The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Courage, Conscience, and Conformity —

South Carolina Jews and the Civil Rights Movement

Register now for spring meeting in Charleston, SC April 16-17

Spring 2016

Volume XXI Number 1
**In this issue**

Enterings Rivers – Millicent E. Brown, Ph.D. – A black teen, one of two girls who were the first African-American students to integrate Rivers High in Charleston, South Carolina, found the presence of a large minority of Jewish students at the school shielded her from the hostility of the Christian white majority. ........................................... 4

Across the Big Water of Lake Marion: The dismantling of the segregated school system – Ernest L. Marcus – Ernie Marcus and Rachel Gordin Barnett, both raised in small-town Jewish families on either side of Lake Marion, discuss their parents’ decisions to send them to “segregation academies” after South Carolina public schools were integrated by federal order. ........................................... 5

The Closing of Eutawville Elementary – Ernest L. Marcus – The new president of HJSSC recounts his experiences when he left the public school system at age nine and enrolled first at Wade Hampton Academy in Orangeburg, and then at Holly Hill Academy. ........................................... 5

When the Saints Go Marching In – Rachel Gordin Barnett – In 1970, five years after the founding of Clarendon Hall, Rachel Gordin and her siblings—the only Jewish students in Summerton, South Carolina—entered the Baptist-supported, all-white refugee located on the outskirts of the small farming town. ........................................... 7

A Southern Jewish Girl’s Very Personal Civil Rights Story – Judy Kurtz Goldman – A native of Rock Hill, South Carolina, looks back on the civil rights era of the mid-twentieth century and remembers instances of both bigotry and bravery, and a lasting lesson learned from her father, Ben Kurtz. ........................................... 8


“I don’t run from nobody!” – Hyman Rubin III – Hyman Rubin, Sr., bequeathed a powerful heritage to his grandson, who describes the late senator’s love for America and his determination to lead the fight against injustice. ........................................... 11

Isadore E. Lourie: Advocate for the Underprivileged – Jack Swerling – Attorney and legislator Isadore Lourie, a colleague recalls, was a strong advocate on behalf of minorities. Known for his compassion, he used his political skills and position in the South Carolina Senate to “do right” for all people, regardless of race, in the Midlands and around the state. ........................................... 12

The Keyserling Family Compass – Billy Keyserling – Beaufort’s mayor traces his family’s shared ethics to his grandfather, William, who, by example, encouraged service to others less fortunate. William’s sons, Leon and Herbert, and Herbert’s wife, Harriet, carried on the legacy. ........................................... 13

Milestones: 40 Pillars, 500 Members – Martin Perlmutter – JHSSC and its affiliates at the College of Charleston have gone a long way towards putting South Carolina’s Jewish history on the map. Join now and ride the wave! ................................. 15

**Letter from the President**

Since moving from South Carolina to Washington, D.C., in 1976, I would never have guessed I’d be writing to you as the new president of JHSSC. How that happened is a tribute to the richness of the experience available to those who become active in the Society. Several years ago I started writing articles for the magazine about various branches of my family in South Carolina, dating as far back as 1842. I had not had a history class since high school, so it was a little daunting, but the enthusiasm and resources offered by Dale Rosengarten, Rachel Barnett, Marty Perlmuter, Alyssa Neely, Ann Meddin Hellman, and others gave me the courage to reconnect with relatives and embark on family research projects.

As co-VP of Archives and Historical Sites this past year, I worked with Society officers and fellow board member Rhetta Mendelsohn on the Orangeburg portion of the fall 2015 conference. While researching Jewish life in small towns similar to Eutawville, when I grew up, I met some fascinating people, such as 90-year-old Bernie Rubenstein of Ellmore, Orangeburg County historian Gene Atkinson, and Becky Ulmer from St. Matthews, a founder of the Ellmore Heritage Museum and Cultural Center.

The fall meeting, “A Tale of Two Cities,” featured terrific programs and speakers. Historic Columbia co-sponsored the Columbia presentations, which covered the capital’s early Jewish history and 20th-century merchants. In the old commercial district of Orangeburg, we unveiled an historical marker commemorating the city’s Jewish merchants and notable residents, followed by a panel discussion at Temple Sinai, where a tiny congregation is holding on despite declining membership.

Our upcoming meeting on April 16–17 in Charleston tackles the complex relationship between southern Jews and the Civil Rights Movement. Most of us are aware of the active involvement of Jews in the desegregation struggles of the 1960s, from Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marching with Dr. Martin Luther King in Selma to the disproportionate number of Jewish Freedom Riders. While the majority of activists came from the North, Jewish progressives in the South also took risks and became involved. That said, most southern Jews, a small minority throughout the region, went along with the white, genteel majority and supported the status quo in race relations. It goes without saying now that no-change meant many of our neighbors would continue to suffer their inferior status with all its disadvantages. I wish I could say it went without saying then, but it did not.

We plan to explore all sides of the issues confronting the region and the nation in this explosive period. Jews in the South felt conflicted in their identity: their forebears in Europe had experienced centuries of antisemitism and outright violence, yet as southerners they were very much accepted in white society. This acceptance, however, came at a price, particularly for people in isolated rural communities. White skin privilege came with the expectation of political conformity on race issues. For Jewish families there was legitimate fear for their safety and economic well-being if they antagonized the mainstream community; the memory of Leo Frank’s lynching resonated with some, and synagogue bombings were not a hypothetical concern. Northern Jews who damned for social justice for blacks brought unwarranted attention to southern Jews, whose racial views were shaped by the mores of the Jim Crow system.

Examining the thoughts and actions of South Carolina Jews during the civil rights era of the mid-twentieth century, we expect to find much to be proud of, but we also are determined to investigate aspects of the subject that make us uncomfortable. In this issue of the Society’s magazine and at our April meeting, we will take a look at the integration of Rivers High School in Charleston and the role played by particular Jewish political leaders in pushing for change. With the USC history professor Bobby J. Donaldson as our keynote speaker on Saturday, and to have the College of Charleston’s African American Studies Program as our co-sponsor. With the outpouring of grief and outrage over the horrific murders at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston in June 2015, I am gratified that the Society is taking this timely subject that just won’t go away, and has designed a thought-provoking spring program.

Hope to see you in April.

Ernest L. Marcus

**On the cover:** Senator Isadore Lourie speaks at the 1986 dedication of the Columbia freeway (also known as Highway 277) named for his good friend Isaiah DeQuincy Newman (1911–1985), pictured in the banner. Elected to the South Carolina Senate in 1983, Newman was the first African American to serve in that legislative body since Reconstruction. Isadore E. Lourie Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, University of South Carolina.
Entering Rivers

Before entering Rivers High School in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1963, I am sure I had almost no knowledge of what it meant to be Jewish. In my narrowly constructed southern world, people were either “white” or “black,” and physical presentation alone accounted for the separation. But because of my parents’ involvement in civil rights struggles that allowed intermittent, although brief, views of human interactions beyond the simplicity of my hometown, I had traveled to gatherings that brought people of good conscience and progressive social agendas together, in spite of pervasive laws and notions insisting on segregation.

Therefore, when I met Jewish students at Rivers, I knew the words to and could convincingly sing “Hava Nagila.” I could enthusiastically dance at Rivers, I knew the words to and could convincingly sing “Hava Nagila.” I could enthusiastically dance to gatherings that brought people of good conscience and progressive social agendas together, in a typical, bigoted American city. Substantial numbers of Jewish residents relegated to “that” side of town created a sizeable enough percentage of Jewish residents relegated to “that” side of town for me to say hello to me that September 1963 day at school, sit next to me in class without pushing their chairs away in disgust, stand next to me in the lunchroom, seven were Jewish. That has always meant something to me. And the “coincidence” of the English teacher waiting until a High Holy Day when no Jewish students were present to have an impromptu classroom discussion about the existence of a “superior race” meant even more.

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The Closing of Eutawville Elementary

Eutawville is a small town in the South Carolina Lowcountry where my peddler grandfather met my grandmother and opened a dry goods store at the turn of the 20th century. The author was a plaintiff in Millicent Brown et al. vs. Charleston School District 20 (1963). Founding director of the “Somebody Had to Do It” Oral History Project, she is principal consultant of the Holy Day when no Jewish students were present to have an impromptu classroom discussion about the existence of a “superior race” meant even more.

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new “independent” schools, the white community’s answer to what was perceived by some to be the federal government’s forced mixing of the races in public schools.

Wade Hampton was a well-known Confederate general and governor of South Carolina. His Democratic nomination for governor was supported by the Red Shirts, a group that sought the removal of blacks from public office after Reconstruction.

Certainly the choice of school name was intended to send a message. Known as the Rebels, the athletic teams wore gray and gold, not-so-subtle references to the Old South. On Wade Hampton’s birthday, just for fun, the “Yankees” in the school were captured and held for ransom in the study hall. Graduating seniors received Confederate flag pins with “Survivor” emblazoned on them.

Church and state were not as separate as I might have hoped (my older sister and I were the only Jewish children in the school). Holy Roller preachers periodically came to the gym for an all-out “sawing” of young souls. Luckily, as a veteran of the Royal Ambassadors for Christ summer camp (another story!), I knew how to stay away from the baptizers. I can’t say I was unhappy at WHA, but I felt an underlying current of racism and danger in Orangeburg (we were there when the Orangeburg Massacre took place in February 1968) that I did not feel at Holly Hill Academy, which opened in 1970, in time for me to transfer for the freshman year. While the school sports teams were called the HHA Raiders, with obvious Confederate connotations, the administration and students did not exude the same feeling of outright racism, and it was a place where I found success and acceptance.

As someone who considers himself a typical Jewish liberal, it is easy to criticize the decisions of my parents. Attending two “segregation” academies is something I feel good about. Still, I can see that it was a period of uncertainty and the Jewish community felt stuck in the middle. The identification of Jews as white gave them a much higher social standing but, at the same time, their own history as victims of antisemitism made them more sensitive to the racism around them.

Not surprisingly, particularly in small towns where African Americans made up the majority of the population, the path of least resistance was to go along with the rest of the white community and avoid being criticized and even ostracized.

Holly Hill Academy’s senior officers, left to right: Vice President Ernie Marcus, President Billy Workman, Treasurer Rick Cummings, Reporter David Shingler, and Secretary Reg Mundon, from the 1974 yearbook, courtesy of Ernest L. Marcus.

When the Saints Go Marching In

by Rachel Gordin Barnett

In the spring of 1970, I was in the eighth grade, looking forward to cheerleader tryouts for our beloved Summerton High School. I had been a JV cheerleader in junior high and it was time to move up to high school. I didn’t know (nor care) about a fourth circuit ruling that demanded total desegregation of our public schools. You see, I grew up in Summerton, South Carolina, home of Briggs vs.aura of the landmark Supreme Court case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. Being 14 years old is very time consuming, and I was truly unaware of the historic significance of this issue. But on a spring evening, my father came home from his drugstore and handed my mother a stack of forms. “Go ahead and register them,” he said. “We have no other option.”

That meant my siblings and I were headed to Clarendon Hall, the private, all-white school, formed in 1965. Schools such as Clarendon Hall were established when desegregation began in the ’60s. Baptist-supported, the all-white refuge was located on the outskirts of our small farming town.

I knew a few kids at Clarendon, but my friends had remained at the public school throughout the “choice” period. That is, every spring a form came home from the school district and you would select your school. We had a few African-American students in our school and, to me, this was not a big issue. We all got along—though, looking back as an adult, I wonder how those few black students felt.

I had to trust my parents. I have no doubt that Clarendon Hall was my father’s school. Indeed, when the school was first formed, I vaguely recall some of the founders visiting my parents to encourage them to send us to CH. At that time, my father had no interest. This was a Baptist-supported institution and it was tough enough to be Jewish in a small town without the added potential of being proselytized on a daily basis!

As it turned out, he had little to worry about, since the opposite happened. His four children, the only Jewish kids in town, were accepted and no one tried to convert us. Even the religion teacher, a staunch Baptist, respected our religious differences. My parents, too, were accepted in the school; my mother, a teacher, took a position at Clarendon Hall teaching social studies, and my father was invited to join the school board. It was quite remarkable.

Looking back, I have fond memories of the private school. But I am not proud of the fact that we went there.

A white-flight school really didn’t reflect the values that my parents instilled in us. I suppose it was more about the place and the times. Mom and Dad were fairly liberal, with a social conscience—at least for South Carolina at the time. When it came to their kids’ education, however, they just wouldn’t risk it. This was a new educational landscape, and as the white AIDS—Above: The author, Clarendon Hall’s head cheerleader in 1974, her senior year, from the 1974 Clarendon Hall yearbook, courtesy of Rachel Gordin Barnett.
community pulled out of the public schools, there was great uncertainty as to what type of an education would remain. So they did what they felt was in their children's best interest and off we went to our new school, Clarendon Hall, home of the Saints.

Oh, when the Saints Go marching in!
Left: Sporting a halo and wings, senior Rachel Gordin demonstrates why she was voted female with the most school spirit. Right: The author's father, David Gordin (seated) with fellow Clarendon Hall board members Henry Rickenbaker and Leslie Tindal. Photos from 1974 Clarendon Hall yearbook, courtesy of Rachel Gordin Barnett.

A Southern Jewish Girl’s Very Personal Civil Rights Story
by Judy Kurtz Goldman

My father, like many southern Jews, owned a women’s clothing store. In the 1950s he hired Thelma, a black woman, to be The Smart Shop’s maid. She was so bright and engaging, my father soon promoted her to saleswoman. She continued mopping and dusting, but she also waited on customers. This made her, by many years, the first non-white salesperson on Rock Hill’s Main Street.

Nowhere’s where the story gets complicated. There was only one bathroom in the store.

Late one evening, our doorbell at home rang. It was the husband of one of the women who worked in the store, and he was falling-down drunk. When my sister and I (maybe 10 and 13) heard the tumult at the front door, we rushed from our beds to the upstairs landing, so we could peek through the banisters. Mr. Wingate was bellowing in my father’s face, “The ladies don’t want no nigger using the bathroom!” Mr. Wingate was down drunk. When my sister and I (maybe 10 and 13) heard the tumult at the front door, we rushed from our beds to the upstairs landing, so we could peek through the banisters. Mr. Wingate was bellowing in my father’s face, “The ladies don’t want no nigger using the bathroom!”

The next evening, I overheard my father telling Mother the talk on Main Street was that Mr. Wingate had brought a gun to our front door. Why he didn’t use it, no one knew.

A decade later, in the early 1960s, Thelma (by then, strictly a saleswoman, no longer a maid) was recognized for her warm personality in a citywide vote. The Evening Herald ran a story under the headline: “Furniture Salesman, Maid in Ladies Wear Store Wins Acclaim as Rock Hill’s Friendliest Employees.”

Whose decision was it to call her a maid? I’m sure it was probably still risky to broadcast her sales status. Were the editors protecting her? Protecting themselves? After all, what small-town southern newspaper wanted to rile its customer base? Or did the editors automatically call a black female worker a maid, regardless of the job she was paid for? Was it the customers who assumed, because of the color of her skin, that she was a maid, even though, every day, all day, she was right there in the front of the store, greeting them by name, ringing up their purchases? Was my father, growing more cautious with age, avoiding putting Thelma in harm’s way? Avoiding putting himself in harm’s way?

Meanwhile, in 1961, while I was away at college, eight men from Rock Hill’s black Friendship Junior College (along with one outside activist) sat down at McCrory’s lunch counter and ordered sandwiches. They were immediately arrested for trespassing and, because money in the Civil Rights Movement was scarce, they refused bail and were sentenced to 30 days’ hard labor at the York County Prison Camp. (“Jail, no bail” soon became the strategy that re-energized the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.) The presiding judge was Billy Hayes, a longtime friend of my parents. In an odd personal twist, Billy Hayes and his wife—two years later—bought our family home. He was a lovely man, but he was on the wrong side of history.

In 2015 the Friendship Nine were invited to a ceremony in Rock Hill in which their convictions were overturned. The presiding judge did not explain their records he wanted them preserved in the court docket so that future generations would know of the young men’s courage. His statement: “We cannot rewrite history, but we can right history.” The judge: John C. Hayes III, Billy Hayes’s nephew.

After college, in the fall of 1963, I signed on to teach at the first all-white high school in Georgia ordered to admit blacks. Roosevelt High was the largest high school in Atlanta and located in one of its poorest neighborhoods. The situation was so volatile, police were stationed every day on all three floors of the building. My first morning, as part of the lesson, I asked my students to name a famous person they’d like to meet. A white boy’s hand shot up. “I wish I could meet President Kennedy,” he said, glancing around, making sure all eyes were fastened on him. “I’d tell him to get these niggers out of our school!”

Weeks later, during homeroom, I heard a scuffle in the classroom and rushed to find two boys fighting—one white, one black. They were small, so I wedged myself in and pulled them apart. It wasn’t until I looked down and saw blood on my knee, then looked up to see the black boy’s bloody cheek, that I realized the white boy had a knife.

On a warm afternoon in November—still my first year—the principal made an announcement over the loudspeaker. It was 2:30, last period of the day, journalism class. We were assigning articles for the school newspaper. The principal’s words: “Our president has been shot.” You could hear white students cheering up and down the halls.

It was impossible to grow up in the South in the 1940s, ’50s, and ’60s, and not feel the rattling effects of segregation. From the side-by-side water fountains in Friedheim’s Department Store to the separate waiting rooms in our family doctor’s office to the whites-only swimming pool at the YMCA, prejudice was everywhere. But I learned strong lessons that night I leaned through the upstairs banisters. Those lessons were clear. Indelible. They remain as well defined for me as if they were set down in black and white.
Spring meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, co-sponsored by the College of Charleston's African-American Studies Program

Saturday, April 16

11:30 A.M.  Registration

Noon  Lunch

12:45 – 1:45 P.M.  Let Us Bake Bread Together: African Americans, Jews, and South Carolina’s Civil Rights Struggle – Bobby Donaldson, Associate Professor of History, University of South Carolina

1:45 – 3:15  Panel Discussion – Rising to the Challenge: Jewish Politicians in an Age of Change
Moderator: The Honorable Jean Toal, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of South Carolina (2000–2015)
Panelists: Billy Keyserling, Marvin Lare, Joel Lourie, Jack Swerling

3:15 – 5:30  Break

3:30 – 5:00  Panel Discussion – Revisiting Rivers: Reflections on School Desegregation
Moderator: Jon Hale, Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, College of Charleston
Panelists: Charlie Brown, Mallicent Brown, Ovetra Glover, Missy Cohen Gold, Robert Rosen, Blanche Weintraub Wine

5:30 – 6:45  Cocktail reception, Albert and Robin Mercer’s residence, 110 Ashley Avenue (corner of Bull Street and Ashley)

Dinner on your own

Sunday, April 17

8:30 A.M.  Breakfast

9:00  Open JHSSC Board Meeting

10:00 – 12:00  Panel discussion – Against the Tide: Risks and Rewards of Rejecting the Status Quo
Moderator: Cleveland Sellers, Jr., President, Voorhees College
Participants: Jack Bass, Dan T. Carter, Bill Saunders, Rabbi Robert Seigel
Respondent: Patricia A. Sullivan, Professor of History, University of South Carolina

Hotel reservations

Frances Marion Hotel
387 King Street
Charleston, SC 29403
(843) 722-0060 or (877) 716-2121

Red Roof Inn
301 Johnnie Dodds Boulevard
Mount Pleasant, SC
(843) 884-1411 or (803) 733-7663

Special rate:
$50 per night plus tax

Meeting registration

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: $50 per person

Questions: Enid Idehohn, idehohn@cfsc.edu
Phone: (843) 953-3918 – fax: (843) 953-7624

“I don’t run from nobody!” by Hyman Rubin III

Recall my grandfather, Hyman Rubin, Sr., saying more than once, always with an uncharacteristic double negative for emphasis, “My father had to run from the Cossacks—I don’t have to run from nobody!” Even as a child I took from that statement two powerful ideas: on the one hand, it showed his love and appreciation for the United States of America, a place where the son of poor immigrants could become a state senator, and a place where a prominent Jew had no need to fear persecution. On the other hand, it showed why he felt called to public service and to fight for racial equality. Fear of pogroms might have forced his ancestors to keep their heads down, but he was free to challenge injustice, and he felt compelled to do so.

Even though he lived in a time when anti-Jewish prejudice was more widespread and acceptable than today, he would never acknowledge it as anything other than “a pinprick of an irritant.” He never excused antisemitism, but he saw its American incarnation as fundamentally different from and less threatening than the form it took in other parts of the world. It might prevent him from playing golf with other legislators at their country club, but it couldn’t stop him from becoming successful in business, winning offices of public trust, and openly challenging his community’s laws and traditions when necessary.

If the United States was a safe and tolerant place for Jews, South Carolina in the 1950s and 1960s offered no such security for its black citizens. For my grandfather, the racial policies and attitudes of the country (and especially the South) were America’s great moral failing. He never doubted what would cause those policies and attitudes to change: leadership. He was the Luncheon Club—first and_above all fill that bill: protecting the Congaree Swamp from logging, amending the state’s strict no-exceptions ban on abortion, urging state support for blind and elderly citizens. But of all these, he took the greatest pride in his fight for civil rights.

In the early 1960s he publicly advocated desegregation, as well as working behind the scenes to ensure that it occurred peacefully. One of his key contributions was his co-founding, along with University of South Carolina President Tom Jones, of an interracial Luncheon Club—the first of its kind in Columbia, and possibly in South Carolina—to bring white and black leader together. Recognizing that these leaders were usually brought together by crisis, and had not had the chance to get to know each other before they had to resolve problems, the two believed the Luncheon Club would remedy that. My grandfather also worked closely with downtown business owners, and especially lunch counter operators, to assure them that if they began serving black customers, white patrons would still come. Meanwhile, he encouraged white Colombians to eat at the lunch counters, sometimes providing the lunch money himself!

The same forces that threatened to boycott integrated lunchrooms also tried to cancel out of Columbia’s city council in 1963, advocating a “segregation ticket” to roll back the changes that had been made. (Lunch counters were desegregated in 1962, but the “white” and “colored” signs were not removed until later
I learned many lessons from my grandfather, some historical, some philosophical, some practical, and some moral. He often said he was too proud to lie or steal: lying and stealing are sneaky, and a proud man does not sneak. He could be very humorous, but also insightful: a person who knows himself well can use one flaw (pride) to guard against others (dishonesty, pettiness, greed). More than anything else, though, I remember two things about him: the love and gratitude he felt for this country, and the obligation he felt to make it better. In fulfilling that obligation, he never ran from anybody.

Isadore E. Lourie: Advocate for the Underprivileged

S
ome years ago the Alabama Bar Association dedicated a memorial in Monteville to the ideals personified by Atticus Finch in To Kill a Mockingbird. To mark the ceremony, author Harper Lee wrote a letter to the bar association, which in pertinent part said, “Your profession has always had some real life heroes—lawyers of great courage and uncompromising integrity who did what was right when right was an unpopular and sometimes dangerous thing to do.” Such a man was Isadore E. Lourie, my mentor and hero, whom I had the privilege of working with in his law practice from 1973 to 1983. A large percentage of our practice involved representing African Americans and other minorities from the Midlands of South Carolina. Our clients trusted Senator Lourie to be a zealous advocate for their cause. They knew by his words, actions, and deeds that he had a sense of compassion for the less fortunate and less privileged members of society. He cherished the trust that people put in him and his goal was to give a voice to those who no one had. Senator Lourie wanted to improve the quality of life of the people he served in his law practice and in the legislature. Our firm was an oasis for minorities facing legal problems.

Isadore Lourie was born in 1932 in St. George. He entered the University of South Carolina in 1951, and was admitted to the South Carolina Bar in 1956. He married Susan Reiner in 1959, and Neil. Senator Lourie advised his skills as a legal advocate and leader and combined them with his talents as a politician to influence the path of legislation from 1962 to 1992. Susan was his partner in his political quests, as well as in life.

That Isadore Lourie would enter politics and become a successful legislator would surprise no one who knew him. He was president of his senior class in high school, president of the student body at the University of South Carolina, chairman of the USC Young Democrats, president of the South Carolina Young Democrats, co-chairman of Young Democrats for Kennedy, and president of the Senate. As a page in the legislature, was administrative assistant to the House Ways and Means Committee, and later, majority leader of the South Carolina Senate for three years. In the legislature Senator Lourie was a member of the group known as the Young Turks, who broke from the “old guard” and committed themselves, in his words, to “the cause of social and economic justice for all our citizens . . . this was the anchor of our entire legislative program.” The Young Turks fought for and succeeded in passing legislation that would assist education, teachers, public kindergarten, consumer affairs, minorities, the handicapped, senior citizens, transportation, housing, and workers’ compensation. From their efforts came the Workers’ Compensation Commission, the Consumer Protection Agency, the Public Kindergarten Program, the South Carolina Council on Aging, the South Carolina Commission on Race Relations, and a host of other progressive programs.

One of Senator Lourie’s most lasting contributions is in the area of race relations. Early in his career he befriended the two great African-American civil rights leaders in Richland County—Reverend C. J. Whitaker and Reverend L. DeQuincy Newman. They both recognized the commitment, force, and energy of Isadore Lourie and, together as a team, they began to change the racial landscape. With Senator Lourie’s help, African Americans were appointed to boards and commissions from which they were formerly excluded. They obtained employment in state and county offices, and they began to have a more significant role in politics. In 1972 these men helped elect the first African-American to the South Carolina House of Representatives—J. S. Leery Johnson and Jim Felder.

Praise for the senator has come from friends in high places. Alex Sanders, Isadore Lourie’s desk mate in the senate, and former president of the College of Charleston and chief judge of the South Carolina Court of Appeals, reported: “During the tumultuous time of the ’60s, Isadore was one of the most meaningful voices that connected black and white people.”

Governor Dick Riley, who served in the state senate and as secretary of education under President Bill Clinton, described his friend’s impact on South Carolina: “Much of the major legal accomplishments of the past quarter century are due to the leadership and caring of Isadore Lourie. He’s been there with his colleagues when their strength was needed.”

And Fritz Hollings, governor and United States senator, succinctly summed up Senator Lourie’s career: “He was the most progressive lawmaker our state has ever known.”

The Keyserling Family Compass

W
hen my mother Harriet Keyserling passed away in 2010, I took the liberty of calling her close friend Marty Perlmutter to ask how she should deal with her “Jewish” identity when making arrangements for her burial and what I knew was going to be a huge celebration of her life.

Mother rarely attended Friday night services, didn’t like worship and didn’t have a lot of patience with the rabbis in Beaufort. At the same time she was devoted to Israel, contributed liberally to Jewish causes, and whenever a smart new family moved to Beaufort from New York, she would ask, “Do you think they are Jewish?”

Fortunately, Martny gave me a way out when he said, “Don’t worry about Harriet and Judaism, she is a prophetic Jew.” While the characterization was new to me, it sounded and felt good, and I have used the phrase to characterize not only my mother, but also my father, his brother, my grandfather, and everyone else in the close family.

When speaking about civil rights it would therefore be short-sighted to speak only about Harriet Keyserling, as my grandfather William, who arrived here in 1888 as a young man running from Tsarist Russia, had such a strong influence on the magnet in our moral compass.

William and his business partner were the first local board members of Penn School on St. Helena Island, Lch a school for freed slaves founded in 1862—the first of its kind in South Carolina. After the Civil War, Jewish/African-American cooperation in Beaufort County and drowned thousands of people on St. Helena, William Keyserling is said to have defied the town fathers and taken Clara Barton and the Red Cross, in the dark of the night, out to the islands to help the African-American families who held on. William helped found Beth Israel Congregation, though he rarely attended services. He died from a massive heart attack while presenting the keynote address at an international UJA conference in New York. His last words were, “It is time for the young people to take over.”

William’s eldest son, Leon, followed that same compass. After graduating from Columbia University and Harvard Law School, he became one of the young architects of the New Deal. As legislative assistant to U.S. Senator Robert Wagner, he helped draft the National Industry Recovery Act of 1934, the National Housing Act of 1935, the Wagner National Labor Relations Act of 1935, portions of the Social Security Act of 1935, and the U.S. Housing Act of 1937. He wrote an essay upon which the Full Employment Act of 1946 was based and served as a member and then chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors under President Truman.

After his years in government service, Leon founded and funded the non-profit Council on Economic Progress, and conducted extensive studies for civil rights and labor organizations. In collaboration with his wife, Mary Dublin, he worked on the rights of women and minorities. Leon was one of the principal organizers of the labor and Jewish/African-American coalition that, throughout the 1960s, championed civil rights for all.

My father, Herbert, and Leon were separated in age by the Great Depression. Their dad had lost most of his wealth when he had to sell land to pay farm debt during the depression and could afford tuition only at the College of Charleston. As a student my father sold his blood for spending money. Nevertheless, as early as his internship at the Medical University of South Carolina, Dad was in the field day and night helping those who otherwise would not have had medical care.

During World War II, Dad joined the navy and, on short notice with no combat training, was deployed to Guadalcanal with the first marine division. At a young age he learned that no notice with no combat training, was deployed to Guadalcanal in the field day and night helping those who otherwise would not have had medical care.

Directors Elizabeth and Courtney Siceloff, who were ostracized in the Beaufort community because of their association with Penn and the Civil Rights Movement. As youngsters we played with black children at Penn, most of whom had been brought into the world by my dad at no charge other than gifts of food, cakes, and sometimes homemade crafts. At Penn, we sat in the front row at Dr. Martin Luther King’s leadership retreats on St. Helena Island. In 1972, when I ran the McGovern campaign, Harriet said she could not help me. But she and her second cousin, her mother, traversed the islands to register black voters and then organized some friends to help get the people to the polls on election day. Subsequently, Harriet and her friends organized a League of Women Voters chapter with a focus on registering voters and seeking opportunities for women and minorities to run for public office.

In 1974 Mother became the first woman elected to serve on county council. There she championed the cause of creating a statue to honor Robert Smalls, former slave turned Union navy captain, then state senator and U.S. congressman. She won, but the county would not allow the statue to be erected on public property, so it was placed at Tabernacle Baptist Church on Craven Street, said to have been Smalls’s home church. It is, to my knowledge, the only piece of publicly commissioned art in Beaufort County.

In 1976 Harriet was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives, the first woman from Beaufort to serve in the legislature. For 16 years she fought for the rights of women and minorities, the arts, the natural environment, and public education. Though not necessarily hers by blood, she followed that same compass William carried with him as he ran from oppression in the Old Country and put to use giving back to those in need.

Above: Leon Keyserling (r) meets with Correta Scott King, August 1976. Handwritten on back of photo: “Conferences in Atlanta on H H Bill . . . auspices Martin Luther King Center for Social Change.”

Below: South Carolina Representative Harriet Keyserling talks with fellow politicians Richard Riley and Nick Theodore. Keyserling Family Papers, Special Collections, College of Charleston.

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina has had a tremendous impact in its relatively short history. Our accomplishments include the Jewish Heritage Collection, the Addlestone Library, which, in collaboration with the 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; an informative and attractive website; the bi-annual publication of this remarkable magazine; and bi-annual meetings—all of which have created a vibrant JHSSC community.

The new Pearlstone/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston, with its emphasis on research, teaching, and community outreach, assures the College’s long-term commitment to Jewish history and, by extension, to the activities of the JHSSC. The Society has helped put South Carolina’s Jewish history on the map, and in so doing, has created a “buzz” across the nation and made the Jewish South a destination for scholars, journalists, genealogists, and just plain tourists.

College of Charleston faculty and JHSSC stalwarts Adam Mendelson, Dale Rosengarten, and Shari Rabin have helped create a new exhibition and book titled By Dawn’s Early Light: Jewish Contributions to American Culture from the Nation’s Founding to the Civil War that includes substantial material from the American South and features the work of Charleston-born artists Theodore Sidney Moise and Solomon Nunez Carvalho. The exhibit will be on display at the Princeton University Art Museum from February 13 through June 12, 2016, and is open to the public free of charge.

Closer to home, JHSSC recently received a $5,000 grant from the Stanley Furbstein Endowment at the Coastal Community Foundation (CCF) to develop its Jewish cemetery records and to include the exemplary Beaufort burial records on its website. The late Mr. Furbstein cared deeply about South Carolina Jewish cemeteries and was instrumental in starting JHSSC’s wide-survey of burials, and single-handedly compiled information on Beaufort’s Jewish cemetery. It is fitting his generous bequest to CCF is funding work he himself initiated.

2016 is the year we hope to realize one of the goals our Past Presidents Council set in 2014. The council committed the Society to reaching 40 Pillar memberships—those who pledge $1000 a year for five years—and 50 dues-paying memberships. We are close on both counts and need your help to make it happen this year. Renew your membership; give a gift membership; become a Pillar. Do it now!
Join the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Name: _______________________________________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________

City: _____________________________ State: ___ Zip: ______________

Phone: ___________________________  Fax:  ______________________

E-mail Address: _______________________________________________

ANNUAL DUES FOR 2016 (JANUARY–DECEMBER)

_____ Individual/Family Membership $36

_____ Friend $200

_____ Institutional $250

_____ Sponsor $350

_____ Patron $750

_____ Founding patron $1,000

_____ Pillar ($1,000 per year for 5 years) $5,000

_____ Foundational Pillar ($2,000 per year for 5 years) $10,000

Join or renew online at jhssc.org.
Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional $36 each.
Send us their information and we will inform them of your gift.
Make checks payable to JHSSC and mail to the address above.

Register now for the April 16–17 meeting in Charleston
See page 10 for more information.
In this issue

Congregation Beth Israel - 100 Years and Counting - Victor Aliferi - From "Herring Alley" to Summit Drive, CBI celebrates the commencement of its second century in Greenville, South Carolina ......... 4

The Zaglins of Greenville: A Jewish-American Saga - Jeff Zaglin - Charles Zaglin from Lithuania, Beth Israel's first rabbi, rode out hard times and built a successful business in the years before the Great Depression, selling meat, groceries, and dry goods from a market on Coffee Street ................. 6

Max and Trude Heller: Giving Back to Greenville – Susan Heller Moses – For the gift of a new life in South Carolina's textile capital, the Hellers returned the favor many times over, spearheading the revitalization of their adopted home town ...................................................... 8

From the Old Country to the Upcountry – Ann Lurey Tracking the Switzers from Ariogola to America - Shaking the family tree for clues, one descendant pieces together the story in search of the big picture ........................................ 10

The Lurey Family Story – From a single branch of Lureys sprouted a handful of new Carolina families who helped found Greenville's Orthodox congregation ................. 11

Mollie Doll Lurey: The Grandest Lady There Was – Joan Bolonkin Meir – Immigrant, wife, mother, matriarch—“Mollie” and her husband, Morris Lurey, are remembered in a granddaughter’s poignant homage .................................................. 12


Memories of Lillian and Jack Bloom in Greenville—A Dynamic Duo – by Miriam Chernoff – A match made in the Upstate, the Blooms found love later in life. Dedicated to Judaism and to community work, they kept their Jewish social circle and their public service separate .................. 14

Davis, Zaglin, and Lurey Family Photographs – A visual essay from the collection of Bobbie Davis, Zaglin, and Lurey Family Photographs ~

Proser Family Values: L’dor, V’dor – Nancy Proser Lebovitz – Founders of the first cancellation shoe store in South Carolina, Carl and Helen Proser became pillars of Beth Israel and passed on powerful Jewish traditions to their children and grandchildren ........................................ 16

Jewish Greenville: From Ethnic Enclave to Multicultural City – Fred Leffert – Changes in a once-insular Jewish community reflect the evolution since World War II of the vibrant modern metropolis Greenville has become .................................................. 18

The Rabbi's Soapbox – Barbara Charldoff Rahban – Greenville of the 1960s and 70s was the perfect place to raise children. This family’s life was centered around school activities, sports meets, dance, and—most notably—Beth Israel Synagogue .................. 20

Living in Liberty, SC – Shirley Sarlin – With operations in Liberty and nearby Easley, Sarlin's Department Stores were Upcountry fixtures for more than 50 years ........................................ 21

Hyman J. Brand: A Man of the Cloth – Alyssa Neely, with Hy Brand – Drawn to Greenville by the textile industry, this six-term president and lay leader of Beth Israel observes that, despite constant change, Beth Israel continues to thrive ................. 22

Building on a Broad Base – Martin Perlmuter – With its feet firmly planted in grassroots membership, the Society has soared to unexpected heights in partnership with the College of Charleston .................. 23

Doreta Glover (left) and Millicent Brown speaking in Charleston, South Carolina, at JHSSC's spring meeting, April 16, 2016. Photo: Jeri Perlmutter.

Letter from the President

Why is it important to belong and contribute to the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina? As southerners and as Jews, we venerate our ancestors and hold tightly to objects that have been passed down through the generations: a shoetree, a Victorian-era baby dress, candlesticks from the old country, photographs of our families, even accounting ledgers from a small-town dry goods store. But without context, things lose meaning after a generation. It is family stories that make history come alive and remain relevant for future generations. For the young adult who catches the family history bug, the academic researcher, or a newcomer to our state, the Society is committed to being the keeper of stories. Through its programs and its affiliation with the College of Charleston, JHSSC also connects the unique qualities of the southern Jewish experience with broader, national themes. No better example exists than our spring 2016 conference, "Courage, Conscience and Conformity – South Carolina Jews and the Civil Rights Movement." There were meaningful, charged exchanges between speakers and audience, heightened in the aftermath of the mass shooting at Emanuel in Charleston. Topics ranged from the integration of Rivers High to stories of what it was like—as a Jew or an African-American—to live through a bitterly divisive period in American history. We heard about Jewish public servants who played critical roles during this turbulent time. We also learned not all South Carolina's Jewish citizens welcomed the winds of change.

The board of directors and officers of the Society invite you to attend our fall 2016 conference, to be held in Greenville from October 21 to 23. The JHSSC bylaws make clear the importance of bringing our programs to all parts of the state. It has been a decade since we met in the Upcountry; Congregation Beth Israel's 100th anniversary celebration this year provides a perfect opportunity to stage our autumn meeting.

Founded as an Orthodox shul in 1916, the congregation aligned with Conservative Judaism in 1954. Beth Israel has been a hub of social and religious life for generations of Jewish Greenwillians. Today many of the city's Jews are from elsewhere, drawn by the strong and growing economy. The centennial celebration, and the contents of this magazine, promise to remind members of the congregation where the long-standing families came from, and to impress a sense of belonging among old-timers and newcomers alike.

Our keynote speaker, Professor Diane Vecchio, will trace the socio-economic roots of Jewish immigrants to Upstate South Carolina in the late 1800s. Jewish peddlers and merchants were drawn to the region by the rapid growth of the textile industry; their entrepreneurial spirit filled an important niche in the economy. Saturday’s schedule, "From the Old Country to the Upcountry," will feature stories of in-migration told by contributors to this issue. The second discussion, "From Main Street to the Board Room," will explore the city's economic transition and changes in Jewish demographics over the past hundred years.

The day will be topped off by the dedication of a State of South Carolina historical marker (co-sponsored by Beth Israel and JHSSC) in front of the synagogue. In the evening, conference attendees will be treated to 'Musical Monuments' composed by Ernest Bloch and Leonard Bernstein and performed by the Greenville Chorale and the Symphony Orchestra at the Peace Center.

Sunday our focus will be on Max Moses Heller, a refugee of the Holocaust who served as mayor of Greenville from 1971 to 1979 and is widely credited with revitalizing the city. He brought a European sensibility to urban design with pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, outdoor seating surrounded by greenery and water features, public music and art. Heller was also a trailblazer on social issues such as affordable housing and diversity in the government workforce. His widow and children will share their memories, joined by former South Carolina Governor Richard W. Riley, who, in 1979, named Heller chairman of the State Development Board. The weekend will conclude with a walking tour downtown led by urban planners Abbie Ricker and Barry Nocks.

Join us for a weekend of celebration, commemoration, and exploration in the beautiful city of Greenville!
All stories have a beginning, yet the date may be debatable. For example, we are here to celebrate the centennial of Congregation Beth Israel (CBI), which received its Certificate of Incorporation on June 17, 1916. Its roots, however, go back at least six years earlier, when 25 families, predominantly Russian Jews, came together to form a congregation and elect officers. Orthodox services took place in congregants’ homes and in the old Bank of Commerce building at the corner of Main and Coffee streets. In 1912 the congregation hired Charles Zaglin to come to Greenville to be the first official rabbi, shochet, and melah. A mikvah was immediately built at the insistence of Zaglin’s wife, Evelyne Rose. Membership dues were $2.00 per family.

The first permanent synagogue was constructed on the north side of town where many of the Jews in Greenville lived—an area affectionately referred to as “Herring Alley.” Charles Zaglin donated a lot on Townes Street in 1925, and the building was completed in 1930 at a cost of $18,000. Services commenced on Friday evenings at 8:00 and religious school met Sunday mornings at 10:00. Congregants were heavily involved in retail trade. Jewish-owned businesses lined Main Street; all kept open on Saturday, the busiest day of the week.

One of the most prominent Jews in CBI history came to Greenville in 1938. Through the help of a local girl, Mary Mills, whom he had met in Europe, Max Heller and his family fled Nazi-occupied Austria. Shep Saltzman provided affidavits to bring them over, and Max went to work as a shipping clerk at Saltzman’s Piedmont Shirt Company. Heller would go on to become a successful businessman and politician. In 1969 he won a seat on the Greenville City Council.

In December 1953 the congregation voted to join the Conservative movement and on August 4, 1954 was accepted into United Synagogue of America. This move appears to have been at least 18 years in the making. Recorded in the minutes of the congregation’s regular monthly meeting, dated December 9, 1935: “The question of Friday night services came up for discussion with a unanimous decision to hold services at 8 p.m. and have conservative services.”

In 1957 CBI purchased land and erected the current place of worship on Summit Drive. The community flourished; a year later the religious school boasted 130 students. A new sanctuary and classroom additions were completed in 1966 for $134,000. The struggle for the women of CBI to have full rights of membership came to the forefront in the late ‘60s. Not until 1967 could an “unattached woman” be a voting member of the congregation. Before then, a member of the Sisterhood of President Max Heller, held its final meeting in the Townes Street building on July 18, 1958. Courtesy of Jeff Zaglin.

Congregation Beth Israel – 100 Years and Counting…

by Victor Alfieri

could attend board meetings but was not allowed to vote. Sondra Umsted was the first woman with voting privileges, and her first documented action was to recommend paying for janitorial services. The 1970s witnessed more changes in the community. The original Tree of Life in the CBI lobby was dedicated in July 1971. In November of the same year, the congregation held its first ecumenical Thanksgiving service with neighboring Northside Methodist Church. Fall 2016 will mark the 45th service that CBI has shared with Northside on the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

The religious school shrank to 70 children in 1972, and by 1977 had dwindled to 21. One reason for the decline is that average family size was decreasing. In 1973 Joyce Abrams successfully presented a recommendation to the board that women be allowed to wear pantsuits “in good taste” to services, as dictated by cold weather, health, or fashion.

Capping a long fight by women to have a say in the congregation, Sue Shager became the first female board president in 1985—eight years after women were finally allowed to serve as officers. In 1991 CBI broke new ground yet again by hiring Rabbi Jodie Futornick as its first female rabbi. Shabbat morning services began the same year. The second Tree of Life, located in the Davis Social Hall, was dedicated in October 1995. Over the next two decades, the demographics of Beth Israel shifted, with newcomers from the Northeast and the Midwest outnumbering native South Carolinians. In 2016 CBI started its official second century with a new rabbi. Mathew Marko, a recent graduate of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles, led his first service on Friday, July 1. The congregation of approximately 100 families is excited about the future and committed to creating a fulfilling Jewish experience in Greenville, South Carolina.

The Zaglins of Greenville: A Jewish-American Saga

by Jeff Zaglin

The story of Rabbi Zaglin and his fledgling family is a Jewish-American saga with deep roots in the soil of South Carolina and the southern United States.

A circa 1909. Left: The Zaglin siblings at the wedding of Shirley Zaglin and Jules Cavalier, June 1950, at the Townes Street shul. From left to right: Harry H., Louis, Joseph G. (Joe), Phillip, and Samuel. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Around 1907, upon his arrival in New York City, Charles found employment in a kosher processing plant. Soon after, he began his travels south. With his wife, Evelyn Rose (Khava Reiza, or Eva Rachel), and son, Solomon Melton (born in 1906 in Vilnius, Lithuania), he moved to Wilmington, North Carolina, to fill a rabbinic position. The Zaglins’ only daughter, Freida Selma, was born there in 1908. A son (my father), Harry Henry, was born in Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia, two years later. By 1912 Charles was hired to serve as rabbi by a handful of Orthodox families in Greenville, South Carolina. Congregation Beth Israel was formally recognized by the state on June 17, 1916.

Disfortune hit the Zaglin family a few months after their fourth child, Joseph, was born in 1912. According to Freida, Evelyn Rose died due to “bad blood.” There was no Jewish burial ground in Greenville at the time, so she was buried in Columbia, South Carolina, at the House of Peace (Whaley Street) Cemetery. She is purportedly one of the first burials there.

After the death of his wife, Charles was forced to break up the family. Times were much different then. Joe, the baby, was sent to live with family in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Sol and Freida were taken in by relatives living in Haverhill, Massachusetts. Harry stayed with an aunt and uncle in Bristol for a few months before returning to Greenville. Freida explained why in her February 27, 1997 interview for the Jewish Heritage Collection: “He was strange to them and they were strange to him, and he would not be trained . . . . My aunt had a lot of little children and she couldn’t cope . . . .”

For the Zaglins, the death of Marion Zaglin on December 6, 2015, in Atlanta, Georgia, marked the end of an era. He was the last of seven sons and one daughter of Charles (born Tzemakh) Zaglin, Lithuanian immigrant, rabbi, shochet, and mohel. The story of Rabbi Zaglin and his fledgling family is a Jewish-American saga with deep roots in the soil of South Carolina and the southern United States.

The Zaglins have been involved with the Greenville Jewish community for more than 100 years. Charles Zaglin’s children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren continue to be deeply engaged in the city’s Jewish and civic life and will be for years to come.

Charles, while acting as rabbi of Beth Israel, opened a business on Coffee Street. Zaglin’s Market sold both kosher and non-kosher meat, as well as dry goods and other groceries. For well over a decade, the market was successful. Charles married divorcée Anna Glickman who, like Charles, had four children; they were older than his and did not live with them. Together Anna and Charles had four more children, all boys: Phillip, Louis, Marion, and Jack, born between 1922 and 1930. Charles’s business grew; he opened an abattoir and added delivery trucks. Freida described other improvements: “He enlarged the store and he built a smokehouse in the back. He smoked his own hams and sausage and bacon . . . . He bought the first coolers, refrigerated coolers, and we had a water system up on top of the building that you ran with the coolers, and we had a freezer. It was in its infancy in those days. We froze and smoked.

Above: Charles, Freida, Solomon, and Eva Rachel Zaglin, circa 1909. Left: The Zaglin siblings at the wedding of Shirley Zaglin and Jules Cavalier, June 1950, at the Townes Street shul. From left to right: Harry H., Louis, Joseph G. (Joe), Phillip Hillal (Hicky), Freida (Kaplan), Marion (Buch), Jack, and Solomon Melton, father of the bride. Courtesy of Jeff Zaglin.

The Zaglin’s Market faced an additional challenge in the 1930s. Freida recalled that competition from supermarkets made it “hard for us to make a living.” In May 1937 Freida had returned to Greenville with her husband, Nat Kaplan, and taken over the market from Charles, who was in declining health. The former rabbi died in July and Zaglin’s Market closed a few years later.

During the 1930s and early ’40s, the Zaglin boys developed quite a reputation in Greenville. They were known about town for enjoying a good time and stories about their shenanigans. Harry, Louis, Marion, and Jack were all in the military in some capacity during World War II, although not all served overseas. After the war Marion moved to Atlanta and was followed by Jack, Louis, Phil, and eventually Joe. They all married and started families. Sol, Freida, and Harry remained in Greenville. Harry Zaglin opened the Greenville Army & Navy store some 60 years ago and it is still located at 660 South Main Street today.

As proprietor of one of the oldest businesses downtown, I take great pride in seeing, on occasion, three generations of Greenvillians walk through the door at the same time.

When the Great Depression hit, the business suffered. Despite the financial crisis, the small congregation began constructing a permanent shul on a lot on Townes Street that Charles had donated in the mid-1920s. The first phase of the building—the basement—was completed well before Freida’s wedding, held in the new hall in June 1931.

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and he had trucks going out to all the little towns, distributing—with salesmen—distributing meats and things.”

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Max and Trude Heller: Giving Back to Greenville

Max Heller and Trude Schönthal, Greenville, SC, circa 1941. Courtesy of Susan Heller Moses.

My parents remained active and dedicated to the Jewish community. Dad created a prayer breakfast for all religions, or a group of prominent business leaders. When asked by a young student, "What do I tell my father when he tells me the Holocaust never happened?" she looks him straight in the eye and softly says, "Tell him you met me." Despite my parents' active lives, family came first. My mother, an only child, likes to say she could never replace the 90 family members we lost in the Holocaust, but she is well on her way with 3 children, 10 grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren.

The Greenville Chorale and the Greenville Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Maestro Bingham Vick, will perform works by two great Jewish composers on the Saturday evening of the conference. 

My father credited Greenville with giving him a new life. He twice served as president of Beth Israel Synagogue and Mom was a long-serving treasurer of the Sisterhood. They helped start a local BBYO chapter and housed many young Jewish people from across the South during conventions. My mom began speaking publicly about the Holocaust, going to business organizations, churches, and schools, teaching her audience to love, not hate. At 94 she continues to speak and can mesmerize an auditorium of young adults.

The Greenville Musical Monuments program has been presented every year since 1998 on the Saturday evening of the Jewish Historical Society Conference. The program features an evening of world-class music and is underwritten by the Greenville Symphony Orchestra. The program includes a musical recital of concerts and symphonies that were especially popular and played an important role in helping transform the Greenville area into a city that is so pedestrian friendly and diverse.

**Jewish Musical Monuments**

**Saturday, October 22, 2016**
**8:00 P.M.**

The Greenville Chorale and the Greenville Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Maestro Bingham Vick, will perform works by two great Jewish composers on the Saturday evening of the conference. Avodath HaKodesh (Sacred Service), by Ernest Bloch, is inspired by the Shabbat morning service. HaKodesh (Sacred Service), by Ernst Bloch, is inspired by the Shabbat morning service. Vick, will perform works by two great Jewish composers on the Saturday evening of the conference. Both works combine lush harmonies with texts of universal meaning and appeal. Join us for an evening of sublime music!

**Program:**
- **Avodath HaKodesh (Sacred Service),** by Ernest Bloch, is inspired by the Shabbat morning service.
- Vick, will perform works by two great Jewish composers on the Saturday evening of the conference. HaKodesh (Sacred Service), by Ernst Bloch, is inspired by the Shabbat morning service.

**Call:** 800.888.7768 or 864.467.3000 if you live in the Greenville area.

To order tickets, call 800.888.7768 or 864.467.3000 if you live in the Greenville area.
From the Old Country to the Upcountry

The Lurey Family Story

The Lureys came to the United States from Bialystok, Russia/Poland, in the early 1900s. Mashe Lea and Zelick Lieb Lurie (Lurey) were the parents of one daughter, Annie, and five sons—Morris (Maurice), Marx, Meyer, Samuel (Schmuel), and Hymen (Chaim). The first family ember to emigrate was Jake. At 18 years of age, after suffering persecution and being kicked by a horse, to boost, he decided to desert the army for a better life in America. A relative in Rhode Island was his destination.

At some point Zelic followed, and Morris arrived in 1903. With eight dollars to her name, 44-year-old Mashe Lea immigrated in 1905 with her youngest sons, Samuel, 16, and Hymen, 14, and joined her husband in Valley Falls, Rhode Island, just north of Pawtucket.

Jake married Annie Hecklin. Annie had two brothers, Beryl and Schmuel. The Hecklins moved to Spartanburg, South Carolina, and, around 1909, all the Lureys followed. Jake, a shoemaker, and Annie lived in various places and in later years moved to Warren, Georgia, to be near their oldest daughter, Minnie Tannenbaum. Jake and Annie maintained a kosher home wherever they lived.

It was in late 1910 that the Morris Lureys moved to Greenville from Spartanburg. Morris and Mollie Dolk Lurey raised six children in Greenville (see page 12 for Mollie’s story). In 1912 Mory operated the New York Shoe Store at 116 East Washington Street. In later years he and his son Meyer, who would take over the business, moved the store to Pendleton Street, one block from Morris’s brother Samuel.

Zelic, Mashe, and Samuel (my father) followed Jake and Morris to Greenville, where Samuel met and married my mother, Greenovillian Ida Switzer. I was raised in Greenville with my three older brothers, Milton, Ralph, and Harold. Dad ran a small department store—Lurie’s—in the West End. Dad spoke mostly Yiddish, especially at home. He spoke English when necessary, but he couldn’t read it or write it, so he kept informed about current events by listening to the radio and reading the Yiddish daily Der Tag (The Day).

Hymen moved to Laurens, South Carolina; his parents lived with him until Zelic’s health declined, at which point Zelic and Mashe moved to Greenville. In 1912 Hymen married Dorothy (Dora) Fayosnky of Greenville in a ceremony performed by Greenville’s first rabbi, Charles Zaglin. Hymen and Dora raised three children in Laurens: Esther Lurey (Ginsberg), Sadie Lurey (Kennedy), and Meyer. Hymen was a very successful businessman.

The Lurey families were instrumental in founding Beth Israel, Greenville’s Orthodox Jewish congregation. The oldest grandchildren all told tales of visiting the housebound Zelic on Rowley Street in Greenville and finding him always studying the Pentateuch. At the insistence of Mashe Lea, all four Lurey sons chipped in to purchase the congregation’s first Torah. Hymen and his heirs, as well as his nephew Meyer, were generous contributors to Beth Israel. On May 6, 1979, Esther Lurey Ginsberg presented a Sefer Torah to the congregation in memory of her husband, Leo, and her parents, Hymen and Dora Lurey.

Tracking the Switzers from Ariogola to America

The Switzers, formerly Reyulovich, were from Ariogola in the eastern portion of Prussia, an area that is now Lithuania but at one time was Russia. How did Reyulovich become Switzer? According to my brother, Milton Lurey, the story behind the port, a large sign advertising Switzer candy was seen and a new American name was started. It has been verified through the Internet that in 1888 a candy company by the name of S-W-I-T-Z-E-R did exist.

The Old Country to the Upcountry

The bridge between them seemed to divide, rather than connect, the two sections of the local writer, between 1890 and 1910 the shops, industries, and many substantial homes. Through the records we can trace the movements of my grandfather, Meyer, and his brothers, although we may never learn what motivated their movements of my grandfather, Meyer, and his brothers, residing in Lynchburg, Virginia. The other four—Morris (Maurice), Meyer, Marx (Marks), and Louis Switzer—came to Greenville, South Carolina, and were dry goods merchants. The only brother to remain in Greenville was Meyer.

Greenville city directories indicate that the Switzer brothers operated stores on Main Street and in the West End. According to Judy Bainbridge, a local writer, between 1890 and 1910 the Switzer brothers operated stores on Main Street and in the West End. The Greenville city directory shows that Marx was clerking for Morris in 1901. In 1903 the only Switzers listed in the directory were Marx and Meyer, yet four years later, it was Meyer and Morris who were recorded as merchants on Pendleton Street (West End). In 1909 Louis was also in the clothing business on Pendleton Street. In 1910 there was no listing for Morris.

Greenville property records show that in 1907 Meyer Switzer paid Alice Coly $1500 for a lot and $450 to add on to an existing structure. This later became 24 Pendleton Street. Meyer had his own building with a separate entrance for an apartment over the store. Our family owned this building until about 1990 when redevelopment of the West End began. Louis’s son Irving stayed in Greenville and worked for Meyer Lurey.

Meyer died in Greenville in 1932 at the age of 78. The Greenville Jewish cemetery was not established until 1938, so he is buried in Columbia in the House of Peace’s Whaley Street Cemetery, which is now surrounded by the University of South Carolina. Meyer’s wife, Sarah Mervis Switzer, is buried there as well, as is his only daughter, Ida Switzer Lurey, who died of pneumonia in 1935 at the age of 44.

I am grateful to those who assisted me in gathering these movements of my grandfather, Meyer, and his brothers, although we may never learn what motivated their choices. Each was married and had children, and among those children, four were named Charles after their grandfather. The two sections of the Greenville city directory shows that Marx was clerking for Morris in 1901. In 1903 the only Switzers listed in the directory were Marx and Meyer, yet four years later, it was Meyer and Morris who were recorded as merchants on Pendleton Street (West End). In 1909 Louis was also in the clothing business on Pendleton Street. In 1910 there was no listing for Morris.

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I am grateful to those who assisted me in gathering this information. The Greenville County Library was very cooperative. Allen Ira Lurey, my nephew and Meyer’s great-grandson, did many hours of research. Bits of information were gathered from cousins. In one case a scrap of paper was sent from one cousin to another and finally to me, with a note saying, “It makes me nervous reading this. You figure it out.”
This is the story of Mollie Dolk Lurey—known to her grandchildren as “Mong”—and how and why she and her husband, in 1910, chose Greenville, South Carolina, to call home. Mong was the GRANDEST lady I have ever known. Fortunately for our family, in 1981, when she was 96, her oral history was recorded. The sound of her voice with her charming accent will forever conjure up loving and cherished memories of my childhood with her.

At age 17 Mong said goodbye to her mother, her brother, and the only life she knew, and made her way alone from Brody—then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—to Trieste, Italy, where she boarded the S.S. Ulyssia, bound for the U.S.A. According to the ship’s manifest, she arrived at Ellis Island on October 13, 1904, listed under the name Malke Dolg; or people: Hebrew. The trip was long and hard. Her ticket was for accommodations in steerage.

I remember Mong telling the story of her arrival at her sister’s house in Providence, Rhode Island. After her 30-day journey by sea, she said she was indeed a sight to behold. In her oral interview she describes steerage as “the filthiest place you could ever imagine.” When asked what she had to eat, she said, “Dark bread and sardines.” After taking time to recover from this treacherous voyage, she found work, where she learned the trade of setting stones in jewelry. She worked full-time for four years and in the evenings went to class to learn English.

Mong always enjoyed telling this story: she overheard her sister say to her friends, “If I had known how homely my sister was, I would never have had her come to the U.S.A.” (At this point in the story, Mong would really start to giggle.) Mong said to her sister, “You don’t have to worry; in a few days I will be recuperated in the story, Mong would really start to giggle.) Mong said to her

Not long after arriving in Spartanburg, the Lureys moved to Greenville. According to Mong, they were the third or fourth Jewish family to reside there. I recall her saying that when asked if they were religious and continued to keep kosher, she emphatically answered, “Oh yes, we order our kosher food from Atlanta.” She said that early on, the Jewish community did not have a rabbi or a synagogue. They held services in a Woodman of the World hall. In time the community purchased land, built a building, and hired a rabbi. Listening to her interview, I can hear the pride in her voice when she describes contributing money to help build the synagogue and buy the congregation’s first Sefer Torah. Originally Beth Israel was Orthodox, but decades later, it morphed into a Conservative congregation.

In Greenville, life continued for the Lurey family with the birth of five more children: Semmie Lurey Paul, Sam (Bubba) Lurey, Meyer Lurey, Hyman Lurey, and my mother, Ida Lurey Bolonkin. My grandfather Morris ran a store called the New York Shoe Store. Early on my grandmother had a little grocery and, in time, life became easier. All the siblings had a deep love and respect for Mong and Morris. As they graduated from high school, they either went to college or began working and helping their parents. My mother, Ida, the youngest of the siblings, remembers the older children helping the younger ones. She often tells the story of how her older sister, Semmie, bought her a bunny-fur stole to wear to a dance.

Interestingly, when Mong was asked about antisemitism in Greenville in the early years, she said she did not experience any. She said, “I never had a problem with anyone. I got along with everyone.” And while that may be true, I think it was because of the person she was. Everyone, and I mean everyone—her husband, her neighbors, her sons and daughters, her grandchildren, and the dogs she doted on. It is with great love and affection that I write this tribute to her.

Looking Back and Moving Forward:
Greenville’s Congregation Beth Israel ~ Building Community Since 1916

Friday, October 21
7:00 P.M. Shabbat service/Installation of Rabbi Mathew Marko
Saturday, October 22
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon
Shabbat service
1:00 – 2:00 P.M.
Jewish Entrepreneurs in the Carolina Upcountry – Diane Vecchio, Ph.D., Furman University
2:00 – 3:15 P.M.
Panel discussion – From the Old Country to the Upcountry
Moderator: Ariane Vecchio, professor of history, Furman University
Panelists: Miriam Chernoff, Ann Lurey, Joan Bolonkin Meir, Barbara Chadoff Rabin, Shirley Honigman Surlin, Jeff Zaglin
3:15 – 3:30 P.M.
Break
3:30 – 4:45 P.M.
Panel discussion – From Main Street to the Board Room
Moderator: Victor Allieri, vice president, Congregation Beth Israel
Panelists: Hy Brand, Michele Brinn, Fred Leffert, Herb Silver, Ken Zweidling
4:45 P.M.
Dedication of marker – Mindy Levy, president, CBL. History of the Congregation
Reception following marker dedication, synagogue social hall (dinner on your own)
8:00 P.M.
Jewish Musical Monuments, Greenville Choral and Symphony, Peace Center (see page 9)

Sunday, October 23
9:00 A.M.
Open JHS board meeting—everyone is invited!
10:00 – 11:00 A.M.
Panel discussion – Max Heller: The Father of Modern Greenville
Moderator: Ernie Marcus, president, JHSSC
Depart for downtown Greenville
Max Heller Plaza: walking tour/lecture by Abbie Rickoff, AICP, and Barry Nocks, FAICP

Hotel reservations
Crowne Plaza Greenville
851 Congaree Road
(803) 269-2000
Special rate: $129 + tax per night, includes breakfast for 2
Additional breakfast available for $11.25 in lobby
Complimentary parking
Full service restaurant

To get the special rate, make your reservation by Sept. 20. To reserve online, click on this link where the “JHS” group code is already selected: "Jewish Historical Society of SC Fall Conference or call (888) 34-3613 and mention “Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina” or “JHS” code.

 Unless otherwise noted, all events will take place at Beth Israel Synagogue, 425 Summit Drive, Greenville

Meeting registration
Online at: Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina
E-mail: jhsoc@bellsouth.net
Or by check, payable to JHSSC c/o Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program – 96 Wentworth Street, Charleston, SC 29403
Meeting fee: $50 per person
Questions: Enid Edelson, edelson@csufc.edu
Phone: (843) 953-3918 or fax: (843) 953-7624

Greenville Chorale and Symphony, Peace Center (see page 9)

From Main Street to the Board Room

Panelists: Hy Brand, Michele Brinn, Fred Leffert, Herb Silver, Ken Zweidling

Dedication of marker – Mindy Levy, president, CBL. History of the Congregation
Reception following marker dedication, synagogue social hall (dinner on your own)

Jewish Musical Monuments, Greenville Choral and Symphony, Peace Center (see page 9)

 Opening JHSSC board meeting—everyone is invited!
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Memories of Lillian and Jack Bloom in Greenville – A Dynamic Duo

My aunt Lillian Chernoff met Jack Bloom in 1956 on a trip to Greenville, South Carolina, where she was attending a meeting of the National Council of Jewish Women—as an NCJW field representative, her task was to support southeastern Jewish communities in the work of the council. Lillian and Jack courted for seven years before marrying, at which time each was about 42 years old. Lillian loved New York City and the move was daunting. She was an apartment dweller; unlike most Jewish families in Greenville, she and Jack lived in apartments until they bought their first house at age 80. She learned to drive in Greenville; at 72 years old she was elected to the South Carolina Commission on Consumer Affairs and routinely drove to Columbia for meetings.

Lillian and Jack were very private. Their social life revolved around their Jewish friends, but in their professional and volunteer activities, they were fully integrated into the non-Jewish community. Early on, for example, Lillian served on the advisory committees of Head Start and the YWCA, and later volunteered as an English tutor to Asian immigrants. During her years in Greenville, she was active in dozens of community organizations and civic associations.

How they kept these two spheres of their lives—their Jewish social circle and their public service—separate is a bit of a puzzle. As a young lawyer, he had been denied entry to law firms because of his religion, and this discrimination may well have led him to nurture his separateness. Yet he was proud of being a southerner and of serving in the U.S. Army in World War II (he retired from the army reserves with the rank of colonel)—and he participated in Jewish and non-Jewish organizations throughout his life.

Visiting Lillian and Jack as a child I recall watching Jack's niece, Stacy, ride a horse, and stopping at the children's clothing market and the local peach orchards. He relished pimento cheese and black-eyed peas; I remember the latter being served as a traditional southern dish on New Year's Day. Despite hearing problems, which began as a young adult, Jack could sing any American folk or popular tune you named. He was also an avid bird-watcher.

For several years, I joined Lillian and Jack at the Nbai Brith Institute of Judaism, Wildacres Retreat (now in its 69th year), a spectacular setting in an eastern woodland forest in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. There, within the context of a Jewish retreat, we learned about Middle Eastern politics, the archaeology of early Christianity, and other equally fascinating topics. Lay leaders led Shabbat services and dining was kosher. Then in my thirties, I was the youngest of the crowd; the Blooms and their friends were in their sixties and early seventies. The retreat epitomized Lillian and Jack's commitment to Judaism, intellectual life, and community.

Jack and Lillian bantered incessantly but loved each other dearly. After Lillian's death, Jack found it difficult to hide his grief. I last visited the two when Lillian was nearing the end. She rallied the weekend my sister, Ellen, and I came, and we conversed as if she was not ill. I only wish I had visited Jack after that—he must have felt quite alone. Melvin, his brother, and Vera, Melvin's wife, were also aging, and the brothers had not seen eye-to-eye for some time. Jack was surrounded by caring health professionals, but his closest friends were aged or gone.

Jack had grown up in the midst of a large extended family and relished the company. He and Lillian, in contrast, formed a small nuclear unit. Jack was greatly saddened by the premature deaths of his sister, Shirley, his niece, Stacy, and nephew, Mark. I wonder if, as he aged, he ever regretted not having a large, extended family of his own.

At the unveiling in 2011, I was comforted to see both Lillian and Jack resting peacefully in a family grave site, under trees, in proximity to their Jewish neighbors and Jack's immediate family—his parents, his sister, and her three children (a third child had died as an infant). The Jewish cemetery was gated and nestled within a much larger one, symbolic, perhaps, of the way Lillian and Jack lived their southern Jewish lives.
Davis, Zaglin, and Lurey Family Photographs

from the collection of Bobbie Jean Davis Rovner

This page, clockwise from upper left: Victor and Mollie Davis, flanked by sons Louis (l) and Alex (Bobbie Jean’s father); Storefront window of the Davis Battery Electric Co., Greenville, SC; newspaper ad for Zaglin’s Market in Greenville, SC, December 10, 1932; Jack, Alex, Victor, and Louis Davis at Davis Auto Parts, Greenville, SC (Photo: Henry Elrod).

Clockwise from above: Victor Davis on the company’s delivery motorcycle; Greenville High School art class, 1939 (Bobbie Jean’s mother, Lily Zaglin, is standing, 3rd from the right); Dean Davis’s bar mitzvah party at Ye Olde Fireplace Restaurant (no longer standing) on Pleasantburg Drive, Greenville, SC, 1965. Seated, left to right: Sarah Lurey Campbell, Ella Sarlin, Mollie Lurey, Morris Zaglin. Standing, left to right: Rabbi David Korb, Charlotte Katz, Semmie Lurey Paul, Annie Tuckfeld Zaglin. (Annie and Morris Zaglin were Bobbie Jean’s maternal grandparents.)
**Proser Family Values: L’dor, V’dor**

by Nancy Proser Lebovitz

My father, Carl Proser, met my mother, Helen Poliakoff, at the University of South Carolina, when he was travelling the South selling ladies’ millinery. They married in 1941 and lived in Anderson, South Carolina, with my grandmother Rachel Poliakoff. The nary called in 1944 and Carl went to war, leaving their two-year-old daughter, Marsha, with family in Anderson. When he returned, Helen and Carl moved to Greenville and started a restaurant supply business. I was born in 1947. In 1951 my brother, Sylvan, arrived to complete our family.

The restaurant supply business failed, and Helen and Carl, with the help of three dear friends in the Jewish community, started the first cancellation (discount) shoe store in South Carolina. Carl would buy overstocked merchandise and previous seasons’ shoes from wholesalers in New York City, as well as from retail stores around the South. At one time he carried men’s shoes. When the Atlanta Falcons trained in Greenville, many players came to the Cancellation Shoe Mart because he sold large sizes. Because of the difference in stature, it was comical to see my father alongside some of the players. The original Cancellation Shoe Mart was located on Washington Street in downtown Greenville. As the business grew, they moved to a bigger building on Main Street, which was to become a fixture in downtown Greenville for years to come. After working side-by-side for more than 40 years, Helen and Carl retired in the mid-1990s. The “pink building” became Soby’s restaurant.

It was not always easy to be a Jewish family in a mid-sized southern town. Beth Israel Synagogue was an important part of our family’s existence and became the center of our Jewish lives. Because Greenville had such a small Jewish community, the shul served not only our spiritual lives, but also our social lives. There we attended services, Hebrew school, youth activities, carnivals, and many other gatherings. Located first on Townes Street in downtown Greenville, the congregation later moved to a new sanctuary on Summit Drive, where it grew and prospered.

Our family was observant, and my father, being well-educated religiously, served as Beth Israel’s “shammes.” Whenever the rabbi was out of town or the shul was “in between” rabbis, my father was called upon to lead services and perform ritual functions. Carl also served for many years as president of the congregation, and subsequently was on the board.

My parents stressed the importance of family. You could find the Proser together for every holiday. As a child, we celebrated all the holidays with our Draisen cousins from Anderson, South Carolina. They usually came to Greenville for the High Holy Days, and we alternated the seders at Passover, my uncle Hy leading one and my father leading the other. Our grandmother Rachel Poliakoff (Bebi) was the matriarch—always there to make sure everything was as it should be.

As the years passed, grandchildren became a part of family celebrations. I will never forget the look of pride and happiness on the faces of his grandchildren as they sat on the bimah with all the children of Beth Israel and watched their Zadie blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. For many years to come we would call on my father, as did many others in our large religious community.

Both my father and my mother were active and enjoyed celebrating happy events with friends and family. My parents were the first ones on the dance floor and my father always led the conga line. When I pledged a sorority at the University of Georgia, my father became president of the Parents’ Club. He was instrumental in building the new sorority house, which still stands on campus today.

The values, both religious and cultural, taught in my parents’ home continue to be practiced today in different parts of the country by our children and grandchildren. L’dor v’dor.

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**Jewish Greenville: From Ethnic Enclave to Multicultural City**

by Fred Leffert

My father, Morris Leffert, came to America from a small village in Poland in 1920, and the family settled in New York City. He relocated to Greenville for the same reason that many Jews came here in the early 20th century—the growing textile and apparel industry. In 1928 his cousin Shepard Saltzman founded the Piedmont Shirt Company and offered him a job. He married my mother, Fannie Mendelson, who had come to New York from Minsk as a child, and brought her to the small but developing Upcountry city in 1940. So I grew up in the Greenville of the 1940s and 50s. The Jewish community of that era was marked by homogeneity—solidly white Protestant—with an invisible black population segregated from mainstream society. In Greenville there were two small Jewish congregations with fewer than 150 members between them, one Catholic Church, and no mosques or Hindu temples. The only Spanish speakers were language teachers in the high schools.

In the public schools each day began with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the Lord’s Prayer and a few verses of scripture, occasionally supplemented with a sermonette by the teacher. This had the effect of providing me with a good, free Christian education and also making me very conscious of being Jewish.

The Jewish community was tightly knit. Jews generally socialized with each other and had few gentile friends. Intermarriage was unusual. Almost everyone, religious or not, affiliated with one of the congregations. For members of the old Beth Israel Congregation the high point of the week was the Friday night service. There was no Saturday morning service, so those Jews not in the apparel business were retail merchants who had to work on Saturdays; professionals were rare. Although there were few traditionally observant Jews in Greenville, the Friday evening service was a sort of ethnic solidarity rally. While not particularly knowledgeable or observant, many of these first and second-generation Americans still felt the strong pull of immigrant memory, giving the services, especially the High Holy Days, a deep emotional aura. The synagogue was, for them, a second home, the focus of much of their energy and devotion. Members vied for offices and seats on the board, and congregational meetings were often marked by passionate arguments, including the throwing of chairs.

The strong ethnic feeling was reinforced by the external environment. There was significant antisemitism in those years, both tacit and overt. The wider community offered few cultural or entertainment attractions; the vibrant Greenville restaurant scene, the Peace Center, the Warehouse and Center Stage theaters were all in the future. There was little to compete with the strong inner life of the congregation.

I left Greenville in 1958 and it is hard to say how I would have come back. After receiving my undergraduate and medical degrees at Emory, I spent four years in residency in New York City (where at seders my cousins marveled that Hebrew could be read with a southern accent). After two years in the navy at Portsmouth, Virginia, I spent the ‘70s in academic medicine at the National Jewish Hospital in Denver and then the University of Chicago. On visits to my parents during those years I was surprised to see Greenville, under the leadership of its first Jewish mayor, Max Heller, evolving into an attractive place to live and work. When I decided to leave academic medicine, it was to return to Greenville to practice.

I returned to Greenville in the 1980s to find a very different milieu and a changing Jewish community. The city had begun its transition to a multicultural, multietnic urban center. The Jewish population was undergoing its own transformation from apparel manufacturers and retail merchants to professionals.

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I returned to Greenville in the 1980s to find a very different milieu and a changing Jewish community. The city had begun its transition to a multicultural, multietnic urban center. The Jewish population was undergoing its own transformation from apparel manufacturers and retail merchants to professionals. Antisemitism was no longer a significant factor; intermarriage was common. The majority of Jews had friends and interests outside the Jewish community. Perhaps most telling: despite rapid population growth, neither congregation was significantly increasing its membership.

The emergence of Greenville as a vibrant modern city appears to have created a new atmosphere, in which individual Jews are living freer, more secure, and more interesting lives, while Jewish communal life is waning. It is this paradox that likely will be the major challenge for Greenville’s Jews as they move toward an uncertain future.
The Rabhans Come Full Circle

by Barbara Chardkoff Rabhan

This is the story of how we found a home in Greenville, South Carolina. Harold Rabhan was from High Point, North Carolina, and I had spent my childhood in Jacksonville, Florida. We met at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1953 and were married a year later in Jacksonville—the start of 63 years of happiness. Our first home was in High Point, North Carolina, where Harold worked in the furniture manufacturing business. Mindy and Andy were born there. We later moved to Jacksonville—my father had died suddenly of a heart attack and we went there to help my mother organize her affairs. Abby was born while we were in Jacksonville, completing our beautiful family.

In 1960 Harold had an opportunity to sell industrial cleaning supplies for Zep Manufacturing Co. in Greenville, South Carolina. What a wonderful move! Thank you, Zep, for bringing us here. It has been a great place to live and raise our family. It certainly wasn’t the city in the ‘60s it is today, but it was and is a delightful place to be.

Our children were one, three, and five years old when we arrived. Our life was centered around school activities, swim meets, dance, and of course, Beth Israel Synagogue. Harold and I both served on Beth Israel’s board. I held many offices in the Sisterhood and was honored with the Woman of Achievement Award. Harold and I were very active in student government. Mindy went to Duke University and Andy followed her two years later. Abby graduated from the University of Alabama. Mindy and Abby went to Houston, Texas, after their graduations. While there Mindy met her husband, Louis Kandel, of Columbus, Ohio, and Abby met and married Daniel Vines of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Thirty years ago the two couples moved to Atlanta and have raised four of my wonderful grandchildren there. Both families have been very involved in Ezte Chaim Synagogue.

Mindy was chosen Best All-Around Student in her senior class, and Abby was very active in student government. Andy was president of the student body as a senior, and Abby and Ralph, a daughter, Lillian. Reuben became an active member of his community, serving on the Pickens County School Board and participating in numerous civic endeavors. Reuben worked closely with the many local clergy, offering them personal discounts as well as helping support their church members who were in need. He and his family attended Beth Israel Synagogue in Greenville, 20 miles away.

In late 1946 Ralph joined his father’s business and continued Reuben’s philanthropic endeavors. Ralph and I met at the University of North Carolina and were married in 1947. (I was considered a “Yankee southerner” because I came from North Carolina.) We had a son, Milton, and three daughters, Becky Lou, Janet, and Linda. Both of us were very active in the Liberty and Pickens County communities. Ralph served as chairman of the Pickens County Planning Commission, board member of the Pickens County Cancer Society, commander of the local American Legion Post, and president of the Liberty-Pickens Lions Club. For more than two decades, he provided storage space for medical equipment that was loaned out to cancer patients in the county. I served the merchandise was sold in less than two weeks. The remaining goods were given to a local youth minister to be used for his church’s youth group. Ralph and I remained in Liberty until 2006 when we moved to Greenville. Ralph died in 2007, but I am still an active member of the Greenville Jewish community.


Living in Liberty, SC

by Shirley Honigman Sarlin

In the late 1800s my father-in-law, Reuben Sarlin, immigrated to the United States and later to Baltimore, Maryland. They had two sons, Stanley and Ralph, and a daughter, Lillian. Reuben became an active member of his community, serving on the Pickens County School Board and participating in numerous civic endeavors. Reuben worked closely with the many local clergy, offering them personal discounts as well as helping support their church members who were in need. He and his family attended Beth Israel Synagogue in Greenville, 20 miles away.

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Hyman J. Brand: A Man of the Cloth
by Alyssa Neely, with Hy Brand

M inneapolis, Minnesota, native Hyman “Hy” Brand had completed a degree in business administration at the University of Minnesota when he signed on to work for textile giant Riegel Textile Corporation in New York City in 1957. After a year of training, he was promoted in rapid succession from sales to management. He was transferred in 1966, and moved with his wife, Janet Franklin Brand, and their daughters, Diane and Cathy, to Greenville, South Carolina, where he became corporate manager of marketing. “Needless to say,” Hy reports, “the move required many adjustments. For example, there were no restaurants open on Sunday. At that time women dressed up to go downtown. Everyone would dress nicely to go to church or synagogue.”

The Brand children had been a year apart in Quantico, Virginia, where Hy, then a marine, was stationed. They were renovated, and the first sign was placed out front. Hy is one of a handful of men who have served as lay leader for Sabbath services in the years when the Conservative congregation was without a rabbi. He was well prepared for the role by male members of his Minneapolis synagogue, Mikro Kodesh, who took him under their wing after his father died when he was 12. Hy, in turn, has embraced the congregation in his adopted hometown. He notes, “Beth Israel is warm and welcoming, capable of fulfilling religious, educational, and social needs. Needless to say, as with all congregations, there is constant change, but our future is a positive one.”


The Jaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston has been the administrative hub of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina since the late 1990s. Founded in 1994, with the support of his friend and fellow-state senator Alex Sanders, then the president of the College. That connection between JHSSC and the College has been a win-win, providing the Jewish Studies Program and the Jewish Heritage Collection (JHC) with statewide reach and giving JHSSC a strong foundation on which to build. The Society hosts bi-annual meetings, produces an incredible newsletter (for which Dale Rosengarten and Alyssa Neely deserve accolades), sponsors cemetery surveys and historic markers across the state, and makes all of this publicly accessible through an impressively website, jhsc.org, maintained by Ann Meddin Hellman, our indefatigable web diva and former president. As administrator of the Jewish Studies Program and JHSSC since 2002, Enid Idelsohn has worked tirelessly and effectively for the well-being of both organizations, and with great success.

JHSSC’s financial structure is as noteworthy as its activities and accomplishments. Except for occasional grant support and sponsorships of special events, JHSSC has relied on its broad membership to fund all of its programs; it raises its annual budget each year from modest membership dues and the generous support of its Pillar members. Pillars donate $1000 a year for five years, and the Society needs a quorum of some 40 Pillars to meet our annual budget. I am deeply thankful to those of you who have stepped up to be Pillars, and I hope this appeal encourages more of you to join such distinguished company. Increasing Pillar support was a major objective of the Society’s 2015 Strategic Plan and remains a priority for me.

I envision a time in the not too distant future when JHSSC will reach out to the community for endowment funds to supplement its Pillar Program. As they mature, organizations need to become less reliant on annual giving for ongoing operations. This reality confronts synagogues, Jewish day schools, and Jewish Studies programs, as well as other non-profit institutions. Nevertheless, it says something genuine and reassuring when an organization can raise sufficient annual funds from its membership to support robust operations. Our broad financial base affirms the late President Bernard Warshaw’s wish that JHSSC remain a grassroots organization. Please become a Pillar and help JHSSC continue to tell this happy story.

JHSSC: Building on a Broad Base
by Martin Perlmutter

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Susan and Charles Altman, Charleston, SC
Ellen Arnowitz, Atlanta, GA
Doris L. Baumgarten, Aiken, SC
Eric and Candace Bergelson, Greer, SC
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ANNUAL DUES FOR 2017 (JANUARY–DECEMBER)

_____ Individual/Family Membership $36

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_____ Founding patron $1,000

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Join or renew online at jhssc.org.

Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional $36 each.
Send us their information and we will inform them of your gift.

Make checks payable to JHSSC and mail to the address above.

Register now for the October 21–23 meeting in Greenville
See page 13 for more information.
In this issue

“Little Jerusalem” – Alyssa Neely and Dale Rosengarten – This photo essay features some of the many Eastern European Jewish immigrants who helped to shape Charleston’s commercial district in the 20th century. It heralds a new online exhibit titled Mapping Jewish Charleston, which showcases numerous images of Jewish life in the port city from the era of the American Revolution to the present. 4

“The ‘Kingdom of Israel’ in this town”: Jewish Merchants in Antebellum Charleston – Shari Rabin – Jewish merchants in 19th-century Charleston, like non-Jews, were subject to the vagaries of running a business. It was important to cultivate relationships and earn a good reputation. Early credit reports not only assessed the soundness of a merchant’s finances, but revealed his standing in the community, Jewish identity also was noted in the evaluations. . . . 8

“The ‘Kingdom of Israel’ in this town”: Jewish Merchants of Charleston and Summerville – JHSSC meets in Charleston and Summerville, May 20 – 21, 2017. 11

From Pineland to Flowertown: Jewish Merchants of Summerville – Spencer Lynch – Summerville, South Carolina, was attractive to Jewish immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s for the economic opportunities it offered as a health resort. Over time it proved to be valuable for its proximity to Charleston with its economic opportunities it offered as a health resort. Over time it proved to be valuable for its proximity to Charleston with its economic opportunities it offered as a health resort.

A New Project and a New Endowment – Martin Perlmutter – The Society sets its sights on broader horizons with the announcement of an ambitious history project and a new means for raising funds. 15

Current and back issues can be found at jhssc.org

Letter from the President

T he Jewish Historical Society’s Spring 2017 meeting is designed to launch a research project now on the Society’s drawing boards—an effort to document Jewish-owned stores, past and present, across South Carolina. We propose to collect written memoirs, oral histories, and photographs of businesses and the people who ran them, and artifacts such as account books, lay-away ledgers, advertisements, invoices, and correspondence. Once compiled, the information and images will be presented on JHSSC’s website. Archival material, if donated, will be housed and catalogued by the College of Charleston’s Jewish Heritage Collection.

Why make this particular subject a centerpiece of our work? The history of Jews in the South, indeed, throughout the Diaspora, is dominated by the narrative of immigrant peddlers selling their wares in rural backwaters. After some level of success, peddlers would open stores in small towns or a neighboring city and become part of the civic fabric of that place. The Jews of South Carolina in the 19th and 20th centuries follow this characteristic pattern, including my family, which at one time or another operated at least 16 stores in the state, from the cities of Columbia and Charleston (including three businesses on King Street) to Abbeville, Greenwood, Kingstree, Manning, and other small towns. My siblings and I spent years working in Marcus Department Store in Eutawville, established in 1901 by my peddler grandfather, Morris Marcus. The importance of family stores in the economic and social history of Jewish life in South Carolina is hard to overstate, and I am delighted to help document this story.

Hope to see you in May!

Ernest L. Marcus

Congregation Beth Israel of Greenville celebrated its 100th anniversary with the dedication of an historic marker, October 22, 2016. Photo by Jeri Perlmutter.

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Hope to see you in May!

Ernest L. Marcus
“Little Jerusalem”
by Alyssa Neely and Dale Rosengarten

In the first half of the 20th century, upper King Street became a Jewish enclave, affectionately dubbed “Little Jerusalem.” Starting as an Indian trade route known as “Broad Path,” the trail up the spine of the peninsula emerged in the colonial period as Charleston’s major commercial artery. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, an influx of immigrants, notably East European Jews, Italians, Greeks, Chinese, and Lebanese, joined Germans, Irish, and English and changed the city’s demography. For several decades a visible Yiddishkeit bloomed in the upper wards, and the neighborhood north of Calhoun and west of King became a small southern version of Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Men who began as peddlers established businesses—dry-goods, furniture, shoe-repair, and tailor shops; hardware, jewelry, and secondhand stores or pawn shops; mattress factories; groceries and delicatessens. At one time some 40 stores on upper King were closed on Saturdays for the Jewish Sabbath. Shopkeepers held daily prayer services above Zalkin’s kosher meat market and in back of Sam Solomon’s wholesale jobbers. Their wives often worked behind the counter; at home they kept kosher kitchens, with African-American cooks standing at the stove and Jewish bubbes giving instructions. The “greenhorns” attended Beth Israel, while the older families went a couple of blocks south on St. Philip Street to Brith Sholom.

“My father had a sense of humor that was really something else . . . if you asked him how business was, he would tell you in Yiddish . . . ‘I haven’t spoken the first word of English yet today.’ He hadn’t had a customer.”
—Irving “Itchy” Sonenshine, October 21, 1997

“We had a shtetl . . . bordered by Meeting, Cannon, Rutledge, and Warren . . . a Jewish enclave . . . We were called Little Jerusalem . . . by people who were outside the Pale, so to speak . . . there was no meanness connected with it.”
—Gus Pearlman, June 10, 1997

“We didn’t hang out on King Street. In fact I never went to upper King Street . . . . That was like a different county or city to me.”
—Marcelle Kleinzahler Furchgott, May 14, 2014

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—Marcelle Kleinzahler Furchgott, May 14, 2014

“The ones who wanted to close on Saturday wanted to observe Shabbos, see. I remember vividly Sonny Goldberg telling me, not long before he died, that he used to love Friday afternoon. Friday afternoon he would get ready to leave the store and go home . . . dress up, shower, get ready for Shabbos. It’s like he was reborn again. He didn’t care what happened to the business. He just was going to take it easy on Shabbos, and he did.”
—Irving “Itchy” Sonenshine, October 21, 1997

“Mazo’s was an institution in the Jewish community. There was never a Sunday that we wouldn’t go for a ride and stop by Mazo’s to get some delicatessen.”
—Abel Banov, April 3, 1996

“Mazo’s was an institution in the Jewish community. There was never a Sunday that we wouldn’t go for a ride and stop by Mazo’s to get some delicatessen.”
—Abel Banov, April 3, 1996
“My daddy was George Goldberg . . . owned a store . . . at 569 King Street, which is two doors south of Cannon Street. There were no less than six men’s clothing stores on that block. First we had my daddy, of course. Then across the street was M. Dumas, a branch of the downtown [M. Dumas] at the corner of Woolie and King Street, run by Nathan Goldberg, who was his son-in-law. A very famous clothing store and a very high competitor of ours was Brickman’s . . . then you had . . . J. Needle & Company, and . . . the Bluesteins, of course, the most historic and famous store, and then you had Mike, Sam, and Jake. They were the Prystowsky brothers and they owned sort of a nicer store. They really shouldn’t have been on that block.”

—Charles Goldberg, January 24, 2013

“Uptown, where we operated, had the . . . merchandise that was more inferior [than in downtown stores]. The clientele at that time was about eighty percent black. The other end of King Street was probably the very opposite.”

—Sam Kirshstein, January 24, 2013

“Mama’s social life was that all these salesmen would come in for their Coca-Cola and slice of bologna . . . she would become friends with them. So this Christian insurance man said, ‘Jews are just so lucky, so lucky. You send your children to college; I can’t send my children to college.' My mother said, ‘You call this lucky? I wake up at five in the morning and I go to bed at twelve and one o’clock at night. You think I’m lucky?’”

—Dorothy “Dutch” Idalin Gelson Cohen, March 5, 1995

“When I came out of the air force in 1956, there were thirty-two furniture stores on King Street. We had no problems with each other. Most of us worshipped together. If you needed a particular piece of furniture from a bedroom suite, you called up somebody that you know that had them and they lent them to you. You either paid the money for it—the wholesale, by the way—or you returned the item.”

—Joseph Chase, January 24, 2013

Quotes are from the Jewish Heritage Collection Oral History Archives: http://jhc.cofc.edu/oral-history-archives/

All photos courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston, unless otherwise noted.
The ‘Kingdom of Israel’ in this town”: Jewish Merchants in Antebellum Charleston

by Shari Rabin

In 1845 pharmacist Philip M. Cohen (1808–1879) was described as “a Jew . . . doing a large fine business who has made [considerable] money. In [dusty] and indefatigable.” This evaluation comes not from a letter or a newspaper article, but rather, from America’s earliest credit reports. In 1841 the Mercantile Agency began collecting local opinions of businessmen from correspondents across the country, with an eye toward determining their creditworthiness. These records are a remarkable and largely untapped source for exploring the businesses and reputations of Charleston Jews. Further evidence of their activities can be found in newspapers, census data, city directories, and archival collections, which have been explored anew by historical researcher Sarah Fick as part of Mapping Jewish Charleston, an ambitious digital project from the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. Philip M. Cohen’s activities are particularly well documented with a Jewish partner named Philip Wineman and was falling all could trouble economic life. By 1853 Cohen was working not easy. Mounting debts, robust competition, and disasters stability, and left soon after. Even for a native Charlestonian like Cohen, business was not easy. Mourneying debts, robust competition, and disasters all could trouble economic life. By 1853 Cohen was working with a Jewish partner named Philip Wineman and was falling behind on payments to their creditors. Next, a fire broke out at his place of business and though they had insurance, it did not cover their costs. Popular opinion held that “even if he [should] recover the insurance money [which] is somewhat medical degree and was well connected in the city. His wife was Cordelia Moïse (1810–1869), a member of a prominent local family, and his uncle—also his wife’s step-father—was Hyam Cohen (1788–1850), Charleston’s city assessor. Yet, despite his status, by 1855 his business had failed. Jews were prominent in many aspects of Charleston’s public life, and a number of them were fabulously wealthy. But Jewish merchants were a diverse lot, including men and women, immigrants and native born, well-to-do and of modest means. Their businesses ranged from pharmacies and groceries to hardware shops and dry goods stores. Through these various activities, Jews made their way in the city, although success was neither easy nor guaranteed. No matter their background or line of business, Jewish merchants discovered that what mattered most were relationships and reputations. According to the credit reports, in the late 1840s Cohen was worth $20,000, had a good reputation, and owned a home and “several negroes.” Slave-owning marked Cohen as a typical, if relatively well-off, Charleston Jew. Members of Charleston’s Jewish merchant community regularly owned slaves and several worked with much success as slave traders. Whatever their “commodity” of choice, however, Jewish merchants’ economic status was not certain to rise. Many Jewish merchants, especially immigrants, floated into town, failed to achieve economic stability, and left soon after. Whether between Jews and non-Jews or among Jews, business relationships were not always harmonious. When his business failed, Cohen’s shop was purchased by Benjamin Mordecai, a fellow Jew who later became a prominent supporter of the Confederate cause. Mordecai was a wealthy slave trader, and the credit reporters estimated that he purchased the store’s stock at half of its actual value. He turned the store over to J. H. Ashurst, the former bookkeeper, and kept Wineman on as clerk, pushing Cohen out. While these relationships determined access to capital, reputation shaped access to credit, which was becoming increasingly important in the mid-19th century. Another Moïse cousin, Edwin, was an auctioneer and grocer who rented space at 28 Vendue Range, an address with a history of association by Jewish merchants. He had entered into business as a clerk for a Jewish firm and in 1853 went into business on his own. Whether between Jews and non-Jews or among Jews, business relationships were not always harmonious.
his share of 'plunder' out of this wide world. By March 1856, however, he had
quit business and was described as 'character below par.'

Besides noting financial and personal attributes, credit reporters
often mentioned the Jewish identity of the merchant and considered it in
evaluating creditworthiness. Descriptions of Philip Cohen regularly
mentioned he was a ‘Jew,’ sometimes differentiating him as a (presumably
more trustworthy) ‘Native Jew.’ After his failure, however, he was
described as ‘an Israelite indeed but not without guile.’ Within six weeks
of Benjamin Mordecai’s takeover of Cohen’s business, it had ‘acquired a
very smutty reputation.’ The new owner was described as ‘posses[ing],
of a large share of the qualities so generally attributed to Israelites’ and
the new firm as a ‘Jew Concern’ and ‘JEWS from A to Z.’ The report
elaborated, ‘If paying is profitable + politic they will pay.’

Jewish identity could be a liability, then, but it could also be an
asset. When Moïse and Grierson opened for business, the credit
reporter noted that competition was fierce, but predicted they ‘will
get the patronage of the ‘Kingdom of Israel’ in this town, a large
Kingdom.’ In the first half of the 19th century, even as religious
reforming and sectionalist politics were on the rise, Charleston Jews
were working to put food on their tables. Many of them did so by
buying and selling commodities, work in which their Jewishness
shaped their business relationships, their financial identities, and
their economic trajectories.

Shari Rabin is assistant professor of Jewish Studies and acting director of
the Pearlstein/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture, http://jewishsouth.cofc.edu/
The first settlement of Summerville, known as Pineland Village, began after the American Revolution, its development fueled by Lowcountry planters eager to escape the heat, biting insects, and disease environment of the coast. Officially, Summerville became a town in 1847. By 1899 it was considered one of the world’s two best places for the treatment of lung and throat disorders because of its dry, sandy soil and the prevalence of pine trees. Even today, the town’s official seal reads “Sacra Pinus Esto (The Pine is Sacred).”

Even today, the town’s official seal reads “Sacra Pinus Esto (The Pine is Sacred).”

My grandfather Samuel Lynch came from Poland through New Orleans to Charleston, where he met and married Pauline Wolper, who had emigrated, also from Poland, to South Carolina as a child. In the 1930s Samuel purchased several buildings on a stretch of Central Avenue (now a pedestrian-only segment popularly referred to as Short Central) in downtown Summerville and commuted from Charleston. He started a dry-goods business called Summerville Bargain Store, selling work boots and pants to the men building the Santee Cooper hydroelectric plant during the New Deal. After Prohibition ended in 1933, he also opened a liquor store. When Samuel died, my father, Seymour Lynch, inherited both businesses.

My grandfather was one of the first individuals in Summerville to lease buildings to African Americans, specifically to two barbers, Mr. Bryant and Mr. Pinckney. As a child during segregation, I remember that Mr. Bryant’s barber shop catered to whites and Mr. Pinckney served a black clientele. Ironically, one of the buildings my family owned was next door to where the Ku Klux Klan met in the 1930s.

When Samuel died, my father, Seymour Lynch, inherited both businesses.

My mother, Marjorie Levy Lynch, a native New Yorker, married my father in 1959 and they decided to live in Summerville. By 1964 my parents expanded their businesses and opened a department store called Seymour’s, while continuing to operate the liquor store. The businesses were located across the street from each other. My father would be working in the clothing shop, and when a customer walked into the liquor store, an employee would yell, “Seymour, you have a customer in the liquor store,” and he would run across the street.

Since our residence was only one block from the stores, our lives revolved around the businesses. On Saturdays, while my parents worked, my brother, Paul, and I would ride our bicycles to the stores and hang out with our friends. Periodically, our neighbors invited us to attend Baptist Bible study. When we started singing Christian hymns, my parents decided it was time to send us to Charleston Hebrew Institute, later called Addelstone Hebrew Academy, under the auspices of the Orthodox synagogue Brith Sholom Beth Israel.

During our teenage years we continued to commute to Charleston to attend high school at Porter Gaud. However, it was important that we always stop by the stores on Friday afternoons to help our parents. My fondest memories were those Fridays. My father would cash hundreds of paychecks for the blue-collar workers, many of whom could not write or did not have a bank account.

The Alcohol Blue Laws created a mini-industry of bootlegging; retail liquor stores were closed after sunset and on Sundays. My father capitalized on this market and became one of the largest distributors of liquor to the bootleggers in Dorchester County. My brother and I would load hundreds of cases of half pints into the cars and trucks of the bootleggers for their weekend sales.

Summerville was a very tolerant community and welcomed many Jewish families. Marcus Barshay, an immigrant from Riga, Latvia, got his start in America running a dry-goods business in Orangeburg in 1897. In 1905 he relocated to Summerville and opened a men’s clothing store on the town square. Five years later he moved his business a couple of doors down into a building previously occupied by another Jewish merchant, Solomon Mirmow, who owned a considerable amount of property in town. Marcus and his wife, Lena Banov Barshay, had three sons and two daughters. Aaron and Sammy took over the business, called Barshay’s, when their father died in 1950.

Around 1900 an immigrant named Saul Alexander from Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, Russia, moved to Summerville and worked at Mirmow Dry Goods Store. In 1914 he opened his own business, also selling dry goods. During the hard times...
of the late 1920s and ’30s, Saul Alexander and Marcus Barnhay were private bankers, providing loans for people to buy homes. When Alexander died in 1952, most of his estate went into the Saul Alexander Foundation, which continues to provide annual grants to charitable organizations in Summerville and the greater Charleston community.

My father’s uncle Isadore Wolper moved to Summerville with his wife, Janette Jacobs Wolper, in 1946. Newly married, they had the idea of opening Dorchester Jewelers as the first jewelry retailers in town. Their shop was on Short Central in a space they rented from my father and grandfather until 1961, when they moved into their own building at 138 South Main Street.

Retiring in 1989, Izzy, as he was fondly called, and Janette were highly regarded and active in the community. They became longtime members of the Lions Club and Summerville Chamber of Commerce. Serving as president of both organizations, Izzy was recognized posthumously for his dedication to the Lions. Janette volunteered as a board member of the Dorchester County Library and accepted numerous invitations over the years from church groups to share her insights about Jewish holidays and rituals. Before we were old enough for our parents to put us to work in their stores, my brother and I spent many Saturdays playing with our cousins. Our families would also celebrate many of the Jewish holidays together.

Around 1900 Etta and Moses Kramer came to America from Prussia and opened a produce market in Summerville on the site where their son Isadore Kramer later built his drug store. Kramer’s Pharmacy was a town landmark for its ice cream counter. Many Jewish families from Charleston would take a day trip to Summerville on Sundays and enjoy a sundae from Kramer’s. Other Jewish families in Summerville, Blue Star, and the Lazaruses, Bernsteins, Bornsteins, Epsteins, Meyers, and Friedbergs.

Like the rest of the Lowcountry, the Jewish population of Summerville is expanding at a significant pace, attracted by industries such as Volvo and Mercedes, as well as the Del Webb retirement community Cane Bay Plantation. As of December 2016, more than 50 Jewish families reside at Del Webb. More than 30 young Jewish families in metro Summerville are receiving free Jewish children’s books from PJ Library, a Harold Grinspoon Foundation program that partners with local philanthropists and the Charleston Jewish Federation to encourage reading in the home. My family and I, though we all now live in Charleston, are still active in our hometown through our association with Summerville DREAM, a non-profit organization dedicated to the revitalization of the downtown area. As property owners, we also consult with several property owners, we encourage reading in Jewish Federation to provide support in perpetuity. If you are interested in becoming a Pillar, or in helping to build our endowment, including legacy giving, please let me know. I am very good by the Society, will produce a valuable historical resource, available to future generations.

Central to JHSSC’s success is the generosity of our Pillars, donors who contribute to the Society at the rate of $1,000 per year for five years. Pillars are our lifeblood; they have helped us put South Carolina’s Jewish history on the map and create a cohesive and welcoming community. As our organization and our ambitions grow, we need to find additional sources of income beyond membership dues. The time has come to seek endowment gifts to supplement our Pillar program. JHSSC’s endowment fund will be housed in the College of Charleston Foundation and provide support in perpetuity. If you are interested in becoming a Pillar, or in helping to build our endowment, including legacy giving, please let me know. I am very good at protecting confidences.

On a personal note, I was fortunate to know Mimi and Harvey Gleberman (obm), co-founders of J. H. Harvey, a retail furniture chain in the Northeast, who retired to Spring Island, South Carolina, from their home outside New York City. Mimi and Harvey were wonderful people—gracious, benevolent, gentle, and warm. Wanting to engage with their adopted community, they were among JHSSC’s first Pillars. Harvey and I kept in touch by phone in 2003. Their son Joseph recently surprised us with a substantial gift in their memory to begin JHSSC’s endowment. Generosity runs in the family. Many thanks!
Join the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Name: ________________________________
Address: ______________________________
City: _______________________ State: _____ Zip: ___________
Phone: ___________________ Fax: _______________
E-mail Address: ________________________________

ANNUAL DUES FOR 2017 (JANUARY–DECEMBER)

____ Individual/Family Membership $36
____ Friend $200
____ Institutional $250
____ Sponsor $350
____ Patron $750
____ Founding patron $1,000
____ Pillar ($1,000 per year for 5 years) $5,000
____ Foundational Pillar ($2,000 per year for 5 years) $10,000

Join or renew online at jhssc.org.
Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional $36 each.
Send us their information and we will inform them of your gift.

Make checks payable to JHSSC
and mail to the address above.

Register now for the May 20–21 meeting in Charleston and Summerville. See page 11 for more information.
The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Register now for fall meeting at Hobcaw Barony and Georgetown October 14–15, 2017

Volume XXII Number 2 Fall 2017
In this issue

The Baruchs of Hobcaw Barony ~ Alyssa Neely and Dale Rosengarten ~ In 1905 Camden-born Bernard Mannes Baruch began piecing together a 16,000-acre coastal estate just north of Georgetown to use as a winter residence and hunting retreat. His daughter Belle Wilcox Baruch immigrated to South Carolina, from Posen, Prussia, in 1854. After serving in the Confederate Army he settled in Georgetown and went into business. His enterprises soon included a hardware store, medical dispensary, boat and oar company, steamship line, of Georgetown, and the Georgetown Rice Milling Company. ................................. 6

“The Between the Waters” ~ JHSSC meets at Hobcaw Barony & Georgetown, Oct. 14–15, 2017 ..................... 8

The Rosen Family: Good Citizenship 101 ~ Benedict Rosen ~ Born Bernard Mannes Baruch began piecing together a 16,000-acre coastal estate just north of Georgetown to use as a winter residence and hunting retreat. His daughter Belle Wilcox Baruch is standing, far right; in the background is crouched in the saddle in front of him; mounted with daughter Renee Baruch, is her father, at her death in 1964, she will created a foundation to manage the property for purposes of conservation, research, and education. ................................. 4

The Kaminskis of Georgetown ~ Alyssa Neely and Dale Rosengarten ~ Heiman Kaminski immigrated to South Carolina, from Posen, Prussia, in 1854. After serving in the Confederate Army he settled in Georgetown and went into business. His enterprises soon included a hardware store, medical dispensary, boat and oar company, steamship line, of Georgetown, and the Georgetown Rice Milling Company. ................................. 6

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The Raven Family: Good Citizenship 101 ~ Benedict Rosen ~ Albert & Sons: The Schneiders of Georgetown ~ Deborah Schneider Smith ~ Albert Schneider founded a business that became one of the Southeast’s biggest department stores, specializing in appliances. Two of his sons joined him in The New Store, and a third went into law and politics. The author recounts the ease with which the family—and all of Georgetown’s Jews—managed the property for purposes of conservation, research, and education. ................................. 9

Albert & Sons: The Schneiders of Georgetown ~ Deborah Schneider Smith ~ Albert Schneider founded a business that became one of the Southeast’s biggest department stores, specializing in appliances. Two of his sons joined him in The New Store, and a third went into law and politics. The author recounts the ease with which the family—and all of Georgetown’s Jews—managed the property for purposes of conservation, research, and education. ................................. 9

The Fogels of Front Street ~ George Sidney Fogel ~ Young dry goods merchant Harry Fogel built a small empire on Front Street, including a clothing store, a 50-room hotel, and the original River Room restaurant. The second generation outstripped their parents in schooling, and the third achieved fame, if not fortune, in the fields of poetry, art, and broadcasting. .................. 11

Ebb and Flow: Georgetown’s Jewish History ~ Martin Perlmutter ~ The Baruchs of Hobcaw Barony ~ Alyssa Neely and Dale Rosengarten ~ Harlan, Shari Rabin, and Dale Rosengarten presented a recent “reset” of our nominating committee assures that we will have rich resources human to draw upon and greater geographic diversity. While our ongoing initiatives continue apace—including oral history interviews, historical markers, website, and cemetery survey—in May we inaugurated a new project to document Jewish “store stories” across South Carolina. All of it is made possible by a steady increase in membership, which just topped $600, and the generosity of our 38 pillars. Our Spring 2017 meeting, “The Kingdom of Israel in this Town”: Jewish Merchants of Charleston and Summerville,” began with information-packed walking tours along King Street led by historian and archivist Harlan Greene and board member Rhetta Mendelsohn. Next, College of Charleston business professor Steve Litvin described how King Street has evolved into an upscale retail and restaurant district. Harlan, Shari Rabin, and Dale Rosengarten presented a preview of Mapping Jewish Charleston, which traces the Jewish geography of the city over three centuries. Panels featuring long

On the cover: Getting ready for the hunt at Hobcaw Barony, ca. 1907. Bernard Baruch is seen mounted with daughter Renee on the saddle in front of him; Bernard’s father, Dr. Simon Baruch, is crouched in the center; Edwin W. Kaminski, is standing, far right; in the right foreground, knelling, is Hobcaw superintendent Harry Donaldson. Courtesy of the Bells W. Baruch Foundation, Hobcaw Barony.

Jewish History Exhibit to Open at Temple Sinai in Sumter

Big plans are underway in Sumter. Temple Sinai, the Reform Jewish congregation, has entered into a new partnership with the Sumter County Museum. Over the years, dwindling membership has prompted temple leaders to consider plans for new uses of the historic sanctuary, should the day come when the congregation is no longer viable. The project is spearheaded by Roger Ackerman and Jay Schwartz, with the members’ support.

In this new partnership, the congregation will continue to use the sanctuary for Friday night and holiday services, and the museum will take over the adjoining social hall to create a permanent exhibition, expected to open in early 2018. The exhibit will feature displays about Jewish history in South Carolina and Sumter, with a prominent section on the Holocaust and Sumter’s ties to this unprecedented tragedy.

We are seeking objects about Sumter Jewish families and community life for the exhibit. Financial donations to the project are always welcome! Please visit our FAQ page, linked from the museum’s homepage, www.sumtercountymuseum.org; Education & Outreach Coordinator Elizabeth Moses, emoses@sumtercountymuseum.org; Tel. 803-775-0908. 

Letter from the President

As I close out my term, I want to thank you for allowing me to serve as president of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina for the past two years. As you might imagine, holding on to my South Carolina roots while living for 41 years in Washington, D.C., has been challenging. Leading the Society has helped me to stay connected and renew ties to “home.” I have enjoyed working with many interesting, accomplished people among the membership, and staff at the produce conferences on topics that are important to me, including southern Jews and civil rights, Greenville’s urban planning guru Mayor Max Heller, and most recently, the merchants of King Street and Summerville, who mirror my own families’ experiences in retail.

Over the past few months we have been working towards a smooth transition as Marty Perlmutter, JHSSC’s founding executive director and maven of all things Jewish at the College of Charleston, retires at the end of the Spring 2018 semester. A recent “reset” of our nominating committee assures that we will have rich resources human to draw upon and greater geographic diversity. While our ongoing initiatives continue apace— including oral history interviews, historical markers, website, and cemetery survey—in May we inaugurated a new project to document Jewish “store stories” across South Carolina. All of it is made possible by a steady increase in membership, which just topped $600, and the generosity of our 38 pillars.

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Time King Street merchants and representatives of Charleston’s burgeoning food scene rounded out the day.

Visiting Summerville’s vital, historic downtown on Sunday was an eye-opener for most of us. Hats off to the Summerville/Donchester Museum, William Dudley and Spencer Lynch, who organized a full afternoon of activities, including the dedication of a historic marker on Central Avenue, a remarkable panel of merchants and customers, tours of Jewish heritage sites and homes, and a family friendly event at the former residence of philanthropist Saul Alexander.

Our Fall 2017 conference takes us to Hobcaw Barony and Georgetown on October 14 and 15. Hobcaw—an Indian word meaning “between the waters”—was the winter retreat of Bernard Baruch. Born in Camden, South Carolina, Baruch made millions on Wall Street and gained renown as advisor to presidents from Woodrow Wilson through Harry Truman. On Hobcaw’s sprawling 16,000 acres, he and his daughter Belle hosted luminaries like Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. We will spend Saturday touring the property, now a world-class center of marine biology and forestry research, and including the children of former Front Street merchants, as several of the newcomers who have revitalized the congregation, which now numbers more than 40 families. After lunch attendees are invited to visit the Kaminski House, Rice Museum, and Kaminski Hardware, for a total immersion in local history.

While I am stepping down as president, I look forward to continuing to work with JHSSC and nurturing my friendships with you all.

SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2018–2019

President
Jeffrey Rosenblum, Charleston, SC

VP Fundraising and Membership
Steve Savitz, Columbia, SC

VP Archives and Historical Sites
Alan Reyner, Columbia, SC

VP Education and Publications
Lilly Stern Filler, Columbia, SC

Treasurer
David J. Cohen, Charleston, SC

Secretary
Gary Baum, Columbia, SC

Archivist
Sandra Lee Rosenblum, Charleston, SC

See you all.

Ernest L. Marcus
The Baruchs of Hobcaw Barony

by Alyssa Neely and Dale Rosengarten

“Belle identified strongly with the Baruch side of the family and felt great inner peace and a sense of rightness when she prayed with her Jewish relatives. Although raised an Episcopalian, Belle occasionally attended synagogue with her devout Jewish grandmother. She especially loved to spend Sabbath eve at her grandparents’ home. Her eyes would fill with tears at the lighting of the Sabbath candles, and she loved to hear Grandfather Baruch speak the ritual blessings in Hebrew.”


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“One reason I established a second home in the South was that my mother had asked me not to lose touch with the land of my forebears. She also had urged me to try to contribute to its regeneration and, in particular, to ‘do something for the Negro.’”

—Bernard M. Baruch

Bernard M. Baruch was very much a self-made man, intent on controlling his image in both pictures and words. His three quotes above come from the first volume of his autobiography, Baruch: My Own Story, 1957.

“The Baruchs of Hobcaw Barony”

by Alyssa Neely and Dale Rosengarten

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Heiman Kaminski arrived in Georgetown at the age of twenty-six with two silver dollars in his pocket, destined to become not merely the most important man in Georgetown Jewry in the late nineteenth century, but perhaps the most important man in all of Georgetown.

"The rise of Heiman Kaminski is nicely summarized in the terse credit reports of the R. G. Dun Company... In 1867, the Dun reporter described Kaminski as 'prompt.' By 1870 he pronounced Kaminski's credit 'excellent.' In 1871 he described him as being of 'excellent character and credit.' The following year he wrote that Kaminski was 'believed to be getting rich.' By 1875 his report only said 'rich.'"

"Heiman and his first wife Charlotte Emanuel had four children: Edwin, Nathan, Joseph, and Linah. Charlotte contracted tuberculosis, and during her illness the family summered on an estate along the Hudson River. After Charlotte's death in 1880, the family continued their tradition of summering in New York. Five years after Charlotte's death, Heiman married Rose Baum (1861–1937). Their only child, a son, Harold, was born February 24, 1886."

"The marriage of Heiman and Rose Kaminski's son Harold to Julia Pyatt marked the first intermarriage between Georgetown's Jewish community and Georgetown's old plantation aristocracy. There is no way to ascertain whether the two families supported or opposed the young people's choice. But there is a way to tell what Georgetonians in general thought of it. Shortly thereafter, they elected Harold Kaminski to be their mayor."

"Quotes, except where otherwise noted, are from "A Community of Memory: Assimilation and Identity among the Jews of Georgetown" in Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture, by Charles Joyner, 1999."
The Rosen Family: Good Citizenship 101

by Benedict (Dick) Rosen

My family's history in Georgetown begins around 1887 when my great-grandmother Sallie Weinberg Lewenthal, and her husband, Philip Lewenthal, relocated from Darlington, South Carolina. Sallie opened a store on Front Street selling baked goods, china, fine linens, and other merchandise. Within a few years she had built a brick building adjacent to the bakery for Dr. Myre S. Iseman's drugstore. Born in Prussia, Philip and Sallie Lewenthal had four children: three in quick succession—Fannie, my grandmother Dora, and their brother Isaac—followed by another boy, Benedict, 11 years later. Fannie and Dora both attended Salem College, a liberal arts women's college in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, founded as a primary school in 1772. The sisters married two gentlemen from New York: Dora married Harry Nathan Rosen and Fannie married Albert Schneider. The brothers-in-law started The New Store in Georgetown in the 1920s, initially selling men's and ladies' clothing, and later furniture and appliances.

Fannie and Albert Schneider had three sons; two went into the business and one became an attorney. My grandparents Dora and Harry Rosen had two sons, Sylvan, born in 1913, and Meyer, born in 1919. Both became attorneys, both served in political office, and each was awarded the Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina's top civilian honor.

My dad, Sylvan, married Erma Levkoff in Columbus, South Carolina, in 1935, when he was in law school. Her brother Irving Levkoff was a classmate. The couple moved to Georgetown in 1936, soon after I was born. Sylvan started his law practice that same year, and my younger brother, Larry, was born a year and a half later.

Growing up, Larry and I attended religious services in the Winyah Indigo Society Hall. We had no synagogue until Temple Beth Elohim's sanctuary was dedicated in 1950. We had religious school in people's homes and later in the synagogue. I was the first bar mitzvah in Georgetown that anyone remembered. My brother and I had many friends but no Jewish friends. We were not aware of any anti-Semitism in Georgetown—that was true for our parents as well as for us. I remember spending Jewish holidays with my grandparents and parents.

Our father was considered to be an excellent lawyer and well respected in Georgetown. First elected mayor in 1948, he served 13 years. Georgetown was struggling financially when he took office—the seventh Jewish mayor in Georgetown's history—and he led the city through difficult times. As mayor he was responsible for annexing the neighboring community of Maryville; as a member of the development board he was instrumental in bringing the steel mill to Georgetown.

Sylvan later served as head of the highway commission and was county attorney for more than 40 years. He was the go-to person for many people, sought after for his advice and leadership. He raised funds for the state's United Jewish Appeal (UJA).

Hotel reservations
Hampton Inn Georgetown Marina
420 Marina Drive, Georgetown, SC 29440
(843) 545-1000
Special rate: $109 per night + tax
To get the special rate, make your reservation by September 20 and mention the group name, “JHSSC.”

Meeting registration
Online at: jhssc.org/events/upcoming with Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express
By check, payable to JHSSC c/o Yaschik/Aronov Jewish Studies Program - 96 Wentworth Street, Charleston, SC 29424
Meeting fee: $50 per person
Questions: Emil Deleohin, deleohin@cofc.edu
Phone: (843) 953-5918 - fax: (843) 953-7624
Albert & Sons: The Schneideres of Georgetown

My grandfather Albert Max Schneider arrived in Georgetown around 1906 at the invitation of J. M. Ringel, who asked him to clerk at one of Ringel’s several department stores. Front Street, Albert had come to the United States from Russia at the age of seven, arriving in New York in 1892. The family settled first in Brooklyn, and even after moving to South Carolina the younger generation continued to spend summers in New York.

Albert went south as early as 1902; family lore claims he worked his way to Charleston on a ship. Whether arriving as passenger or crew, he first worked as a cotton mill clerk in Summerton and then for a Charleston merchant, before being recruited by Ringel.

Everybody worked for Mr. Ringel when they first came to Georgetown . . . . [if] they needed a job and they were Jewish, he would give them a job . . . . Jewish merchants would get the young men to come to work for them . . . . [because] anybody that had daughters wanted to make sure that they’d marry a Jewish man. —Philip Schneider 1995*

On New Year’s Eve, 1910, Albert married Fannie Lewenthal of Haverhill, Massachusetts. In 1911 they opened Hyman-Schneider Co., a dry goods store on Front Street. Philip described how Hyman thought that was pretty good so he declared himself a partner.

My wife, Brenda, and I retired as CEO of AVX Corporation and officer of Kyocera, a Japanese company that produces electronic components and other products. I continue to serve on the boards of Brookgreen Gardens and the Belle W. Baruch Foundation Trust, as well as the mortgage company of Carolina Financial Corp.

Brenda has been very active in Myrtle Beach, working for years with Belk, serving on many committees at the Dunes Club and other volunteer boards, and taking superb care of my parents in their last years.

Brenda was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts, to Rose and Joe Wekstein from Russia and Poland. She and I both grew up in families who were advocates of Jewish causes, and we in turn have been supporters of Temple Emanuel in Myrtle Beach, as well as Temple Beth Elohim in Georgetown. We feel this is important and what our parents would have wanted.

Meyer joined Syban’s law practice soon after World War II and they remained partners until Dad died in 1996. The law firm Rosen & Rosen was considered to be first-rate.

Philip, the second son, served in the South Carolina House of Representatives and was honored as the Most Valuable Legislator of the year. "She worked up the receipts, there were or two, when they totaled up the receipts, there were healthy profits. Albert

My mother, Erma, was also very active in the community. She started the Red Cross blood drive, headed the program for many years, and was honored as the organization’s “woman of the year.” She worked hard for the temple and served as president of its Sisterhood.

My brother, Larry, lives in Austin, TX, with his wife, Phyllis, and Beverly. From 1963 to ’66 Meyer served in the South Carolina House of Representatives and was always well thought of. He is still around at age 97 and his daughter Beverly makes sure he is well cared for in an assisted living home in Charleston.

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Three generations of the Rosen family gathered in November 1995 for the dedication of the new bridge crossing the Sampit River, named in honor of former Georgetown mayor Sylvan Rosen, seen here standing beneath the sign, flanked by sons Larry and Benedict.

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The Fogels of Front Street

by George Sidney Fogel

The history of the Fogel family in Georgetown, South Carolina, begins with Harry Fogel, who emigrated in 1900 from the Austro-Hungarian province Galicia in what is today’s Poland. By 1904 Harry was in Georgetown operating a dry goods business. The woman who would become his wife, Clara Hepler, emigrated from Odessa, Russia, in 1905, arriving first in Charleston, South Carolina, where her family was in the jewelry business. On November 19, 1908, a small blurb in Georgetown’s Daily Item noted: “Mr. Harry Fogel, a young dry goods merchant of this city, is in Charleston, and will be married this evening at 8 o’clock to Miss Clara Hepler of that city. Accept the Daily Item’s congratulations, Harry.”

By 1920 Harry and Clara had three children: Beatrice, age ten; Abraham, age six; and Ruby, age four. Interestingly, the census also reports living in the home one Isadora Hufflin, age 22, who had emigrated from Austria in 1910.

The Fogel family store occupied three different locations during its years on Front Street, and by the 1930s had moved to the 800 block in the front of the Standard Opera House. The Opera House had been built in 1894 after a fire destroyed part of the downtown area. In 1932 the building burned to the ground and Harry lost everything; however, he was able to buy the land and erect a new building that housed the clothing store and the Lafayette Hotel.

From 22 rooms, the hotel, renamed Prince George Hotel, had expanded in 1950 to 50 rooms in a renovation that added a third floor and the original River Room Restaurant.

The 1940 census recorded Harry, Clara, their children—now young adults—and Beas husband, Fred, all living in a house on Broad Street. All family members were employed by the store and hotel. Fred was from the Bronx, New York, and had arrived in Georgetown about 1935.

According to the census, Harry had a fifth-grade education and Clara had completed seventh grade, but their offspring outstripped them in schooling. Abraham and Ruby both graduated from college, while sister Beas two years of college to her credit. Abe attended Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, but transferred to University of South Carolina where he broke his leg in his junior year and was not able to drill with his class. He graduated from USC in 1935; Ray graduated from the University, where she also voted class poet; and Bea attended Brenau College in Gainesville, Georgia, graduating in 1929.

Abe had joined the U.S. Navy in the late 1930s and was on active duty with Fleet Air Wing 8 when the United States declared war in 1941. He told of being shipped to Pearl Harbor in the first convoy, arriving a few days after the attack, only to have his group ordered back to California. He served the rest of the war in the Pacific Theater, primarily in New Guinea and the Philippines. Harry Fogel’s relatives in Europe all were killed by the Nazis, except for one cousin who survived and later moved to Palestine. Harry himself did not outlive the war. He died on April 28, 1943, soon after learning of his sister’s death. Ruby and Abe both said that he died of a broken heart.

Beatrice and Fred managed the store during the war years. Afterwards the family reaped the benefit of Georgetown’s bountiful postwar economy, fueled in part by the opening of International Paper’s Kraft Paper Mill—the largest in the world—in 1936.

On March 29, 1941, Abe married Elizabeth (Bette) Rose Greenwald from Baltimore. Their eldest son, Harry Robert Fogel (Ted), was born on May 4, 1944—Abe met him for the first time when Ted was 18 months old. Mustering out of active duty in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1945, Abe returned to Georgetown but remained in the navy reserves and sometime in the 1950s attained the rank of full commander.

This page, clockwise from left: Fred and Bea Fogel Kaufman, Abe Fogel and his father Harry; Clara Hepler Fogel; Ruby Fogel Levkoff.

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This page, clockwise from left: Fred and Bea Fogel Kaufman, Abe Fogel and his father Harry; Clara Hepler Fogel; Ruby Fogel Levkoff.
Ruby enrolled in graduate school at Columbia University and was a copy writer in New York when she met Jack Levkoff, who worked as a controller at Macy's. Their two Jewish mothers in Georgetown had set them up: Ruby's mother, Clara, planned it with Jack's mother, Sophie, who had moved to Georgetown after the death of her husband, Lazarus Levkoff, to be near her daughter Dorothy (Dot) Levkoff Schneider (Mrs. Phillip Schneider). With their children both in New York City, the mothers conspired with some cousins to arrange a blind date! Ruby and Jack were married in 1947.

Ruby continued her writing career with some acclaim. A collection of her poetry titled Of Apes and Angels was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1948, and two years later one of her poems received the James Joyce Award from the Poetry Society of America.

Jack and Ruby's two daughters, Lizabeth and Mary, were born in Miami Beach. Jack's career in real estate and later in financial analysis had taken the couple first to Birmingham, Alabama, and then to Florida. The family returned to visit Georgetown over the years, their trips immortalized in Ruby's poem "Perhaps Some History." Ruby inherited Harry's store building at the corner of Front and Broad, which was rebuilt in a low, modern style after a devastating fire. Their daughters eventually sold the property, along with the house, and moved to Brevard, North Carolina; he has four daughters, one in Virginia, one in Texas, and two in Columbia, South Carolina. Born in 1955, I was Bette and Abe's second son. Growing up I worked in the store and assumed management in the late 1970s. In the mid-'80s the family decided it was time to close the business. Competition from outlet stores in Myrtle Beach, a general economic downturn, and changes in regional and national market conditions eroded the viability of small retailers, even before the advent of online shopping. Today there are a few family-owned department stores in the South. Ruby's daughters would enjoy success: Liz with remarkable innovations in real estate that enabled her to retire at the age of 40 and fulfill her dream of living in Jerusalem, and Mary in the world of museums. A specialist in French Renaissance art, Mary Levkoff also wrote books on Auguste Rodin and Willem de Kooning.

Ruby's daughter Dorothy (Dot) Levkoff Schneider, Mrs. Phillip Schneider. With their children both in New York City, the mothers conspired with some cousins to arrange a blind date! Ruby and Jack were married in 1947.

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Above: Commander Abe Fogel, September 1944, stationed with the U.S. Navy amphibious forces in New Guinea.
Below: Abe Fogel (l) with Bernard Baruch in the lobby of the Prince George Hotel. Photo by W. H. Barney of Georgetown.

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Ebb and Flow: Georgetown’s Jewish History
by Martin Perlmutter

The Jewish community of Georgetown is a fascinating study of the old and the new—an historically important population that dwindled in the past half century and is now in the early stages of renaissance. Temple Beth Elohim mirrors the trajectory of Jewish life along the South Carolina coast and the upstate, as tourism, industry, and an influx of “snowbirds” have revitalized the economy and populated social and religious institutions. Traditionally Jewish dry goods stores and groceries have disappeared from main streets across the state, but the Sunny South has become a destination for manufacturers of automobiles and jet planes, IT companies, and retirees. The Grand Strand has been a prime beneficiary of this latter contingent, attracted by the temperate climate, white sand beaches, golf courses, and modest property taxes. Georgetown claims the second oldest Jewish population in South Carolina and a Jewish cemetery dating to 1772. By 1800 the town’s 80 Jews made up roughly ten percent of the white population; over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, Georgetown elected seven Jewish mayors. In 1884, relatively late in the span of the town’s Jewish history, Congregation Beth Elohim was established as a sister to Charleston’s Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. Having worshipped in homes and communal spaces such as the Winyah Indigo Society for nearly two centuries, Georgetown’s Jews dedicated a synagogue in 1950 on the corner of Screven and Highmarket streets. Front Street was dotted with Jewish merchants.

In the second half of the 20th century, however, Beth Elohim’s membership began an inexorable decline. In Georgetown, as in small towns across the nation, Jewish children came of age and pursued education and economic opportunities elsewhere. By the mid-1990s the dozen or fewer congregants who remained considered selling the temple and using the funds for cemetery maintenance. Still, a small group of “Elders” continued to hold services, and their loyalty was rewarded when, in 2001, Elizabeth Moses moved to Georgetown and led an effort to revive the congregation. She reached out to new residents of the Grand Strand and built the temple’s membership, which today boasts 43 families, who hold regular Friday night services, have renovated the social hall, and take pride in the long history of Georgetown’s Jewish life.

JHSSC has played a role in this transformation. Elizabeth was one of the Society’s first employees (she also worked for the College’s Jewish Heritage Collection and Jewish Studies Program), we began recording oral history interviews in Georgetown as early as 1995; and JHSSC met there in 2001, 2004, and 2009.

With the help of local members we need Pillars—benefactors who contribute $1,000 per year for five years—to sustain our ambitious projects. Become a Pillar and help keep the Society’s engines humming!
Join the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Name: ____________________________________________

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ANNUAL DUES FOR 2018 (JANUARY–DECEMBER)

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Join or renew online at jhssc.org.

Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional $36 each.
Send us their information and we will inform them of your gift.

Make checks payable to JHSSC
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Register now for the October 14–15 meeting at Hobcaw Barony and Georgetown. See page 8 for more information.
Memory, Monuments, and Memorials

Register now for spring meeting in Charleston
April 28–29, 2018
In this issue

Not Fully Human: Why Racists Are the Living Dead – Simon Lewis – During the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, Jewish activists made common cause with black people to battle racism and injustice. The author urges us to apply lessons from this history of solidarity to combat the current resurgence of white supremacists, who have grown bold enough to espouse their ideology in public and wear their symbols on their sleeves like badges of honor. 

The Shadow of John C. Calhoun – Herb Frazier – As an African-American boy growing up in Charleston, South Carolina, in the 1950s and ’60s, the author learned not to trust “Mister Charlie.” He recalls feeling the “creepy sneer” of John C. Calhoun bearing down on him while walking past the statue that still stands, a shrine for some, a relic for others, and for many, an archetype of intolerance. Frazier found freedom—as his father had before him—in travel.

Beholding the Past at Magnolia and Buchenwald – Raja Léon Hamann – A young scholar steps outside his comfort zone with visits to both a southern plantation where Africans and African Americans were enslaved and a Nazi concentration camp. Gazing into the “abysses of human nature,” Raja Hamann discovers invaluable lessons about himself and about history. 

Memory, Monuments, and Memorials – JHSSC meets in Charleston, April 28–29, 2018 

To Honor the Survivors and Remember the Dead: Building a Memorial in Marion Square – David Popowski – A son of Holocaust survivors describes his parents’ harrowing experiences during World War II and their immigration to Charleston in 1949. He recalls the spark, 45 years later, that ignited a four-year drive to honor survivors and memorialize those who had perished in the Shoah.

To Teach the Children: Columbia’s Holocaust Memorial – Lilly Stern Filler – The ambition of two Holocaust survivors to build a monument in their adopted city was realized through the efforts of their daughter and the greater Columbia community. The surplus of funds raised for the project led to the creation of the Columbia Holocaust Education Commission.

Confronting Our Complex Past at Historic Sites – Robin Waites – Incorporating information about enslaved people in historic narratives and exhibits makes possible a more comprehensive view of the past that challenges conventional wisdom and invites meaningful dialogue.

History Is Local – Martin Perlmutter – The Society’s extraordinary success since its founding 24 years ago has been propelled by its members, its Pillars, and its ongoing relationship with the College of Charleston. Dr. Perlmutter may modestly downplay his effective leadership but all who know the story of the Society and Marty’s role in marrying town and gown know that a visionary has been hard at work.

Keynote Speaker: Michael Arad

Michael Arad’s design for the National September 11 Memorial at the World Trade Center site, titled “Reflecting Absence,” was chosen from among more than 5,000 entries submitted in an international competition held in 2003. He joined the New York firm Handel Architects as a partner in April 2004. A native of Israel, Mr. Arad was raised there, the U.K., the United States, and Mexico. He earned a B.A. from Dartmouth College (1994) and a Master of Architecture from the Georgia Institute of Technology (1998). In 2017, Mr. Arad was selected to design a memorial to the victims of the 2015 mass shooting at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina.

Letter from the President

It is with great excitement that I have assumed the presidency of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina for the second time. My first presidency (2000–2001) occurred while I was a practicing architect, 18 years ago. Now in my third year of retirement, I will have much more time to do activities that I enjoy, such as working with all of you to continue the Society’s growth and maintain its high standards of excellence.

JHSSC was conceived in 1993 when Isaadore L. Lourie, obm, assembled a small group in Marty Perlmutter’s office at the College of Charleston. Isaadore has been duly credited as the founder of the Society, but it was Max Heller, obm, and Trude Schönthal Heller won in 2007—he for his innovative work as mayor of Greenville; she as an active Holocaust educator; and both for exemplifying the best of Jewish values through their civic involvement in their adopted home. Ann Meldin Hellman was awarded the Order in 2015 for her tireless efforts developing the Society’s website and documenting and cataloguing Jewish burials across the state.

On Saturday evening, April 28, I look forward to presenting JHSSC’s fifth “Order of the Jewish Palmetto” to Dr. Martin Perlmutter for his leadership of the Society and his accomplishments at the College of Charleston directing the Yachsh/Arnold Jewish Studies Program and establishing the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. Marty was also the catalyst for building the Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center and its recent addition, which houses a kosher/vegan/vegetarian dining hall dubbed Marty’s Place, in his honor.

At our meeting on April 28–29, 2018, JHSSC will partner with the College of Charleston’s Carolina Lowcountry and Atlantic World and African American Studies programs, and the Charleston branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History to explore a topic that has caught the attention of the nation—public memory and memorialization. Saturday’s panels will focus on how communities pay homage to loss, or raise high their heroes in heavily politicized environments.

Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina
Page 2
JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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March Perlmutter and Ann Meldin Hellman at the May 2, 2015 meeting in Charleston where Ann was awarded the Order of the Jewish Palmetto. Photo by Jeri Perlmutter.

On the cover

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With Marty’s retirement at the end of this school year, JHSSC also moves to new ground with a new executive director—a changing of the guard for both Jewish Studies and the Jewish Historical Society. Please join us for a lively and provocative spring meeting in Charleston on April 28 and 29, and a bittersweet celebration as our fearless leader steps down from his post.
Not Fully Human: Why Racists Are the Living Dead
by Simon Lewis, Professor of English, College of Charleston

T
two years ago, JHSSC's annual conference examined the roles South Carolina Jews played (or did not play) in the Civil Rights era. Joining forces with the local chapter of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), this year's conference continues and expands that exploration, while aiming to exemplify the alliance between blacks and Jews in the fight for social justice.

Connections between anti-black racism and anti-Semitism are well documented. The white nationalists in Charlottesville who chanted, “You will not replace us. Jews will not replace us,” are only the most recent manifestation. The Ku Klux Klan notoriously targeted Jews and Catholics as well as people of color. South African apartheid, the set of segregationist policies that 20th-century French philosopher Jacques Derrida called “the last word in racism,” was created by a political party many of whose leaders had been interned by the British during World War II because of their pro-Nazi beliefs. Thus, although the kinds of persecution Jews and black people worldwide have suffered vary in nature and degree, there is a shared consciousness of racial violence that, despite differences between the communities, fosters a fundamental anti-racist affinity.

That affinity and shared consciousness have historically motivated cross-community collaboration in pursuit of equal rights for all, notably in the courageous commitment of Jewish Freedom Riders during the Civil Rights Movement, and in similarly significant contributions by prominent Jewish activists in the anti-apartheid struggle—sometimes at the cost of their very lives. The history of this solidarity offers important lessons for us in our current situation. Currently, locally, a network of faith-based congregations has come together in the Charleston Area Justice Ministry. While the stakes may not appear to be as high as they were in the 20th century, the principle that freedom is (or should be) universal demands that we actively combat the life-denying processes both of anti-Semitism and of anti-black racism.

When Alan Paton, the acclaimed South African author of Cry, the Beloved Country, revisited the United States in 1954 after almost a decade, he wrote optimistically of the South’s “Big Change.” “The South is beyond question a different place from what it was when I last visited it,” he wrote. “One gets a vivid impression that the Deep South, the Deep South of the grossest inequality, the worst discrimination, of murder and violence, is slowly retreating. Its theories of white supremacy and segregation are slowly being forced into the Gulf of Mexico, where they will be drowned, thus holding water for the first time.”

As we have seen too clearly over the last couple of years—notably in the mass murder in Mother Emanuel Church and in the alt-right demonstrations in Charlottesville, the Gulf of Mexico, and the alt-right terror that followed—such optimism is naive. The glue holding all of this together has been racism and xenophobia, just as it has been black racism.

As a child in Charleston in the 1950s and 1960s, I was more aware of other nations than the dangers of Jim Crow in this racially divided city replete with symbols glorifying the Confederacy.

There really was never much to fear from whites, I thought, because I knew Africans. The smelly odor of racism and the vulgar disparity of life around you. To seek joy in the saddest places. To pursue beauty to its lair. To respect strength, never power. Above all, to watch. To try and understand. To never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple. To respect strength, never power. Above all, to watch. To try and understand. To never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple. To respect strength, never power.

Above: White nationalists bearing tiki-torches march on the University of Virginia campus in Charlottesville, August 11, 2017, to protest the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee from a city park. Below: Unite the Right rally participants show their true colors with the statue of General Lee in Emancipation Park in the background. Photos by Evelyn Hockstein (see evelynhockstein.com).

In the Shadow of John C. Calhoun
by Herb Frazier, public relations and marketing manager for Magnolia Plantation and Gardens and co-author of We Are Charleston: Tragedy and Triumph at Mother Emanuel (2016).

My daddy, Benjamin Frazier, sailed to Cuba with the U.S. Navy where he was welcomed as an American sailor more warmly than he was in his segregated hometown of Charleston, South Carolina. Daddy returned with souvenirs from Havana, including a special tablecloth decorated with a large map of the island.

That tablecloth stirred my childhood imagination. I admired the colorful drawings of palm trees, bongos, and scantily clothed women with fruit hats. My gaze, however, always returned to Cuba’s priest-shaped outline.

“I traced the map with my finger tip. ‘I want to go there,’ I said. ‘That thick plastic tablecloth was my Aladdin’s Lamp. When I touched it and spoke those words the ancestors cleared a path that would lead the tiny teddy-bear-hugging me not just to Cuba but around the world.’

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Above: Father and son, Charleston, South Carolina, circa 1945.

The only dream worth having is to dream that you will live while you are alive, and die only when you are dead. ‘To love. To be loved. To never forget your own insignificance. To never get used to the unspeakable violence and the vulgar disparity of life around you. To seek joy in the saddest places. To pursue beauty to its lair. To never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple. To respect strength, never power. Above all, to watch. To try and understand. To never look away. And never, never to forget.'

Arundhati Roy, The Cost of Living, 1999

Mountain of the Living Dead
by Herb Frazier, public relations and marketing manager for Magnolia Plantation and Gardens and co-author of We Are Charleston: Tragedy and Triumph at Mother Emanuel (2016).

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Above: Father and son, Charleston, South Carolina, circa 1945.

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Spring 2018
Volume xxiii - Number 1

Page 4

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Page 5
Daddy didn’t have to tell me, however, about John C. Calhoun, whose statue stands on the street that bears his name. Black Charlestonians know two truths about the city. Streets flooded on cloudless days and Calhoun was no friend to the black man. My eyes avoided his creepy sneer. Instead I focused on the date of his death—1850. He died a century before my birth. As a child I was thankful he was gone before I was born.

Daddy also didn’t complain that black people were barred from the nearby Jewish-owned Sam Solomon department store. Because Daddy was in the navy we had options on where to shop. We didn’t have to face the possible humiliation of being turned away from a white-owned business on King Street. We shopped mostly on the naval base in the North Area. After I was born the navy began to lift racial barriers. That policy was most evident when Daddy was transferred in 1965 to the U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo in 1965 to the U.S. Naval Station Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, mid- to late 1960s. Photos pictured are Herb’s brothers, Benjamin Frazier III and Terry Frazier.

I am not African American. My mother is German and my father Nigerian. I grew up and have always lived in Germany. During my time in Charleston, one experience left an indelible impression. Joe McGill, founder of the Slave Dwelling Project, invited me to an overnight stay at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, Charleston, SC, February 16, 2018. Courtesy of Joseph McGill.

Above: Herb Frazier, Charleston, SC., circa 1955. Behind him are the Ansonborough projects and Marsh Street (neither the street nor the projects exist today). Below: Herb Frazier (second from left) with his grandmother, Mable Frazier, and his parents, Albertha and Benjamin Frazier, at U.S. Naval Station Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, mid- to late 1960s. Photos courtesy of Herb Frazier. Not pictured are Herb’s brothers, Benjamin Frazier III and Terry Frazier.

Travel stories to share, too.

Two years later, as we played, I had a chance to do what my father did—travel. I became a newspaper reporter. When I took a reporting job in 1972 at the then News and Courier in Charleston, my father was stunned. He wasn’t elated that his son was one of the first black reporters to integrate the white newspaper. He asked why I wanted to work at that paper, the one that supported segregation and the one he wanted to burn down in the mid-’50s. His views softened by the 1970s. America and Charleston were changing for the better, and he was beginning to partially trust “Mister Charlie.” Decades later after working at other papers around the country, I returned to Charleston. I joined the staff at the Post and Courier. That’s when I got a chance to report overseas. I saw the Berlin Wall crumble. I walked between the two Koreas. I watched workers unearth the dead following Rwanda’s genocide. I called Daddy from sprawling Tokyo, a city he never saw. I lived in South Africa where I taught university students the importance of a free press and accurate reporting.

Initially, I didn’t want the assignment in South Africa because of Daddy’s stories of how the apartheid government kept him and other black sailors on the ship when it docked in Cape Town. My views on South Africa changed with Mr. Mandela’s presidency.

Daddy taught me chess when I was 12. It was more than just a game. For him it was metaphor on life. In all matters, think of your next move. Years later, as we played, I had never have expected to feel on a former plantation, a place that, to me, really existed. I felt different about the place where I had slept, the cabin and the concentration, labor, and death camps set up by the Third Reich are the same. But there are similarities among them. All were places of unimaginable torment, horror, and pain, of the systematic subjugation of humans deemed less human than others.

During my time in Charleston, one experience left an indelible impression. Joe McGill, founder of the Slave Dwelling Project, invited me to an overnight stay at Magnolia Plantation on October 7th, and I readily agreed. When the day came, however, I got nervous. What was I supposed to feel? How would people behave towards me? And what kind of behavior and emotions would they expect of me as a “Black” person visiting the site of a former plantation?

I am not African American. My mother is German and my father Nigerian. I grew up and have always lived in Germany. But even though the experience of slavery has not been passed down to me as part of my family history, I regard slavery and the subsequent discrimination and violence against African Americans as much more than mere historic events, appalling but distant. I feel deeply affected by that history. It forms an important part of my identity as an Afro-person. Besides the projections of other people upon me, there was thus much that I expected from myself as well.

I spent the whole day at Magnolia, and while it was very moving, emotionally and intellectually, it did not bring me what I felt it should have. There was no moment of revelation, no life-changing incident. Before we went to sleep in the cabins, I noticed how beautiful it was outside in the moonlight. The moon had been full just a few days earlier and was still shining brightly. I remarked to Dontavius, with whom I was sharing a space in the cabin, how I would love to take a walk now, not really expecting him to say yes. But he did.

Dontavius and I walked around for an hour or more, and though we barely knew each other, we had a long and intimate conversation. Magnolia felt magical. From the white of the moon to the black of the shadows everything was imbued with a soft and delicate blue. The trees and plants seemed to glow, and all the hardness and sharpness of things were gone. It was a dreamy and very comforting atmosphere, something I would have never expected to feel on a former plantation, a place that, not so long ago, I regarded as a reminder only of a horrible and dark past. We would stop and be quiet sometimes, listening in awe to the sounds of nature, the owls, the insects, and the purling and gurgling of the water.

I felt calm when we went to bed. The next morning, I realized that something unexpected had happened overnight. I felt different about the place where I had slept, the cabin and Magnolia in general. It meant something to me on a much more personal level now. But how so? Of course, the experiences Dontavius and I shared when we took that walk had a profound meaning to me, but there was something else as

Beholding the Past at Magnolia and Buchenwald

This summer I spent two-and-a-half months in Charleston working on a research project about the interplay of gentrification, cultural heritage tourism, and the politics of race and identity. It was my first time in the Lowcountry, and it was the first time in my life to visit former plantations. I had read about them, primarily in academic articles that criticize them for not paying sufficient attention to the history of slavery and the lives of enslaved people. Still, I was irritated when I saw for myself how former slave labor camps are being advertised as tourist destinations and wedding venues, lovely gardens to marvel at. One of my initial impulses was to think of Nazi concentration camps, and how inconceivable it would be to turn them into amusement parks. I do not want to imply that the slave labor camps of the American South, euphemistically called plantations, and the concentration, labor, and death camps set up by the Third Reich are the same. But there are similarities among them. All were places of unimaginable torment, horror, and pain, of the systematic subjugation of humans deemed less human than others.

For instance, the former slave labor camps are located on plantations, and a former institution such as a plantation is often referred to as a “South Sea” or a “Black Sea.” The term “South Sea” is a euphemism for slave labor camps, and a former institution such as a plantation is often referred to as a “South Sea” or a “Black Sea.”

I felt different about the place where I had slept, the cabin and the concentration, labor, and death camps set up by the Third Reich are the same. But there are similarities among them. All were places of unimaginable torment, horror, and pain, of the systematic subjugation of humans deemed less human than others.

During my time in Charleston, one experience left an indelible impression. Joe McGill, founder of the Slave Dwelling Project, invited me to an overnight stay at Magnolia Plantation on October 7th, and I readily agreed. When the day came, however, I got nervous. What was I supposed to feel? How would people behave towards me? And what kind of behavior and emotions would they expect of me as a “Black” person visiting the site of a former plantation?

I am not African American. My mother is German and my father Nigerian. I grew up and have always lived in Germany. But even though the experience of slavery has not been passed down to me as part of my family history, I regard slavery and the subsequent discrimination and violence against African Americans as much more than mere historic events, appalling but distant. I feel deeply affected by that history. It forms an important part of my identity as an Afro-person. Besides the projections of other people upon me, there was thus much that I expected from myself as well.

I spent the whole day at Magnolia, and while it was very moving, emotionally and intellectually, it did not bring me what I felt it should have. There was no moment of revelation, no life-changing incident. Before we went to sleep in the cabins, I noticed how beautiful it was outside in the moonlight. The moon had been full just a few days earlier and was still shining brightly. I remarked to Dontavius, with whom I was sharing a space in the cabin, how I would love to take a walk now, not really expecting him to say yes. But he did.

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Above: Herb Frazier, Charleston, SC., circa 1955. Behind him are the Ansonborough projects and Marsh Street (neither the street nor the projects exist today). Below: Herb Frazier (second from left) with his grandmother, Mable Frazier, and his parents, Albertha and Benjamin Frazier, at U.S. Naval Station Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, mid- to late 1960s. Photos courtesy of Herb Frazier. Not pictured are Herb’s brothers, Benjamin Frazier III and Terry Frazier.

well. Eventually it occurred to me that it must have been the sleeping itself.

Sleeping, of course, is a deeply intimate practice. We are vulnerable when we sleep and only relax and let go in an environment that feels safe to us. I believe that by spending the night in the former slave cabins, by physically facing such miniscule discomforts as cockroaches and other insects possibly crawling on the bed, I was able to process deeper discomforts as cockroaches and other insects possibly crawling over my body, and by mentally confronting my anxieties about the site and my imagination of the horrors that happened there in the past, I was able to remove these deeper emotional conflicts I had about former slave labor camps.

This experience allows me to look at these sites differently. I see them as places of both peace and sadness now. The live oak trees epitomize that ambivalence to me.

Elegantly adorning the alleys, the Spanish moss drooping from their branches, they bestow upon these landscapes a dreamy and surreal beauty. At the same time, crooked under the weight of the structures of Buchenwald have been destroyed; only a few remains. The crematorium where the imprisoned had to burn their fellow inmates is one of them. Upon entering that building, I first walked into the "pathology department." Its purpose was to find out why the detainees died, but to determine whether even in death their bodies might be exploitable. What was greatly valued was human skin. For one of his birthdays the commandant received a lamp as a gift from his officers whose shade was made from the skin of dead prisoners.

I feel devastated by the insanity that ruled such places. But I also feel a distance from the other Germans in the group. But it did not affect my emotional connection to the site. I was moved to tears several times. It was very cold that day. My hands hurt and even started to feel numb in the brief moments when I removed my gloves to take a few photos. As I walked the fields of debris in the former detainee section, the utter emptiness of the place, the only sound the wind whirling snow, created an almost haunted scene. I cannot imagine how it must have been for the people who were forced to walk through the snow half naked or march up from nearby Weimar clothed in rags and often barefoot.

Our guide told us of the zoo built directly in front of the detainee section. The guards would go there on weekends with their families to get some well-earned rest from the strains of their duty," quoting the first commandant of the camp. There is nothing left today that reminds visitors of a zoo, unimaginable as it is anyway. Most of the structures of Buchenwald have been destroyed; only a few remain. The crematorium where the imprisoned had to burn their fellow inmates is one of them. Upon entering that building, I first walked into the "pathology department." Its purpose was to find out why the detainees died, but to determine whether even in death their bodies might be exploitable. What was greatly valued was human skin. For one of his birthdays the commandant received a lamp as a gift from his officers whose shade was made from the skin of dead prisoners.

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I am the child of Holocaust survivors. Henry Popowski and Paula Kornblum Popowski were both from Kaluszyn, a Polish town 50 miles east of Warsaw. Before World War II its population numbered approximately 10,000—80 percent of whom were Jews. My father was 11 years older than my mother, so while they knew each other's families, they did not know each other until after they were liberated.

Their stories of survival differed dramatically. My father lived as a young man in Warsaw in the late 1930s. When Germany invaded Poland he was conscripted into the Polish army. After Poland surrendered, he found his way back to Kaluszyn to warn his family of the impending danger and urge them to leave. Two of his six siblings hid in the woods and the remainder of the Popowski family perished. My father sought refuge in the Warsaw ghetto and subsequently was incarcerated in the concentration camps: Kraków, Plaszów, and Ebensee, a sub-camp of Mauthausen. He survived because of his skills as a carpenter, his family's trade.

They migrated to Chicago, nearly 2000 miles from Kaluszyn. There they lived in a convent and worked in a glass factory, using their Catholic identities. After they were liberated in January 1945 by the Russian army, they made their way back to Kaluszyn. My grandparents, my mother’s brother, and numerous family members were gone. The flour mill had been seized.

My mother and aunt found a group of family friends who had survived and together they traveled to Landszht, Germany, where my parents met. They remained there until 1949, waiting for approval to immigrate to America. During that time, they married and the first of their four children, my brother Mark, was born.

My parents’ immigration to Charleston was sponsored by cousins Joseph and Rachel Zucker. Charleston had a uniquely large number of ex-patriot Kalushiners dating back to the late 19th century. Thus, the city was a welcoming place for my parents to begin their new lives—indeed, they were the last Kalushiners to make Charleston their home. I was born in Charleston, followed by my two sisters, Sarah and Martha. During our childhood, my parents did not discuss the specifics of their war experiences. I would tell my friends that my parents had accents because they were from Europe, my grandparents were killed in the war, and the family members I had lived in Brooklyn and Israel. As we began our college years, my parents opened up—my mother more than my father. As a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto and the camps my father had seen the Holocaust in all of its horror.

Fast forward. I graduated from college and law school and returned to Charleston to practice law, start a family, and be near my parents. One day in 1994, I was working in my office when Pincus Kolender called. Like my parents, Pincus was a Holocaust survivor and he had known me, literally, from the day I was born. He and fellow Auschwitz survivor Joe Engel wanted Charleston to have a Holocaust memorial. He said Jerry and Ann Binyon, other members of my parents’ sponsors, Joseph and Rachel Zucker) had pledged $60,000 in seed money and local architect Jeffrey Rosenblum had offered to help. Anita is the daughter of survivors Rose Mibab and Carl Goldbrin of Jacksonville, Florida, and Jerry's father Leon Zucker lost the vast majority of his family in the Holocaust. Also, Pincus and Joe had met with Mayor Joe Riley and he pledged his full support. Pincus asked me to chair the project and added that they felt it was so important, they were willing to pay me my hourly rate to do so. They anticipated the cost of the memorial would be $200,000. I told Pincus to give me a night to think about it.

Guessing the project would take a year and an hour or so $200,000. I told Pincus to give me a night to think about it. During our childhood, my parents did not discuss the specifics of their war experiences. I would tell my friends that my parents had accents because they were from Europe, my grandparents were killed in the war, and the family members I had lived in Brooklyn and Israel. As we began our college years, my parents opened up—my mother more than my father. As a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto and the camps my father had seen the Holocaust in all of its horror.

Initially, I questioned the necessity of building a Holocaust memorial in Charleston. Would enough people in a small metropolitan area with a relatively modest Jewish population care? As the project evolved and I saw the gratifying response of both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities, my concern abated and my devotion to the mission intensified. The five-year period of design, fundraising, and construction was time-consuming, at times contentious, and meaningful. A committee of approximately 20 members of the Jewish community, with survivors Joe Engel, Pincus Kolender, Charles Markowitz, and Sam Greene playing key roles, oversaw the project. A sub-committee consisting of Jennifer Phillips, Anita Zucker, Jeffrey Rosenblum, and myself handled the daily tasks and issues. Jennifer Phillips was at the center of our work, devoting her energies full-time to the project. Mayor Riley assigned City Parks Director Steven Livingston and head of Cultural Affairs Ellen Dressler Moryl to the committee, and they worked diligently with us.

From a group of 15 applicants, architect Jonathan Levi of Boston and landscape design firm Design Works of Charleston were selected. At the recommendation of Jeffrey Rosenblum and respected contractor and Jewish community leader Raymond Frisch, the committee chose contractors Stier, Kent & Canady to build the memorial. After receiving their cost estimate of approximately $500,000, we began the fundraising effort, led by Anita. Our timing was fortuitous because the economy was robust and we had broad support from the community at large. Contributions came from countless individuals and—owing largely to Anita’s work—from numerous corporations.

The selection of the site was mildly controversial. A few people preferred the old museum property on Rutledge Avenue, but the consensus was that Marion Square, fronting Calhoun Street, was best because of its visibility. There was also some disagreement about the design proposed by the professionals: some critics wanted a more striking structure and others a greater emphasis on Jewish symbols. The committee finally approved the memorial as you see it now. There was no discussion about the irony of it being next to a towering structure of former vice president and slavery advocate John C. Calhoun. Marion Square, by the way, is owned by the Washington Light Infantry and Sumter Guard and is leased to the City of Charleston. Their member and former South Carolina State Senator Robert Scarborough represented those organizations and skillfully handled the collaboration.

We broke ground on July 23, 1997, and on June 6, 1999, five years after the call from Pincus Kolender, we dedicated the memorial at Marion Square before a crowd of 1,500 people. It was a remarkable day that included a performance by the Charleston Symphony Orchestra conducted by David Stahl, generously sponsored by Walter Seinsheimer and Dr. David Russin. When it ended, I told my mother: “Now our mishpacha who perished have had a proper burial.”
To Teach the Children: Columbia’s Holocaust Memorial

by Lilly Stern Filler, Chair, South Carolina Council on the Holocaust and Co-chair, Columbia Holocaust Education Commission

My parents, Jadzia Szklarz and Ben Stern, obm, were Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Columbia, South Carolina, on June 8, 1949—their day of independence! Along with them came a 18-month-old daughter, Lilly (me), born in Munich, Germany. We were sponsored by a paternal uncle, Gabriel Stern, who had immigrated to the States in the early 20th century and ultimately made Columbia his home.

We arrived at Ellis Island via the U.S. Army transport ship General J. H. McRae and, once in the United States, my parents chose never to look back. Our family grew to four children and my father built his own construction business. My parents’ experience of the Shoah was so dreadful it was rarely discussed in our household, so when my father died unexpectedly while my mother was battling Alzheimer’s, I knew I had to find a way to honor them and to memorialize the family members they had lost.

I remembered that my mother, in the 1980s, had tried to form a committee to create a standing Holocaust Memorial in Columbia. Both of my parents lamented that their chosen American city did not have such a memorial, although they visited many in other cities. My mother’s efforts were thwarted by fears of anti-Semitism, and the committee struggled to make decisions on design, location, publicity, and so forth. As a result, the project was tabled.

In the 1990s, my father began to raise money for a city council a site for the stone edifice in the newly developed city of South Carolina. Both of my parents wished to have a Holocaust program. Later, prospects for funding were expanded to any educator teaching the history of the Holocaust, as well as training workshops for teachers who want to add the subject to their curricula. The council sponsors a Summer Workshop that brings to Columbia distinguished faculty from the non-profit organization Facing History and Ourselves, based in Washington, DC, for a three-day program following four weeks of online sessions. Every other year the council sponsors a trip to Eastern Europe for teachers interested in experiencing first-hand the locations and lasting legacy of the Holocaust. Both the workshop and the European tour are heavily subsidized by the council and graduate credits are offered.

The project raised more money than was needed, so with the remaining funds the Columbia Holocaust Education Commission (CHEC) was launched. Co-chaired by Lyssa Harvey and me, this commission was to adopt the original goals of the memorial and continue to pursue innovative ways to educate the people of the city and nearby towns. Since its inception in 2001, the commission has awarded mini-grants for teachers K–12, developed a speaker’s bureau, and created a 24-panel exhibit, Holocaust Remembered, which tells the stories of liberators and local survivors.

The exhibit has been shown in public spaces around the city and will travel this spring to four churches, two universities, and one Presbyterian retirement community in Summerville, South Carolina. CHEC publishes an annual newsmagazine distributed by the McClatchy papers to more than 1.5 million South Carolinians every spring.

The committee grew to about 50 people. For the next year we met all together once or twice a month and more often in subcommittees. On the Internet we found an existing memorial in Boca Raton, Florida, that satisfied our criteria. Creator Irwin Hyman gave us permission to use his design, which we modified to incorporate a timeline and a list of liberators and survivors. I contacted Mayor Bob Coble, who advised me to request from city council a site for the stone edifice in the newly developed Memorial Park in downtown Columbia.

On June 6, 2001, the 57th anniversary of D-Day, we unveiled our beautiful granite monument in Memorial Park. A gentle rain was falling, but it was one of the most moving and memorable days of my life. More than 500 people attended the ceremony, which was filmed by SCETV; platform guests included South Carolina Governor Jim Hodges, Mayor Bob Coble, and other distinguished individuals. The grandchildren of survivors and liberators unveiled the monument. Each year in April, SCETV replays the hour-long dedication on television.

For more information online, see:
- Ben Stern’s Jewish Heritage Collection oral history interview
- Columbia Holocaust Education Commission panel on Ben Stern
- South Carolina Council on the Holocaust’s digitized survivor and liberator testimonies, including interviews with Ben Stern and Jadzia Szklarz Stern

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Holocaust education was not new to South Carolina. In 1989, Senator Isaadore Lourie, obm, had introduced a bill creating the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust (SCCH). The legislature allocated funds, and the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house appointed council members, charged with providing support to any community in the state that wished to have a Holocaust program. Later, prospects for funding were expanded to any educator teaching the history of the Holocaust, as well as training workshops for teachers who want to add the subject to their curricula. The council sponsors a Summer Workshop that brings to Columbia distinguished faculty from the non-profit organization Facing History and Ourselves, based in Washington, DC, for a three-day program following four weeks of online sessions. Every other year the council sponsors a trip to Eastern Europe for teachers interested in experiencing first-hand the locations and lasting legacy of the Holocaust. Both the workshop and the European tour are heavily subsidized by the council and graduate credits are offered.

With their common purpose of outreach, CHEC and SCCH collaborate seamlessly. Their work has become even more critical in the past two years as we have seen a rise in anti-Semitic acts and vile rhetoric, a willingness to be openly intolerant and racially bigoted. We need to teach our children, and all young people, the importance of respect, the value of diversity, the power of acceptance, and the love of mankind. Public reminders such as the Holocaust Memorial and programs offered by CHEC and SCCH become more vital as eyewitnesses of the Shoah pass away. Our small state has a large commitment to Holocaust education and remembrance. Time will not slow, and the need to educate, to recognize the facts, the causes, and the consequences of the Holocaust grows increasingly urgent.

We will not forget!
Confronting Our Complex Past at Historic Sites
by Robin Waite, Executive Director, Historic Columbia

In 2003, Historic Columbia opened a new exhibit at the Hampton-Preston Mansion, one of six historic sites for which we serve as steward. A Home to Many People was the organization’s first attempt to document urban slavery at this antebellum property and more broadly in South Carolina’s capital city. With panels addressing topics ranging from urban comparisons and the differences between enslaved labor in an urban versus a rural setting to the treatment of enslaved men and women by their owners, the exhibit broke new ground for Historic Columbia. Before this, the daily lives of 68 men, women, and children, without whom the property could not have scarcely meant anything. Introducing content about enslaved people and free blacks who worked for the Hamptons and Prestons provided visitors with a more authentic and complete view of life at the mansion. As difficult as this history is to share and to hear, it would be irresponsible to ignore it.

Ten years later, in 2014, our organization re-opened the Woodrow Wilson Family Home as the only museum in the country focused on the Reconstruction Era. Shifting the interpretive frame from a shrine to the 28th president to an in-depth and honest exploration of the years immediately following the Civil War, when the teenage Wilson lived in Columbia, allowed Historic Columbia to shed light on one of the most misunderstood and understudied aspects of our nation’s past. Addressing the progress made by black leaders in public education, municipal services, and religious institutions, as well as the political terrorism employed by white supremacists intent on regaining power, themes at this site are meant to challenge visitors’ perceptions of a key period in American history.

Exit surveys completed by visitors to the Hampton-Preston Mansion provide evidence of their reconsideration of a past they thought they understood, an acquisition of new information, and a desire to learn more. Transformations like these, resulting from personal experience, critical thinking, and dialogue, are needed to forge a future of challenging stories and acknowledging our complex and intertwined past, we can engender change. As Dr. David Skorton, Secretary of the Smithsonian, explains: “In the end, many of the issues that all cultural institutions explore, from climate change to economic inequality, to race relations, may ultimately have political or partisan implications. Our role is to not advocate or judge. Instead, cultural institutions aim to provide context and information—and often the forum—to address the big issues knowledgeably and constructively.” [“Trusted Sources: Why Museums and Libraries Are More Relevant Than Ever,” American Alliance for Museums, February 27, 2017.]

This transformation began at the Wilson site, in May 2018, Historic Columbia will premiere a new tour at Hampton-Preston, which extracts the content from the Home to Many People panel exhibit and integrates it into the central visitor experience. Utilizing new research, primary documents, images and technologies, this tour offers a much deeper exploration of life at the estate. For example, visitors will learn about enslaved domestic workers William and Maria Walker, a brother and sister owned by the Prestons. William worked as John’s body servant and worked in the ‘ Continued.

T he Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina has been an important part of the Yashav/Arnold Jewish Studies Program for most of the Program’s history. The Society is an expression of one of JSP’s central missions—community outreach—and by virtue of its remarkable impact, it has helped to define Jewish Studies. JHSSC was founded to study, preserve, and promote awareness of the history and culture of the Jews of South Carolina. It fosters public history at its best, supporting publications, exhibitions, oral histories, cemetery records, archives, and most important, a vibrant community galvanized by its mission and committed to its projects. Jewish Studies has no better example of town/gown cooperation than its relationship with JHSSC. This College/community synergy is also at the heart of the Jewish Heritage Collection at Addlestone Library and the Pearlstein/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture.

The Society teaches us that much of history is local. The broader Jewish narrative encompasses slavery in Egypt, an exodus, great kings, destruction of the temples in Jerusalem, and longings for the promised land of a return to Zion. But for many South Carolinians, Jewish history revolves around the family store, the immigrant family, quiet Sundays when most neighbors were in church, summers spent at Camp Blue Star, Camp Judea, or Barney Medintz, and efforts to Small congregations in towns with a declining Jewish presence.

JHSSC has surpassed the expectations of those who witnessed its birth nearly 25 years ago. Isadore Lourie would be proud to see how far the Society has come. We owe much of our success to the loyalty of our dues-paying membership, now numbering over 500, and to our ongoing relationship with the College of Charleston—a bond that dates back to the friendship between Senator Lourie and his former desk mate in the state house, College President Alex Sanders.

Most of all, we are indebted to the Society’s Pillars and Foundational Pillars—stalwarts who donate $1,000 or $2,000, respectively; each year for five years. With your continued generosity, I am confident the JHSSC membership and lay leadership will carry the Society far into the future, creating community and preserving memory even after the small town merchants of St. George, Summerton, and Walterboro are gone.

History Is Local
by Martin Perlmutter

Pillars
Susan and Charles Altman, Charleston, SC
Ellen Arnowitz, Atlanta, GA
Doris L. Baumgartner, Aiken, SC
Harold Brody, Atlanta, GA
Max and Ann Meddin Bellman, Charleston, SC
Alan and Charlotte Kahn, Columbia, SC
Allan and Jeanne Lieberman, Charleston, SC
Susan R. Lourie, Columbia, SC
Andrew and Mary Poliaikoff, Spartanburg, SC
Edward and Sandra Poliaikoff, Columbia, SC
Alan and Anne Reyner, Columbia, SC
Deborah Ritter, Columbia, SC
Benedict and Brenda Rosen, Myrtle Beach, SC
Jeffrey and Mickey Rosenberg, Charleston, SC
Sandra Lee Rosenblum, Charleston, SC
Joseph and Rebecca Wolf, Charleston, SC
Larry Simon, Isle of Palms, SC
Mark and Gayle Sloan, Myrtle Beach, SC
Gail (Altman) and Ronald Spahn, Baltimore, MD
Michael S. Kogan, Charleston, SC
Doris L. Baumgarten, Aiken, SC
Judith Green, Charleston, SC
Stuart and Rebecca Greenberg, Florence, SC
Max and Ann Meddin Bellman, Charleston, SC
Alan and Charlotte Kahn, Columbia, SC
Jerry and Sue Kline, Columbia, SC
Michael S. Kogan, Charleston, SC
Ronald Kramer, Bryn Mawr, PA
Allan and Jeanne Lieberman, Charleston, SC

Foundational Pillar
Nathan and Marlene Addlestone Foundation
Sherman Charitable Trust
Henry and Sylvia Yashav Foundation

Founding Patrons
Rachel and Henry Barnett, Columbia, SC
Barry Krell, Charleston, SC

C.B.P.
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Harvey and Mimi Giebner
Ruth Brody Greenberg
Ann and Al Scherz
Raymond Rosenblum
Raymond and Florence Stern
Raphael and Lois Wolpert
Jerry Zucker
Join the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Name: ________________________________________________

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Phone: _____________________________ Fax: _____________________________

E-mail Address: ________________________________________________

ANNUAL DUES FOR 2018 (JANUARY–DECEMBER)

___ Individual/Family Membership $36

___ Friend $200

___ Institutional $250

___ Sponsor $350

___ Patron $750

___ Founding patron $1,000

___ Pillar ($1,000 per year for 5 years) $5,000

___ Foundational Pillar ($2,000 per year for 5 years) $10,000

Join or renew online at jhssc.org.

Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional $36 each.
Send us their information and we will inform them of your gift.

Make checks payable to JHSSC
and mail to the address above.

Register now for the April 28–29 meeting in Charleston. See page 9 for more information.
Register now for fall meeting
October 20–21, 2018
in Sumter and Camden

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Endangered Congregations
Strategies for Survival

Volume XXIII  Number 2  Fall 2018
In this issue

Sumter’s Temple Sinai Breathes New Life – Annie Rivers | It took a village to save this synagogue and its cemetery. The Charleston Jewish Federation, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim of Charleston, Coastal Community Foundation, Sumter County Museum, and Sumter County locals responded to the congregation’s call for help to prepare for an uncertain future. Temple Sinai’s Jewish History Center opened on June 2, 2018, ushering in a new era for a two-centuries-old community and assuring responsible stewardship of a historic landmark. ............................................................. 4

Eulogy for Elizabeth – Dale Rosengarten | Beloved friend and colleague Elizabeth Moses leaves a lasting legacy at the College of Charleston, Georgetown’s Beth Elohim, and in the new Jewish Historical Society of Temple Sinai, which she helped to create. .......................... 6

Turning Out the Lights – Dr. Louis A. Drucker | Imagine growing up in a town so small, there aren’t enough Jews for a minyan. And then imagine families from a few rural communities coming together in 1945 to form a congregation and build a synagogue to serve the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. The author describes how Temple Beth Or in Kingstree taught him the value of education, hard work, and compassion, but it was the sense of shared history and the feeling of belonging to an extended family that made closing the doors for the last time so painful. …… 8

Love and Loyalty: Temple Mt. Sinai in Walterboro – Paul Siegel, Gale Siegel Messerman, Penny Siegel Blachman, and Joseph Siegel | The post-World War II Baby Boomer generation was making its appearance when Walterboro’s Jews began raising the necessary funds to build a synagogue and acquire land for burials. The congregation did indeed “boom” for the next three decades, followed by a period of steady decline. Though too few for a weekly minyan, the membership swells each year for the High Holidays, as the sons and daughters who moved away return, drawn by fidelity to a community that once flourished. .............................................. 9

Endangered Congregations | Strategies for Survival | JHSSC meets in Sumter and Camden, October 20-21, 2018 | JHSSC’s fall meeting in Sumter and Camden will consider the plight of endangered congregations. Small-town southern Jews remain present in the remnants of their homes, businesses, and religious buildings, even if they are too few to raise a minyan. Just 25 years ago, South Carolina was one of only two states in America where more citizens lived in rural areas than in urban centers. Rural roads and railroads linked the towns to each other and to major population centers. Religion tied South Carolina’s Jews together. In October we will explore what remains of families and buildings in these far-flung communities. South Carolina’s population has almost doubled over the past five decades, with that in mind, we will discuss strategies for the preservation or the reestablishment of Jewish life in small towns.

JHSSC will discuss strategies for the preservation or the reestablishment of Jewish life in small towns. Looking forward to JHSSC’s 25th anniversary year, I think back on our founding members, on those who have been involved since the early years, and on those who are no longer with us. We sadly add to the list of those who have lost our fellow board member and beloved friend Elizabeth Moses of Sumter. I meet the Moses family through the Society, working with Robert Moses when we founded JHSSC, and with his youngest daughter, Elizabeth, on our first and second Georgetown meetings. We all miss her, and we extend our deepest condolences to the Moses family.

I look forward to seeing you in Sumter and Camden this fall. Please send me your suggestions, concerns, and ideas for future meetings.

Wishing everyone a healthy and happy New Year,

Jeffrey Rosenblum, FAIA, JHSSC President
Sumter’s Temple Sinai Breathes New Life
by Annie Abrams Rivers, Executive Director, Sumter County Museum

Sumter has a rich Jewish history. The first Jewish immigrants arrived here from Charleston around 1815. From the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s, there was a steady Jewish presence in town thanks to active retail, textile, and manufacturing opportunities aided by vital nearby rail lines. As in many small-town southern communities, however, the latter half of the 20th century saw the congregation dwindle. Younger manufacturing opportunities aided by vital nearby rail lines. As an enterprise. The museum and temple boards and I decided that the social hall would make a great display area after a few renovations. Temple Sinai agreed to raise funds for the project and I promised to assist by finding grants.

The Sumter County Museum, Temple Sinai, and Coastal Community Foundation signed an agreement in December 2016 with the mutual goal to preserve the Temple Sinai building “as a historic entity with the purpose of operating it as an educational and cultural facility.” The document details a plan for the Foundation to manage and disburse the temple’s cash assets to ensure the maintenance of the building. The Sumter County Museum agreed to develop a historical exhibit and oversee the building’s care. Through all discussions, it was made clear that the temple would continue to be available as needed for Sabbath and holiday services as well as celebratory occasions and funerals. While it took several drafts to reach a final agreement, the signed document provides clear instructions for each party in the immediate and distant future. Ackerman and Schwartz got busy fundraising. I secured a Connected Communities grant from the Central Carolina Community Foundation. By early 2017, the project was a reality.

I suggested hiring the Charleston-based company HW Exhibits, then known as the History Workshop, to help curate and design the exhibition. I had worked with its staff members on the museum’s outdoor signage and was impressed with their skills in exhibit design and fabrication. We had a great team from HW Exhibits, led by Rachel Bragg as project manager and Kelly Bozarth as designer. First, we determined the exhibit’s mission: to remember, celebrate, and share Jewish history with the people of Sumter and their visitors. While we knew we wanted a significant portion of the display to focus on the Holocaust, featuring the story of Sumter’s own Holocaust survivor, Abe Stern, we felt it was also important to tell the history of Jewish life in our town. Jews played a major role in the development of both city and county. With the Jewish population declining in numbers, it seemed more important than ever to ensure the historic memory of this portion of the people would be preserved.

In spring 2017, we hired Elizabeth Moses as Sumter County Museum’s Education and Outreach Coordinator. Moses, originally from Sumter, has deep Jewish roots in the community and had been a critical player in developing the landmark exhibit A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life. In collaboration between the College of Charleston and McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina. She helped connect the museum to long-standing members of the congregation and their children.

Not knowing anything about running a museum, Ackerman and Jay Schwartz approached the Sumter County Museum Board of Trustees with the idea in 2015. Considering the temple’s proximity to the museum and its significant historical value, the board quickly supported the idea but wanted to make sure it was feasible for a small museum staff to manage such an enterprise. The museum and temple boards and I decided that the social hall would make a great display area after a few

Two years later, Sinai’s board of directors appointed a long-range planning committee composed of Roger Ackerman, Harby Moses, Robert Moses, Ray Reich, and Jay Schwartz. The committee had to face the hard questions of what to do with the historic 1913 building if Temple Sinai no longer had sufficient members to keep the synagogue going. Would it be turned into something else? Sold? They also had to secure the future care of their cemetery. In 2007, the temple’s archives were donated to Special Collections at the College of Charleston.

On a friend’s recommendation, Ackerman reached out to consultant David Samat, former president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta and current president of the

Jewish Community Legacy Project. Ackerman remembers being at an “impasse” until Samat visited. They decided to tackle the cemetery concern first. With the Charleston Jewish Federation. After several meetings, an agreement was drawn up for the Federation to manage perpetual care of the cemetery.

They then turned their focus to the temple building complex. Robert Moses suggested contacting Charleston’s Reform synagogue, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE). Since most of the original Jewish settlers in Sumter came from Charleston, KKBE already had a strong tie to Temple Sinai. A large congregation with a robust historical consciousness, Beth Elohim was willing and eager to help Temple Sinai.

Another agreement was drawn up, this time giving KKBE control over the temple board and the ultimate decision of when to turn the lights off. Temple Sinai set up two endowments with the Coastal Community Foundation: one for the Charleston Jewish Federation to use for the cemetery’s care, the other for the “care, maintenance, and operation” of the synagogue as well as support for Jewish heritage programs.

With the agreements successfully concluded, the committee did not have any additional plans. However, word got around through various news articles about the temple’s anticipated eventual closing. Local residents of Sumter without a Jewish background expressed concern and interest in helping. This led Roger Ackerman to consider turning part of the building into a museum about the Holocaust. With no permanent exhibit on the Holocaust between Atlanta and Richmond, he saw an opportunity for the temple to serve as an educational resource for the students of Sumter County and beyond.

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and as a result we acquired many artifacts and photos to tell the story of Sumter’s Jewish life.

The exhibition is divided into seven sections: Discover Judaism, Finding a Place: Jewish Immigrants Arrive in South Carolina, Jewish Life in Sumter, the Holocaust, Sumter Connections to the Holocaust, a Holocaust reflection area, and Congregation

The Temple Sinai Jewish History Center, as we named the new museum, opened to great fanfare on June 2, 2018. We chose the word Center to call attention to the fact that it is more than a static exhibit. We plan to sponsor educational programming throughout the year with lectures, musical performances, and other events. While the exhibit installation is mostly permanent, portions will change, and artifacts will rotate over time.

Eulogy for Elizabeth, Temple Sinai, Sumter, SC

delivered by Dale Rosengarten on July 25, 2018

T
oday we are tasked with saying goodbye to Elizabeth, youngest daughter of Harriett and Robert Moses. We ache with her death because, whether we knew her as daughter, sister, colleague, co-worker, friend, mentor, or prayer leader, she was a loved one. In all the roles she played, under all the hats she wore, she never let anyone down. Elizabeth would do for you and go as far for you as she could, and then go some more.

When I first met her dad and mom in 1995, soon after we launched the Jewish Heritage Project at the College of Charleston, Elizabeth was living in Massachusetts, working as a biologist with a specialty in marine mammals. I heard about her as the younger sister of Natalie, Carol, Katherine, and Laura, as the one who loved animals and who decided to pursue her father’s religion—studying diligently with rabbis Michael Mellen and Jonathan Magidovitch and, in 1997, converting to Judaism.

Armed with a bachelor’s degree from Wofford and a master’s degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Elizabeth spent the first dozen years of her professional career working with marine life—a Sea World and the New England Aquarium, and on research cruises in the North Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Eastern Tropical Pacific.

In 1999 she ended her seafaring days and returned to South Carolina. She began working for the College of Charleston as an archival associate for the Jewish Heritage Collection and as an administrative assistant for the Jewish Studies Program. That’s when I came to know and love her. Among other tasks, she persuaded reluctant lenders to let us acquire the litany: “Myer Moses I was a Patriot in the War of Independence, Myer Moses II in the War of 1812, and Myer Moses III, a rebel in the War between the States. Elizabeth loaned an ambrotype of Myer III for the show.

It was a long journey to reach this point, but we are all very proud of the temple’s new life. Ackerman recalls, “We worked hard. I can’t tell you how many times we met over agreements. To see the end result is emotional. We can’t wait to share the Center with members of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina at their October meeting in Sumter. For more information, please visit our website at www.sumtercountymuseum.org.

As a Portion of the People

On her father’s mother’s side, the Emanuel ancestors came to America on the boat popularly known as the “Jewish Mayflower”—the St. Catherine—which, in 1654, carried 23 Jewish refugees from Recife, Brazil, to the port of New Amsterdam, later called New York.

Elizabeth was proud of her heritage and devoted to her family, but her most outstanding characteristic, in my opinion, was her commitment to truth-telling. She was one of those people who could be read like a book, or even a half truth. She told it like she saw it and would not hesitate to point out when the emperor had no clothes.

She also had a keen sense of humor, a deep interest in history, and a way with words.

Just as A Portion of the People began its two-year tour, Elizabeth made plans to move to Georgetown, SC. She never was a big city girl, she said, and always preferred small town life. She had heard that congregation Beth Elohim in Georgetown was in trouble, its members so few and so aged, they were talking about selling the synagogue and “turning off the lights.”

Landing a job as instructor and research technician in the Department of Marine Science at Coastal Carolina University, and finding a small house that would accommodate her and her menagerie of dogs and cats, she made the move. With persistence, intelligence, and gentle persuasion, she fought out Jewish retirees who had migrated to the Grand Strand and brought them into the fold of Georgetown’s longstanding Jewish community. Many of the newcomers had more Jewish education than the natives, but almost none knew how illustrious the town’s history was. Elizabeth knew! It would have been easy for her to become bitter and hardened, or to surrender to self-pity and regret. But she did not hear that and you did not see that development of A Portion of the People—the Chronicle of 500 years of southern Jewish life. She connected us with members of her extended family and helped persuade reluctant lenders to let us borrow objects for the exhibition.

As many of us know, the roots of the Moses family tree run deep in South Carolina, going back to before the American Revolution. I used to like to rattle off the litany: Myer Moses I was a Patriot in the War of Independence, Myer Moses II in the War of 1812, and Myer Moses III, a rebel in the War between the States. Elizabeth loaned an ambrotype of Myer III for the show.


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Elizabeth Moses greets a diamondback terrapin during one of her marine animal surveys in North Inlet, east of Georgetown, SC, ca. 2003. Photo: Rob Young.
Turning Out the Lights
by Dr. Louis A. Drucker, Past President, Temple Beth Or, Kingstree, SC

Turn out the lights when you leave. It’s a simple statement that we’ve all heard. Seems reasonable, seems easy, but how do you do it? How do you do it when it’s your synagogue and you’re not only leaving, you’re closing? Such is the fate of many of South Carolina’s small-town congregations, including mine, Temple Beth Or in Kingstree, South Carolina. In February 2005, the day after my father’s funeral, I had to turn out the lights.

The congregation at Temple Beth Or taught me many things. I learned to read Hebrew. I learned the history of the Jewish people and their historic struggles with many kinds of strife. I learned how hard work and compassion for others could reward you with far more than wages at a job. I learned that not all the people in my temple were perfect, but each had a purpose and a place. I learned to be a leader of the congregation and of weekly Shabbat services. I learned how to make as much noise as possible when I heard the name HAMAN! But what I never learned was how to end it all. How could it be that I, the president of the congregation, was going to be the one to make the decision that it was time to close the doors? How could it be that, after only 60 years, did this happen? How can I go over to our cemetery and turn on the lights when I leave? It’s a simple statement that we’ve all heard. Seems reasonable, seems easy, but how do you do it?

April 1945 as a Conservative congregation by Jewish families that lived in small towns in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. They met in members’ homes until they finally decided upon a location for a synagogue in Kingstree. On April 10, 1949, the cornerstone for Temple Beth Or was placed. Like all congregations, there were Shabbat services, onegs, seders, Purim festivals, men’s club and Sisterhood, religious school, Hanukkah parties, field trips, youth group, monthly bulletins, and fundraisers. We did it all. Except we didn’t have a rabbi. How could we? We were only a small group of families in a small town.

Fortunately, Synagogue Emanu-El in Charleston was willing to take us under its wing for many years; with its help every child in our congregation for decades was either a bar or bat mitzvah. Every year, for the High Holidays, we hosted a rabbinical student from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York to lead us in prayer. Our congregation prospered. Little did we know that our level of education, drive, and success would contribute to our demise. It wasn’t long before our children, who had achieved excellence in the classroom and society, were now leaving our sleepy rural setting for life in bustling cities around the country. The job market was changing and our community wasn’t. The proprietors of many Jewish businesses in Kingstree and nearby towns were retiring and closing their businesses.

As our numbers diminished, so did our potential to attract new members. How do you convince that new Jewish couple with the four-year-old daughter to come to your temple when all the other Shabbat services depend on finding a minyan; when you have no religious school because there are only two children in the congregation; when all of that and more is offered at another temple 40 miles away? I suspect similar scenarios have taken place in other small Jewish communities in South Carolina, such as Camden, Dillon, and Orangeburg—isolated towns negatively affected by changes in the local economy and population. Some small congregations, like Temple Beth Elohim in Georgetown, have been able to avoid extinction because of their geographical advantage. Retirees moving south help to sustain these congregations, though it’s a different environment, where there is a thriving city or town. Many of our small congregations in South Carolina don’t have the societal infrastructure needed to retain their residents, let alone draw newcomers.

I only hope you don’t have to be the person who turns out the light.

Love and Loyalty: Temple Mt. Sinai in Walterboro
by Paul Siegel, Gale Siegel Messerman, Penny Siegel Blachman, and Joseph Siegel

During the early years of Jewish religious life in Walterboro, South Carolina, dating to the early 1900s, Sabbath services were held in private homes, the Masonic hall adjoining Zalin’s Department Store, and, for a time, at the Walterboro Army Airfield chapel. The Torah was kept at the home of Jacob Frank. Lewis Harris, the son of Ruth Horowitz and Abram Harris, proprietors of Hayes Jewelers on Washington Street in Walterboro and later on Lucas Street to the Masonic hall, carrying the Torah wrapped in a sheet. Various members of the Jewish community led the prayers and delivered sermons. Among the earliest members were our maternal great-grandparents (Joseph’s great-great-grandparents) Anna Barth and Hyman Zalin. Their daughter Besie married Albert Novit, and their daughter Leona, our mother, married Anderson native Sam Siegel.

The cataclysmic events of World War II inspired this population at large. Temple Mt. Sinai groundbreaking, Walterboro, SC, 1950.

The completion of the Synagogue was not, in itself, the end. It is the beginning . . . the spirit of a congregation is more than its beautiful temple. Gold and marble are never as bright as love and loyalty." The Rev. John Youniger extended formal greetings on behalf of the Walterboro Ministerial Union. A reception in the temple's cultural center: "The completion of the Synagogue is not, in itself, the end. It is the beginning . . . the spirit of a congregation is more than its beautiful temple. Gold and marble are never as bright as love and loyalty." The Rev. John Youniger extended formal greetings on behalf of the Walterboro Ministerial Union. A reception in the temple's new assembly hall followed the ceremony. The Rev. John Youniger extended formal greetings on behalf of the Walterboro Ministerial Union. A reception in the temple's new assembly hall followed the ceremony. In the early 1950s, the congregation also arranged to
have a parcel of land in Walterboro’s Live Oak Cemetery set aside for a Jewish burial ground, freeing the city’s Jews from having to purchase plots 50 miles away in Charleston, an accomplishment that was a high priority for our father, Sam Siegel. Congregants purchase their respective plots directly from the Live Oak Cemetery Association.

Our congregation has never formally affiliated with either the Conservative or Reform tradition. At the January 1952 annual meeting, Sam Novit, our great-uncle, moved that they affiliate with the Conservative Movement. A discussion followed with members expressing concern over the cost and a desire to determine personal preferences first. A straw poll was taken and the result was thirteen for Conservative and nine for Reform, but there was no motion, second, or formal vote.

Affiliation with United Synagogue of America (later renamed United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism) was proposed again in 1956, this time by Henry Kessler. The same concerns were raised but, in the end, the board decided to request materials to help plan services from both the United Synagogue and Hebrew Union College (Reform).

Although the Conservative label stuck, many members have felt a close kinship with Reform; a number have also held membership at either Synagogue Emanu-El or the Reform Temple Beth El of Charleston. Most of the Baby Boomers and their children have moved to larger cities, the extended families, understanding that their children attending Sunday school. Although the future looked bright, the changing business dynamics of small towns in the United States presented a challenge. Once a thriving area for small businesses, many owned by Jewish families, downtown Walterboro no longer provided a fertile environment for this type of enterprise. Young people, looking for social, cultural, and economic opportunities, were drawn to urban areas. By the 1950s, U.S. Highway 301 offered travelers the fastest route between the Northeast and Florida. The South Carolina portion, completed in the late ‘40s, is well inland from U.S. Hwy 15 and diverted tourists to Robertston, a 40 miles west of Walterboro. Roads were better and gas was cheaper. In the 1970s, with the advent of Charleston Square and Northwoods Mall, more and more Walterboro residents did their shopping on the outskirts of Charleston. Further damage occurred when, first, Kmart came to Walterboro, then Walmart and Super Walmart.

Sixty-six years after the founding of Temple Mt. Sinai, Jewish life in Walterboro has drastically diminished. With fewer than ten members residing in town, holding weekly Shabbat services is not realistic. However, there is still something remarkable about the Jews of Walterboro. While most of the Baby Boomers and their children have moved to larger cities, the extended families, understanding that their roots lie in this small, southern town, come together every year to worship at Temple Mt. Sinai for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Although our numbers have dwindled, our community is still a proud community and will not give up our identity.

Bernard Warshaw (center, in black), former president of the JHSSC, and his wife, Ann, surrounded by family and fellow congregants, Temple Mt. Sinai, Walterboro, SC, ca. 2006. Photo: Alan Gardner, MD. Courtesy of Paul Siegel.

Paul Siegel, president of the congregation for four decades, fondly remembers community leader Bernard Warshaw informing the congregation of attempts by Charleston synagogues to “swallow up” Temple Mt. Sinai. Paul remembers Bernard striding up to the bimah and announcing to the congregation that “we are a proud community and will not give up our identity.”

In the three decades after building the synagogue, the Jews of Walterboro maintained a vibrant religious community with as many as 50 adult members in the congregation and 15 children attending Sunday school. Although the future looked bright, the changing business dynamics of small towns in the United States presented a challenge. Once a thriving area for small businesses, many owned by Jewish families, downtown Walterboro no longer provided a fertile environment for this type of enterprise. Young people, looking for social, cultural, and economic opportunities, were drawn to urban areas. By the 1950s, U.S. Highway 301 offered travelers the fastest route between the Northeast and Florida. The South Carolina portion, completed in the late ‘40s, is well inland from U.S. Hwy 15 and diverted tourists to Walterboro, Walterboro was cheap. In the 1970s, with the advent of Charleston Square and Northwoods Mall, more and more Walterboro residents did their shopping on the outskirts of Charleston. Further damage occurred when, first, Kmart came to Walterboro, then Walmart and Super Walmart.

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Growing Up Jewish in Camden
by Garry Baum, Becky Baum Lourie, Cheryl Baum, and Harry Baum

When I was growing up in Camden, South Carolina, in the 1960s and '70s, the city had a population of around 8,000. Now it is about 7,000. But while the city itself has lost some residents, Kershaw County has really ballooned. The Jewish population of Camden was thriving when my siblings, Harry, Cheryl, Becky, and I were children, but it was starting its descent. Many kids, like me, left Camden after high school and did not return.

There were a few Jewish families in Camden with children: the Kareshes, Schreibers, James, and others. We would see each other at Jewish functions. My brother, sisters, and I were socially friendly with all of them. One of my earliest memories associated with Judaism was my brother Harry’s bar mitzvah. It was a big event and many of our out-of-town relatives attended. The celebration took place at the Holiday Inn in Lugoff, which may have been one of the few hotels in the Camden area and probably the only one that could hold the large crowd that attended.

Growing up Jewish in a small town was different from being raised in a city that had enough Jewish families to fill a synagogue and maintain a youth group. Most of my friends were not Jewish. They really didn’t understand my religion, but it was never an issue. The only difference was I got out of school for two days during the High Holidays, and we didn’t celebrate Christmas with a tree, though one time we had a “Hanukkah bush” made of tree branches and gum drops. We usually had a “Hanukkah bush” made of tree branches and gum drops. We usually had a “Hanukkah bush” made of tree branches and gum drops. We usually had a “Hanukkah bush” made of tree branches and gum drops. We usually had a “Hanukkah bush” made of tree branches and gum drops.

Our home was next to the temple and served as the place for oneg after Shabbat services. My mom, Ann Briskin Baum, would have coffee and such for the Jewish families that would stop by.

Our house also served as a landing spot for sorts for a number of relatives. They would either come for a visit on their way somewhere, or they would plan a vacation and stay with us for a few days. We had a large dining room table that accommodated several guests at various meals; of course, there was a kids’ table as well. My grandmother, Minnie, whom we called Nannie, would make the best chopped liver and that is when I learned to like it. To this day, all others are judged by hers.

Leon Schlosburg (wife Triaize) was our lay rabbi when I was little. Sometimes we would meet at one of Camden’s restaurants after services, and on a couple of occasions congregation members gathered to celebrate Hanukkah together; I remember spinning the dreidel with the other children. After Leon died, my dad, Bernie Baum, became the temple’s lay leader and conducted services for many years. When he and my mom moved to Myrtle Beach in the late 1980s, Jay Tanzer (wife Rita) led services. I remember Jay would also give a thoughtful and informational “sermon.” I always made it a point to return to Temple Beth El for High Holiday services. I still do.

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When I was growing up in Camden there were maybe 20 Jewish families who belonged to Temple Beth El—down from around 100 families in 1927. Our house was right next door to the temple, which, by the way used to be St. Mary’s Catholic Church, built in 1903. I remember going to temple as a young girl for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. There would always be a visiting, retired rabbi to conduct the services. Eventually, my father, Bernie Baum, took over leading the prayers for the holidays. My dad was not a rabbi; he owned Fox Pawn Shop, which was on Broad Street in the heart of downtown Camden. After he and my mother moved out of Camden, Jay Tanzer served as lay leader and he continued in that role for a number of years. Then my younger brother, Garry, took over, and he leads services twice a year for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I still go home with my family for Rosh Hashanah.

My siblings and I went to Sunday school classes in Sumter, though one temple in Sumter. I remember my sister, Cheryl, driving us there every Sunday and how I never wanted to go. My older brother, Harry, had a bar mitzvah at Temple Sinai, and Cheryl and my younger brother, Garry, and I were confirmed there.

At home my family celebrated Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Passover, and Hanukkah, but I don’t remember having a Shabbat meal on Fridays or lighting Shabbat candles as a child. The first time I lit Shabbat candles, we were having a meal with my husband’s parents, Susan and Isadore Lourie. I remember thinking how special that felt and tried to do it often with my children when they were young.

I loved growing up in a small southern town and being Jewish was just that. I was Jewish and my friends were not, but that was okay. Life in Camden was good.

The sanctuary at Temple Beth El has not changed much. We do have air conditioning and heat now. Before that, we had large fans to cool us off. We have an annex in the back of the temple where the children—when there were enough for a class—went to Sunday school. My classmates learned more than I did about our Jewish heritage; I never learned much. Our class, which consisted of me, my brother Harry, and the Schreibers and Karesh kids, was very small—about eight altogether—so my family sent us to Temple Sinai in Sumter for Sunday school.

In the 1960s and early ‘70s, our temple had a nice crowd of about 40 people. Now we only have about ten families. We open up only four times a year for evening and day services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

My father, Bernie Baum, became our rabbi after Leon Schlosburg died. Now my brother Garry Baum leads our services and we have different people read from the Torah. A
member takes the Torah home after services to keep it safe. It was not hard living in Camden with such a small Jewish community. That's all I know. I still live in Camden and I love it. Opening the temple for our holidays is very exciting. Now we have families coming from large cities to celebrate with us. They say it's because we are small and they would rather come to a small temple instead of one of the larger ones.

Harry

During the 1960s I remember having Temple Beth El next door to the house where I grew up in Camden. That was good about 14 days a year, because those were days when the congregation gathered for services. Temple was very formal, but also—little did I know at the time—very English. Hebrew was never spoken, except for the Sh'ma and the Bar'chu, which were recited from memory, not read. We had a rabbi from Sumter come during the school year once a month, on Sunday afternoons, to lead Shabbat services. During the High Holidays, the president of the congregation led the services—that is, the part in English. We would take out the Torah but never open it. As a child all I remember was being told to be quiet.

Sunday school meant going to Sumter every week—a 70-mile round trip. At the beginning, a high school student, Steve Zagoria, was hired to drive us. When he graduated it required an unhappy parent. Then three of us—David Karesh, Harry Kline, and me—had our bar mitzvah. We became the Hebrew experts. Even if we said something wrong, who knew?

Today the reality is the size of the congregation at Temple Beth El continues to shrink. I remember three generations of the Baum family—our grandparents Minnie T. Baum and Morris and Cille Briskin; Minnie’s sisters, Rose Israel and Augusta Simons; Uncle Norman Baum; and my parents and siblings—taking up the entire right side of the temple, while the rest of the congregation was on the left. Many of us have moved away. Today, we have fewer than ten dues-paying families. Once we invited some friends of mine from a local Baptist church, who were interested in attending a service, and they outnumbered the Jewish people.

My brother, Garry, is in charge of services. Without him and Barbara Freed James, who is temple secretary and treasurer, we would not exist. I hope more Jewish people come to Camden so we can keep the temple alive for many years to come. It would be a shame for it to close.


Left: Harry Maurice Baum’s bar mitzvah cake, created by Sura Wolff Wengrow of Columbia, SC, and Harry’s thank you note. Mrs. Wengrow made elaborately decorated cakes for many bar and bat mitzvah celebrations, and other occasions. She compiled an album filled with photographs documenting her creativity. Courtesy of Sura’s son Arnold Wengrow and daughter Reberta Wengrow Karesh.

Baum Brothers Store, ca. 1890, Camden, SC. Three Baum brothers emigrated from Schwersenz, Prussia, settled in Camden and, in 1850, opened a mercantile store. All were soldiers in the service of the Confederacy. Marcus Baum lost his life to friendly fire in 1864. After the Civil War, Herman and Mannes operated what their sign described as “The Mammoth Store” at 1000 Broad Street. In 1902, Baum Brothers stocked buggies, groceries, dry goods, and hardware. Special Collections, College of Charleston.
My earliest recollection of going to shul in Anderson was around 1947. I was about five years old. The service was held in a room over a grocery store on East Whitner Street. I remember looking down out of the window at the children walking to town when school at McCants Junior High was over for the day. I don’t remember anything about the service but I do remember that my new wool suit itched terribly and I was very uncomfortable. The next year we had our own synagogue. There was no air conditioning back then, the wooden pews were hard, the sanctuary was crowded with a lot of big loud people I didn’t know, and my wool suit still itched. The cantor was Nahum Rosenblum and he made each Hebrew word he chanted last forever and ever. I remember he would spend an eternity on just the one word “Hamelech.” I remember recruiting (begging) Lynn, who was a teacher, to add Hebrew to the curriculum. She agreed, even though she didn’t know how to read Hebrew. I bought the books and told her she just had to stay one lesson ahead of the kids. She did great with it!

The congregation was initially Orthodox, with services led by George Ackerman of Walhalla, South Carolina, and a series of part-time rabbis, including Rabbis Norman Goldberg, William (Bill) Feyer, and Israel Gerber. In the 1950s, there was a shift toward Conservative practices. For a few years the Shabbat services were Conservative but High Holidays were Orthodox. In the late ’70s, the congregation shifted to Reform services. We briefly joined the Reform Movement and still use the Reform Gates of Prayer as our prayer book on Shabbat.

Many improvements have been made to the sanctuary, which can seat 150 people. We installed air conditioning in the mid-to late ’50s, replaced the carpeting, and added padding to the pews. We replaced the old 1940s roll-out windows with 12 beautiful stained glass windows, and we recently added stained glass doors to our ark in memory of Alvin Fleishman, reportedley Anderson’s first bar mitzvah. The ark now houses three Torahs. The original was brought over from Kiev by my grandfather Zalman Poliakoff. We also have a Holocaust Torah from a community in Czechoslovakia that we traditionally use for the afternoon service on Yom Kippur.

In recent times, Dr. Robert Kimmel, Dr. Peter Cohen, and Mike Krupsaw have provided bar and bat mitzvah training. Lay leaders conduct services every Friday night, and Dr. Kimmel leads services for the major Holidays, as well as several Shabbat services.

The membership of our congregation has stayed fairly steady over the past ten years. At its peak Temple B’Nai Israel served 36 member-families, a number that now stands at 25. The demographics are a cause of concern. When we had 36 families most members were in their 30s and 40s and there were about 50 kids. Now there are almost no children—in the 1990s our Sunday school classrooms were converted to one large area for break-the-fast meals and Passover Seders. Our membership ranges in age from 60 to 80.

I’m not sure what the future holds for Temple B’Nai Israel of Anderson. While the general population of the Anderson area is growing, the number of Jews is declining. We do lose some potential members, especially those with young children, to Temple of Israel, Beth Israel, and Chabad in Greenville. New industry coming to Anderson all the time and there is a major push to build hotels, parks, and a convention facility in the Lake Hartwell recreational area. We have some new members, recent retirees who have moved to our area from other parts of the country. Maybe if we hold on long enough, a retirement community like the one Del Webb built near Bluffton will come here and bring with it sufficient numbers of Jewish residents to spark a revival in our congregation.

Small-town Conundrum: Temple Sinai of Orangeburg

When we moved to Orangeburg in 1981, Lillian Goldberg, our next door neighbor, invited us to Friday night services at Temple Sinai, which were conducted by her brother Mordie Rubenstein. It wasn’t until a few years later that we finally accepted the offer. During our first visit we were warmly greeted by the dozen or so congregants. They welcomed our three-year-old daughter and newborn son, expressing joy about seeing children in the synagogue again.

In 1956, after years of fund raising and holding services in family homes, Temple Sinai was built at its current site on Ellis Avenue, in a residential neighborhood. By the 1980s, Temple Sinai’s membership—like that of many synagogues in small southern towns—was shrinking. As children grew up they moved out of town seeking employment elsewhere; parents were aging and some passed away. There weren’t enough younger people to replace them in the congregation. At that time, a minyan was unusual for Friday night services, and most of the congregation attended only one service, which was on Yom Kippur.

Then, on January 24, 1987, Mordie Rubenstein died. Without our lay rabbi, services were discontinued until Rosh Hashanah, when the son of a rabbi was hired to conduct services, which was tradition. We traded the Yom Kippur fast in the basement of the synagogue with food brought in by the members. It was always our best attended event of the year. That year, at the Yom Kippur break-the-fast, Mordie’s widow, Yetta, got up and remarked that since her husband passed away we had not had one service; she felt we were no longer a functioning synagogue and, as treasurer, proposed that we hold a business meeting in two weeks to discuss closing the synagogue and distributing its assets.

Approximately 30 people attended the business meeting, including—to my surprise—several non-members. One gentleman was an accountant who was Jewish but converted to Unitarianism and attended a church in Columbia, South Carolina. While claiming no affiliation with Temple Sinai, he said he felt a tie to Judaism and he had the expertise to help us liquidate the assets.

There were two primary opinions on how to proceed. The first was we should sell the building and distribute all assets to other places of worship in Orangeburg. The rationale was that these churches helped us when we were raising money to build Temple Sinai since they thought bringing a synagogue to Orangeburg would complete the major institutions of religious worship in the area. The second strategy, endorsed by most of the congregation, was to continue as we had in the past; no one, however, was willing to assume the leadership position.
Finally, a compromise was proposed: three members would alternate conduct services, so as not to put a big burden on one person. In addition, instead of Friday nights, services would be conducted on Saturday mornings to accommodate elderly members who preferred to drive in daylight. The last and most significant change was the decision to hold services only on the first Saturday of the month. Our thinking was that members would be more likely to attend regularly if the obligation was less demanding.

That year was a resounding success. Attendance was high and most members expressed satisfaction with the renewed fellowship. Unfortunately, at the end of the year, two of the lay readers moved out of state, leaving me with the responsibility of running services. Over the last two decades, new members, David Farr in particular, have shared the leadership of the synagogue.

From about 1988 to 2000, things went smoothly. Since former members were persuaded to rejoin under our new format, enrollment expanded to roughly 50 members at our peak. Among those who joined were a few well known citizens, whose participation improved our visibility. We invited non-Jewish residents to special events such as our Passover Seder, which helped to increase awareness of Judaism in the area. But recurring problems—an aging population, children leaving the area, to increase awareness of Judaism in the area. But recurring problems—an aging population, children leaving the area, leaving me with the responsibility of running services. Over the last two decades, new members, David Farr in particular, have shared the leadership of the synagogue.

-- Susan and Charles Altman, Charleston, SC

Telling the Story

by Mark Swick, Executive Director, JHSSC

A s of press time, it has been nearly four months since JHSSC’s spring meeting when I stepped into Marty Perlmuter’s gigantic shoes as the Society’s executive director. I have spent that time working with JHSSC staff and lay leadership on our major initiatives, including our upcoming fall meeting in Sumter and Camden and next spring’s 25th anniversary gala, to be held in Charleston.

We continue to make great progress with our newest venture, the Jewish Merchant Project (JMP), which aims to collect the story of every Jewish merchant who has operated in South Carolina and document the impact Jewish businesswomen and women have had on their communities, large and small. The JMP website is up and running—awaiting input from all of you who have information to share. Check it out at www.merchants.jhssc.org. Take the survey, explore the map, volunteer to help.

The merchant information we’ve gathered so far confirms what we have long known: that Jewish storekeepers who set up shop on main streets across the state became, with their families, the backbone of small congregations, reaching their peak as the post–World War II Baby Boomers came of age. When that generation moved away to pursue higher education and occupations elsewhere, the Jewish populations of small towns began to wane, and congregations faltered. Sensing the shifting tide, the Society’s founders, led by Isadore Lourie, felt compelled to record and remember what they saw as an endangered contingent of South Carolina Jewry. Telling the story of the small-town Jewish merchant was very much at the heart of JHSSC’s mission.

Small and mid-sized Jewish communities, not only in South Carolina but across the nation, continue to suffer from demographic decline, with some disappearing entirely. A few have found creative strategies for survival, while others are searching for a way forward. As you’ve read in this issue, our fall meeting in Sumter and Camden will focus on the plight of endangered congregations and consider approaches that may reverse the downward spiral. While looking backwards is a quality inherent to all historical societies, I am proud that JHSSC also looks to the future.

Our most ambitious initiatives, not to mention day-to-day operations, are made possible by the generosity of our Pillars—JHSSC members who commit $5,000 over five years. Pillars allow us to think big and take our work seriously. For that you are owed a debt of gratitude, as well as an invitation to join us in October. Please come to the open board meeting Sunday morning and help us plan events to commemorate our 25th year. We have much to do, and much to celebrate.

Barry Frishberg, lay leader of Temple Sinai, Orangeburg, SC. Rosh Hashanah 2010. Photo: Larry Hardy, Courtesy of The Times and Democrat (Orangeburg, SC.).

Living by the Rails: A History of Lowcountry Railroads

The Morris Center for Lowcountry Heritage, Ridgeland, SC

April 28, 2018 – March 19, 2019

The Morris Center for Lowcountry Heritage, Ridgeland, SC

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While researching her family history, attorney and Charleston native Deborah Lipman Cochelin discovered that her great-grandfather Solomon Lipman, who lived in Ridgeland, South Carolina, filed a lawsuit against the Atlantic Coastline Railroad in 1913. The outcome resulted in a ruling that stands today in the book Living by the Rails, currently on display at the Morris Center for Lowcountry Heritage in Ridgeland. The center is open, free of charge, Tuesday through Saturday, 10 to 5. Its third annual Dine, Dance, and Discover Fundraising Gala will be held on October 26.

Pillars

Susan and Charles Altman, Charleston, SC

Ellen Arnovitz, Atlanta, GA

Doris L. Baumgarten, Aiken, SC

Harold Brody, Atlanta, GA

Alessio and Dina Cohen, Delray Beach, FL

Joan Cutler, Columbia, SC

Barry and Ellen David, Anderson, SC

Lowell and Barbara Epstein, Charleston, SC

Bruce and Lolly Filler, Columbus, OH

Steven J. Gold, Greenville, SC

Judith Green, Charleston, SC

Stuart and Rebecca Greensberg, Florence, SC

Max and Ann Medwin Hillman, Charleston, SC

Alan and Charlotte Kahn, Columbus, OH

Judy and Sue Kline, Columbus, OH

Jehuda and Karen Kogan, Charleston, SC

Allan and Jeanne Lieberman, Charleston, SC

Susan R. Lourie, Columbus, SC

Bert and Robin Mercer, Charleston, SC

Susan Pearlstein, Charleston, SC

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Edward and Sandra Poliakoff, Columbus, OH

Alan and Anne Reyner, Columbus, SC

Deborah Ritter, Columbus, SC

Benedict and Brenda Rosen, Myrtle Beach, SC

Jeffrey and Mickey Rosenblum, Charleston, SC

Sandie Lee Rosenbaum, Charleston, SC

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--- Individual/Family Membership                             $36
--- Friend                                                                        $200
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--- Sponsor                                                                     $350
--- Patron                                                                        $750
--- Founding patron                                                       $1,000
--- Pillar ($1,000 per year for 5 years)                           $5,000
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Join or renew online at jhssc.org.
Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional $36 each.
Send us their information and we will inform them of your gift.

Make checks payable to JHSSC
and mail to the address above.

Register now for the October 20–21 meeting in Sumter and Camden.
See page 11 for more information.
In this issue

A Good Living Can Be Made in Trade— Lynn Robertson — The dream of many Jewish immigrants arriving in South Carolina around the turn of the 20th century was to develop a successful selling route, acquire a store of their own, find a spouse, and raise a family. In this essay, the curator of A Store at Every Crossroads traces the roles Jewish merchant families played not only in southern cities, but in every town and hamlet along a railroad line or highway. — 4

D. Poliakov: 100 Years on the Square – Ed Poliakov — D. Poliakov emigrated in 1893 from the detsel of Kamen, northeast of Minsk in today’s Belarus. After short stints in several upcountry towns, he settled in Abbeville, South Carolina, where he opened a clothing store in 1900 that remained in operation for a full century. — 8

Edward’s $5- $100- $1.00 Stores and the Kronsberg Brothers — Mickey Kronsberg Rosenblum — With help from his uncle Joseph Bluestein, Edward Kronsberg opened the first Edward’s five and ten cent store on King Street in Charleston in 1926. Joined in the 1930s by his brothers and mother, the Kronsbergs launched a 50-year expansion that led to the creation of more than 35 stores. — 10

Lowcountry: Past and Present — Lisa Rosamond Thompson — Look, and look again, at the images in this photo essay, and at I. D. Rubin’s “New York Pawn Office” on the cover. These “doubletakes” are reproduced from the artist’s senior thesis project at the College of Charleston. — 13

Revisiting the Past and Envisioning the Future — JHSSC Celebrates its 25th Anniversary, Charleston, SC, May 18–19, 2019 — 14–15

The Brody Brothers: Jewish Retail Giants in South Carolina — Harold J. Brody, M.D. — Russian immigrant Hyman Brody turned his shoe shop (est. 1918) in Sumter, South Carolina, into a department store, then tripled its floor space. When his sons joined the business, the Brodys expanded into North Carolina and opened a second store in Sumter called The Capitol. — 16

The Furchgott Stores, since 1866 — David Furchgott, with contributions from Alison Walsh and Maurice Furchgott — Slovakian Max Furchgott arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1865, and partnered for a time in dry goods with his brothers Herman and Leopold and businessmen Charles Benedict and Morris Kohn. The family spread out to the south, north, and west, establishing successful department stores in Jacksonville, Florida, as well as Charleston... — 18

Rails to Retail: Mercantile Pioneers in St. Stephens — Deborah Lipman Cochelin — St. Stephens, in the upper reaches of Berkeley County in an area described as the “wild, wild, West,” was a business frontier in the early 20th century for merchants Gus Rittenberg, Arthur Lipman, and Paul Read. — 20

The Sam Solomon Company — Kate Stillman, Martha Stillman Silverman, Ellen Jacobson Terry, and Marilyn Solomon Brilliant — Through much of the early 20th century, Sam Solomon Wholesale Jobbers helped to stock the shelves of storeowners and fill the packs of newly arrived immigrants who got their start by peddling. In the 1950s, Solomons’s sons and son-in-law shifted from wholesale to a retail discount operation and catalog showroom. In the ‘60s, Aaron Solomon made headlines by challenging the Sunday Blue Laws. — 24

What Makes a Merchant? — Mark Swick — JHSSC’s new executive director remembers the merchant patriarch of his family, Meyer Rosenblum, a Swedish immigrant who operated The Hub Clothing Co. in Iron Mountain, Michigan, exhibiting the same driving work ethic and sense of civic duty as his compatriots in South Carolina. — 27

Letter from the President

As JHSSC enters its 25th anniversary year, it’s a good time to reflect on what has been the secret to our success and longevity. I believe the key has been stability of leadership and staff, and a lot of hard work by all those involved. Marty Perlmutter and Dale Rosengarten were the catalysts who had enormous vision and put forth tremendous effort. Enid Idehohn, Alyssa Neely, Rachel Barnett, and Mark Swick are part of the team comprising the current backbone of the organization. We cannot thank them enough. It is an honor for me to be a part of a state-wide group, based at the College of Charleston, that, among its significant historical accomplishments, has brought together so many people from across South Carolina.

At the Society’s meeting in May we will get a preview of the Jewish Merchant Project. The first fruits of the effort is A Store at Every Crossroads, an exhibition opening on May 18 in Addlestone Library. Creating the exhibit and filling out online surveys has prompted many family members to assemble their histories, compiling archival materials and writing about the experiences of their forebears. Some of their essays appear here in print, with longer versions posted online.

The stories coming to light are from the era of our grandparents and parents, the early 20th century, when new immigrants built successful businesses—often dry goods stores—and contributed mightily to South Carolina’s economy and growth.

We were lucky to recruit Lynn Robertson, former director of McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina, to curate and design the exhibition, which has already attracted interest from Historic Columbia and the State Museum in Columbia. In the lead story in this issue, Lynn outlines the long history of Jewish merchants, from peddlers and small-town storekeepers to retail tycoons and builders of shopping malls. For the past 25 years, JHSSC has looked back in time to understand our present. Much of what we know about South Carolina Jewish history has been documented by our own research. At our May meeting, we will use our acquired knowledge to try to imagine what the next 25 years holds for the history of American, and especially southern, Jews. Three renowned speakers will help us forge these ideas. Historian Stephen J. Whitfield, author of nine books on American Jewish culture, will be our keynote speaker on Saturday. On Sunday morning we will host a conversation between Rabbi Judith Schneier, former senior rabbi at Charlotte’s Temple Beth El, and Steven R. Weissman, author of the recent bestseller Chosen Wars: How Judaism Became an American Religion. Together we will consider trends in Jewish life and culture that will affect our future and our children’s future over the decades to come.

The Society has awarded the Order of the Jewish Palmetto five times in its 25-year history—to Senator Isadore Laurie, Greenville Mayor Max and Mrs. Trude Heller, Solomon Breibart, Ann Meddin Heilman, and Dr. Martin Perlmutter. It will be my great pleasure to award the Jewish Palmetto for the sixth time to Dr. Dale Rosengarten.

Dale has been central to JHSSC from the very beginning, playing a major part in its organization in 1994. She is founding director of the Jewish Heritage Collection at the Addlestone Library and has built an extensive manuscript and oral history archives that attracts researchers from far and wide. In partnership with McKissick Museum, she curated the exhibition A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life at McKissick Museum, Columbia, SC, 2002. Photo by Jeri Perlmutter.


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A Good Living Can Be Made in Trade
by Lynn Robertson, curator, A Store at Every Crossroads

During the period of mass immigration between 1881 and 1924, the vast majority of East European Jews coming to the United States settled in urban areas, mainly outside the South. Northern and midwestern cities often are presented as sites of the typical American immigrant experience. But lives lived away from big cities are equally important to our understanding of history. South Carolina, undeniably rural and agricultural, offered Jewish “greenhorns” opportunities to experience, and integrate into, a different America.

It was here, throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, that small towns sprang up across the state along railroad lines and roadways, serving as trading hubs for local farmers and businesses. They attracted a significant influx of Jewish immigrants who had some background in retail trade; life as a rural peddler was an understood path to achieving financial security and being your own boss. For many newcomers, some of whom spoke only Yiddish, the dream was to develop a successful selling route, acquire a store of one’s own, find a spouse, and start a family.

Life in business often began with a dry goods store. These establishments sold most of what farm families needed, from plows to pillowcases. General merchandise stores commonly evolved into more specialized businesses as the town grew. Jewish merchants frequently encouraged other immigrant entrepreneurs or family members to join them—part of a matchmaking strategy that recruited single men as salesmen and potential suitors.

Many towns boasted numerous Jewish-owned stores by the 20th century. In 1927, the small town of Bishopville was home to 93 Jewish residents, many of whom, such as the Levensons, had stores on Main Street.

These general merchandise stores served as community centers in small towns—destinations where both town residents and rural visitors could socialize as well as shop. The local store was a hub for news and gossip, friendships and rivalries.

Customers, especially women, looked forward to acquiring not only daily necessities but also the modest luxuries displayed on the shelves.

Some early Jewish merchants established themselves as purveyors of inexpensive merchandise. Regional suppliers provided a wide variety of wholesale goods to peddlers and storeowners. The Baltimore Bargain House specialized in serving southern merchants, many of them Jewish, offering credit and prepaid freight on first orders. Arrangements like these made it affordable for would-be merchants to stock their wagons or shops and develop a clientele. In 1911, Wolfe Rubenstein and his wife, Fannie Berger, opened the appropriately named Underselling Store in Elloree. But, by World War II, they were successful enough to install a new awning carrying the more dignified Rubenstein’s above the store.

Jewish-owned establishments had a reputation for being more courteous to African-American clients, allowing them to try on articles of clothing, not a common practice in other shops. Jewish storekeepers also were more likely to extend credit to people of color. Their open-for-business policy required merchants to carefully navigate the racial norms in towns where the Ku Klux Klan operated openly. During the revival of KKK activity in the 1950s, Nathan Bass, the only Jewish merchant in North, South Carolina, both offered shelter to his customers during Klan displays and confronted his Masonic brothers on their racist views.

Small-town storeowners provided financial loans to regular customers, or became creditors in the crop lien system, where merchants furnished supplies to farmers against the sale of future crop yields. Holding the land as collateral, if years were bad, store men became landowners, and many diversified their investments by going into timber, cotton, or other crops. In this way, they started to look like so many of their fellow townsmen, managing land and worrying about the vicissitudes of weather and markets.

By the end of World War II—after the wholesale destruction of European Jewry that came to be called the Holocaust—American Jews emerged as the most affluent and influential Jewish population in the world.

Their assimilation into mainstream America was driven by the immigrant generation’s dreams of financial stability and public acceptance. Local storeowners were recognized as important contributors to day-to-day life and were increasingly invited to take part in public affairs. As their businesses prospered, Jewish merchants displayed their commitment to their adopted communities through civic and benevolent activities. Jewish women and men often served on boards and founded cultural organizations.

Perhaps the ultimate manifestation of Jewish involvement in community affairs was widespread engagement in politics. By 1900, many towns in the state could claim Jewish residents who had been elected mayor, city council member, or state legislator.

Some of South Carolina’s most powerful politicians in the 20th century came from Jewish merchant families. Sol Blatt reminisced about working in his father’s store in Barnwell. Irene Rudnick, whose family’s business was in Columbia, became the first Jewish woman elected to the state legislature. Members of other families, such as the Louries from St. George and the Kornbluts in Latta, maintained their mercantile ties while becoming politically prominent.

By the 1970s and ’80s, many once-thriving small-town Jewish stores were out of business or soon to be. Typically, the younger generations in storekeeper families went to college, became professionals, and moved to cities. Acknowledging the reality of small-town depopulation, some prudent merchants relocated their businesses to thriving cities such as Greenville, Columbia, and Charleston.

The spirit of entrepreneurship that characterized the ambitions of early Jewish peddlers and merchants did not disappear. Retailers looked for niche markets where they could avoid competition from big box stores. Some specialized in quality goods and personalized service. Spartanburg’s Price’s Menswear, established by Harry Price in 1903, offered custom-made suits to its Upstate clientele.

Others pursued new strategies for offering merchandise at bargain prices. Harry Zaglin opened the Greenville Army and Navy Store, selling military surplus, in the 1950s. The wholesale warehouse established in Charleston by Sam Solomon in 1909 passed to his sons, Melvin and Aaron, and son-in-law, Joseph Stillman, at his death in 1954. They pioneered retail discounting through customer memberships and catalogue showroom merchandizing. The company that once supplied Jewish peddlers grew to include stores throughout South Carolina as well as three other states.

In the post–World War II suburban boom, main street stores migrated to shopping centers. Development of South Windermere across the Ashley River from downtown Charleston—the brainchild of attorney William Ackerman—began in 1951 and included one of the first suburban malls in South Carolina. When it opened in 1959, the Kronsberg brothers’ North Charleston Pinehaven Shopping Center, featuring their Edward’s store, was the largest retail complex in the state. Merchants in other growing cities followed the same pattern. In the 1960s, established stores in Columbia such as Berry’s On Main maintained their Main Street presence while opening branch stores in suburban locations.

Tourism brought in a new mobile customer base. In the 1920s, with the establishment of the federal highway system, Routes 17 and 15 carried travelers down the coast. Tapping into the growing flow of New York to Florida traffic, Albert Novit, in 1937, expanded his mercantile shops in Walterboro, opening an adjacent hotel and then a restaurant. Fifty years later, Alan Schafer’s popular South of the Border, located on Route 301, with its iconic sombrero sign, only grew in popularity when I-95, with an adjacent Dillon exit, was completed through South Carolina in 1978.

The 21st century introduced online shopping and created the e-commerce customer. Stores such as M. Dumas, originally established in 1917 in Charleston by Mendel Dumas as a uniform shop for local service jobs, and Britton’s in Columbia now have professionally designed web sites for international buyers of their iconic southern men’s wear styles.

Perhaps Edward Kronsberg, in a 1949 article in the Charleston Evening Post, best summarized the history of Jewish merchants and their contribution to South Carolina: “Our business is founded on personal interest. We make friends in the community in which we establish ourselves and share our time between community activities and business.” For two centuries Jews have set up businesses, engaged in civic life, and established families. From Clio to Charleston, and Greer to Greenville, Jewish merchants have been an integral part of our state’s history.
D. Poliakoff: 100 Years on the Square

by Ed Poliakoff

D. Poliakoff, the dry goods store opened in 1900 by my grandfather David Poliakoff, was in business on historic Court Square in Abbeville, South Carolina, for more than 100 years, from February 19, 1900, to August 26, 2000. David emigrated from Kamen, a shtetl about 112 miles northeast of Minsk in today's Belarus, in 1893, when he was 20 years old. His passport application (found last year in the State Historical Archives of Belarus) states that the purpose of his trip was to "earn money." A few brittle wholesaler invoices addressed to "Poliakoff Brothers, Clifton, SC," some in Yiddish, remain from the years 1890–1899. David Poliakoff was in business with his brother Mendel, 1894 to 1898, first in Clifton (near Spartanburg), then in Gaffney, South Carolina. In 1898–1899, he was in Aiken County. Family lore has it that David was a peddler who initially picked McCormick, South Carolina, to open his own store and paid the first month's rent, but quickly decided to settle in Abbeville. Years later, in a November 1937 interview for the Abbeville Press and Banner, he said he came to Abbeville after leaving his brother Samuel in Graniteville, South Carolina. Abbeville's population had more than doubled between 1890 and 1900, perhaps a reason he decided to settle there. The 1900 U.S. Census for Abbeville Township listed David Poliakoff [sic], "clothing merchant," born in Russia in 1872, as a boarder who could read, write, and speak English. The store's original location on Abbeville's Court Square was "next door to [the State] dispensary" as noted in its March 1900 ad in the Abbeville Medium. A 1900 ledger shows cash sales the first month in business were $433.98. The store, along with the dispensary and several other businesses, got electric lights in March of that year. By June 1901, David Poliakoff had become a U.S. citizen. Affidavits supporting his petition were filed by Mendel and J.S. Poliakoff of Langley, South Carolina, a cousin. A 1901 headline in the Press and Banner proclaimed "He Is One of Us Now." A July 1904 article in the Abbeville Medium reported on the wedding of David Poliakoff and Elka Rachel Axelrod. The ceremony in Augustus was performed by Rabbi Abraham Poliakoff, a cousin and the first spiritual leader of Augusta Congregation Adas Yeshurun. Rabbi Poliakoff was married to David's sister, Rebecca. A 1937 Press and Banner article looked back and recounted: "Mr. Poliakoff had not been in Abbeville but four years when he sent back to Russia for his sweetheart. His marriage to Miss Rachel Axelrod . . . showed him to be a man of outstanding wisdom and good judgment. Mrs. Poliakoff has truly been a helpmeet. She has not only kept a fine hospitable home, reared a large family, but has been his true partner in the operation of his store." David Poliakoff died on June 9, 1940. According to the Press and Banner, "Mr. Poliakoff had been at his store throughout the day and was sitting in his chair at home when the end came . . . [He] prospered in Abbeville but in prospering he won the goodwill, the respect and esteem of a great circle of friends." The paper noted he was the oldest living member of the local Masonic Lodge and a regular attendee. Elka Rachel Poliakoff died at home on June 8, 1956, after a brief illness. She was described in the hometown paper as a "prominent Abbeville businesswoman and a resident of this city since 1904." David and Rachel raised five sons and a daughter, maintaining an observant Jewish home a block from Court Square. Throughout its 100 years, the store was closed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. In a 1920 article entitled "The Knowledge of Hebrew Not Now Confined to Preachers," the Abbeville paper extolled their first-born. "Young Ellis Poliakoff returned this week from Anderson where for the past month he has been under the tutelage of a professor of Hebrew and . . . has mastered the intricate characters of the Hebrew language." David Poliakoff "is the proudest man you ever saw when he is listening to his son read so fluently the language of his fathers." Sons Ellis, Marion, Myer (my father), Arthur, and Samuel all graduated from Agnes Scott College, Atlanta, Georgia, where over a period of more than 15 years at least one Poliakoff brother occupied the same dorm room (#48) at Burney College, according to an October 29, 1935, article in the USC Gamecock. All the brothers served their country during the World War II era, three overseas. Ellis was a respected physician who served the people of Abbeville County his entire professional career, excepting wartime service. Marion was a gentleme man who established a top-line men's apparel store in Wallalla, South Carolina. Arthur (Bud) was a beloved pharmacist in Atlanta and became the senior practicing pharmacist in the state of Georgia. Samuel was a prominent physician in Atlanta and a discerning collector of Western American Indian art. He bequeathed to the Abbeville County Public Library, "in honor of the Poliakoff Family," his unique collection of pottery, textiles, and paintings, along with a monetary bequest, establishing in Abbeville one of the most significant public collections of this genre. Readers are invited to visit the collection in person or online at http://poliakoffcollection.webs.com/.

Daughter Eva Poliakoff, who later was a school teacher and lived with her husband and family in Marblehead, Massachusetts, graduated from Agnes Scott College, where her roommate was Rosa From of Union, South Carolina. Eva and Rosa became roommates at the suggestion of Eva's brother Myer, who had met Rosa at Jewish dances in Columbia. Rosa was the daughter of Israel and Bertha From, immigrants from Lithuania. Israel was a successful merchant—"I, From, Dry Goods and Notions" was a household word in Union—and Bertha a religiously observant homemaker. After graduating from Agnes Scott College, Rosa became a teacher in Atlanta, while Myer completed his degree at USC and returned to Abbeville to work with his parents in the store, eventually taking over its management. On February 20, 1940, Myer Poliakoff and Rosa From were married at the Fром residence in Union.

As his business grew, David Poliakoff had moved the store twice, settling in its third and final location in 1935 on the northeast corner of Court Square at Washington Street, located on the site where John C. Calhoun's law office once stood. It was constructed in 1873, only eight years after the horse-drawn entourage of Jefferson Davis, Judah P. Benjamin, and others in the fleeing Confederate war cabinet came up Washington Street from the train station to the Square, en route to the Abbeville residence where the last meeting of the cabinet was held. Myer ran D. Poliakoff's for almost half a century, in later years with Rosa's help. Like his father, he was a life member of the Abbeville Masonic Lodge. He was an officer of the local development board, a 17-year member of the school board, and a longtime board member, treasurer, and ardent supporter of the Abbeville County Library system. His portrait, a gift of former store employees, hangs in the Library's Poliakoff Art Gallery and Meeting Room.

D. Poliakoff was an Abbeville institution, where a visit to the store and a welcome from the Poliakoff in charge was a custom for generations of Abbevillians. It was not unusual for a resident to be outfitted at Poliakoff's as a child and employed there as a teen, then return as a parent for proper fitting of his or her children. Myer and Rosa were regular attendees at apparel shows at the merchandise marts in Atlanta and Charlotte. My sisters, Doris and Elaine, and I grew up in Abbeville, about a mile from the store, where we helped out after school and on weekends. Store specialties included the expert fitting of children's shoes—with Myer routinely declining the sale if he was not satisfied with the fit—and women's and children's apparel. At merchandise shows, Rosa frequently selected women's apparel with specific customers in mind. Myer Poliakoff died on August 10, 1985. Rosa took up the reins and ran the store with paperwork assistance from her children.

Myer and Rosa Poliakoff were strong advocates for maintaining the 19th-century charm of Abbeville's Court Square, a frequent subject for artists. A 1987 painting by Oscar Velasquez, AWS, later reproduced as a postcard, makes artistic reference to Myer (with bow tie and red vest) and Rosa in front of the store. A 1990 Location Agreement with Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, for which the filmmaker paid D. Poliakoff $200, permitted interior and exterior shots of the store during production of Sleeping with the Enemy, starring Julia Roberts. In 1995, NationsBank TV ads featured Rosa Poliakoff and the store interior.

D. Poliakoff building after renovation, Washington Street view, Abbeville, SC. Photo by Ed Poliakoff.
Still family-owned, the D. Poliakoff building was renovated a few years after the business closed, reopening its heart pine flooring, high ceilings, and windows retaining on its corner sidewalks its pre-electrification translucent panel vault lights and grate-covered basement light wells. The building’s front parapet and side wall still display “D. Poliakoff” in the large letters once common on storefronts. Tenements once occupied the basement.

The store’s 90th anniversary was celebrated in April 1990 at a public event near the Square. Speakers included former Governor Dick Riley, former Congressman W. J. Bryan Dom, and state senator Billy O’Dell, who presented the congratulatory resolution adopted by the General Assembly. State Senator Isadore Lourie, who was the keynote speaker, praising the generation of Jewish immigrants who established businesses in the South around the turn of the century. “I shall always stand in awe of that generation,” he declared, adding that he hoped the descendants of these Jewish immigrants would remember their forefathers’ twofold heritage and be proud of it: “Proud to be sons of the covenant between God and Abraham . . . and proud to be Americans.”

On April 29, 1990, Greenwood’s Index-Journal, in an article entitled “90th Anniversary Not a Swam Song for Rosa Poliakoff,” quoted Rosa’s observation that what separated D. Poliakoff from other stores for most of the century was personal service and attention: “We always say you can’t come into the store without being greeted by a Poliakoff . . . people like to be remembered by their names.”

The Poliakoff building would reach its 100th anniversary in April 1995 in conjunction with a meeting of the newly organized Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. A congratulatory letter from President Bill Clinton was presented to Rosa Poliakoff.

Rosa Poliakoff was determined D. Poliakoff would reach its 100th anniversary in February 2000. She died October 26, 1999 and was buried alongside her beloved Myer in Aiken’s Sons of Israel Cemetery. Family and devoted staff kept the store in business until after the anniversary was reached, and D. Poliakoff closed its doors for good on August 26, 2000.

Today, 105 West occupies the Poliakoff building on Alberville’s Court Square. Photo by Eli Poliakoff.

Edward’s 5¢ · 10¢ · $1.00 Stores and the Kronsberg Brothers

Miriam Stoller Kronsberg, widow of Edward Kronsberg—grandfather and namesake of the man who founded Edward’s—emigrated from Ukraine to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1888. She was nine years old when Abraham, her three sisters, and a half-brother, Abraham, grew up in Baltimore and as a young man became a cigar maker. In 1902, he married Lena Jacobson, a Lithuanian immigrant and daughter of Meyer Jacobson and Rose Rockell Mervis Jacobson. Their first son, Edward, was born the following year in his grandparents’ home in Portsmouth, Virginia. Edward contracted polio as an infant and, for his whole life, he walked with a limp.

About the time Edward was born, Abraham moved the family to Tilghman Island, Maryland, where he opened a clothing and dry goods store. They were the only Jews on the island and, despite the logistical difficulties, Lena kept a kosher home, getting meat by boat from Baltimore, but mainly cooking fish, which was plentiful on the island. Lena and Abraham had three more sons after Edward: Meyer was born in 1905, Milton in 1909, and Macey in 1911.

Raymond Sinclair described Abraham and Lena’s observation that what separated D. Poliakoff from other stores for most of the century was personal service and attention: “We always say you can’t come into the store without being greeted by a Poliakoff . . . people like to be remembered by their names.”

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Edward’s 5¢ · 10¢ · $1.00 Stores and the Kronsberg Brothers

by Mickey Kronberg Rosenberg

Lena Kronsberg, ca. 1900, and Abraham Kronsberg, ca. 1905. Courtesy of Mickey Kronberg Rosenberg.

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Lena Kronsberg, ca. 1900, and Abraham Kronsberg, ca. 1905. Courtesy of Mickey Kronberg Rosenberg.
During the 1970s, major changes in retail were taking place, and Edward's stores were described as "junior department stores." In 1972, they opened the biggest store to date—60,000 square feet—in Dillon, South Carolina, and the following year, stores were opened in Newberry and Georgetown (a second store), as well as in the South Carolina, and the Edward's store there was inundated, with no flood insurance on the building. All the stock was lost and the store needed a major renovation. The corporation was not able to insure the building because the building was lost and the store needed a major renovation. The corporation was not able to insure the building because of no flood insurance on the store there was inundated, due to a storm in Laurens, South Carolina, and the Edward's store there was inundated, with no flood insurance on the building. All the stock was lost and the store needed a major renovation.

In spite of national competition, the new executives continued to open additional stores in the Palmetto State. Between 1973 and 1974, they built new stores in Union, Hilton Head, Camden, Easley, and Mt. Pleasant. Finally, they decided to venture out of state—Georgia—opening first in Savannah in 1975 and Brunswick in 1977. Around the same time, there had been a storm in Laurens, South Carolina, and the Edward's store there was inundated, with no flood insurance on the building. All the stock was lost and the store needed a major renovation. The corporation was not able to insure the building because of no flood insurance on the store there was inundated, due to a storm in Laurens, South Carolina, and the Edward's store there was inundated, with no flood insurance on the building. All the stock was lost and the store needed a major renovation.

In 1970, the Kronsbergs inaugurated a store in Greenville, South Carolina, and the following year, stores were opened in Aiken, Orangeburg, Greenwood, Laurens, North Augusta, Myrtle Beach (the second store), Lake City, and another in Charleston in the new James Island Shopping Center. With the addition of so many stores, it became necessary to build more warehouse space so plans were made for a new 80,000-square-foot warehouse and 18,000 square feet of office space to be located in a building that could be seen from I-26 in North Charleston.

In 1979, the Kronsbergs inaugurated a store in Greenville, South Carolina, and the following year, stores were opened in Newberry and Georgetown (a second store), as well as in the new Ashley Plaza Mall, West Ashley, Charleston. In 1971, they also opened a small store in the Harbor View Shopping Center on James Island, which was intended to serve as a prototype for future neighborhood stores. Not long after the Harbor View opening, Avram was named president and Edward became chairman of the board.

Under Avram and Buddy's management, the new South Carolina stores were built even bigger. In 1972, they opened the biggest store to date—60,000 square feet—in Dillon, followed the next year by stores in Florence and Summerville. Edward's stores were described as "junior department stores." During the 1970s, major changes in retail were taking place with the advent of stores such as K-Mart and Wal-Mart—national chains offering similar goods at competitive prices. As public corporations, these big box stores had a lot of money for expansion. In 1960, Sam Walton had gone public, a concept Edward refused to embrace. Avram recalled his father's attitude in a 2001 interview: "He didn't want to share his business with anybody, and he didn't want anybody telling him what to do, and we never had the capital. We had to expand out of profits, not out of raised money, and so we didn't grow as rapidly."

Lisa Rosamond Thompson, known professionally as Lisa Rosamond, is a senior at the College of Charleston majoring in History and Studio Arts and minoring in Jewish Studies. After taking a course at the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program, she found herself drawn to further study of Jewish religion and culture.
Dale Rosengarten
Recipient of the Order of the Jewish Palmetto

Join us Saturday evening when we present Dale Rosengarten with the Order of the Jewish Palmetto, an acknowledgement of her tireless work on behalf of the Society. For more than two decades, Dale has been JHSSC’s historian par excellence, traveling the state, gathering oral histories, photographs, and artifacts that document Jewish life in South Carolina. Dale’s generosity and expertise have been instrumental to our success in researching, recording, and interpreting our family stories through exhibits, panel discussions, and this magazine, assuring that South Carolina Jewry is part of the public discourse on American Jewish history. We are grateful!

Founding curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston Library, Dale Rosengarten developed the landmark exhibition A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life, which opened at the University of South Carolina’s McKissack Museum in 2002 and traveled nationally for two years. More recently, for the Princeton University Art Museum, she co-curated an exhibit on Charleston-born artists Theodore Sidney Moise and Solomon Nunes Carvalho. She currently serves as associate director of the College’s Pearlstein/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture.


His curricular and research interests are primarily in the intersection of politics and ideas in the 20th century. Whitfield has twice been awarded Fulbright visiting professorships: first at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1983-84) and then at the Catholic University of Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium (fall semester 1993). For a semester in 2004, he became the first Allianz Visiting Professor at the Ludwig-Maximilians University of Munich to offer courses in American Jewish studies.

Revisiting the Past and Envisioning the Future
JHSSC Celebrates its 25th Anniversary

May 18–19, 2019 ~ Charleston, South Carolina

All events take place in the Sylvia Vlosky Yachsh Jewish Studies Center, 96 Wentworth St., unless otherwise noted.

Saturday, May 18
11:30 a.m. Registration and lunch
12:00 p.m. Welcome – Jeffrey Rosenblum
12:15 Layers of History – Lisa Rosamond Thompson, College of Charleston
12:30 – 1:45 Merchants: The Narrow of the Southern Jewish Experience
Stephen J. Whitfield, Max Richter Professor of American Civilization, Emeritus, Brandeis University
2:00 – 3:45 Merchants on the Move
Moderator: Katharine Allen, Research & Archives Manager, Historic Columbia, and Lead Researcher, Jewish Merchant Project, JHSSC
Panelists: Harold Brody, Deborah Lipman Cochelin, Mickey Kronsberg Rosenblum, Zachary M. Solomon, Alison Walsh
4:00 – 4:30 A Store at Every Crossroads: Curator’s Talk
Lynn Robertson, former Executive Director, McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina
6:30 25th Anniversary Reception – Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, 205 Calhoun St., third floor
A celebratory evening featuring a cocktail buffet, the opening of A Store at Every Crossroads: Documenting the Stories of South Carolina’s Jewish Merchants, and a special awards presentation of the Order of the Jewish Palmetto to Dale Rosengarten

Sunday, May 19
9:00 a.m. Open JHSSC board meeting—everyone is invited! Bagels will be served
10:30 – 12:30 American Judaism and Civil Engagement: Our Future Depends Upon It
Rabbi Judith Schindler, Sklut Professor of Jewish Studies and Director of the Stan Greenspoon Center for Peace and Social Justice, Queens University, Charlotte, NC, and Rabbi Emerita, Temple Beth El, Charlotte, NC
How Judaism Became an American Religion and What the Future Has in Store
Steven R. Weisman, Vice President for Publications and Communications, Peterson Institute for International Economics, Washington, DC

Be sure to visit A Store at Every Crossroads at Addlestone Library, as well as two exhibits on display at the Jewish Studies Center: Picturing Southern Jews, Room 305, and Lowcountry: Past and Present in the Levin Library, Room 210.

Hotel reservations
Francis Marion Hotel
387 King Street, Charleston, SC 29403
877.756.2212
Special rate: $339 per night + tax
To get the special rate, make your reservation by 5:00 p.m. on April 17 and mention Group JHSSC2019.

Meeting registration
Online at: jhssc/events/coming
By check, payable to JHSSC c/o Yachsh/Arnold Jewish Studies Program ~ 96 Wentworth Street, Charleston, SC 29424

Meeting fee: $60 per person
Questions: Reid Idehohs, ridehohs@cofc.edu
Phone: 843.953.3918 ~ fax: 843.953.7624

Nelson Mullins
Reception sponsored by Nelson Mullins
The Brody Brothers: Jewish Retail Giants in South Carolina

by Harold J. Brody, M.D.

Many business careers are stories of father-son relationships with the father originating the business and the sons carrying the torch after the father's death. This is the history of the Brody Brothers Dry Goods Company, founded in 1917 by my grandfather Hyman Joseph Brody (1876–1946) as a simple shoe store in Sumter, South Carolina. Hyman and his brothers and sisters, children of Moedechai Schuster and Ruth Palevitz Schuster, settled in New York briefly after emigrating from Russia, but within a few years Hyman moved to the South on advice from friends.

Hyman Joseph Brody (née Schuster; family lore has it that “Brody” was on a sign at the New York docks and was adopted because it was easier to pronounce than Schuster), a native of Kletzk, Russia, immigrated to the United States in 1906. His wife, Bessie Lampert Krasnushelsky Brody (1882–1967), immigrated in 1913 with their children Sam, Raymond, William, Leo, Abram, and Jake. After Hyman and Bessie reunited, they moved to Anderson, South Carolina. Over time, the family grew, adding four boys—Reuben, Julius Samuel (“Sammy”), Morris, and Alex—and one girl, Ruth.

Hyman set up shop as a cobbler and shoemaker when the Brodys arrived in Anderson in 1913. Five years later they moved to Kinston, North Carolina, and established a second Brody’s Department Store. The Kinston store collaborated with the Sumter store in buying, selling, and public relations as the Brody brothers built their enterprises.

The original Brody’s was so successful that, in 1934, the brothers opened a higher-end store at 37–39 North Main Street called The Capitol Department Store. Three years later The Capitol moved to a more central location at 12 South Main Street. Remodeling to keep abreast of the times, the Brodys expanded the store into two adjoining properties. They also joined Independent Retail Buying Syndicate, enabling them to offer, at affordable prices, nationally known brands usually sold at much larger department stores. The Capitol became known as the largest Jewish-operated dry goods store in South Carolina at the time.

Convinced that Sumter was destined to grow and that its future was bright, Hyman did his utmost to expand the business. The shoe store became Brody’s Department Store, located at 8 West Liberty Street; in 1929, its floor space was tripled to include 10 and 12 West Liberty Street. All the Brody brothers worked in the store and contributed to its success. The two oldest siblings, Sam (1901–1986) and Raymond (1902–1992), helped their father and stayed in retailing for their lifetimes. With financial support from his brothers, William (1904–1974) moved to Philadelphia and became a physician. Throughout his life, he remained in close touch with the family, providing medical advice when needed. In 1928, Leo (1906–2003) moved to Kinston, North Carolina, and established a second Brody’s Department Store. The Kinston store collaborated with the Sumter store in buying, selling, and public relations as the Brody brothers built their enterprises.

An outstanding attribute of the company was good employee relations and good working conditions managed by local owners. Indeed, the tradition continued after World War II when the youngest brother, Alex (1922–1997), having returned from the war and attended college, became the manager of the original Brody’s on Liberty Street in Sumter. He devoted his life to Sumter retailing, and the Alex Brody Pavilion on Main Street was erected in his name.

Ruth Brody Greenberg (1920–2012), the only daughter of Hyman and Bessie Brody, married Dr. Stephen A. Greenberg and moved to Florence, South Carolina, 40 miles from Sumter.

In 1938, Hyman Brody retired from the business because of his and his wife’s poor health. The same year, the Sumter business was reorganized and incorporated as Brody Brothers Dry Goods Company, with Leo, Abram, Jake, and Reuben as officers. Brody policy, according to the “Employee Handbook of the Capitol Dept. Store,” was to “sell merchandise as reasonably as possible,” “to give honest value,” and “to satisfy its customers.” The rapid expansion and phenomenal growth of the company proved the soundness of this policy.

Also in 1938, Brody’s, Inc. opened its doors in Greenville, North Carolina, about 30 miles northeast of Kinston. Leo got the store up and running and, at age 21, Ruth took over until Morris (1918–2011) returned from World War II. His son Hyman (“HJ”) worked with him in the late 1970s, after his graduation from the University of Pennsylvania.

Julius Samuel (Sammy) (1916–1994) joined Leo in Kinston after serving in the world war. Sammy was not cut out for retailing but became very successful in radio/TV and the soft drink industry; his philanthropy is recognized to this day. Leo, Sammy, and Morris were instrumental in establishing the medical school at East Carolina University in Greenville, renamed the Brody School of Medicine in their honor.

Abram (1909–1948), my father, married Sara Pearlstein from Olar, South Carolina, in 1946, shortly after the death of his father, and he settled down to manage the shoe and men’s departments of The Capitol in Sumter. Of the other Brody brothers in the retail business, Reuben (1914–1964) managed the women’s department, Jake (1911–1999) handled physical renovations, maintenance, and housewares, and Leo managed the Kinston store, which carried similar merchandise as The Capitol.

The Brody Brothers Dry Goods Company of Sumter was the pivotal point from which the North Carolina Brody brothers catapaulted. As long as retailing was in operation, the Brody brothers and cousins worked together for mutual continuity and excellence to serve the public good of the Carolinas. Thanks to the children of the Brody brothers, that legacy continues today with the Alex Brody Pavilion in Sumter, contributions to Sumter’s Temple Sinai Jewish History Center, the Ethel Brody Scholarship at the University of South Carolina, and the aforementioned Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University in Greenville, the Brody Brothers Auditorium at Kinston High School, and at Duke University in Durham: the Brody Scholarships, the Brody Theater, the Café at the Nasher Art Museum, and the Charlotte Brody Discovery Garden.

After Reuben’s untimely death in 1963, the Brody family sold The Capitol Department Store to Alden’s of Chicago.


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An outstanding attribute of the company was good employee relations and good working conditions managed by local owners. Indeed, the tradition continued after World War II when the youngest brother, Alex (1922–1997), having returned from the war and attended college, became the manager of the original Brody’s on Liberty Street in Sumter. He devoted his life to Sumter retailing, and the Alex Brody Pavilion on Main Street was erected in his name.

Ruth Brody Greenberg (1920–2012), the only daughter of Hyman and Bessie Brody, married Dr. Stephen A. Greenberg and moved to Florence, South Carolina, 40 miles from Sumter.
Reuben's son David, born and raised in Sumter, joined the North Carolina retailing operation after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania.

Abram continued to operate a shoe department within the newly-owned Capitol. When The Capitol relocated to Jessamine Mall in 1980, the shoe department remained and became Abram Brody's Shoes at 16 South Main Street. In 1983, on Abram's death, the old Capitol store was renovated, and the shoe store became part of the new Brody's On Main Department Store, managed by Alex and his son Mark. The store carried a higher priced line of women's wear than the Brody's Department store. Brodys on Main closed after Mark departed Sumter about 1988. Abram Brody Shoes remained for another ten years—still owned by the Brodys—and was sold around 1999, ending the reign of the Brody retail giants of Sumter.

In a 1959 essay written by my parents, Sara and Abram Brody, in honor of the 25th anniversary of The Capitol Department Store, they remarked that the growth of the Brody business "gives inspiration to individual ownership in today's great economic structure of chain stores and large combines." K-Mart, the first chain to come to Sumter, opened in the early '60s, signaling the decline of locally operated stores. It's interesting that K-Mart—owned by Sears, which is also liquidating—is set to close in March 2019. After 50 years of rise and decline, the chain store is now eclipsed by Amazon and the internet.

The Furchgott Stores, since 1866

by David Furchgott, from family records and the meticulous research and editing of cousin Alison Walsh, aided by the personal recollections of cousin Maurice Furchgott

Brothers Herman Furchgott (1841–1912) and Max Furchgott (1844–1921) migrated from Nitra (in present-day Slovakia) to New York City in the early 1860s. The reasons for their leaving are unknown. By all appearances the Furchgotts were a well-established family spread across a region from Vienna to Budapest and into the hinterlands of what is now Slovakia. Upon arrival, the brothers Americanized their family name to Furchgott.

After a brief few years of acculturation in New York, they moved to Charleston in 1865 as the American Civil War ended, where they were joined by their brother Leopold (1852–1928).

The turbulence in central Europe at that time had been volatile as well, so it is curious that their father, Abraham Isaac, and his wife, Marie (née Herzog) Furchgott, saw all three of their boys emigrate nearly at once, leaving them with their four daughters in Nitra. America was a land of opportunity, and Charleston, up until a few decades before the Civil War, boasted its largest concentration of Jews.

In 1866, the brothers opened their first dry goods store, Furchgott & Bro, near the southwest corner of Calhoun and King streets, probably living over the initial store and moving among three locations near that corner in a four-year period. In 1869, Charles Benedict (1848–1909) of Jacksonville became a partner, and the business became Furchgott, Benedict & Co., moving twice again to a prestigious location further downtown at 259 King Street.

Also in 1869, Leopold moved to Jacksonville, Florida, to establish another store with Benedict at the equally prominent location on Bay Street facing the St. Johns River. Charles Benedict was well established in Jacksonville. He was born in Austria and probably had family ties to the Furchgotts in Nitra, which is only 80 miles from Vienna, or possibly could have met them through the Masons, with which Max Furchgott was very involved.

In 1879, Morris Kohn created a New York buying office for the firm and provided additional financial backing. The Furchgott brothers' maternal uncle Philip Herzog of New York was also a silent partner and backer of the business. The firm became Kohn, Furchgott, & Benedict (Kohn became a partner in 1881). Kohn was also from Austria with the same likely connections to the Furchgotts as Benedict. Around 1875, a store was briefly operated in Atlanta, but was sold in 1878 to the Kresky Company.

Webb's Historical, Industrial and Biographical Florida of 1885 said of the firm: "Their amount of sales mark this as one of the largest dry-good houses in the South. . . . All members of the firm are practical men in the business, and are courteous, painstaking gentlemen; and, it need not be added, honorable, reliable business men, of which Jacksonville and Charleston have every reason to be proud!"

Max Furchgott returned almost yearly to Europe on buying trips and to visit family. In fact, his first two sons, Herbert and Lionel, died in 1882 in the fifth cholera pandemic while visiting Nitra. They are buried in the Jewish cemetery there. Tragedy didn't end for the Furchgott family and its businesses. They also lived through the devastating Charleston earthquake of 1886. It was the largest earthquake ever to take place on the east coast, with almost all the buildings in the city either flattened or damaged. Max Furchgott led a number of major charitable efforts to help with the recovery, but he moved his family to New York for several years. There the children attended religious school at Temple Emanu-El.

In 1887, soon after the earthquake, Kohn, Furchgott, & Benedict constructed a glamorous new building at 259 King Street on the site of their damaged store. Finding little success, Max moved to New York the following year, apparently to join his family, and then returned in 1901 to establish M. Furchgott & Co. Dry Goods at 265 King Street. In 1907, he moved the store to 240–242 King Street, advertising as being "in the bend of King Street." Three years later, the business was renamed M. Furchgott & Sons. The "& Sons" were Arthur, Melvin, and Oscar Furchgott. The location is now part of Charleston Place, a hotel and high-end shopping center that occupies a whole city block.

Herman left Charleston and moved west, first to Denver where he operated several business ventures, including at least one similar retail dry goods department store. He later moved to St. Louis and finally to Chicago, where he died in 1912. Herman had one son and seven daughters.

Both the Charleston and the Jacksonville stores were considered innovative: they were the first to have elevators, the first to have women salesclerks and home delivery by automobile. Also, they were among the first to have telephones and to serve black customers.

Clockwise from top: Furchgott banner advertising "Ladies Ready To Wear Garments" and "Dry Goods Matting, etc.,” hangs over King Street, Charleston, SC, 1901, in this postcard reproduction of Morton Bradliff Paine’s photograph, Special Collections, College of Charleston. Kohn, Furchgott, & Benedict, 259 King Street, Charleston, SC, with 1887 carved in the pediment, courtesy of George L &Orange Cook Photograph Collection, South Carolina Library, University of South Carolina. M. Furchgott & Son, 242 King Street, Charleston, SC, courtesy of the Furchgott/Furchgott family.

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Rails to Retail: Mercantile Pioneers in St. Stephens

by Deborah Lipman Cochelin

Long before Jews arrived in today's northern Berkeley County, the area south of the Santee River served as a refuge from religious persecution for a portion of the French Protestants actively recruited by the English Proprietors of Carolina after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. The Huguenots, as they came to be called, some of whom had been wealthy landowners in France, were drawn to Carolina by the promise of religious freedom and large estates advertised in glowing terms by the Lords Proprietor, who envisioned profits from trade generated by an agricultural colony. By the mid-1700s, dozens of rice plantations, cultivated by enslaved Africans, had been established along the Santee. In this region, about 50 miles north of Charleston, a town grew up around historic St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, erected in 1767, now a national landmark. In 1781, the town was incorporated under the parish name of St. Stephens, which was officially changed to St. Stephen in 1952.

Northern Berkeley County has remained rural since the days of the Huguenot planters. Today, St. Stephen and nearby towns are economically depressed and thinly populated. Despite the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, the region profited from South Carolina's extensive network of railroads. Sawmills sprang up near rail lines, and Charleston merchants saw opportunities to build shops in towns like Moncks Corner, about 30 miles from Charleston, and Bonneau, another 10 miles farther north. According to Maxwell Clayton Orvin's history of Moncks Corner, the names of Jewish merchants who set up shop in Berkeley County just before the turn of the 20th century include Selig (Zelig) Behrmann (whose nephew was Ben Barron, founder of Barron's Department Store in Moncks Corner), Sol Lurie, Louis Glick, Sol Goldberg, Mendel Dumas, Frank Read, Isaac Read, and Abe Read.

Not until about 1900 did the first known Jewish merchant settle in St. Stephens. Gus Rittenberg (brother of Sam Rittenberg and my great-uncle) arrived in the town with a young wife, Henrietta (Hennie) Behrmann, who had emigrated in 1893 from Russia, and three very young children, Anita, Corinne, and Walter. In the 1910 census, Gus was identified as a merchant with a general store, and the number of his children had doubled, now including Morris (Maurice), Arthur, and Rose. Also listed as members of the Rittenberg household and workers in the store were two brothers, Herman and Isadore Sanditen, Russian immigrants related to Gus's sister's husband, Samuel Sanders (Sanditen). Around 1910, the enterprising Gus Rittenberg built a sawmill on his land not far north of St. Stephens Station, on the west side of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad's track, with a spur that would enable him to ship finished lumber to growing markets.

On August 6, 1912, a train of passenger cars running south went dead on the track about 40 feet from the mill, idle at the time. A local train from Florence soon came behind and began to push. Cinders from the laboring engine were churned up by the wind and blown into the lumber yard. Sawdust and waste lumber caught fire and spread to the mill, causing much destruction. Rittenberg prevailed in his lawsuit against the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and was awarded damages for the destroyed mill, inventory, and machinery.

Disaster from the railroads struck again early on a Sunday afternoon in March 1918. Shortly after a freight train of 36 loaded cars passed through St. Stephens, a fire was discovered on the roof of a house, which jumped to adjoining buildings and burned until most of the row was destroyed, including Gus Rittenberg's store. The railroad company was held liable for damages in the amount of $69,000, in what was considered to be St. Stephens' worst fire.

By the time of the 1918 fire, the Rittenbergs were maintaining homes in both St. Stephens and Charleston. Corinne graduated with distinction from Ashley Hall that year. Gus and Hennie first appear in the Charleston city directory in 1917 and, over the next few years, some of their children are listed as well, including Edward, born in 1916. The 1917 directory shows Gus is in business—Southern Jute Products, 154 East Bay Street—while his brother Sam, who had served in the state legislature in 1913–1914 and was running Carolina Advertising Agency. A year later, the brothers established another company, Rittenberg Wood Yard, at Meeting Street near Magnolia Crossing. By 1920, Southern Jute and Rittenberg Wood disappear from the city directory, and subsequent listings note that Gus is a general merchandiser and merchant, perhaps a reference to his St. Stephens store. He died in 1924 in a car accident near Moncks Corner.

In February 1920, the U.S. census lists my great-grandparents and their children living in St. Stephens: Rachel (Rae) Rittenberg Sanders (Gus Rittenberg's youngest sibling), her husband, Sam Sanders (listed as a naturalized citizen from Russia, a general merchant, and a former book peddler in Brooklyn, New York), and the children, Sara (Lipman), Hilbert (Bert), Wilfred, Leonard, and Charlotte (Karesh).
Max Lipman, my paternal grandfather, was working as a bookkeeper for Mendel Dumas in Bonneau when someone suggested that he meet a young lady teaching at the public school in St. Stephen’s. He had recently joined the Jewish community by converting from his Christian heritage of his mother, Caroline Kate and, however, the teacher was a substitute. He peered into the schoolhouse window thinking the substitute was the young lady he was to meet. Max asked her for a date, and the rest is history. Max Lipman and Sara Sanders were married from 1922 until Sara’s death in April 1981. Their wedding was officiated by Rabbi Jacob Raisin of K. K. Beth Elohim in Gus Rittenberg’s home on Huger Street in Charleston, as recollected by a very young guest, Henry Rittenberg (1918–2012), son of Sam Rittenberg. During the time the Rittenbergs lived in St. Stephens, it is believed they kept the Sabbath and observed other Jewish traditions.

Arthur (Adolph) N. Lipman may have learned of opportunities in St. Stephens when attending his younger brother Max’s wedding. By 1922, he had served in the navy during World War I and was working in sales for I. M. Pearlstine & Sons in Charleston. Like Max, Arthur was born and raised in Ridgeland, South Carolina, to Bavarian parents, Solomon and Theresa Krapf Lipman, who had immigrated to America in the early 1880s. Arthur arrived in St. Stephens in 1925 and opened a mercantile business; after a fire destroyed the store, he went into furniture—Read & Lipman—with Paul Read. Arthur also worked at Paul’s general merchandise store. Paul’s children Sally Kate and Fanny were sharing with me their recollections of the store. My grandparents on St. Margaret Street in Charleston would stay during the summer; my family stayed there in the late 1950s. Arthur’s Sunday visits to my Lipman grandparents on St. Margaret Street in Charleston during the winters of the 1960s brought such delight as he swept through the front door with his great shock of tumbling white hair with a slight curl. He greeted us in his Gullah-Geechee accent, with his ever-present broad smile and cheerful countenance, while totting a bushel basket of sweet potatoes or other seasonal vegetables. I remember the earthy smell clinging to his large overcoat, wafting in with the cold air that followed him into the living room.

Spanning the decades, Arthur’s exhaustive and selfless contributions to important town affairs garnered him the Municipal Association of South Carolina’s Public Service Award in 1973. He was responsible for organizing the town’s fire department in the early 1930s, served as the fire chief and water works commissioner, acted as mayor pro tem for numerous terms, and functioned as the acting mayor to complete unexpired terms of office. Arthur was a charter member of the St. Stephens Lions Club and a member of the St. Stephens American Legion Post 62 and Mt. Hope Lodge 128. His health declined in the late 1970s, and he died in August 1979 at the age of 86. Although his grandfather had been a rabbi in Wurzburg, Germany, Arthur was never an observant Jew. However, his character and deeds epitomized the Jewish concept tikkan olam (repair of the world) and were memorialized in his epitaph, “Gentle, Kind, Beloved.”

Frank Read (1868–1940) arrived in America from Latvia through Ellis Island. The original family name was spelled “Redt” but was legally changed to Read after the ladies of Pinopolis, who had been teaching him English, insisted that “Redt” was not the proper word to spell his name, based on his European pronunciation. Frank married Fredericka (Fanny) Lief (1868–1958) and later brought over his Lithuanian born son, Daniel, and his wife’s mother, Dina Lief. Four more children were born to the Reads in South Carolina: Riva, Ludvig (Ludie), Joseph (Joe), and Paul. One day he invited his brother Paul to build his first store, with a residence on the second floor. It opened in the early 1930s. There was about a block long, where shoes, clothing, and groceries were sold; mules were sold from the yard. Since there were no undertakers in Moncks Corner, Frank also sold caskets, a business practice that Paul Read continued from his store in St. Stephens until at least the early 1960s.

Their sister, Esther Read (1879–1949), who married Mendel Davis Dumas, of Drinik, Lithuania, arrived in Moncks Corner about 1890. (Dumas operated a store in Bonneau before moving to Charleston, where he went into business with Frank Read.) In November 1898, their younger brother, Isaac Read, joined them, and Frank built a large two-story frame house, now known as the Coastal Hotel, a short distance from the present railroad station. Frank and Fanny’s son Paul was born around 1905; he lived in Moncks Corner until the family moved to Charleston, where he attended the High School of Charleston and The Citadel. After venturing into some real estate deals in Florida, Paul was ready to settle down. Upon returning to South Carolina, he met Sephra Savitz at a social event where it was love at first sight. Sephra, whose family were merchants in St. Matthews and Columbia, had been the roommate of Paul’s brother Joe’s wife, Florence Panitz.

Arthur the Pie Boy or Pie King, Franklin Turner of Turner Lumber Company, Louisiana, opened the Santee River Hardwood Mill in St. Stephens. It drew many workers to the town, whose population tripled by 1930. This boom may have influenced Paul to build his first store, with a residence on the second floor, in 1926, the year he and Sephra were married. The store building was sold for $200 in 1931, coinciding with the birth of their first child, Robert. This time, the residence was built behind the store, as it was a warehouse for storing supplies and dry goods. The Read family expanded with the birth of two more children, Frank and Sally Kate.

by the shooting that Paul went into the street and asked the gunmen to stop firing because it was disturbing his wife. Incredibly, they obliged, stopping long enough for Sephra to leave for home, before resuming their shooting. Time stood still in St. Stephens until at least the 1950s, when a vacant lot next to the store accommodated customers needing a place to leave their mules, horses, and wagons. Christmastime was always a memorable and exceptionally busy time for the Reads. Since they could not stop working for lunch, their cook brought platters of sandwiches to the store. Family members who were merchants in Columbia and St. Matthews came to St. Stephens on Christmas day for a big dinner and fireworks.

The main street in St. Stephen (as it is spelled today) may be a shell of what it was when these pioneering Jewish merchants had a presence, but the street named Lipman Drive and the annual Arthur Lipman Day are reminders of their legacy. The town still is notable for grand houses on its outskirts and the annual Arthur Lipman Day are reminders of their legacy. The town still is notable for grand houses on its outskirts and the historic church. An Army Corp of Engineers facility built by Lowcountry basket makers. Berkeley County’s economy is on the rise again, this time with 21st century industries, such as Google in Moncks Corner, and J. W. Aluminum and defense contractor W International in Goose Creek.
The Sam Solomon Company
by Kate Stillman, Martha Stillman Silverman, Ellen Jacobson Terry, and Marilyn Solomon Brilliant

Sam Solomon emigrated from Russia in 1902 when he was 17 years old. Seven years later, he opened his own business in Charleston, South Carolina. Eventually, that business grew to 11 stores in four states and became known for pioneering a novel retail format and mounting the first legal challenge to South Carolina’s Sunday closing laws.

In 1902, Sam Solomon came to New York City with his father. Eventually, all six of Sam's siblings immigrated to America, settling in Charleston, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, New York, and Chicago.

In 1909, at the age of 24, Sam opened the business that would become Sam Solomon Wholesale Jobbers at 526 King Street. Sam distributed general merchandise to retail outlets, focusing on dry goods and toys. Although it had several addresses on King Street over the years, by the 1940s Sam's store was located at 484 King Street. In 1912, Sam married Sophie Prystowsky, who had wide family connections in the city; Sophie's father owned E. Prystowsky and Sons—Mike Sam and Jake's at 525–527 King Street (later the Father-Son Store).

As with many Jewish businesses at the time, the entire family was involved in the operation of Sam Solomon Wholesale Jobbers. Sam and Sophie's five children—Naomi, Aaron, Muriel, Frances, and Melvin—all helped in the store and took turns staffing the register.

Sam Solomon was known for his compassion, generosity, and warmth. The Charleston News and Courier printed a special tribute on the editorial page after his death, declaring that he was "a kind and generous man who did not spare himself in helping others."

As his own business thrived, Sam also helped those who were just starting out, especially newcomers to the city. He extended credit and loans on generous terms and offered moral support and material assistance to many who would later become successful Jewish merchants. Traveling salesmen knew that they could find a minyan at the store on King Street and enjoy Sabbath dinner at the Solomon home on St. Philip Street. Sam and Sophie invited as many guests to their beach house on Sullivan's Island for Sunday night supper—including many other mitzvahs, Sam regularly visited the sick in the Jewish community.

Sam was a man of strong faith. He was a charter member of Beth Israel synagogue and an active and long-time member of Beth Sholom Beth Israel after the congregations merged in 1954. Following the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, he made the store's facilities available for packing and shipping literally tons of food and clothing to Israel.

In 1947, Sam Solomon opened Regal's Department Store at 501 King Street. He opened a second location on Reynolds Avenue in North Charleston. In 1960, both locations were sold.

Sam Solomon died on February 8, 1954, and ownership of the store passed to his two sons, Melvin and Aaron, and to his son-in-law, Joseph Stillman.

Novel Business Format

In November 1953, just months before Sam’s death, the store moved to a modern, custom-built, air-conditioned building at 338–340 East Bay Street. The business became known as Sam Solomon Company and changed from a wholesale to a retail discount operation and catalog showroom, while continuing to serve retailers in the Carolinas and Georgia. In 1962, the East Bay facility more than doubled in size to 50,000-plus square feet.

Retail customers at Sam Solomon Company had to have a membership card to enter and shop, but there was no charge for the card. Operating on a membership basis allowed the store to offer discounted prices. The store sold broad lines of nationally advertised and other brand merchandise, including jewelry, electronics, small appliances, toys, sporting goods, housewares, giftware, health and beauty aids, and clothing—until 1968, clothing.

A popular feature of the store was its large color catalog, which grew to roughly 500 pages. Sam Solomon Company was a founding member of the Merchandisers’ Association, Inc., an organization based in Chicago and composed of similar catalog showroom businesses. The association members cooperated in the preparation of a standard catalog used by all members and customized for each business.

Sam Solomon Company's showroom on East Bay Street and in all of its locations had a different feel from other catalog showrooms. There were no cliboards or one-item displays. Just as in a department store, customers bought most items directly from the showroom floor using shopping carts. The store also carried merchandise that was not included in the catalog.

Challenge to the Sunday Blue Laws

In April 1962, a law restricting sales and other business operations on Sunday became effective in South Carolina—commonly known as the Sunday Blue Laws. Since its founding, Sam Solomon Company had closed on Saturday in observance of the Jewish Sabbath and had been open on Sunday.

On Sunday, May 6, 1962, and again the next Sunday, the chief of police and a detective came to the store and presented an arrest warrant/summmons for Aaron Solomon, who was identified as the manager of the store. The warrant charged Aaron with a general violation of the Sunday Blue Laws and for selling two baby strollers. Because the parties recognized that the violation was intended to be a test case of the Blue Laws, Aaron was placed only under “technical arrest.”

A local court convicted Aaron on both counts and fined the store $50 for each violation. Sam Solomon Company quickly appealed the conviction to the South Carolina Supreme Court, arguing, among other points, that the Blue Laws violated the religious freedom guarantees of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and similar provisions in the South Carolina state constitution. As Aaron told the press: “We feel certain it was not the intention of the lawmakers to force us to profane our own Sabbath and observe someone else’s.”

In 1965, the South Carolina Supreme Court upheld the conviction, holding that the Blue Laws did not further Christian beliefs or discriminate against other faiths, but merely established a uniform day of rest for all citizens.

Sam Solomon Company then appealed the state ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court, but the court dismissed the case.
What Makes a Merchant?
by Mark Swick, Executive Director, JHSSC

While my love for South Carolina is tied to our state’s remarkable Jewish history, it is not a history that I claim as my own. I am From Off—my people come from Michigan and Illinois, and I grew up in Maryland. So how did a reformed Yankee connect to the missions of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina?

The answer can be found in the pages of this magazine and the story not told herein of my great-grandfather Meyer Rosenblum, a Swedish immigrant who operated The Hub Clothing Co. in Iron Mountain, Michigan, for most of his professional life. I am no descendent of the Palmetto State, but I proudly trace my lineage to a hard-working Jewish merchant deeply embedded in his community.

I wrote in the pages of our fall magazine about the significance of Jewish merchants to the communities in which they lived and worked. Those words further confirm the stories in this issue: Jewish merchants operating on main streets across the state became, with their families, the backbone of small congregations, reaching their peak as the post–World War II Baby Boomers came of age. When that generation moved away to pursue higher education and occupations elsewhere, the Jewish populations of small towns began to wane and congregations faltered.

Such was the case with my grandmother and her siblings, who left Iron Mountain for The City as soon as they could. But the stories of my merchant patriarch remain vivid in memory, like hundreds of similar narratives that they could. But the stories of my merchant patriarch remain vivid in memory, like hundreds of similar narratives that they could. But the stories of my merchant patriarch remain vivid in memory, like hundreds of similar narratives that they could. But the stories of my merchant patriarch remain vivid in memory, like hundreds of similar narratives that they could. But the stories of my merchant patriarch remain vivid in memory, like hundreds of similar narratives that they could.
Join the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Address: ___________________________________________________________________
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Phone: _____________________________ Fax:  _________________________________
E-mail Address: ___________________________________________________________

ANNUAL DUES FOR 2019 (JANUARY–DECEMBER)

____ Individual/Family Membership                             $36
____ Friend                                                                        $200
____ Institutional                                                              $250
____ Sponsor                                                                     $350
____ Patron                                                                        $750
____ Founding patron                                                       $1,000
____ Pillar ($1,000 per year for 5 years)                           $5,000
____ Foundational Pillar ($2,000 per year for 5 years)   $10,000

Join or renew online at jhssc.org.
Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional $36 each.
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Register now for the May 18–19 meeting in Charleston. See page 15 for more information.
In this issue

In Search of Jewish Spartanburg – Joe Wachter – A marble tablet inscribed with the names of Temple B’nai Israel’s founders inspired the author to find out who they were. Wachter’s childhood memories and his tenacious research reveal a tightly-knit Jewish community, fostered by involved parents and a beloved religious leader of nearly 30 years, Rabbi Max Stauber. …….

Memories of Our Father and Temple B’nai Israel during the Youthful Time We Lived in Spartanburg – Ben Zion Stauber, Naomi Miriam Stauber, Alvin Stauber, and Lynn “Honey” Stauber Greenberg – The children of Rabbi Max Stauber, transplanted from Patchogue, New York, recall the family’s move to Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 1955, when their father was hired to lead Temple B’nai Israel. Even as a boy in Austria-Hungary, Max demonstrated his devotion to Judaism and family, according to his youngest child Ben’s account. Naomi describes her father’s “inner circle,” the Uptown Nine, a group of locally prominent Christian ministers—resounding evidence of the city’s ecumenical atmosphere. Alvin entertains with tales of his father’s minyan-making exploits; and Honey fondly remembers twirling in the foyer of “the Rabbi’s Parish,” visiting Jewish-owned stores along Main Street, and her mother’s challah—no guest left her house without one. …….

Price’s Store for Men: “Ends Your Quest for the Best” – Harry Price – The author’s grandfather Harry Price arrived in the thriving textile town of Spartanburg in 1900, and immediately launched a men’s clothing store—first called The New York Bazaar—that flourishes to this day. Harry made a name for himself in civic organizations—the Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club, Woodmen of the World, and Loyal Order of Moose—and was a charter member of Temple B’nai Israel. …………..

In Search of Jewish Spartanburg – JHSSC meets in Spartanburg, November 9–10, 2019. …….

The Froms of Union: Merchants on Main Street for 100 Years – I. Allan From and Gloria From Goldberg – Israel and Bertha Kessler From of Lithuania raised six children in the small town of Union, South Carolina, where, in 1917, the Jewish population numbered 40, as reported in the American Jewish Yearbook. All the From children followed their parents into retail and, by the 1940s, the Carolina Upcountry was dotted with From family members and their relatives running stores. Siblings Allan From and Gloria Goldberg, grandchildren of Israel and Bertha, describe growing up in Union at a time when only two Jewish families remained. ………..

The Teszlers of Budapest and Spartanburg: Pioneers in Textile Engineering – Diane C. Vecchio – Hungarian textile manufacturer Sandor Teszler, after surviving the Holocaust, attempted to rebuild his business in Budapest, but fled to America with his wife, Lidia, and their sons Andre and Otto, after the government seized his factories. Sandor and the Andersons became leaders in the textile industry, while setting an example for fair hiring practices and philanthropy in their adopted hometown of Spartanburg. ………..

Growing up in Gaffney – Benjamin Franklin Sheftall III – Small town life for this Jewish boy in the 1950 and ‘60s was one of contrasts. He had plenty of friends who made no issue of his religion, but the Ku Klux Klan was much in evidence and discrimination against African Americans was overt. Ben traveled to Spartanburg to attend religious services, participate in youth group activities, and train for his bar mitzvah at Temple B’nai Israel, yet among his Jewish peers, he felt like an outsider. …………..

Endowing our Future – Mark Swick – The strength and vitality of the JHSSC is evident through its meetings, public programs, archives, and special projects. Sustained by its members and its partnership with the College of Charleston, the Society has created a new endowment fund to insure its future growth and development. …………..

Correction: In the Spring 2019 issue on page 13, we mistakenly identified this gentleman as Harry Appel. He is Abraham “Ab” Appel, husband of Ida Goldberg and father of Harry, Famous, Tony, Sam, and Sidney.

Letter from the President

It’s been a tough summer in the United States. Shootings, discord in Washington, and racist rhetoric that hasn’t been heard since the 1960s remind us of Winston Churchill’s famous words (paraphrasing philosopher George Santayana): “Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.” In the spirit of remembering our history, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina was established in 1994 “to encourage the collection, study, and interpretation of South Carolina Jewish history and to increase awareness of that heritage among Jews and non-Jews.” Over the past 25 years, JHSSC has developed into the largest Jewish statewide organization and worked steadily to fulfill its mission. With the Society’s support, the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston’s Addlestone Library has recorded more than 500 oral histories and accessioned thousands of archival documents. In partnership with the College’s Jewish Studies Program and the Pearlstein/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture, we offer an array of public programs and learning opportunities. Historic Columbia’s Jewish Heritage Initiative has fueled our research and fieldwork on merchants across the state and assisted in the production of the exhibit A Store at Every Crossroad, on view this fall at both Addlestone Library and the Temple Sinai Jewish History Center in Sumter. Our website and biannual magazine help spread the word about the history we are uncovering. In our conferences, we strive to stay current, covering contemporary and sometimes controversial subjects.

Our meeting on “Memory, Monuments, and Memorials,” for example, followed the Alt Right demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia, which turned deadly. Last spring’s 50th anniversary gala was indeed a celebratory event but also engaged serious conversation among top scholars about what the future holds for American Jewry in the decades ahead. As I complete my second term as JHSSC president, I am proud of the work we are doing and confident the Society is in good hands.

Our fall 2019 meeting is scheduled to take place in Spartanburg on November 9–10. The planning committee, headed by Spartanburg native Joe Wachter, has been hard at work designing the program. Spartanburg’s Jewish history will take center stage on Saturday, with a talk and panel discussion, a site visit to the old synagogue, and dinner at Temple B’nai Israel with entertainment by Cap and Collar. On Sunday we will commemorate the 81st anniversary of Kristallnacht, the Nazi’s “Night of Broken Glass,” with a tribute to the Teszler family, refugees from Budapest, Hungary, who developed double-knit textile manufacturing in Spartanburg.

I want to thank the Spartanburg community for welcoming us with true southern hospitality. As always, hats off to the professionals, staff, and volunteers who help us run a highly successful organization. Without them there would be no Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

I look forward to seeing you all in Spartanburg in November!

Jeffrey Rosenblum, FAIA, JHSSC President
In Search of Jewish Spartanburg

by Joe Wachter

I was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, at Mary Black Hospital on February 17, 1946. My parents, Joseph and Margaret Wachter, met while both were stationed at Camp Croft, a World War II–era infantry training camp in Spartanburg County. Growing up in Spartanburg, my brother, Charles, and I were aware that we were part of a Jewish family and members of Temple B’nai Israel Congregation. When I was six years old, I started attending Sabbath services and Sunday called the Dean Street Synagogue in downtown Spartanburg. Eleven concrete steps led to the synagogue’s two large front doors, and each time I entered the building I saw a large marble tablet on the wall facing those doors. Engraved in stone were the names of the individuals who founded my Jewish community and built our first synagogue.

About 14 years ago, while visiting Spartanburg, I decided to find out more about the people whose names were on the marble tablet. I was familiar with the names Spigel, Price, and Hecklin. Some of their descendants were still living and working in Spartanburg. I also knew the Greenewald name. A clothing store by that name had operated in downtown Spartanburg for over 100 years. However, I knew nothing about the others. There are 24 family names on the tablet, representing 27 families, and I have uncovered a great deal of information about all of them. I have spoken to more than 250 descendants of Spartanburg’s early Jewish settlers and later arrivals, including those not affiliated with the temple, and I am amazed at what I have thus far uncovered. I continue to discover new information about them. They were and are a remarkable group of people. (Some of their stories are forthcoming at jhssc.org. See p. 12 for details.)

My parents’ generation at the temple did an outstanding job of creating and nurturing a Jewish community for me and the other kids who grew up there. That sense of belonging meant a lot to me and it has a lot to do with why I wanted to find out more about the families of Temple B’nai Israel. Rabbi Max Stauber, who led our congregation for almost 30 years, contributed significantly to the sense of belonging we experienced. In many ways, he was the face of Spartanburg Jewry. He was respected by every member of our Jewish community and always saw the best in every person. He never uttered an unkind word about anyone.

Our youth group, the Spartanburg Chapter of the B’nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO), made up of members of Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA) and B’nai Brith Girls (BBG), also fostered feelings of kinship. I was a member from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, along with about 50 other teens. Our advisors were Joel Tanenbaum, Kathy Steinberg, and Helga and Herb Moglin. We were extremely active during that time period. We had meetings every two weeks and we wrote and published The Shmunos, our own monthly newspaper, which was loaded with stories about who we were and what we were doing.

Because most of our parents were busy making a living downtown (and despite none of us being particularly religious), our youth group made up the minyan at Saturday morning services conducted by Rabbi Stauber. Every Sunday we held a b’nai mitzvah service, followed by a brunch catered by our mothers and a cultural hour featuring talks by local attorneys, doctors, and college professors.

We had a debate team and participated in competitions. We also had a basketball team (with AZA emblazoned on our jerseys) in the local church league and were one of the best teams in the league each year. Our coach was Jack Steinberg. We organized social activities on a regular basis and visited and befriended other Jewish kids at weekend events in cities in Georgia and the Carolinas.

Those were special times. Some of the people reading this will remember that in 2003 we had a 40-year BBYO reunion in Spartanburg, which lasted three days. For those three days, we ate together, laughed together, and celebrated our friendships, memories, and collective history. It was truly a moving and memorable event, so much so that my wife openly cried when she saw how much like a family—a big Jewish family—we all were. Of the 50 or so kids I knew, 44 attended, traveling from far and near. Another four wanted to come but could not because they were on business outside the country or were ill and could not travel. That stands in my mind as a remarkable statement about how much the temple meant to all of us and how much we meant to each other.

No one yet knows when the first Jews arrived and settled in Spartanburg. Jacob Rader Marcus, in To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1855–1984, notes that nine Jews lived in the city in 1878. The Carolina Spartan reported in September 1888 that the city’s “Hebrew friends” met for the first time in the home of local attorney, Mr. Scovel, on Union Street.

In May 1916, the board filed for incorporation under the name Temple B’nai Israel (Sons of Israel) and, two months later, the congregation purchased a lot and house located at 104 Union Street (the corner of Union and S. Dean streets) for $2,560.00, the home of local photographer, A. T. Willis.

That same fall, Rabbi Hyman Samuel Cohen was hired in 1914 as the first full-time rabbi. He died unexpectedly in October 1916.

Earlier that year, at the invitation of temple member Joseph Spigel, Rabbi Jacob Raisin of K. Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina, came to Spartanburg to organize the congregation’s first synagogue. In May 1916, the board filed for incorporation under the name Temple B’nai Israel (Sons of Israel) and, two months later, the congregation purchased a lot and house located at 104 Union Street (the corner of Union and S. Dean streets) for $2,560.00, the home of local photographer, A. T. Willis.

That same year, temple members organized a social club and bought the store operated by Abe Levin, located at 113 ½ East Main Street. Levin’s store was above a clothing store owned by Joe Miller called The Standard Cloth Company, known to locals as “The Standard.” At that meeting Levin was elected the first president. Between 1912 and 1916, the group held services at the Hering Furniture Store (115 East Main Street), the Standard, and other downtown business establishments, including Goldberg’s and the second floor of the Floyd L. Liles Department Store, both located on Morgan Square.

Rabbi Hyman Samuel Cohen was hired in 1914 as the first full-time rabbi. He died unexpectedly in October 1916.
year, a Sunday school was operating in Isabelle Fuchter’s house across the street at 162 S. Dean Street.

Temple B’nai Israel hired Spartanburg architect Luther Douglas Proffitt and construction of the synagogue started in the spring of 1917. Joseph Spigel, then serving as president of the temple, chaired a committee that oversaw the project. On May 10, once the exterior of the building was completed, a formal dedication ceremony was held and a cornerstone placed at the northeast corner of the building. The public was invited to the event and Rabbi David Marx of The Temple in Atlanta also spoke.

The Dean Street Synagogue operated at the corner of Heywood and Dean Street at 162 S. Dean Street. The property included a three-story Victorian-style home that was purchased by a congregation called The Bread of Life Christian Church. After the sale, a ceremony was held to move the Torahs from the building and place them at the community center.

After the sale, the property was purchased by a congregation called The Dean Street Synagogue. The building was designed and built by Luther Douglas Proffitt in 1907, the same man who built the temple at the northeast corner of the building. The public was invited to the event and Rabbi David Marx of Temple B’nai Israel in Atlanta chaired a committee that oversaw the project. On May 10, once the exterior of the building was completed, a formal dedication ceremony was held and a cornerstone placed at the northeast corner of the building. The public was invited to the event and Rabbi David Marx of Temple B’nai Israel in Atlanta also spoke.

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In 1942, as the temple’s membership grew, B’nai Israel hired Rabbi Samuel Wrubel, who remained in the pulpit until 1954. An accomplished writer and speaker, he was frequently invited to address civic and religious organizations in the Spartanburg area. Prior to Wrubel’s arrival, the congregation was not affiliated with any one branch of Judaism and tried to meet the needs of all its members. Sometime during Wrubel’s tenure, the temple became affiliated with Conservative Judaism and the United Synagogue of America. In 1955, Rabbi Max Stauber came to Spartanburg from a congregation in Patchogue, New York, on Long Island, and he served our community until he passed away in 1986. During his lengthy tenure as rabbi, the membership in the congregation continued to grow.

In the early 1930s, our congregation purchased a large tract of land for a community center and Sunday school. The property included a three-story Victorian-style home and was located on Heywood Avenue, about two miles from the Dean Street Synagogue. The building was designed and built by Luther Douglas Proffitt in 1907, the same man who designed and built the synagogue in 1917. Abe Smith, who had been active in temple affairs since the 1930s, was primarily responsible for securing that property.

The Dean Street Synagogue operated at the corner of Union and Deans streets until 1961, when it was sold to a local church. After the sale, a ceremony was held to move the Torahs from the building and place them at the community center on Heywood. Two years later a new synagogue was built on the Heywood Avenue property. My father, then the president of the congregation, was heavily involved in planning and designing the new building, along with Henry Jacobs, Andrew Teszler, Max Massey, Joel Tanenbaum, and Abe Smith. It was one of his most cherished memories and accomplishments.

In 1971, largely through the generosity of Andrew Teszler, the congregation constructed a Sunday school building adjacent to the new synagogue. The Dean Street building is now being used by a congregation called The Bread of Life Christian Fellowship. When I go inside, however, it still has the look and feel—even the smell—of the synagogue I remember as a child. I have not been affiliated with Temple B’nai Israel since the 1960s. Since that time, the congregation has continued to grow and prosper, and it has been served by a number of rabbis. In 1995, the membership at Temple B’nai Israel voted to affiliate with the Reform Movement and join the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Since 2003, Rabbi Yossi Liebowitz has served with distinction as the spiritual and religious leader of the community.

As noted above, I am still researching Spartanburg’s Jewish history. If you would like to discuss any of that history with me or if you have any information you would like to share, please do contact me. I would be happy to hear from you at any time. Thank you.

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**Memories of Our Father and Temple B’nai Israel during the Youthful Time We Lived in Spartanburg**

by Ben Zion Stauber, Naomi Miriam Stauber, Alvin Stauber, and Lynn “Honey” Stauber Greenberg

In Austria-Hungary in or around 1905, he would tell each of us a different date, probably because he didn’t remember what he had told us before, which became a running family joke. In those days, very few male babies were registered at the government office for fear that in 18 years they would be drafted. He also told me that every time there was a war, he changed nationalities: Austro-Hungarian, Hungarian, Austrian, and probably others he didn’t bother to share with me. Also, since births were not registered, he didn’t know the actual day he was born, but he knew it was around Shavuot. It was cold, he said, and I always wondered how a newborn remembered this.

I will share a story he told me that shows his bravery on his draft notice to Judaism. Some of the details may need a stretch of belief but he said it was true, and, knowing my father, I believe every word.

The Stauber family in Vishel de Sus, Romania.

All photos courtesy of Ben Stauber, except where otherwise noted.
The movie Beyond Culture Shock. What we knew of “The South” was from my father’s stories because he not only knew the laws of Shabbos, he also said that they would appear kosher. Finally, one day when the sun set and the darkness came over them, the captain of the Cossacks gave the full reins for the horses and told him to hop on the buggy seat. A very exhausted young man declined the offer to ride. When he was asked why, he replied, “It’s Shabbos, I can’t ride an animal on Shabbos.”

When the soldiers were done with Zadie’s mouth, a group of not-so-soldiers told Zadie they needed the horses because their horses were exhausted. He also said that they would return Zade’s horses when they were done with them. Hah! Poopy! Liars!

Zade told my father to go with the soldiers and bring his horses back home. Young Max obeyed and walked with the soldiers, gripping the reins as tight as he could. For many miles and days, he kept a watchful eye for anything that did not appear kosher. Finally, one day when the sun set and the darkness came over them, the captain of the Cossacks gave Max the full reins for the horses and told him to hop on the buggy seat. A very exhausted young man declined the offer to ride. When he was asked why, he replied, “It’s Shabbos, I can’t ride an animal on Shabbos.”

The UpTown Nine were Daddy’s inner circle, dealing with the same issues with their congregants, no matter what the religion, as he did with his. When Daddy was dying from a stroke, Mother allowed only the congregation president and the ministers of the UpTwn Nine to visit in the hospital. They were paying their respects, with many honest tears and much affection. The local Spartanburg newspaper called Daddy the “Little Giant” in its editorial page obituary and devoted a third of a page that day to describing his contributions to Spartanburg and South Carolina. Governor Richard Riley had asked Daddy to write the “Ten Commandments of Mental Health for South Carolinians” and he had served on the Spartanburg County Mental Health Association for years.

Somewhere in the middle of the 28 years of Daddy’s tenure in Spartanburg, faculty from Wofford College and Converse College asked him to teach them the Old Testament from the Jewish perspective. He became an adjunct professor at Converse College and taught faculty courses for years. He also taught Hebrew classes to the Congregation student who wished to learn the Bible in the original language.

From time to time the Sisterhood held bake sales to raise money. Temple B’nai Israel’s reputation for delicious goods spread. The temple parking lot was full of cars the day of the sale with visitors from across Spartanburg County. My mother baked eight challahs in the beginning years and cringed at the high price the women running the sale charged for her homemade challahs. Each year they asked Mother to bake more and more as there was such a calling for them. Her strudel and rugelach flew off the tables. Everyone had a good time: there was lots of fun, lots of laughter, and the entire Spartanburg community was represented.

Twice a year Mother and Daddy would host a luncheon in their home for eight to ten of the UpTwn Nine Ministers: mid-February for Black History month and another significant time six months later. Mother’s menu was that of a Yom Tov dinner, including several courses and many dishes no one had previously tasted in their lives. The guests each went home with a fresh baked challah, looking forward to the next time, they exclaimed.

The four years I spent in Spartanburg before departing for college left indelibly etched memories of a minyan or two. Of ten—Women? Children?—has been hotly debated among Jewish scholars for centuries. In the reminiscences below, I present memories of a minyan or two or three where my father, Rabbi Max Stauber, was a central character.

When I was only ten years old, before our family’s move to Spartanburg from Patchogue, New York, my father would sometimes call me at home as I was preparing to go to school to serve as the tenth man for the 7:30 a.m. weekday minyan at my father’s synagogue located right next door to our house. I was glad to attend and happy I could be the tenth man. At the end of the service, I trotted next door, finished my breakfast (wobbled it down!), and do not remember ever being tardy for school.

I also recall a “minyan mitzvah”—some might call it “minyan psikdashah”—after we moved to Spartanburg. During Sukkot, Shavuot, or Passover weekday services at the synagogue’s downtown location on Dean Street, with my family in attendance, my father would sometimes send me to the hine, conveniently located next door, to ask the administrative staff for permission to “yank” the Shapiro twins out of class (only for an hour or so), so we could make a minyan and thereby be
able to recite certain prayers, as well as read the Torah portion for the day. This Make-a-Minyan effort was usually successful and did not seem to impair the Shapiro twins’ academic or professional success as they went on to illustrious careers in law and medicine.

When I told my parents I would be visiting them in Spartanburg during my law school semester break in 1968, my father invited me to deliver the sermon at Friday evening services. I respectfully declined because I was exhausted after end-of-semester exams. I did go to Shabbat services on Friday evening and felt relaxed there and felt my stress level diminishing. Said stress level reduction was short-lived. When it was time for the sermon, my father announced, “My son Alvin will now deliver the sermon, a D’Var Torah.” I was in shock! I was stunned! Somehow I organized some thoughts on my way up to the bimah and followed one of the guiding principles of Jewish public speaking, which is: “When in doubt, KVETCH!”

So I babbled on for ten minutes about the malaise that Jewish university students felt in the turbulence of the 60s. After the service, I asked my father where I could go to pick up milk and eggs for our mom and I were sent to pick up milk and eggs for our mom who was always baking challah and rugelach to be on hand for the endless trail of visitors to our house. The owner of the store was so southern and nice, he replied, “Ya’ll come back.” So I did, and he said “Did you forget something?” Friday nights and Saturdays we walked the one and a half miles to Temple B’nai Israel downtown for Shabbat services. Someone driving by would always stop and ask if we wanted a ride. Reactions were mixed.

We eventually built our new synagogue on Heywood Avenue, and I was the first to become bat mitzvah there. Years later, I was married in that same sanctuary. My fondest memories as a child were babysitting for Helga and Herb Moglin; buying clothes from Mac Massey’s store, The Kiddie Korner; getting gas at Junie White’s gas station; and walking down Main Street with my dad, visiting stores like Marion’s (Speedy Feinstein’s lady’s clothing store), Joseph H. Wachter, Sr.’s Elliott’s Jewelers, and Sheila Rose’s bakery. Saturday nights were filled with playing cards at the Sun ‘n Sand Motel, run by Aunt Flo and Jack Price.

Cooking with the women of our temple was a blast and listening to Alan Silverman play the piano for our spectacular shows leaves my heart so warm. And who can forget Mozelle Harris? There could be no function without Mozelle’s help. Our door was always open and all visitors left with a challah loaf under their arm. B’nai Israel is a warm and welcoming place and my childhood reflects that.

Price’s Store for Men: “Ends Your Quest for the Best”

by Harry Price

I was said he bore a resemblance to George Gershwin, with whom he shared New York City beginnings and Lithuanian heritage. They both died too young in 1937, and they obviously had a South Carolina connection: Gershwin’s “working vacation” at Folly Beach, near Charleston, to research Porgy and Bess, and my grandfather Harry Price’s random selection of Spartanburg to start his business.

Visiting his brother-in-law, J. J. Saul, in Hartwell, Georgia, Harry heard that Spartanburg “was a good town for business,” bustling from the thriving textile industry. Marketer that he was, he adjusted his business plan several times. In 1900, his first store was named The New York Bazaar, sounding sophisticated to him, but not so much to the Spartanburg market, a mere 35 years after the Civil War. By 1903, the year of Spartanburg’s great flood, with a name change and a new location on the square, Harry Price’s store for men was launched.

Harry became known for his gracious and courteous manner and he easily made friends with Mayor John Floyd, who owned the neighboring dry goods store and sold caskets from his back door. Price’s targeted Wofford College students, who would come to school from small South Carolina farming communities without proper dress clothes.

In the 1920s, sporting goods and a boy’s department were added on the second floor. In his late 90s, Mr. Robert Pickens stated it was the “proudest day of his life, when his mother took him to Harry Price for his first pair of long pants.” The Pie Eater’s Club was created for local boys, circulating monthly comic books that showcased new styles.

As would be expected, Harry Price was civicly engaged. Landrum’s 1933 book of South Carolina biographies states that he was a founding member of the Chamber of Commerce and the Kiwanis Club and affiliated with the Woodmen of the World and the Loyal Order of Moose. He was a founding member of Congregation B’nai Israel and served on the building committee for its first temple.

At the home of the bride’s parents, Harry Price married Dora Mann in 1909 in Newberry, South Carolina. Worthy of note, two future South Carolina governors were in attendance—Ibra Blackwood, a friend of the groom from Spartanburg, and Caleb Blease, a friend of the bride’s father from Newberry. Each governor became notorious in his own right.

Not surprising given her German heritage, Dora Mann Price was disdainful of her husband’s Eastern European antecedents. She was also somewhat ambivalent about being Jewish. Her interest in the Temple’s Ladies Aid was said he bore a resemblance to George Gershwin, with whom he shared New York City beginnings and Lithuanian heritage. They both died too young in 1937, and they obviously had a South Carolina connection: Gershwin’s “working vacation” at Folly Beach, near Charleston, to research Porgy and Bess, and my grandfather Harry Price’s random selection of Spartanburg to start his business.

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Auxiliary was primarily to provide readily available bridge partners. After her husband’s death, she remained the cashier at Price’s for more than 30 years.

While Harry Price never met George Gershwin, he was able to meet another notable 20th-century American, Spartanburg was Charles Lindbergh’s only stop in South Carolina on his national tour after his triumphant flight across the Atlantic. At that time, Spartanburg had the only airport in the state. Harry Price attended the formal banquet held in Lindbergh’s honor at converse College. There is an iconic photograph of Spartanburg’s best attended parade. It shows Lindbergh in an open-air car riding down Main Street. Harry Price standing in the cheering crowd in front of his store with his young daughter, Anne (later Gray), and his father-in-law, Joseph Mann. There wasn’t a parade when Harry Price first arrived in town, but certainly Spartanburg cheered him on.

Spartanburg Stories

To learn more about the lives and careers of notable Jewish people who are part of the history of Spartanburg, see Joe Wachter’s upcoming “Spartanburg Stories” at jhssc.org. Profiles will include:

- Anna Kramer Blotcky, life-long music and voice teacher, recognized as a skilled contralto in the world of opera
- Harold Cohen, whose World War II partnership with Creighton Abrams earned them the moniker “Roosevelt’s Highest Paid Butchers”
- David Max Eichhorn, U.S. Army chaplain who conducted religious services at Dachau after the concentration camp was liberated in 1945
- Al Rosen, a feared slugger for the Cleveland Indians between 1950 and ’56, who came to be known as “the Hebrew Hammer of Major League Baseball”
- Seymour Rosenberg, whose column for the Spartanburg Herald, called “The Stroller,” entertained and sometimes angered readers for more than 33 years
- Bill Shapiro, track & field champion at Spartanburg High School and Tulane University, who brought home two gold medals from the 1965 Maccabiah games in Israel

Hub City Reminiscences

Moderator: Joe Wachter
Panelists: Dot Frank, Allan From, Gloria Goldberg, Andy Poliaskoff, Harry Price, Gary Smiley, Sandy Smiley, Ben Stauber
4:00
Tour of former Temple B’nai Israel, 191 S. Dean Street (a short drive from current synagogue)
6:00
Reception, buffet dinner, and entertainment by Cap and Collar
For more than three decades Rabbi Yossi and Pastor Paul have brought their musical talents, charm, and humor to their respective pulpits. Joining forces in 2003, they perform a mix of traditional folk, country, and original songs that serves as a bridge among faiths and peoples.

Sunday, November 10
9:00 A.M.
Membership meeting and executive committee elections—everyone is invited! Coffee and bagels will be served.
10:30–12:00
From Budapest to Spartanburg: The Tezlers, Textile Giants in the American South
Moderator: Diane Vecchio, Professor Emeritus, Furman University
Panelists: Mr. Oakley Coburn, former Head of the Library Department & Archives, Wofford College, and Dr. Charles D. Kay, Professor Emeritus, Wofford College

Hotel reservations
Spartanburg Marriott
299 North Church Street, Spartanburg, SC 29306
800.527.6465
Special rate: $129 per night + tax
To get the special rate, make your reservation by 5:00 p.m. on October 17 and mention Group JHSSC2019.

Meeting registration
Online at: jhssc.org/events/upcoming
Or by check: payable to JHSSC
c/o Yaschik/Aronold Jewish Studies Program – 96 Wentworth Street
Charleston, SC 29424
Meeting fee: $60 per person
Questions: Enid Idelsohn, idelsohn@cofc.edu
Phone: 843.953.3918 ~ fax: 843.953.7624

In Search of Jewish Spartanburg
November 9–10, 2019 – Spartanburg, South Carolina
All events take place at Temple B’nai Israel, 146 Heywood Avenue, unless otherwise noted.

Saturday, November 9
11:30 A.M.
Registration and lunch
12:00 P.M.
Welcome – Jeffrey Rosenblum, JHSSC president
12:30 – 1:30
In Search of Jewish Spartanburg
Joe Wachter
2:00 – 3:30
Hub City Reminiscences
Moderator: Joe Wachter
Panelists: Dot Frank, Allan From, Gloria Goldberg, Andy Poliaskoff, Harry Price, Gary Smiley, Sandy Smiley, Ben Stauber
4:00
Tour of former Temple B’nai Israel, 191 S. Dean Street (a short drive from current synagogue)
6:00
Reception, buffet dinner, and entertainment by Cap and Collar
For more than three decades Rabbi Yossi and Pastor Paul have brought their musical talents, charm, and humor to their respective pulpits. Joining forces in 2003, they perform a mix of traditional folk, country, and original songs that serves as a bridge among faiths and peoples.

Main Street at Morgan Square, Spartanburg, SC, ca. 2015. Photo by Joe Wachter.
The Froms of Union: Merchants on Main Street for 100 Years
by I. Allan From

On Friday, October 7, 1927, the front page of the Union Daily Times featured a picture of Israel From and an article about his life in Union. "To tear loose from the land of your Fathers, leave all of the surroundings of the childhoo..." the story began. "Then to realize that you are burning all of your bridges behind..." said. "and that you are landing in a strange country without money..." continued. "nothing between you and darkness but your own determined efforts, requires..." concluded. "plenty of physical energy."

Israel From was born in Lithuania in 1878; his wife, Bertha Kessler, was born in 1879. They met and fell in love. Israel immigrated to Worcester, Massachusetts, in the 1890s and lived with relatives, possibly one or more of his brothers. (Eventually three of his brothers, his sister, Eva, and his parents all settled in Worcester.) By 1900, Bertha had joined him and the couple were married.

What brought the Froms to Union? The tale is a typical one of chain migration. Bertha's cousins Hyman and Philip Berlin lived in Baltimore and, in the 1890s, decided to make their way south. They peddled in North Carolina, with their base in Moncure, near Raleigh, then in Burlington, and later in Haw River. Hyman married his first cousin Alte Kessler, who was Bertha's older sister. After trying their hand at dairy farming and a stint in Baltimore, the brothers moved to Union, peddling in the countryside and then succeeding in opening small stores in town.

The Berlins told Israel and Bertha, then living in Worcester, about opportunities in Union, and the Froms moved there around 1901. Israel began peddling in the northern part of Union County in an area called Pea Ridge, walking from house to house selling cloth, clothes, kitchen items, and sewing supplies. He later purchased a horse and then a wagon and, in 1904, he opened a dry goods shop on Main Street. Soon thereafter he welcomed his brother Solomon Fram who had been a cobbler in the Old Country and who now opened a store across the street in Union.

Israel had a reputation as hardworking, fair, and civic minded. He and Bertha reared six children, all of whom ended up in the retail business.

A family portrait shows Israel to be a sharp dresser. He loved the latest in inventions and was one of the first in Union to acquire an automobile, a radio, and an electric shaver. He learned to speak English without a European accent and enjoyed taking an occasional drink and playing cards with friends, Jewish and non-Jewish. His father remembers driving with his father into the country during Prohibition to purchase bootleg whiskey.

My father, Harry, the last of six children, married Edith Small of Asheville, North Carolina, and opened Harry From's on Main Street in Union. The store sold men's, women's, and children's clothing and shoes, mostly to lower and middle-class whites and African Americans. My father always said, "Treat everyone with respect. Money is not white or black, it's green."

My grandfather rarely worked in the store; according to Israel, he could hire people to sell goods but couldn't hire someone to rear his children. Bertha was deeply religious. Both she and Israel were proud of their Jewish heritage and faith and never shied away from telling their neighbors in Union County how much Judaism meant to them. In Lithuania Bertha's mother had taught Hebrew and Bertha was well versed and observant. She kept a kosher home, ordering meat from Atlanta, which sometimes arrived in not the best condition. She learned to properly salt the meat so it was edible. She served chickens raised in the backyard and slaughtered according to the laws of kashrut.

Bertha davened three times a day until the day of her death in 1969. She also recited Musul whenever necessary. I can remember my parents encouraging me to stand next to my grandmother when she prayed but not to disturb her. Israel, on the other hand, was not so Orthodox and would eat non-kosher food outside the house. Family lore has it that if Israel brought home treyf (non-kosher) food, Bertha would send him to the backyard where he would sit on a tree stump and eat in the company of the horse he kept from his peddling days.

Rosa Poliakoff, in an oral history recorded in 1995, claimed the only time she heard her parents disagree was when Bertha wanted her children to stay home from school for all Jewish holidays and Israel wanted them to go to school, except on the High Holidays. I believe Israel won this discussion. All the children attended college except my father. Ellis went to Clemson, Lena, Mary, and Sarah attended Winthrop College, and Rosa matriculated at Agnes Scott College in Atlanta. My father was headed to Georgia Tech, but when his father died he last year in high school he decided to stay home and work in the store with Ellis. The Froms show Israel to be a sharp dresser. He loved the latest inventions and was one of the first in Union to acquire an automobile, a radio, and an electric shaver. He learned to speak English without a European accent and enjoyed taking an occasional drink and playing cards with friends, Jewish and non-Jewish. My father remembers driving with his father into the country during Prohibition to purchase bootleg whiskey. During Israel's time, when the Ku Klux Klan would parade on Main Street in white robes with their faces hidden under hoods, it is said he would call them by name. Afterwards the marchers confronted Israel and asked how he knew they were. "I sold you your shoes," he replied. Versions of this story are told about other Jewish merchants elsewhere in the state—clearly the tensions between small town shopkeepers and their Klan customers hover not far beneath the surface in the collective consciousness of southern Jews. Indeed, my sister remembers essentially the same encounter in our father's generation, as described in Gloria's account below.

When our family closed my father's store, I was told by my elderly African American that my grandfather was the first merchant on Main Street to allow people of color to try on shoes. I asked him how African Americans bought shoes in other stores and he explained they would measure the length of their foot with a string, go to the store and ask for a shoe of that length. I was proud to hear my immigrant grandfather had treated all people with respect.

The Belk family opened a store in Union around the same time Israel opened his. It was one of their earlier stores, on perhaps the second day, Israel and Mr. Belk knew one another and when other stores went out of business, the two of them would purchase the merchandise together and share it. Obviously, this did not last very long, as Mr. Belk went on to create the largest department store chain in the Carolinas.
Other Jewish merchants in Union, apart from the Froms and Berlins, included the Kassler family, who lived in Buffalo, a few miles from Union. Two of their children were Norma Shapiro and Ethel Berman, both of Gaffney. Jacob Cohen owned a fine store in Union and was well established before my family arrived. There were also the Berelovits family (Mr. Berelovits had married a cousin of Bertha From), the Levine family, the Krass family, the Nathan Shapiro family, whose son Louis married Norma Kassler and lived in Gaffney. Solomon From also came to Union, owned stores in Union and Lockhart, and lived with his wife, Katie, in Union until the late ’40s.

In 1917, the American Jewish Yearbook counted 40 Jews in Union, likely enough to make minyan (a quorum of 10 Jewish men required to hold prayer services). Jacob Cohen and my grandfather Israel were said to have held services at their homes, using a Torah Israel bought. According to my aunt Rosa Poliakoff, after the congregation in Spartanburg was established, Israel gave the Torah to B’nai Israel since there were more Jews in Spartanburg than Union.

When Israel and Bertha arrived in Union, they joined the Conservative congregation in Charlotte, North Carolina, where they had relatives, then began attending services in the Conservative congregation in Spartanburg. Israel gave the Torah to B’nai Israel in 1920, using a Torah Israel bought. Jacob Cohen and my grandfather Israel were co-founders of the Union Country Club in the late 1940s. My mother, Edith, was a volunteer for the Junior Charity League. And Maie was a founder and served on the local board of the University of South Carolina at Union.

The Froms and our Berlin relatives were scattered across the Upstate, with stores in Union, Abbeville, Woodruff, Greer, Bolton, Wagner, and Greenwood, South Carolina. Today, none are left. I. From closed in 1974 and Harry From in the latter part of 2005, marking 100 years of Froms in Union County.

Being Jewish in Union

By Gloria From Goldberg

Belonging to the only Jewish family in Union, South Carolina, grew my brother, Allan, and me, a unique perspective. We were taught at an early age that we were Jewish and different. Our parents drove us 30 miles to Spartanburg and waited two hours for us to attend Sunday school. My dad hired a driver to take us to Hebrew school in Spartanburg during the week.

We were always proud of our Judaism and we got along well with our non-Jewish friends. When I was about the age of four, I attended kindergarten at the First Presbyterian Church near my house. I’ll always remember the Christmas program when I was chosen to be the “star” on the Christmas tree. It was my teacher, the late Sara Sutherland, who chose me. I’ll bet I was the only Jewish star on a Christmas tree in history.

It was drilled into Allan and me that we were Jewish. When my dad closed his store for the High Holidays, he placed a sign on the door: “Closed for the Jewish Holidays.”

One important reason why this home was purchased. Obviously, with six children, the family needed a much bigger home than the two-or three-bedroom house where they lived before.

To the best of my memory, the house had three bedrooms downstairs, along with two kitchens, and there were five bedrooms upstairs. Having a milk and meat kitchen made things easier for my grandmother and was probably a major reason why this home was purchased. Obviously, with six children, the family needed a much bigger home than the two-or three-bedroom house where they lived before.

I never felt like an outsider and grew to be friendly with the ministers. I don’t remember any bad experiences; in fact, our teachers were wonderful ladies. I attended public schools in Union from 1st grade until 12th grade. I belonged to a Cub Scout troop associated with First Presbyterian, a Boy Scout troop associated with the Episcopal church, and remember attending on many occasions with other clubs associated with the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. All my friends, no matter what religion they were, would attend teen clubs at different churches.

I never felt like an outsider and grew to be friendly with the ministers. I don’t remember any minister ever trying to convert me. Obviously, when prayers were said, I did feel uncomfortable and realize that we were going to practice that religion. None of the other youngsters made me feel awkward about the situation. I have been told by many of my friends, at a much later time, that I have no faith.

All the Bases Covered: Memories of my Childhood in Union

By I. Allan From

Even though the only Jewish families in Union while I was growing up were that of my father and his brother, I experienced a wonderful childhood. I was born in Union in 1950 and can remember growing up in a large house on South Street. My grandfather Israel From purchased this house in the early 1920s from a prominent banker in town. The house was big, painted white, with a wrap-around porch. This is where my father and his brother and sisters spent most of their childhood.

To the best of my memory, the house had three bedrooms downstairs, along with two kitchens, and there were five bedrooms upstairs. Having a milk and meat kitchen made things easier for my grandmother and was probably a major reason why this home was purchased. Obviously, with six children, the family needed a much bigger home than the two-or three-bedroom house where they lived before.

I never felt like an outsider and grew to be friendly with the ministers. I don’t remember any minister ever trying to convert me. Obviously, when prayers were said, I did feel uncomfortable and realize that we were going to practice that religion. None of the other youngsters made me feel awkward about the situation. I have been told by many of my friends, at a much later time, that
they never thought of me as a Jew, but as another person who happened to be Jewish. Many of them have also told me, they don’t understand anti-Semitism, as I was the only Jew they knew growing up and was just like them.

On occasion, I would attend church with my non-Jewish friends and was always made to feel welcome. On Christmas mornings, I remember getting up early and going to visit several of my friends to help them open their Christmas presents. It was just part of growing up. My parents had no problems with my ecumenical activities. We talked constantly about being Jewish. My parents encouraged me to engage with my Christian friends, but made sure I maintained my Jewish beliefs and values. I believe they thought this is fine now, but if you are going to marry a Jewish woman, I surprised them by marrying two Jewish women, but not at the same time.

When I was young, we joined Temple B’nai Israel in Spartanburg where I attended Sunday school and Hebrew school. My mother was from New York City and did not drive, so my parents would hire teenagers to drive me to Hebrew school in Spartanburg several times a week. On Saturdays I would take the bus from Union to Spartanburg, where a family friend would pick me up and take me to temple. After attending services, I would go back to the rabbi’s house, have lunch with him and his wife, and then have a private Hebrew lesson. Rabbi Max and Mrs. Stauber were wonderful people and treated me as one of their own. Rabbi Stauber served at B’nai Israel for more than 30 years and is still a legend there. For my bar mitzvah many people from my hometown of Union came and were quite interested in the ceremony as none of them had ever attended a bar mitzvah before. I believe they were fascinated by hearing Hebrew and holding a book where you read from right to left. Many of my parents’ friends said they would like to be Jewish because we served great food and gave a good party.

I was involved in activities at Union High School, such as student government and sports. I really was not much of an athlete but enjoyed playing. My senior year I was elected president of the student body at Union High School. Among at least 1,000 students at Union High School, my sister and I were the only Jews. I felt if there was any anti-Semitism, it certainly would have shown up at that time. During the campaign, I would walk around the school early in the morning to make sure that my signs were in the proper place. I probably had 100 signs and on only one occasion on one day was there an anti-Semitic remark. I immediately took the sign down and replaced it with another. There were no other issues.

I knew students at Union High School whose parents were involved in the Klan. One such person came up to me one day and asked if I knew his father was head of the Klan in Union. I indicated that I did, and he told me that he had known me for most of his life and considered me a friend. He further told me that though he liked me, he didn’t want to know any more like me. I was speechless, not knowing how to take that comment. On another occasion, at a local drive-in restaurant, I remember when some boys I knew asked me to help erect a cross for a Klan rally. I asked them if they knew I was Jewish, and they said they knew but didn’t care. I declined their invitation.

My sister, Gloria, and I were the only two Jewish students in the Union County public schools, but one of my best friends growing up was Jewish. Chuck Bernstein lived in Gaffney, about 30 miles from Union. His grandparents, the Kasler family, had operated a store in Buffalo, South Carolina, a few miles from Union. Chuck’s mother, Ethel, was born there and later moved to Gaffney. Chuck was exactly my age and our grandparents had been friends, our parents were friends, so it was only natural we became good friends. We met first when we were about five years old and Chuck beat me up, but we never had another fight. He was a star football player at Gaffney High, was involved in student government, and was as much a part of the Gaffney community as I was in Union. Neither of us spent much time with the Spartanburg Jewish community as we were very happy and busy in our hometowns. We spent many weekends together; when he called me, I got off the line, and when I went to Gaffney, he did the same. Not one of these problems with my ecumenical activities. We talked constantly and loved our community.

I was in sixth grade, we moved from the old family home to a new one in Union next door to First Presbyterian’s parsonage. A new minister moved in and my parents became good friends with him and his wife. They socialized, I played with their children, and I shot one-on-one basketball with Reverend Blumer. He played to win as he was a proud graduate of the University of Kentucky. At Christmas he would invite my sister and me over to his house when other college students came home. We were part of his family. When my mother died in 1970 at the age of 48, Reverend Blumer and his family were on vacation. Rabbi Stauber and the Spartanburg community had been very supportive of my sick mother, but the Blumers gave her much needed support as well. A member of Reverend Blumer’s congregation called him to let him know that my mother had died and Reverend Blumer called my father. He said he would be coming home for the funeral. My dad told him not to come, that he had very little vacation time and that we would get together when he got back. Reverend Blumer insisted upon attending and my father told him, if you come you will participate. So on May 31, 1970, Rabbi Stauber and Reverend Blumer conducted my mother’s funeral service.

Nine years later my father married an Episcopalian woman. When he died in 1993, the funeral was conducted by the next-door Presbyterian minister, the Episcopalian priest, and a Chabad rabbi. I like to say that my family had all the bases covered. I have always felt there was no better place to grow up than Union. When my mother was sick, the community came out to visit and care for her. People in Union respected us for who we were and a difference in religion was really never a problem. I sometimes think how fortunate I was to grow up in a small town and enjoy the advantages of knowing I was the same as the others but with a different religion. The Froms certainly blended into and loved our community.

The Teszlers of Budapest and Spartanburg: Pioneers in Textile Engineering

by Diane C. Vecchio

In 1959, Andrew Teszler, a Holocaust survivor and a graduate of North Carolina State University, pitched an idea to David Schwartz, the president and CEO of Jonathan Logan, Inc., of New York City, the country’s leading manufacturer of women’s apparel. Teszler’s idea was to start the first double-knit garment operation in the United States. After a feasibility study, the two men agreed on a vertically integrated manufacturing facility, producing double-knit fabric from fiber.

Schwartz sent Andrew to Spartanburg to organize the Butte Knit Division for parent company Jonathan Logan. The mill opened in 1960 and eventually became the largest manufacturer of women’s clothing in the world and the first company to produce double-knit fabric in America.

Andrew was the eldest son of Sandor and Lidia Teszler, Hungarian Jews who survived the brutality of the Holocaust and the communist take-over of their country. Fleeing their homeland, first to England and then to America in 1948, the Teszlers found a refuge and prosperity in the textile industry that so powerfully shaped Upstate South Carolina.

Andrew’s father, Sandor, studied textile engineering in Germany, graduated in 1925, and returned to Budapest to work in a knitting factory. Sandor and his brother Joseph, who
was a textile manufacturer, opened a plant in Belgrade in January 1941, during the Nazi take-over of Europe. The brothers operated factories throughout central Europe and Sandor admitted that "we lived in a dream world, never believing that deportation could happen to us."*

On April 6, 1941, Germany declared war on Yugoslavia. Sandor and Lidia fled to Great Britain to join their two sons who had been sent there earlier.

After Hungary was liberated by the Soviets, Sandor rebuilt the business, but the communist-controlled Yugoslav government seized the factory, claiming he had collaborated with the Germans during the war. Sandor and Lidia fled to Great Britain to join their two sons who had been sent there earlier.

In January 1948, Sandor and Lidia immigrated to New York where another Teszler brother, Akos, had established a textile factory. Akos made Sandor a partner in the business. Andrew and his brother, Otto, enrolled in the textile engineering program at North Carolina State University and worked as a world leader in textile education and research.

After his move to Spartanburg in 1960, Andrew Teszler recruited upper-level managers and specialists for Butte Knit through familial and personal connections. He was a devoted civic leader and abhorred the racial segregation that dictated life in the city of Spartanburg.

Sandor Teszler Library. Courtesy of Spartanburg Herald-Journal Collection, Spartanburg County Public Libraries.

Engaged with the community as a member of Rotary, the Chamber of Commerce, and as a trustee of the Charles Lea Center. In 1997, Wofford College awarded him an honorary doctorate and, at the age of 93, he was named Professor of the Humanities by a vote of the faculty.

After his death at the age of 97 in 2000, Wofford created the Sandor Teszler Award for Moral Courage and Service to Humankind in memory of his work; a fitting memorial to a Holocaust survivor: the courage, perseverance, righteousness, and kindness guided his life.

The Teszlers were survivors. They survived the Holocaust and the Soviet take-over of Hungary. They immigrated to America where their leadership in the field of textile manufacturing revolutionized the production of women’s clothing and provided employment to thousands of people.

They gave back to America through philanthropy that spanned the community from Temple B’nai Israel to Wofford College and the city of Spartanburg.

Growing up in Gaffney

I

was the youngest of three children born to Benjamin and Norma Kassler Sheftall. My father, Benjamin Jr., was the son of a Savannah, Georgia, fire chief and a member of the prominent Sheftall family of Savannah, whose ancestor, also named Benjamin Sheftall, was among the founders of Congregation Mickve Israel in 1735. I was told that my father’s mother said to my father, “Bennie, if you want to marry Norma, you’ve got to leave Savannah and move to Gaffney.” So he did. He was in the beauty supply business. He could work from anywhere. His office was over Normali Smart Shoppe, where my mother had a dress shop business, and next door to his father-in-law’s haberdashery. Benjamin Jr. did not live to see his namesake born, succumbing in 1947 to a heart attack—his third—just six weeks before I came into the world.

I grew up in the late 1950s, early ’60s, in Gaffney, South Carolina, a small textile town in the upper part of the state where discrimination was rampant. There was a preponderance of white supremacists. The Klan was very big in those days. We used to go to this place, which was kind of an open-air 7-Eleven, called the Cold Spot. They had applications for the KKK right there. Wofford College and crosses burned in front of the Catholic Church. I grew up with discrimination against religion, as well as for the color of one’s skin. The president of Limestone College in Gaffney had his house bombed in the mid ’50s for writing an article promoting racial equality and integration in South Carolina.

Despite the presence of the Klan, it was a good small town to grow up in.
Gastonia, North Carolina, about 30 miles northeast of Gaffney. That’s where my family had gone before my father passed away. My mother had a strong bond there. She knew a lot of people. But then when she remarried, I think the Jewish families in town decided to move to the synagogue in Spartanburg. Maybe that was an up-and-coming congregation, increasing in size. Spartanburg was a big textile mecca with a strong Roger Milliken presence. Also, they had the 4-85 corridor and they had hotel, motel owners. They had a lot of people who had migrated down from the Northeast. My experience with organized Judaism, so to speak, was really from Spartanburg.

I just think that we were outsiders. Going to temple in Spartanburg, being from Gaffney, was difficult for a young person. The rabbi in Spartanburg, Max Stauber, was a New Yorker. He wanted an Orthodox temple. B’nai Israel was Conservative at best. I just never enjoyed it. It was very difficult for me when I was 9, 10, 11 years old to be transported from everything I knew to a strange place to try to make friends and learn about religion. There are some people there that I did admire, looking back at it. But I didn’t think the rabbi loved being in the South. I don’t think he was happy there. He never smiled.

Nevertheless, the rabbi and Mrs. Stauber really tried hard to get the young people involved. They had a Sunday Tallis and Tefillin Club, breakout on Sundays. I was a faithful attendee. Alvin Stauber has been married to my first cousin Susan for almost 50 years.

Along with three or four other youngsters, I was trained by Rabbi Stauber, my bar mitzvah on the 26th of Cheshvan, with his sister, Myrna Sheftall, 1958. Below: Bennie (e) and his brother, Stanley Sheftall, and mother, Norma Kassler Sheftall Shapiro, 1954.

Above: The author, Benjamin "Bennie III" Sheftall (r), with his sister, Myrna Sheftall, 1958. Below: Bennie (e) and his brother, Stanley Sheftall, and mother, Norma Kassler Sheftall Shapiro, 1954.

The seeds of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina were planted in fertile soil more than 25 years ago. Our founding president, the late State Senator Isadore Lourie, along with several compatriots, saw a pressing need to preserve the record of South Carolina’s Jewish communities and their shifting demographics. In 1994, they proposed the creation of a new historical society dedicated to the mission of preserving, organizing, and promoting the history and culture of South Carolina’s Jewish communities through research, preservation, documentation, and education.

Twenty-five years later, I can testify that JHSSC is in very good shape. The Society is strengthened by the robust manuscript and oral history archives housed in the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College’s Addlestone Library, as well as the public programs and research facilitated by the Pearlstone/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. We maintain a multi-faceted website, jhssc.org, featuring statewide records of Jewish cemeteries and memorial plaques, a full run of our biannual magazine, and our newest and arguably most ambitious effort to date, the Jewish Merchant Project.

The Society also benefits from a strong relationship with our host institution, the College of Charleston’s Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program. The College provides critical staffing and infrastructure, allowing us to deploy our operating budget on programming and content rather than keeping the lights on. Annual expenses are supported by membership dues and especially the generosity of our Pillar members, who commit to donating $1,000 per year for at least five years.

That said, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. We find ourselves in a period of tremendous generational wealth transfer, according to the AARP, over the next 25 years. Baby Boomers will pass along nearly $4 trillion in assets to their heirs and charities. We need to make sure our constituents and supporters have the opportunity to contribute to the Society’s future well-being and by making a gift to JHSSC’s newly established endowment fund. Contributions of any size will allow the Society’s leadership to pursue ongoing projects, propose additional ventures, and engage the next generation in our work.

If you find value in what we do—whether you attend meetings, make use of our digital resources, read the pages of the magazine, or simply take pride in South Carolina’s vibrant Jewish heritage—I hope you will consider becoming a Pillar member or making a gift to our endowment, so that in another quarter century, JHSSC will still be in the business of promoting research, documenting, preserving, and educating the public about our state’s Jewish history and culture.
Join the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Name: ____________________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________
City: _____________________________ State: ________  Zip: _________________
Phone: _____________________________ Fax:  _________________________________
E-mail Address: ___________________________________________________________

ANNUAL DUES FOR 2020 (JANUARY–DECEMBER)

____ Individual/Family Membership                             $36
____ Friend                                                                        $200
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____ Sponsor                                                                     $350
____ Patron                                                                        $750
____ Founding patron                                                       $1,000
____ Pillar ($1,000 per year for 5 years)                           $5,000
____ Foundational Pillar ($2,000 per year for 5 years) $10,000

Join or renew online at jhssc.org.
Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional $36 each.
Send us their information and we will inform them of your gift.
Make checks payable to JHSSC
and mail to the address above.

Register now for the November 9–10 meeting in Spartanburg. See page 13 for more information.