

# Newsletter of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

September 1994 ♦ Issue 1 ♦ Elul 5754

## Next Board Meeting

Board members will convene in Charleston at the College of Charleston (President's Board Room, Randolph Hall) on Sunday November 6 at 1:00 PM for a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina (JHSSC). In addition to general business of the association, the board will discuss programming for the upcoming annual meeting. Ms. Marcia Zerivitz, Executive Director of the Mosaic Museum in Florida, will give an overview of the successful efforts of Florida's Jewish community to establish a museum. All officers and members of the board of directors should notify President Lourie if they cannot attend.

## New Members

Our membership keeps growing with new members each week. Please urge your friends and neighbors to join the JHSSC. It's still possible to become a Founding member (\$500) or a Founding Patron (\$1000). Other membership categories include: Individual (\$35) and Sustaining Member (\$100). For further information, contact David Cohen, Treasurer (953-5530)

## Focus on Collecting

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina has designated the Robert Scott Small Library at the College of Charleston as its repository for manuscripts and archives related to the history of Jews in the state. The librarians at that institution have agreed to process and make available to scholars, students, genealogists, and the general community those materials acquired on behalf of the JHSSC.

The College library recently received a significant collection from Temple Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim including the Temple organizational and business records as well as the papers of individuals such as Thomas Tobias, Penina Moise and Francis Salvador. (A forthcoming issue of the newsletter will describe this collection in detail.)

While not all collections may be as old as the KKBE material, many people may be surprised to learn how wide-ranging the interests of archivists are. All aspects of Jewish life in South Carolina should be represented in these collections. The archivists would like to acquire the records of Jewish organizations like burial societies, synagogues, schools, community centers and charitable endeavors. The records of Jewish owned businesses and family papers are

also excellent resources.

The JHSSC encourages individuals and organizations interested in donating papers to contact the Special Collections Department of the Robert Scott Small Library (953-5530).

## Mark Your Calendar

The 2nd Annual Meeting of the JHSSC will be held in Charleston over the weekend of March 17-19, 1995. Details about speakers, tours and related events will be sent to members in January 1995. Rooms have been reserved at the historic Barksdale Inn located two blocks from the College of Charleston. Members interested in reserving rooms should contact M. Perlmutter (953-5682).

The Southern Jewish Historical Society meets on October 14-15-16 in Raleigh, NC. Drs. Jim Hagy, Belinda Gergel and Leonard Greenspoon will update their presentations from our April 1994 meeting. Contact Helen Silver (763-8714).

Abbeville, SC will celebrate the 95th anniversary of the Poliakoff Department Store on April 29-30, 1995. Highlights include a showing of "The Last Hour" at the Opera House on Saturday. The play recounts the last meeting of the Confederacy and tells, among other stories, that of Judah Benjamin.



# **Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina Inaugural Meeting Draws 250 People to Charleston: A Special Report**

by Leah F. Chase

"Every newcomer to the South, whether it be to Charleston or Atlanta or wherever, has to encounter Southern history, has to encounter Southern customs, has to encounter the South," said author Eli N. Evans, at the April 16-17 inaugural meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina in Charleston. "It's great to be back in the home state of Judah P. Benjamin and Isadore Lourie, two great political figures in South Carolina's history," Evans said during his keynote address. Evans is president of the Charles H. Revson Foundation.

Held on the campus of the 220 year old College of Charleston in conjunction with its Jewish Studies Program, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina's first meeting brought together over 250 people.

Fond memories of his youth and differences encountered in the South, blended with the warmth and esteem shown to his family, led State Sen. (ret) Isadore Lourie to envision the Jewish Historical Society of to preserve the history of immigrants like his parents. Many of these nineteenth century Europeans became peddlers driving horse and wagon along rural dirt roads. With the encouragement and assistance of his school chum of more than twenty years, College of Charleston President Alex Sanders, Lourie's efforts were realized over the two day conference.

"Jews have been in South Carolina since 1695. We have a proud heritage, both as South Carolinians and as Jews," said Lourie at the outdoor afternoon social at the College's historic Cistern. the fragrance of honeysuckle and jasmine under the shade of ancient oaks stimulated the delegates to renew friendships and share recollections of family migrations to the South.

Historical presentations were given by Leonard J. Greenspoon, Professor of Religious Studies at Clemson University and the author of "Judaism" in Religion in South Carolina; Columbia College historian Dr. Belinda Gergel; College of Charleston Professor Jim Hagy, author of This Happy Land; and one of Charleston's foremost Jewish historians, attorney Benjamin Goldberg.

Dr. Greenspoon noted that Jews were in Greenville and in the smaller cities and towns of upstate South Carolina, forming a continuous community that can be traced for at least one hundred years. He encouraged members of the society to preserve anything of historical value and to maintain oral and written records that will be of use to future generations.



SB 28

Evans, the son of a Jewish mayor of Durham, North Carolina, and the author of The Provincials, writes about Jewish life in the South. His newest book, The Lonely Days Were Sundays: Reflections of a Jewish Southerner, (University Press of Mississippi), takes its title from the diary of his grandmother, Jennie B. Nachamson, recalling her life in the early 1900s.

"The lonely days were Sundays," she wrote, "Sundays when I watched the town people going to church, while we stayed upstairs in our apartment. Then I would feel like an outsider in this little community. I would have hunger in my heart for my own people. I would visualize a Utopia -- a village like this of all Jews -- going to temple on the Sabbath."

That book is dedicated to Evans' son, Joshua. Evans told of Josh's birth in a New York city hospital. He told how he clutched his wife's hand with one hand and with the other in his pocket, he held a vial of dirt from Chapel Hill and Durham because he "...didn't want this child born altogether a Yankee." Later, after his mother died, he planted a tree in her memory on the grounds of Hadassah Hospital Ein Karem using the same dirt from North Carolina. His mother was a friend of Henrietta Szold, and founded Hadassah in the South in 1919.

Also on the program was Saul Viener, Atlanta, representing the American Jewish Historical Society and the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

"The Jews of South Carolina have a happy story to tell and are eager to tell it. The Society is off to a great start. I am glad that the Jewish Studies Program at the College is a part of it," said Dr. Martin Perlmutter, Director of the program which was endowed through the generosity of Sylvia and Henry Yaschik of Charleston over ten years ago.

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\* Leah (Feinberg) Chase is a freelance journalist from Charleston. She, too, is a small town Southerner, born in West Point, GA, population 5000.





# Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Fall 1995

## President Isadore Lourie Evaluates First Two Years Accomplishments of Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

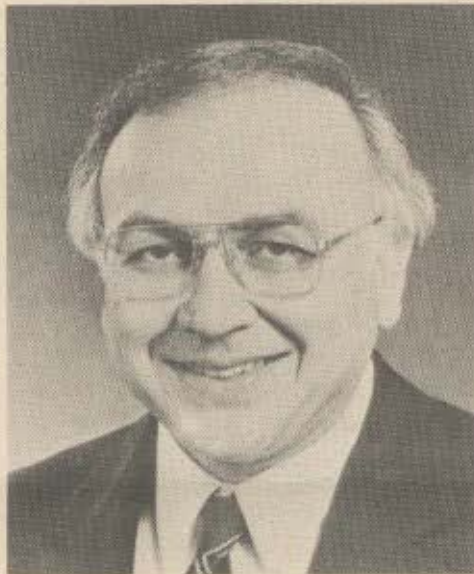
Dear Friends:

This is the first publication of the Newsletter of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, and we hope that you will read it with the interest and enthusiasm that have issued from the activities of the Society.

Our Society is part of the College of Charleston Foundation, and is under the auspices of the College's Jewish Studies Program. A special thanks should be given to Alex Sanders, president of the college, and his staff; to Dr. Martin Perlmutter, Director of the Jewish Studies Program; and to David Cohen, the Society's treasurer and the College's librarian. Sol Breibart, Benny Goldberg and Robert Rosen also deserve special recognition for helping to maintain Jewish history in South Carolina. Sol is a past president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

Jews have been living in South Carolina for over 300 years, and our state's Jewish heritage is unique and special. For instance, South Carolina was the first of the original Thirteen Colonies not to require a religious oath to hold public office. As a result, Francis Salvatore was allowed to be a delegate to the Colonial General Assemblies held in South Carolina before the Revolutionary War. Later, Salvatore became the first American Jew to die in our war for independence. Also, religious services have been held in our state almost from the beginning. Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, the Reform Temple in Charleston, will celebrate its 250th Anniversary in 1999, and we look forward to helping it commemorate that milestone.

Since the Society's founding two years ago, we have been very active. Our first annual meeting took place in Charleston in April 1994, and featured the noted author and lecturer Eli Evans as keynote speaker. Our second Annual Meeting this past spring was



*Isadore Lourie, President of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, is a former South Carolina state senator.*

also held in Charleston to help commemorate the 140th Anniversary of its Orthodox Brith Shalom-Beth Israel Congregation. Our keynote speaker was Dr. Leonard Dinnerstein, a prominent historian from the University of Arizona, and a panel composed of Samuel J. Tenenbaum, Gerry Sue Arnold and Max Heller discussed the issues raised.

Also this past spring we had a "mini-meeting" in Abbeville in conjunction with the 95th Anniversary of the D. Poliakoff Department Store, and also to help observe the anniversary of the last Confederate Cabinet meeting which took place in Abbeville in May 1865. Judah P. Benjamin, originally from South Carolina and a member of the U.S. Senate from Louisiana, served in the Cabinet from the beginning, and was considered by many to be the acting President during the last years of the Civil War because of the declining

health of Jefferson Davis.

In January 1996, we will hold our third Annual Meeting in Columbia and join in its Tree of Life Temple's 100th Anniversary celebration. This event is co-chaired by Dr. Belinda and Richard Gergel, whose assistance in starting our Society and continuing its activities has been invaluable.

At present, the main ongoing initiative of the Society is its Jewish Heritage Project under the chairmanship of Judge Klyde Robinson. This project is being co-sponsored with the Society by the College of Charleston, the University of South Carolina McKissick Museum, and many individual contributors. It is under the direction of Mrs. Dale Rosengarten, who has been conducting interviews throughout the state, collecting a list of artifacts, etc. All of this work will be correlated and hopefully result in an exhibit at McKissick which will later travel to Jewish museums throughout the United States.

There is much to be proud of in our heritage, and we need all of you to help us preserve it and enable it to flourish. With the arrival in South Carolina of German Jews in the 1800s, Eastern European Jews in the early 1900s, the Holocaust survivors, and now a new wave of Russian Jewish immigrants, we have a wonderful and diverse history to cherish and nourish. I have had the opportunity to speak to the Jewish communities of Greenville, Florence and Hilton Head, and at the Pee Dee B'nai B'rith Lodge. If you would like to have a speaker come to your community, please let me know and the Society will arrange for me or another representative to "tell the story."

I hope to see you in Columbia in January!

ISADORE LOURIE





## COLUMBIA TO HOST EXCITING ANNUAL MEETING IN JANUARY

Make plans now to attend the third annual meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina in Columbia on January 12-14, 1996!

This year's meeting will be held in conjunction with Columbia's Tree of Life Congregation's Centennial Celebration. "We are moving out to explore the Jewish experience in communities around the state," Society President Isadore E. Lourie explained, noting that Jews first settled in Columbia in the early 1820s.

This year's program will begin with a special ceremony on Friday morning, January 12th, at 11:00 a.m. in City Hall Chambers on Main Street. Tree of Life was organized in Columbia's City Hall Chambers in 1896.

Columbia's Mayor Bob Cobie and other dignitaries will participate in the City Hall program, which will be followed with a buffet luncheon at the Capital City Club. At the luncheon, Dr. Belinda Gergel will provide a slide/lecture presentation on Columbia's earliest Jewish community, its establishment of a synagogue and Jewish Sunday School (the seventh in the country) in the 1840s, and its rich tradition of public service that produced two Jewish mayors before the Civil War. Dr. Gergel is assistant professor of history at Columbia College and is the co-author of a new history of the Jews of Columbia, *In Pursuit of the Tree of Life: A History of the Early Jews of Columbia, South Carolina and the Tree of Life Congregation*. A tour of the historic Columbia Hebrew Benevolent Society Cemetery will be available after the luncheon.

Jewish Historical Society members will attend Tree of Life's Centennial Sabbath Service on Friday evening at 8:00 p.m. Dr. Gary Zola of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati and author of the recently published *Isaac Harby of Charleston: Jewish Intellectual and Reformer* will deliver the sermon. Dr. Zola will share insights on South Carolina's role in fostering the development of Reform Judaism in America. Tree of Life's Sisterhood will host a lovely Oneg Shabbat following the service.

The Saturday morning program will begin with a brief service at Columbia's historic "Big Apple," once the synagogue of the House of Peace Congregation and later a nightclub where the dance called the "Big Apple" was first performed. The building has now been restored and our Saturday morning service will be the first at this location in over sixty years. A morning presentation on "Columbia Jewry in the Early Twentieth Century" by Belinda and Richard Gergel will follow next door at the Richland County Public Library. This presentation will focus on the lives and contributions of newspaperman and business leader August Kohn; his daughter Helen Kohn Hennig, the matriarch of Columbia's Jewish community and a noted historian; and legendary Dr. Josiah Morse, the University of South Carolina's first Jewish professor. After the morning presentations, we will tour a special display on Columbia's Jews in the library's Local History Room.

Lunch will be held at the Summit Club with presentations on the life and times of Isaac Harby, who is credited with being the guiding spirit of the first major reform effort of Judaism in America. Dr. Gary Zola will deliver a special address on Charleston's Isaac Harby, and Robert Rosen, author of *Charleston and Confederate Charleston*, will speak about Charleston in Harby's era of the early 1800s. Melvin Young, author of *Where They Lie* will discuss his research on South Carolina soldiers in the Civil War.

An afternoon session will feature a presentation on the "Jewish Confederates of the Midlands" by Jacob Greenberg, who was recently selected for participation in the Junior Scholars Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Greenberg's research has focused on the activities of Jews in the Confederacy from Columbia, Sumter, Camden and surrounding areas. Our day will conclude with a lovely Dinner/Dance Gala with Tree of Life members at the Adam's Mark Hotel in honor of the Temple's centennial.

The Sunday morning session will begin with coffee and bagels at the historic South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina campus. Dr. Herb Hartshook and other members of the library staff will discuss the library's special collections in Jewish history, and provide a display of the library's most significant holdings. Our business session will follow. We will conclude with an update on the status of the South Carolina Jewish Heritage Project by Mrs. Dale Rosengarten.

A block of rooms has been held for members of the Jewish Historical Society at the Adams Mark Hotel at the special rate of \$69 per night. Contact the Adams Mark at 803-771-7000 or 1-800-444-2326 to reserve your room.

Some interesting books depicting our South Carolina Jewish history are:

*This Happy Land* by Professor James Hagy;  
*The Provincials*, by Eli Evans, Gary Zola's *Isaac Harby of Charleston*,  
and *The Jews of South Carolina* by Barnet Elzas.



# Jewish Heritage Project: Progress Report

## Dale Rosengarten: October 1995

*Did you know* that in 1800 more Jews lived in Charleston, South Carolina, than anywhere else in the United States? that Georgetown had a Jewish mayor in 1818? that by 1925 Bishopville was home to some 26 Jewish families? that before World War II, many members of "ultra-Reform" congregations in communities such as Sumter and Camden had never worn a yarmulke or been to a bar mitzvah?

The Jewish heritage of South Carolina is rich, complex and full of surprises. Its study and preservation became the focus of a state wide campaign last January when, with support from the College of Charleston and McKissick Museum, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina launched the Jewish Heritage Project.

As project director, I have spent the past ten months traveling around the state, interviewing the oldest members of old Jewish families (and some newcomers too), visiting synagogues, cemeteries and historical societies. Our ultimate aim is to build a Jewish archives and research center and to mount a major museum exhibition. Meanwhile the process has proved as rewarding as any outcome we might hope to achieve.

So far I have been to Abbeville, Anderson, Andrews, Beaufort, Bishopville, Camden, Charleston, Columbia, Darlington, Dillon, Georgetown, Greensboro, Latta, Mullins, Spartanburg and Sumter. I have recorded forty 90-minute oral histories and collected documentation on more than seventy-five families. People have told me stories about where their forebears came from and how they got here. I've seen family trees and certificates of birth, naturalization, marriage, and death; portraits of illustrious ancestors; photographs, including daguerreotypes and tintypes; diaries, memoirs, scrapbooks, correspondence, business accounts, congregational minutes; heirlooms such as antique jewelry, candlesticks, samovars and kiddish cups from the Old Country. I've photocopied documents, photographed objects and accepted some originals on behalf of the collection.

Every place I've visited I've been housed, fed, welcomed, treated like family and made to feel at home.

None of this would be possible with-

out the assistance of the State Advisory Committee, recruited and chaired by Judge Klyde Robinson. Judge Robinson has accompanied me on several field trips; members of the committee have provided introductions, set up interviews and shown us around. In Charleston I've had the help of a group of able and willing volunteers.

Within the Jewish community enthusiasm for the project is strong. People seem ready and eager to talk about their lives, as if they've been waiting to be asked. Everywhere we look we find folks already caught up in the search for roots - people writing memoirs, families compiling genealogies, synagogues celebrating anniversaries, communities organizing reunions. Suburban, urban and "sun belt" congregations are expanding and becoming more observant. New arrivals bring energy, money and an invigorating activism to the synagogues they join. Oldtimers, in turn, stake their claims to history and tradition. "My family has worshipped at Beth Elohim for seven generations," a member of Charleston's oldest congregation proudly told an unwitting "come-here."

In small towns Jewish life is passing from the scene, creating an urgency to collect and record. Old families are disappearing through intermarriage, conversion and outmigration. Populations decline, synagogues close, Jewish shop owners go out of business. As sons and daughters of dry goods merchants graduate from universities and enter the professional class, nobody is left to mind the store. Saul Krawcheck, the Engel Brothers, Sonny Goldberg and Sam Siegel all have closed their doors in the past few months. What is to become of their account books and ledgers? Unless we make efforts to save these important materials, the resources for reconstructing the history of once vital communities will be irrevocably lost.

*Anyone with questions, comments, or suggestions, should call me at Special Collections, College of Charleston Library, 803-953-5530.*

*For more information on the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program, please call Dr. Martin Perlmutter at 803-953-5682.*

### *A note on acquisitions*

Thanks to Nat Shulman, Saul Krawcheck, Maurice Nussbaum, Sol Breibart, Leon and Rita Banov, Fannie Appel Ronas, Doris Baumgarten and Helen Silver for helping the Jewish Heritage Project acquire the following valuable collections:

- the files of the Community Relations and Social Service committees of the Charleston Jewish Federation
- accounts, photographs and scrapbooks (1939-1970) from Jack Krawcheck's store on King Street, Charleston
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- the Charleston Jewish Community Center's oral history collection.

Thanks to Isidore Denmark for his father's certificate of citizenship, Ella Levenson Schlosburg for her mother's prayerbook and Carolyn Baruch Levenson for her Sunday School workbook. We've been given photographs by Harry Price of Spartanburg, Frances Bass Ginsberg and Sam Levenson of Bishopville, Jim Wood of Camden, Arnold Prystowsky of Charleston, and Alan Rosen, formerly of Charleston, now of Carmel, California. Also, Flossie Arnold, Wendell Levi, Jr., H.D. Barnett, Norman Baum, Michael Schwartz, Robert Zalkin and Stanley and Chariot Karesh have loaned photographs for us to reproduce.

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**REGISTRATION FORM**  
**ANNUAL MEETING - JANUARY 12-14, 1996**  
**Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina**  
**Columbia, South Carolina**

Adams Mark Hotel Reservations can be made by calling: 803-771-7000 or 1-800-444-2326  
**Ask for special Jewish Historical Society rate of \$69 per night**

For additional information, call 1996 Program Chairperson Belinda Gergel at 803-736-5139.

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Please Print

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First Spouse/Friend  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

CONFERENCE FEE: GENERAL \$110 per person  
CONFERENCE FEE: SENIOR CITIZENS (over 65) \$75 per person  
CONFERENCE FEE: ACADEMICIANS \$75 per person

Conference fees include Friday and Saturday luncheons, Saturday morning coffee and bagels, Saturday Gala Dinner, tour, and Sunday morning continental breakfast as well as your 1996 JHS-SC MEMBERSHIP FEE. NO PARTIAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES ACCEPTED.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

- GENERAL MEMBERSHIP (but unable to attend conference) \$35 per person or couple
- GENERAL / SENIOR CITIZEN / ACADEMICIAN (included in Registration)
- PATRON \$250 (includes 2 registrations)
- BENEFACTOR \$500 (includes 2 registrations)

PLEASE FIND ENCLOSED REGISTRATION FEES FOR \_\_\_\_\_ PERSONS.  
TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED IS \_\_\_\_\_.

Number of people attending the following events:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> CITY HALL CEREMONY                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> SATURDAY LUNCHEON |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FRIDAY LUNCHEON <i>Please note special dietary needs</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> DINNER/GALA       |

**MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AND MAIL TO:  
DAVID COHEN, TREASURER, JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, COLLEGE OF  
CHARLESTON, CHARLESTON, SC 29424-0001.**

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina  
College of Charleston  
Jewish Studies Program  
Charleston, SC 29424-0001



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# *Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina*

*Spring 1996*

## *Mazel Tov to our New Officers and Directors*

Good luck to our new officers, board, and committee chairs just elected for two-year terms at the annual business meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina on January 14 in Columbia. We suggest that our members save this list for further reference.

**PRESIDENT**  
**VICE PRESIDENT**  
**SECRETARY**  
**TREASURER**  
**FOUNDING PRESIDENT**

Klyde Robinson  
Richard Gergel  
Martin Perlmutter  
David J. Cohen  
Isadore Lourie

### *Board of Directors*

Max Heller  
Robert Moses  
Arlene Polinsky  
Sam Rogol  
Dr. Sol Neidich  
William Ackerman

Joseph Rex  
Gerry Sue Arnold  
Harold Kornblut  
Benjamin Goldberg  
Rabbi Theodore Levy  
Mick Lourie

### *Chairmen of Standing Committees*

(Also serving as Board Members)

**HERITAGE**  
**PROGRAM & CONFERENCE**  
**HISTORIC SITES**  
**FINANCE**  
**GRANTS**  
**PUBLIC RELATIONS**  
**NOMINATIONS**  
**MEMBERSHIP**

Sandra Lee Rosenblum  
Belinda Gergel  
Janice Kahn  
Robert Rosen  
Solomon Breibart  
Leah Chase  
Jeffrey Rosenblum  
Barry Krell

### *Executive Committee*

All Officers  
Belinda Gergel  
Robert Rosen

Gerry Sue Arnold  
Benjamin Goldberg  
Sandra Lee Rosenblum

**JEWISH HERITAGE PROJECT**  
**NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

Dale Rosengarten  
Helen Silver

## **Getting Acquainted with our New President Judge Klyde Robinson**

Our new president, installed at the last session of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina in Columbia in January, is well-known to many of our members.

A Charleston native, Klyde Robinson began his higher education in South Carolina at The Citadel, earning his bachelor of arts degree in 1946. He graduated from Harvard Law School in 1949, with a degree in jurisprudence, and in 1977 attended the National Judicial College. Returning to South Carolina, he has served as Circuit Judge, United States Attorney for the District of South Carolina and Attorney for Charleston County.

Robinson has played an active role in local and state organizations. He has served on the boards of directors of the Charleston Interfaith Crisis Ministry, Charleston Symphony Orchestra, South Carolina Heart Association, Charleston Jewish Community Relations Committee and Beth Elohim Congregation.

Through the years, Robinson has held numerous leadership positions, including President, Charleston Jewish Community Center; Chairman of the Board, Charleston County Heart Association; Campaign Chairman, Charleston County Muscular Dystrophy Association; Vice-Chairman, Charleston County Democratic Party; Vice Chairman, Simons

*continued on page 2*



## A Visit with Dale Rosengarten, Historian and Curator for the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Stacks of old records, books, aging photographs, tape recorders, file cabinets, and computers catch one's attention when one arrives in Special Collections at the College of Charleston Library.

Presiding over a back corner of the archives is Dale Rosengarten, historian and curator for the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina since January 1995. She is waiting to greet me with a smile.

Dale is perfectly suited for the job both by education and experience. A native of New York City, she received her B.A. degree summa cum laude from Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA., in 1969, with a major in social studies. In 1975 Dale received her M.A. in American History and at present is a Ph.D. candidate in the History of American Civilization at Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Her expected date of completion is June 1996.

Her work experience is equally impressive, with many publications to her credit. Best known to Charlestonians is the exhibition catalog titled *Row Upon Row: Sea Grass Baskets of the South Carolina Lowcountry*. Mounted by McKissick Museum in

Columbia, the exhibit traveled to Charleston's Gibbes Museum and many other sites around the country.

Dale told me in an interview that "through the basket project, I entered the museum business... If I had to describe myself, I'd call myself a 'social historian,' but I love curatorial work because I enjoy putting history together with a visual interpretation. After *Row Upon Row*," Dale explained, McKissick Museum hired me to organize a conference focusing on sweetgrass as a natural resource. The conference spawned a community organization and helped initiate a transplantation project."

Dale and her husband, writer Theodore Rosengarten, moved from Massachusetts to McClellanville, SC, in 1976, and have put down deep roots. Their sons, Rafael David, now 16, and Carlin Isaiah, nearly 12, were both born in South Carolina.

The Jewish Heritage Project was initially suggested by one of Dale's colleagues at McKissick. In 1992 the Museum asked Dale to explore the feasibility of mounting a major research project and exhibition on South Carolina's Jewish history and culture.

This is when I met Dale. She called

one evening for an appointment and was on our doorstep the next day. I described some of the resources available in Charleston and throughout the South.

With the founding of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina in April, 1994, the idea of the Heritage Project became a reality. The rest is history, as the saying goes. Over the past year, the project has gained tremendous momentum (see our Fall 1995 newsletter for a progress report).

I predict that Dale's enthusiasm and skills, together with the financial backing and support of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, the College of Charleston, and McKissick Museum, will one day lead to a traveling exhibition about the Jews of South Carolina, and looking to the future, to a permanent museum.

If you would like more information about the project or want to share your family's history, write to: Dale Rosengarten, Jewish Heritage Project, College of Charleston Library, Charleston, SC 29424.

Helen Silver

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### President, continued from page 1

Guild of the College of Charleston; and Secretary, Brith Sholom Congregation.

Robinson is very proud of his family. His wife, the former Claire Zuckernik, is a Boston native and a graduate of Mt. Holyoke College in Springfield, Massachusetts. She is currently employed as Director of the Elderhostel Program at the College of Charleston.

She, too, has been active in community organizations, including the League of Women Voters of Charleston County and the Charleston Chapter of the Council of Jewish Women.

The Robinsons have two daughters, Amy and Eve, both of whom live in the Washington area, and one granddaughter Robinson Gold.

Robinson has given much thought to the agenda he would like to see carried out by the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. "I would like to increase the participation of volunteers in the Heritage Project in order to interview every Jewish family in South Carolina as to their family genealogy and provide them with an opportunity to reminisce and tell their story. These taped interviews will be transcribed, catalogued and housed at the College of Charleston so that scholars and others may have them available," said Robinson in his acceptance speech.

He also wants to make inquiries about the reestablishment of a Jewish cemetery on Hanover Street in Charleston. "As I understand it," he said, "these cemeteries were condemned and taken by the City of Charleston for failure to pay abut-

ment taxes in the 1930s. A few of the stones were removed, but the majority were desecrated by vandals. I do not know how we can continue to revere our ancestry, take pride in their accomplishments, and let this violation of sacred ground go unchallenged. To me it is indefensible."

Another of Robinson's goals is "to create a long-range plan to establish a Jewish museum in Charleston. It is well-recognized that South Carolina, and particularly Charleston, is steeped in Jewish heritage from the earliest colonial days. The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina is the ideal organization to sponsor and provide the leadership for this movement. With a united effort we can begin, and ultimately, accomplish this necessary and deserving achievement!" Robinson declared.



# Conference Highlights to Cherish

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Jewish history enthusiasts from around the state gathered in Columbia on January 12-14 for the Third Annual Meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

Held in conjunction with the centennial celebration of Tree of Life, Columbia's oldest Jewish congregation, this year's meeting was well attended and had overflow audiences at several events. The program began with a kick-off ceremony at Columbia's City Hall that highlighted the involvement of the Jewish community in the life of the capital. Columbia Mayor Bob Coble served as master of ceremonies, and was joined by Charleston Mayor Joe Riley. Special guests included former Columbia City Councilman and State Senator Hyman Rubin, who reflected on his many years of public service. The ceremony concluded with the presentation of a portrait of Henry Lyons, Columbia's Jewish mayor in 1850, on loan from Mobile, Alabama, and the Proclamation of "Tree of Life Congregation Day" by Mayor Coble.

United States Senator Fritz Hollings and South Carolina Supreme Court Justice Jean Toal brought special greetings at a luncheon following the ceremony at the Capital City Club. Columbia College professor, Dr. Belinda Gergel, was the luncheon speaker and presented a slide/lecture on the establishment and development of Columbia's antebellum Jewish community. After the luncheon, Society members toured the historic Hebrew Benevolent Society cemetery on Taylor Street, one of the oldest cemeteries in the state. Dr. Gary Zola, Dean of Admissions at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and a noted scholar of

American Jewish history, was the featured speaker at Tree of Life's Centennial Shabbat Service, which included Reform rabbis from around the state.

The Saturday session began with morning services at Columbia's historic "Big Apple," once the synagogue of the House of Peace Congregation and later a nightclub where the Big

*Isadore Lourie, Alan Kahn and George Vogt, Director of S.C. Department of Archives and History*

Apple dance was first performed.

The morning program was held at the adjacent Richland County Public Library and featured Belinda and Richard Gergel, co-authors of a new history of Columbia Jewry. The Gergels' slide/lecture focused on the lives and contributions of three prominent members of Columbia's Jewish community in the early twentieth century - newspaperman and business leader August Kohn; his daughter Helen Kohn Hennig, a noted historian, clubwoman and leader in Jewish women's organizations; and University of South Carolina professor and humanitarian Dr. Josiah Morse.

A lovely luncheon followed at the Summit Club with Dr. Gary Zola,

author of a new biography on Charleston Jewish reform leader Isaac Harby, as the featured speaker. The afternoon program included presentations on Confederate Jewish history by Jacob Greenberg, a National Endowment for the Humanities' Junior Scholar, and Mel Young, author of a recently published work based on the Civil War correspondence of the Raphael Jacob Moses family. In the evening, Society members attended an elegant Tree of Life Centennial Dinner Gala at the Adams Mark Hotel.

The Sunday morning session convened at the beautiful South Carolina Library on the horseshoe of the University of South Carolina campus. Members of the library staff described the library's holdings of Jewish interest. Staff members of the South Carolina Archives and History Division displayed a number of historical documents including the citizenship papers of Simon Valentine, who

in 1697 became South Carolina's first Jewish citizen.

During the business session that followed, Dale Rosengarten provided an update on the Jewish Heritage Project and the meeting concluded with the election of new officers. Members gave a round of applause to outgoing president Isadore E. Lourie for his outstanding work and elected Clyde Robinson of Charleston as the new president.

Rabbi Ted Levy of Hilton Head introduced a resolution to elect Isadore E. Lourie Founding President in Perpetuity. The motion was passed by acclamation.

Contributed by Belinda Gerge





*Below is information on two outstanding books you'll want to own.  
We hope to have reviews in a forthcoming edition!*

**IN PURSUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE**

A History of the Early Jews of Columbia, South Carolina,  
and the Tree of Life Congregation  
by  
Belinda & Richard Gergel

Beautifully illustrated with numerous historic photographs,  
this limited edition is a "must" for yourself and your friends.

Mail check for \$30 payable to Tree of Life Centennial  
Celebration to Tree of Life, 6719 North Trenholm,  
Columbia, SC 29206.

**LAST ORDER OF THE LOST CAUSE**

The Civil War Memoirs Of A Jewish Family  
From The "OLD SOUTH"  
by Raphael Jacob Moses, Major, C.S.A., 1812-1893.  
Compiled, Edited and Expanded by  
Mel Young of Chattanooga,  
author of WHERE THEY LIE

Order from University Press of America, 4720 Boston Way  
Lanham, MD 20706, phone (800) 462-6420.  
Paper, \$25 ISBN 0-7618-0081-6.  
Cloth, \$57.50 ISBN 0-7618-0081-8.

**Course Offerings - Jewish Studies - College of Charleston - Fall 19**

- HEBREW 101 Elementary Hebrew - A first-semester introduction to modern Hebrew. No Prerequisite. Talia Arnon
- HEBREW 201 Intermediate Hebrew - A third-semester study of modern Hebrew. Prerequisite Hebrew 102 or the equivalent. Talia Arnon
- HISTORY 344 Modern European Cultural History - A study of European High and Low Culture from Romanticism to Existentialism. Professor Richard Bodek
- HONORS 390 History of the Holocaust - An examination of the genocide of European Jewry during the Second World War. Professor Beatrice Stiglitz
- JWST 300 Jewish Thought - An examination of some important thinkers and ideas within the Jewish tradition. Professor Martin Perlmutter
- POSC 324 Politics of the Middle East - An analysis of the politics of the Middle East with emphasis on political, social and economic patterns and processes. Professor John Creed
- RELS 201 The Old Testament - An introductory study of the Hebrew Bible which considers the development of biblical literature in the context of ancient Near Eastern culture and history.

On Tuesday, March 19, at 7:45 pm, Room 118, Education Center, a panel of three local rabbis will present the views of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism respectively on the Messianic Age and the World to Come. This event has become a regular occurrence and a highlight of the Jewish Studies Program.

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina  
College of Charleston  
Jewish Studies Program  
Charleston, SC 29424-0001

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# *Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina*

FALL 1996



## ***JHSSC Begins Its Fourth Year***

*Join Us As We Celebrate And Learn!*

It hardly seems possible that three years have passed since the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina was launched at an organizational meeting at the College of Charleston. That was in the Autumn of 1993. In April 1994, the Society held its first annual meeting.

Now, with over 250 members from around the state and beyond, we look forward to the beginning of our fourth year!

After a very successful regional conference in Sumter this past June (see page 2), the JHSSC will return to Charleston for our fourth annual meeting in January 1997.

Plans for excellent speakers, delicious meals, and wonderful company are well under way, and a number of hotel rooms conveniently located have been reserved at special conference rates. These are listed on the enclosed flyer.

Call early for your reservations, and ask for the special rates for JHSSC members.

### **Remember these dates:**

Friday, January 24

through

Sunday, January 26, 1997

See you then!



Rabbi Ted Levy and wife Ina Rae

### ***Rabbi Levy Donates Collection***

Rabbi Ted Levy and his wife Ina Rae, both of Hilton Head, donated a significant Judaica library collection to the College of Charleston, home of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. The collection of over 1000 volumes is of high quality and represents a significant addition to the Jewish Studies holdings of the library.

The College's Jewish Studies collection has been under significant pressure because of the rapid growth of the Jewish Studies Program, so the additional volumes are welcome and needed. Rabbi and Mrs. Levy wanted their books read, not merely housed at the College, so most of the volumes will go into general circulation and be available for students to use in their courses.

Rabbi Levy has agreed to help coordinate future Jewish Studies acquisitions for the College. Both he and his wife are founding members of the JHSSC and have been active with the Society since its inception.



## JHSSC Regional Meeting In Sumter A Resounding Success

Ninety delegates attended the JHSSC regional meeting in Sumter, SC, this past June 14-16. Sumter's historic Temple Sinai hosted our meetings and provided warm welcomes for all the participants. Temple Sinai is living testimony to a once thriving and still active Jewish community. Dr. William A. Rosenthal, Rabbi Emeritus of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim of Charleston, conducted the Friday evening services; Richard Moses welcomed the crowd and Morris Mazursky presented a history of Temple Sinai. The delegates got acquainted after services at a festive Oneg Shabbat sponsored by Virginia Moise Rosefield.

On Saturday morning delegates assembled at the beautiful Hebrew Cemetery to get a first-hand view of Sumter's rich Jewish history. The memorial stones were of great interest for their unique designs, touching messages and family histories. Delegates then went to Temple Sinai to learn more about the exquisite stained glass windows

that adorn the sanctuary. The clear morning light illuminated the beautiful and glowing colors of the windows believed to have been created in Germany in the late 1800s. Robert Moses led the discussion.

Katherine Richardson, director of the Sumter County Museum then gave an excellent account of the Moïse papers that have recently been donated to the museum. Delegates spent Saturday afternoon sightseeing, and shared a delicious dinner at the Sunset Country Club, with some of the older members reflecting on growing up Jewish in the Sumter community.

At the business meeting Sunday morning, it was decided that the Spring 1997 regional meeting will be held in Greenville, SC, in an effort to encourage more participation in JHSSC from the Upstate. The group thought that if Sumter was any indication, regional meetings are an excellent way to highlight the important work of the JHSSC.

## JHSSC and College of Charleston to Sponsor Elderhostels

JHSSC and the College of Charleston will sponsor two week-long Elderhostels in June 1997. Elderhostel is a national organization, based in Boston, which attracts senior citizens from across the country to different locations for extended study of a topic or theme. Participants in June's program will be housed at the newly renovated Francis Marion Hotel, across the street from the College of Charleston. The following is a description of the Elderhostel:

South Carolina has an historic Jewish presence that dates back at least three hundred years, with Sephardic Jews coming to the South Carolina coast through the Caribbean Islands. There have been subsequent influxes of German and East European (and Northern) Jews. Charleston's Jewish Community was the largest Jewish Community in the United States as late as 1830. Today, South Carolina has an active, increasingly urban, Jewish population. Charleston has large Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Congregations, a Hebrew Day School, and a prosperous, well-entrenched Jewish community.

This Elderhostel will explore South Carolina Jewish history. An overview of Southern history will provide the context of the Jewish story of South Carolina. Participants will discover a generally happy story of a society tolerant of religious diversity. The Elderhostel will visit historic Jewish sites in Charleston, including the oldest surviving Reform Synagogue in the world, and the oldest Synagogue building in continuous use in the United States.

The Elderhostel is located in downtown Charleston within walking distance of many of the historic sites of Charleston. It is hosted by the Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

For further information, contact the Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston at 803-953-5682.



View of Hebrew Cemetery in Sumter, SC, visited by delegates to regional meeting



# Jewish Heritage Project Awarded NEH Planning Grant

With the aid of a \$40,000 Planning Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Jewish Heritage Project enters a new phase this fall. The award, made to McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina, will fund the development of an exhibition tentatively titled "Pledging Allegiance: Jews in South Carolina, 1695-1995." McKissick Museum, the Jewish Historical Society, and the College of Charleston are co-sponsors of the project.

One of our first tasks is to identify artifacts, documents, and images that tell the stories of Jewish life in South Carolina. We need your help!

The items we seek are on your shelves and walls, and in your trunks and attics. Of special interest are photographs and scrapbooks; letters, diaries, memoirs, and minute books; family, business, and congregational papers; vintage clothing; and fine art. We are looking for things people brought from the "Old Country," including

religious artifacts such as prayerbooks, *tefillin*, *kiddush* cups, *havdallah* spice boxes, and secular objects such as samovars, mortars and pestles, tablecloths and linen.

We are searching for items that convey the immigrant experience--a peddler's pack, a sign from a country store, koshering equipment, Yiddish language books and newspapers. And, of course, candlesticks, the traditional symbol of the Jewish home.

Competition for NEH funding this year was especially strong. The Division of Public Programs's available funds were reduced by almost 60 percent in 1996. Two hundred and sixty four proposals were submitted, of which 101 were requests from museums and historical societies. Our project was among the 25 chosen for funding. One reviewer judged it "one of the top four planning proposals."

The review panel was impressed by the "extraordinary community interest partnership"

that the proposal represents. We at the Jewish Heritage Project thank everyone who worked on the grant, wrote letters of support, and read the various drafts.

For more information about the exhibition, please contact Project Director Dale Rosengarten, or Archivist Katherine Fleming, at:

Special Collections  
Robert Scott Small Library  
College of Charleston  
Charleston, South Carolina  
29424  
(803) 953-8016

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## *Thomas Cooper Society and South Caroliniana Library to Honor Senator Isadore Lourie*

The Thomas Cooper Society and the South Caroliniana Library will hold a reception in honor of Senator Isadore E. Lourie on Wednesday, October 30, 1996, from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. at USC's Thomas Cooper Library. This celebration marks the completion of the major phase of the South Caroliniana Library's *Isadore Lourie Papers, Project, and Oral History*. An exhibit on Lourie's life and public career will be mounted just inside the entrance to the Thomas Cooper Library, which is located on Greene Street, near the corner of Sumter Street.

Ronald E. Bridwell, President of the Thomas Cooper Society, will welcome guests at approximately 5:15 p.m., after which Herbert Hartsook, Curator of Modern Political Collections, will briefly describe the project. Senator Lourie's remarks will follow.

The exhibit will remain on display at the South Caroliniana Library through January 2, 1997.

### *Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina*

#### JHSSC Officers

Isadore Lourie	<i>Founding President</i>
Klyde Robinson	<i>President</i>
Richard Gergel	<i>Vice President</i>
Martin Perlmutter	<i>Secretary</i>
David J. Cohen	<i>Treasurer</i>
Helen Silver	<i>Newsletter Editor</i>
Dale Rosengarten	<i>Jewish Heritage Project</i>

*Please Send Change of Address notices to:*

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College of Charleston  
Charleston, SC 29424



# Searching for your Past in the Present

by Warren A. Kohn

I am often asked why I am interested in my family's genealogy. The answer is simple: so that my ancestors will not be forgotten and so that my children will know. Our ability to discover our past has never been more available than it is today. I was fortunate to come across JewishGen as I began my research. JewishGen brings together JewishGenealogy researchers from all over the world as they read each day's computer messages entered into the system. Over 2000 researchers "gather" to share information, ideas, research and research problems. Their passion is Jewish family history with particulars on their own families. They are willing to share, they want to know more, and they are willing to help others along the way.

Literally, from the corners of the world, we access JewishGen and each other through our computers in our studies. Excitedly, we find relatives in common, gain assistance in the translation of ancient headstones and mysterious documents. I located a second cousin in Australia on JewishGen; I found a college fraternity brother that I had not seen or heard from since the day of graduation. My wife located a cousin who was in the military and stationed less than 100 miles

away. All of this was done from a computer in my study.

What is JewishGen? It is a non-profit, wholly volunteer, computerized communication network for people involved in Jewish family genealogy. It puts the vast resource of thousands of other like-minded individuals at your fingertips. They do accept contributions which are tax deductible but they do not charge for access to or use of the system. They operate a world-wide computer communication system with a Web Site and on-line information. All that is needed is a computer, a modem, communications software, and a telephone line. You can generally access the project with a local telephone call. In Columbia, I communicate with JewishGen through a local bulletin board system (BBS) and although my system operator (Sysop) will accept contributions, there is never a charge. I also access JewishGen at its Web Site through my Internet provider.

There are three ways to contact the forum: you may use your Internet provider (if you subscribe to a commercial Internet provider such as America On Line, Prodigy, Compuserve, AT&T Worldnet, etc., you already have access), USEnet (*soc.genealogy.jewish*) or Fidonet. If you

have access to a bulletin board system, ask your systems operator to subscribe to JewishGen for you. Simply ask him to subscribe to *jewishgen.org*. The rest is simple. Each of these will connect to the same message base for JewishGen. The message base averages 50 to 100 messages daily.

While on the Internet, you can access JewishGen's Web Site at *www.jewishgen.org*. Once at the Web Site, the amount of information is endless. As a beginner, you may want to read JewishGen FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) which will expedite your research - - no need to ask questions which have been asked and answered before. You may search JewishGen InfoFiles which contain volumes of information such as the calculation of past Jewish dates, the meaning of symbols and letters on headstones, the variances in language used by various Jewish ethnic groups, etc. Seeking a family name and/or community? Check out JewishGen Family Finder (JGFF) which is a database of others seeking the same names and/or communities.

*This is the first part of a two-part article. The author is an attorney in Columbia, SC*



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# *Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina*

SUMMER 1997

## *JHSSC Fourth Annual Meetings held in Charleston*

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina held its Fourth Annual Meetings in January on the College of Charleston campus. The meetings were held in conjunction with Synagogue Emanu-El's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

The weekend began on Friday with a City Hall Celebration to commemorate Synagogue Emanu-El's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The celebration was led by Mayor Joseph Riley, with Rabbi Edward Friedman, Judge Klyde Robinson, and Jerry Zucker participating.

Following the City Hall Celebration, visitors had the option of choosing between three on-site tours led by local members. Sol Breibart, local historian and founding member of the Jewish Historical Society of S.C. offered a guided tour of the Coming Street Cemetery, which is the oldest surviving Jewish cemetery in the South and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, the oldest surviving Reform Synagogue in the world, and the Jewish Heritage Project Archives at the College of Charleston, which now include 38 private collections ranging in size from a few documents to six cubic feet of materials, were also available for on-site tours.

Saturday's events began with Saturday morning services at Synagogue Emanu-El, a Kiddush/luncheon at Emanu-El and a panel discussion by some of the Synagogue's founders remembering the early days of Emanu-El. In the afternoon, Dr. David Goldfield, Robert Lee Bailey Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, presented an excellent lecture on "The Jewish Place in the South," highlighting both the successes and the limitations of Southern Jews. His thesis was that the Jews had a "place" in the South, allowing them considerable freedom but with some constraints on the opportunities available to them.

Saturday evening's events included the Footlight Players' presentation of "The Desperate Hours" by Joseph Hayes, The Charleston Symphony Orchestra's evening at the Pops featuring "the Fabulous Forties," and a cocktail reception and black tie dinner at the College which raised funds for the Jewish Heritage Project (story and pictures, page 4).



JHSSC Members Celebrate at City Hall; From left, Rabbi Edward Friedman, Janet Friedman, Jerry Zucker, Anna Lea Steinberg, Mayor Joseph Riley, and County Council Chair Barrett Lawrimore.

Sunday's events began with brunch at the College's Simons Center for the Arts when David Cohen, Dean of Libraries at the College, and Rabbi William A. Rosenthal, Rabbi Emeritus, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, presented Rabbi and Mrs. Theodore Levy with a plaque honoring them for their gift of a significant Judaica library collection to the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program. Immediately following this presentation, Dale Rosengarten, director of the Jewish Heritage Project, and Sandra Lee Rosenblum who oversees the Project, gave an extended update on the progress of the Project, with a wonderful slide presentation.

Sunday's keynote address was given by Jenna Weissman Joselit, currently at New York University, who spoke on "The Invention of American Jewry." She highlighted different ways in which American (and specifically Southern) Jewry accommodated itself to the somewhat alien environment of America and developed distinctive and innovative practices. The history of KKBE's organ was given as an example. A luncheon and business meeting followed.

The meetings attracted over two hundred participants again this year! Next year in Columbia.



# Senator Isadore Lourie honored in Columbia

by Herbert J. Hartsook

On Wednesday, October 30, the University of South Carolina's Thomas Cooper and University South Caroliniana societies hosted a reception honoring Isadore E. Lourie and recognizing him for the gift of his personal papers to the Modern Political Collections Division of the South Caroliniana Library. The gala affair drew a standing room only crowd that included family, friends, board members of the JHSSC, and legislators and attorneys with whom Lourie has been associated. The event was highlighted by a surprise visit by Lourie's close friend and current U.S. Secretary of Education, Dick Riley.

Modern Political Collections exist to document South Carolina society and government at the state and national levels. The University is excited about Lourie's collection because his life and career span a remarkable period of change in South Carolina's government and he was among the key players in instituting change. His papers will form an important resource for future generations of scholars who will find our recent history just as fascinating as we now find the Colonial and Civil War eras.

In opening the formal remarks, Riley said: "Izzy and I have had a wonderful life together in public service.... They called our crowd the 'Young Turks.' We didn't have a big crowd, but we had a very active crowd, and I hope an honorable one.

Because we were really trying to bring South Carolina into this century.... Izzy Lourie did more to bring people together at a time that was extremely important for this country, and all of us should be forever grateful for that." The following are excerpts from Lourie's remarks:

"My parents came to this country at the turn of the century, traveling to a place of new frontiers in pursuit of religious freedom. It made a tremendous impression upon me as they discussed these efforts with me. My mother in particular had a social conscience as wide and as long as this wonderful state. She more so than any other person instilled in me a sense of caring for the needy and the underprivileged, which I hope was a mainstay of my political life.

"The highlight of my legislative career was those years when I was active with the group called the 'Young Turks'.... Through the efforts of this group and many others, we were able to be responsible for progressive legislation in the fields of education, senior citizens, consumer protection, economic development, health care, and many other areas, all of which we believed and hoped would have a lasting impression on the social progress of South Carolina. Our commitment to the cause of social and economic justice for all of our citizens was the anchor of our entire legislative program.

"My heritage as an American, as a Jew, and as a South Carolinian have been the nourishment of my life. These heritages were the cornerstone of my public service. I continue to be very proud of and cherish all three of these great heritages.... I do not want to close my remarks without saying a word about America.... We are able to pursue to the heights of our abilities the opportunities presented to us because of freedom in America. Freedom to worship, to speak, to read what we want to. Freedom to think of great ideas for tomorrow. You can feel the freedom in the air in America and South Carolina; and for that we are all blessed."

Herbert J. Hartsook is the Curator of Modern Political Collections at the South Caroliniana Library at U.S.C.

## Charlotte And Alan Kahn honored By BSS Traditions

Beth Shalom Synagogue in Columbia honored Charlotte and Alan Kahn at its Traditions Dinner on April 13 at the Embassy Suites Hotel. The Traditions Dinner, which was chaired by Senator and Mrs. Isadore Lourie, honors a person or a couple who have a tradition of dedication to the Synagogue and the community.

Born in Columbia, Alan B. Kahn is the son of the late Katie and Irwin Kahn. Mr. Kahn is a graduate of Duke University and George Washington University. He is President of Kahn Development Company, which develops and manages real estate. He also serves as chairman of M.B. Kahn Construction Company, Inc., which was founded by his grandfather, M.B. Kahn, in 1927.

Charlotte Kahn was born in Port-Said, Egypt and spent her childhood in Egypt and France. She graduated from Georgetown University in 1964. In 1965, she married Alan Kahn. They have three children, Kevin, Monique and Charles, and one grandchild, Sophia Kathryn.

## Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

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Klyde Robinson	<i>President</i>
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## JHSSC and the College of Charleston sponsor Elderhostels

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina and the College of Charleston sponsored two week-long Elderhostels in June. Elderhostel is a national organization, based in Boston, which attracts senior citizens from across the country to different locations for extended study of a topic or theme. Participants were housed at the newly renovated Francis Marion Hotel, across the street from the College of Charleston, and ate at the College cafeteria. They attended presentations and discussions about Southern history with an emphasis on the Southern Jewish story.

Presenters included members of the local Jewish community and the College community as well as members of the community at large. Among the presenters were Ted Rosengarten, Sol Breibart, Robert Rosen, Dale Rosengarten, William Moore, Curtis Franks, Belinda and Richard Gergel, Ben Goldberg, Eileen Chepenik and Chief Reuben Greenberg. Janice Kahn guided a tour of Jewish sites in Charleston.

The Elderhostels received excellent ratings from the participants, who were enthusiastic about the Elderhostels, the College of Charleston, and Charleston. As a result, the Jewish Studies Program and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina will conduct two more Elderhostels in May of 1998. For more information, contact Claire Robinson in the College's Department of Continuing Education, 953-5488.

## College of Charleston Library hires Dale Rosengarten as Curator of Jewish Heritage Collection

The College of Charleston has made a serious commitment to the goals of the Jewish Heritage Project by hiring a full-time curator/historian to identify, gather, and make available materials related to the Jewish experience of South Carolina. By design, the earlier Jewish Heritage Project is moving increasingly toward an exhibition and, by default, increasingly away from archival development and special collections. Since the College of Charleston is interested in archives and special collections, it was eager to continue and expand the earlier focus of the Jewish Heritage Project. Hence, the commitment to a permanent position in Special Collections of the Library devoted to the Jewish experience of South Carolina.

Dale Rosengarten, curator of the earlier Jewish Heritage Project and well-known to members of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, has begun working full-time at the Library, continuing much of the focus of her earlier work. Dale was recently awarded her Ph.D. from Harvard University, writing her dissertation on the African/American tradition of sweetgrass basketry. She has published Row Upon Row, a well-received and often reprinted

history of traditional sweetgrass basketry.

The College of Charleston and its Jewish Studies Program has supported the Jewish Heritage Project from the Project's outset. The College helped design the Project, it has provided the Project's facilities, it has organized the Project's funding, and it has contributed significantly each year to the Project's budget. The College's hiring a curator indicates satisfaction with the Project and a commitment to its continuation. Part of the curator's duties will be to teach regular courses related to the South Carolina Jewish experience.

The project shall bear the name "South Carolina Jewish Historical Society Jewish Heritage Collection." The Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston is committed to raising \$250,000 in endowment money for the Jewish Heritage Project. The annual proceeds of that \$250,000 endowment will help support the curator's work, for as long as the College remains committed to the Jewish Heritage Project. This is part of a million dollar capital campaign for Jewish Studies at the College that is now underway. All help is welcome.

## Regional Meetings to be held in Greenville

The South Carolina Jewish Historical Society will hold its regional meetings this Fall in Greenville, S.C. from November 14<sup>th</sup> through 16<sup>th</sup>, 1997. Both the Greenville Temple and Synagogue will participate in the weekend celebration which will feature lectures, symposia, and slide presentations. An Executive Meeting of the JHSSC Board will end the weekend.

Last Fall's Sumter regional meetings were so successful that the Society committed itself then to a Greenville regional meeting in which the Greenville Jewish Community will be highlighted. Jack and Lillian Bloom, long-time Greenville residents, have been instrumental in coordinating the efforts.

Registration for the Greenville meetings is \$25 per person and covers the cost of the Shabbat luncheon and the Saturday night dinner. Not only will the meetings be fun, they will be inexpensive.

The Comfort Inn (phone: 864-271-0060) has reserved a limited number of rooms for the JHSSC at the special rate of \$49 per room (single or double), which includes a hot breakfast buffet. Participants need to make their own reservations. Make them early.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

DAY PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EVENING PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

FAX \_\_\_\_\_

**I would like to attend the Greenville regional meetings of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina!**

I have enclosed \$25 for each member attending.

Number of members attending \_\_\_\_\_  
Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please renew my membership in the Jewish Historical Society of S.C.**  
Please complete reverse side for membership

JHSSC membership fees do not include meeting expenses. Please detach and enclose this form and make checks payable to the Jewish Historical Society of S.C. Mail payment to:

**Martin Perlmutter, Secretary**  
Jewish Historical Society of S.C.  
College of Charleston  
Charleston, S.C. 29424-0001



# Black Tie Affair Benefits Jewish Heritage Project

In conjunction with its Annual Meetings in Charleston, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina sponsored a Black Tie Cocktail Hour and Dinner to benefit the Jewish Heritage Project.

Sue and Robert Prenner hosted a cocktail hour at their beautiful and historic Meeting Street home, formerly the home of Mordecai Cohen, a prominent Charleston Jewish citizen of the early nineteenth century. After cocktails, the group moved on to Alumni Hall at the College of Charleston for an elaborate dinner. President Alex Sanders, of the College of

Charleston, gave a moving presentation on the importance of understanding and acceptance in a culturally diverse society.

The Cocktail Reception and Dinner netted more than \$18,000 for the Jewish Historical Society's Jewish Heritage Project.

Many thanks to all who supported and attended this event.



JHSSC President, Judge Klyde Robinson, welcomes guests



I would like to join the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina!

I have enclosed \$35 for 1998 membership (includes husband and wife)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

DAY PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EVENING PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

FAX \_\_\_\_\_

Support the Jewish Heritage Project by considering these additions - all donations are tax exempt (dues are included):

- Friend (\$36 to \$99)
- Sustaining (\$100 to \$249)
- Patron (\$250 to \$499)
- Sponsor (\$500 to \$999)
- Benefactor (\$1000 to \$5000)
- Founder (More than \$5000)

## Goldhagen to Speak in Columbia on September 24

The Sho'tim Society of Columbia, a group of South Carolina Attorneys, will host a three-day seminar featuring those Nuremberg prosecutors that are still living. The seminar will extend from Wednesday, September 24 through Friday, September 26.

Daniel Goldhagen, a prominent historian and author of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* will be the Keynote Speaker on Wednesday evening.

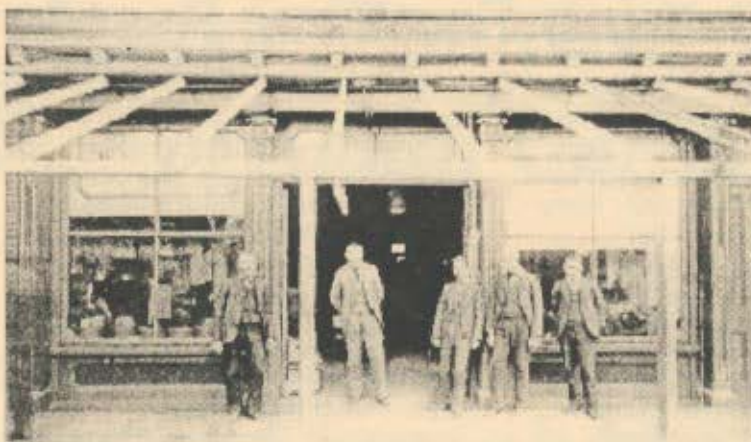
The event is free and open to the public. For further information, contact Isadore Lourie at (803) 799-9805.

*Don't Forget!*

Regional Meetings in Greenville Nov. 14 - 16  
Annual Meetings in Columbia April 3 - 5



Items collected thus far for the Jewish Heritage Project include pictures, right, (the B.J. Barnett store, Sumter, 1904), and a Havdallah spice box, below.



## Exhibit to highlight state's rich Jewish heritage

BY CHRIS HORN

For a generation following the American Revolution, which American city had the largest Jewish Population?

One hint: before guessing New York or Philadelphia, adjust your sights further south.

"By 1800, Charleston had the largest and wealthiest Jewish contingent. The city was also the 19<sup>th</sup>-century birthplace of Reform Judaism in the United States" said Jane Pryzbysz, curator of research and folklife at USC's McKissick Museum and co-director of a major Jewish heritage project.

The story of how South Carolina's Jewish immigrants adapted to American culture (and the Southern sub-culture) while maintaining their own religious and social customs is the focus of a forthcoming exhibition entitled "Pledging Allegiance: Jews in South Carolina, 1695-1995."

"This is really a story about how the people who came here became American — through social, religious, and cultural adaptation. Every immigrant group wrestles with this issue," Pryzbysz said.

The project, now in the planning phase with a \$40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, is sponsored by McKissick Museum, the College of Charleston, and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. A traveling exhibit is expected to tour museums across South Carolina and the country, after opening at McKissick in 1999.

The exhibit will highlight 300 years of Jewish heritage in the state by presenting and interpreting:

- religious and secular artifacts brought to this country by Old World immigrants
- photographs, scrapbooks, and other memorabilia documenting the changing cultures and practices of Jewish families in South Carolina
- family papers, business records, and manuscripts that capture daily details of Jewish life in the South.

"We have already documented a number of items such as menorahs, spice boxes, candlesticks, immigration papers, and passports," Pryzbysz said. "And we have identified a number of memoirs and letters, too. Jews in South Carolina have kept a great record of their own history, perhaps because of their uprooting. The loss of home and the threat of extinction posed by the Holocaust have fueled efforts to preserve earlier cultural practices."

The idea for the Jewish heritage project was first suggested several years ago by Gary Stanton, a former folklorist at McKissick.

At the request of McKissick director Lynn Robertson, Dale Rosengarten at the College of Charleston has undertaken much of the groundwork, conducting archival research and interviews with families and tracking down dozens of sources for the project. The Jewish Historical Society has organized a statewide network of heritage committees that will help gather materials for the exhibit.

"Jane and I will attend the annual conference of the Council of American Jewish Museums this month. I think this show is going to be well-received," Rosengarten said. "This country is ready for a

happy story, and it really has been a happy story for the Jews in South Carolina. South Carolina has a very good record of religious tolerance."

In fact, South Carolina was the first modern community in North America or Europe to allow Jewish men to vote and to elect Jews to public office.

Along the way, Jewish immigrants in South Carolina had to choose sides on such issues as the Civil War (many Jews fought for the Confederacy), blue laws, and mercantile practices (Jewish merchants had to decide whether to open on Saturday or sell non-kosher products such as pork and shellfish).

Today, Jewish populations have declined in the state's small towns, but have grown in metropolitan and resort areas.

"There is no monolithic Jewish culture anymore. There are many cultures within the Jewish community, and it continues to change with immigration of Jews from Israel, Russia, and South Africa," Pryzbysz said. "There is a sadness that the Jewish presence is diminishing in many smaller towns, and without that presence, there is a danger of anti-Semitism rising.

"But it's part of the American success story — their children are not returning to the small towns. They are making their way, but not in small-town South Carolina."

While other Southern states have successfully launched their own Jewish heritage exhibits, the story of Jews in South Carolina promises to be extraordinary, Rosengarten said.

"This was the gateway for many European Jews to the New World. There is a rich heritage here of which surprisingly few people — Jewish or non-Jewish — are aware," she said.



The Chaplin, Citron, and Berkovitz families, Columbia, 1916

*This article was originally printed in the USC Times and is reprinted with their permission.*



# Searching For Your Past In The Present

by Warren A. Kohn

Are you familiar with Yizkor books? Yizkor Books are written recollections by residents of communities which were destroyed during the Holocaust. Many contain maps hand-drawn from recollection, photographs of friends, family, and neighbors. There are more than 2000 of such books in existence; JewishGen Yizkor Index has them indexed with additional information on where they may be purchased or how to obtain them by interlibrary loans. A word of caution: most of these volumes are written in Yiddish or Hebrew and there are very few English translations available.

JewishGen has special interest groups (SIG) for those of us who have interests in very limited areas. For example, there are special interest groups for those seeking information on families in Poland or parts of the former Soviet Union, United Kingdom, Flanders, South Africa, or Argentina, with direct contacts with people in those areas. Seeking information on Litvaks or CryptoJews? There may be a

special interest group for you.

JewishGen provides a mentor program for newcomers, an index to Poland from the Russia era (Russian Era Indexing Poland Project known as REIPP), an index of qualified professional translators and genealogical researchers around the world, is presently indexing Jewish Cemeteries world-wide, and supports Jewish Family Home Pages.

JewishGen is not the only resource available in Jewish genealogy. There is Virtual Shtetl on the Internet at [sunsite.unc.edu/Yiddish/roots/html](http://sunsite.unc.edu/Yiddish/roots/html). There is also a JewishNet at [www.jewishnet.net](http://www.jewishnet.net). You can now access the Social Security Death Indices which are available on-line at [www.infobases.com/ssdi](http://www.infobases.com/ssdi). Your local Family Center at the Church of Latter Day Saints can provide invaluable information and assistance by way of ship sailing dates, ports of sail and ports of entry, passenger lists, census tracts; they will direct you to other resources. The Church of Latter Day

Saints is reported to have the most complete Polish birth and death records outside of Poland to date.

There is a recent publication which can direct you to more Jewish sites on the Internet. The book is *The Jewish Guide to the Internet* by Diane Romm, published by Jason Aronson, (ISBN: 1568219148) and contains more than 500 Web Sites.

While the computer is a great aid in the task of genealogy, it is not the sole resource. There is still a lot of legwork to be done. Talk to older family members and record those conversations on audio or video tape; they are precious and valuable recollections. Take photographs of headstones and rubbings from those too worn to be photographed. Have old family photographs recopied. In the end, the energy will have been well used. The results will be well worth your while. Happy researching!

*This is the second part of a two-part article. The author is an attorney in Columbia, SC.*



Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina  
College of Charleston  
66 George Street  
Charleston, SC 29424

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# *Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina*

Fall 1999

## JHSSC - Sixth Annual Meeting and 250th Anniversary of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Charleston, South Carolina October 22-24, 1999

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina will hold its Sixth Annual Meeting in Charleston, SC, October 22-24 at the College of Charleston campus and in nearby synagogues. The meeting marks the commencement of a year-long celebration by Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) of its 250th anniversary. KKBE is America's oldest synagogue in continuous use.

Originally chartered as an Orthodox Sephardic congregation in 1749, hence the title Kahal Kadosh, KKBE became America's first Reform congregation and the only one to grow from purely native roots. The transition from Orthodox to Reform is the subject of Sol Breitbart's feature article in this newsletter.

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina is the largest statewide Jewish organ-



Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, 86 Hasell Street

ization in South Carolina, with over 300 members. Its annual meetings attract participants from throughout South Carolina and beyond.

This year's meeting promises to be especially successful. Not many American Jewish communities can celebrate a continuous and generally welcome presence of 250 years.

Details of the meeting appear on pages 7 and 8. Please make your reservations early. Hotel rooms at these special rates, dinner accommodations, and places on the tours are all limited. We expect a large turnout including a contingent from the American Jewish Historical Society who have been invited to join the celebration as our special guests.







# KKBE: The Transition from Orthodox to Reform

By Sol Breibart

This essay traces the evolution of Charleston's Beth Elohim from its Sephardic Orthodox origin to its Reform status. At its inception, Beth Elohim followed the practices, traditions, and procedures adopted by rabbinical authorities in the 17th century. As it made reforms, the congregation interpreted Biblical laws in the spirit of accommodation to changed needs and circumstances, believing that no one generation can legislate for all future ages. It was not an easy or quick transition.

Jews came to America for the same reasons that attracted other Europeans: greater economic opportunity, political liberty, and freedom from religious discrimination. Jews migrated to Carolina because the spirit of the colony, under the liberal philosopher John Locke, provided just such an environment. In fact, Locke's Constitution, written for the Carolinas, provided that when seven persons wished to form a religious association, they could do so.

Jews have been in Charleston at least since 1695. At first, as a transitory group, they worshiped in private homes. Then, as Nathaniel Levin reported in 1843, "on the second day of the year 5510 (September 3, 1749)," a group of Jews led by Moses Cohen, recently arrived from London, "associated themselves as a religious society," which they called *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim*. Congregants met in a wooden house on Union (now State) Street. They elected Cohen *haham* (religious leader), Isaac DaCosta *hazan* (reader), and Joseph Tobias *parnass* (president). The leaders of the new congregation had been associated with the Orthodox Sephardic synagogue in London known as Bevis Marks. Naturally, in Charleston, they followed the beliefs, practices, and governance to which they had been accustomed in England.

As the membership grew, the congregation moved to three other

sites before renting a stone building on Hasell Street in 1780, which they renovated into a synagogue (later called the "old synagogue"). Soon they purchased this building and adjacent land on Hasell Street on which they erected, in 1792, what was then the most impressive synagogue in the United States.

In those early days, Congregation Beth Elohim was an Orthodox community. Failure to comply with its regulations and practices resulted in severe fines, loss of privileges, and even excommunication. At that time, such a system was commonplace among Jews in England where synagogue authorities were responsible to the political powers for the good behavior of their co-religionists. For Jews in Charleston in 1800 the situation was quite different. Here Jews were guaranteed full civil and religious freedom and had enjoyed such liberties practically from their arrival. They had participated in the Revolutionary War; they were not afraid to challenge authority.

The first serious effort to bring about reforms in Beth Elohim, the first in any American congregation, occurred in 1824 with the formation of the Reformed Society of Israelites. Although the movement for reform in Judaism had begun several years earlier in Germany, the movement in Charleston was "native to the place,"

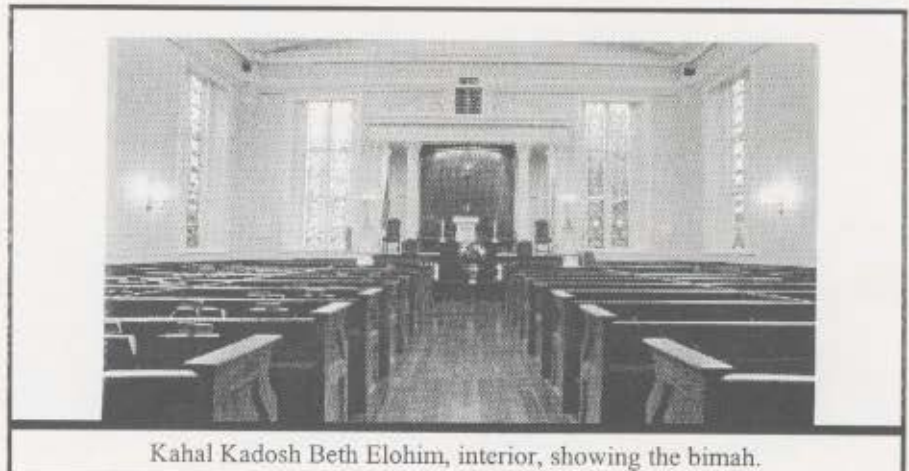
having been initiated by a group of cultured American Jewish intellectuals. Influenced by the freedom of the American scene and the equality they enjoyed, they desired that their religious practices be more like their friendly non-Jewish neighbors.

The Reformers appear to have been interested at first primarily in achieving certain changes within the liturgy of Beth Elohim. They were concerned about the apathy and neglect they noticed in the congregation and petitioned the Board of Trustees for better decorum, increased use of English in the services, and an abridgement of the services to eliminate repetitious and superfluous matter. They had no desire, as they said, "to abolish such ceremonies as are considered landmarks to distinguish the Jew from Gentile"; their main goal was "to preserve and perpetuate the principles of Judaism in their utmost vigor and purity."

When their petition was rejected, the Reformers withdrew from Beth Elohim and worshiped as a separate congregation. Within their own institution, they moved beyond the changes they had requested for Beth Elohim.

They set the Five Books of Moses and the Prophets as the standard by which to judge what parts of the liturgy to revise, alter, or discard. This was an

*cont'd pg. 4*



Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, interior, showing the bimah.



**KKBE.....cont'd from page**

important decision, for they no longer accepted, as their authority, the Oral Law promulgated in the Talmud. They altered Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith by omitting statements which recognized the coming of a messiah, the return to Palestine, and the bodily resurrection of the dead. They believed in the immortality of the soul and that morality and good faith toward all mankind are the basic tenets of religion. They worshiped with heads uncovered and used instrumental music in their services. They developed their own prayer book – most of it in English – the first such prayer book produced in America for a Jewish congregation.

The Society at one time had almost as many members as Beth Elohim. It might have attracted greater numbers, for as Isaac Harby wrote in 1826, "The Jews born in Carolina are mostly our way of thinking on the subject of worship, but act from a tender regard for the opinions and feelings of their parents on not joining the Society." The Society was disbanded in 1833, after nine years of existence. Most of its members returned to Beth Elohim and its Orthodox ways, but their ideas did not die.

The Reformers' time came several years later. When fire destroyed the synagogue in 1838, Congregation Beth Elohim erected a new Greek Revival style edifice. The building still stands today, the oldest Reform synagogue in the world. In July 1840, 38 members of the congregation petitioned the Board of Trustees to call a general meeting to consider the propriety of installing an organ in the new synagogue to assist the vocal part of the service. Feeling "a deep interest in our religion" they were anxious to embrace every laudable and sacred mode by which the rising generation may be made to conform to and attend our holy worship." The majority of the Board felt that the petition was a violation of the constitution which provided that the mode of worship in the synagogue should continue to follow *Minhag-Sephardi* (Spanish -

Portuguese custom) and which prohibited any alterations in the service. But, to gratify the petitioners, the Board did call a general meeting.

Abraham Moïse, at one time a president of the Reformed Society of Israelites, proposed a resolution that an organ be procured and erected in the new synagogue. With the full support of the minister of the congregation, the Rev. Gustavus Poznanski, who had once been strictly Orthodox but who had a strong interest in music, the resolution was adopted by a vote of 46 to 40. This was the first time in American Jewish history that an organ was used in a synagogue for regular services. In an emotional speech at the dedication of the new building in March 1841, the Rev. Poznanski justified the installation of instrumental music in the synagogue as "scripturally proper in praising God," and for the first time came out in defense of the Reform practice of conducting portions of the service in the vernacular of the people.

In his discourse, Poznanski angered the Orthodox by proclaiming that "this synagogue is *our* Temple, this city *our* Jerusalem, this happy land *our* Palestine." They misinterpreted his statement, claiming that it denied the long-held belief of the coming of a messiah, the return to Jerusalem, and the restoration of the Temple there. A native of Poland, Poznanski was only speaking from the fullness of his heart and with an immigrant's appreciation of the privileges and liberties enjoyed by Jews in America.

These changes at Beth Elohim caused the secession of the Orthodox, who formed a new congregation, Shearith Israel, and later built a synagogue on Wentworth Street. Moderate Traditionalists remained at Beth Elohim, hoping to reverse the trend toward Reform. When the Reformers, with Poznanski's support, sought to eliminate a special service during the Festival of Weeks and to eliminate observance of the second day of some of the holy days and festivals, the Traditionalists were able to thwart them. But Poznanski and a committee of

three appointed by the Board of Trustees to prepare a translation of Maimonides' Articles of Faith for display in the synagogue, produced a version – later identified as Poznanski's version – which seems to have followed that used by the Reformed Society of Israelites earlier. Poznanski said that he knew no stopping place to reform in this enlightened age. Nevertheless, in 1843 the Traditionalists, who were a large minority in Beth Elohim, sought to regain control of their religious destiny by inviting the old members, who had seceded, to rejoin them. They wished to form a majority to restore, as they said, "the true spirit of our religion in conformity with the Mosaic and Rabbinical laws, and so reinstate the mode of service in the Hasell Street synagogue as it was practiced heretofore in the old Synagogue."

Traditionalists regained control of Beth Elohim temporarily, dismissed the Rev. Poznanski, and abolished all reforms. But a lawsuit instituted by the Reformers eventually went before the South Carolina Supreme Court in 1846, where the justices found in favor of the Reformers on constitutional grounds and ordered the Traditionalists to return control to the Reformers. The Traditionalists capitulated, resigned from Beth Elohim and joined the Orthodox congregation Shearith Israel.

The Reformers were again in control. At the first congregational meeting following the Supreme Court decision, they abolished observance of the second day of holidays, introduced the three-year cycle of reading the Torah, shortened the service by eliminating certain readings, and elected Poznanski as minister for life. Interestingly, he had already been elected for life in 1838.

Their troubles however, were not over. Considering himself too controversial for the welfare of his congregation, Poznanski resigned as minister in 1847, but consented to serve gratuitously until a replacement could be found. Beth Elohim seems to have had some difficulty in filling the pulpit.

*cont'd pg. 5*



Isaac Mayer Wise, who later became the organizer of the Reform Movement in the United States, was interviewed for the position but turned it down; he and his wife feared Charleston's humid weather and the yellow fever which often plagued the city.

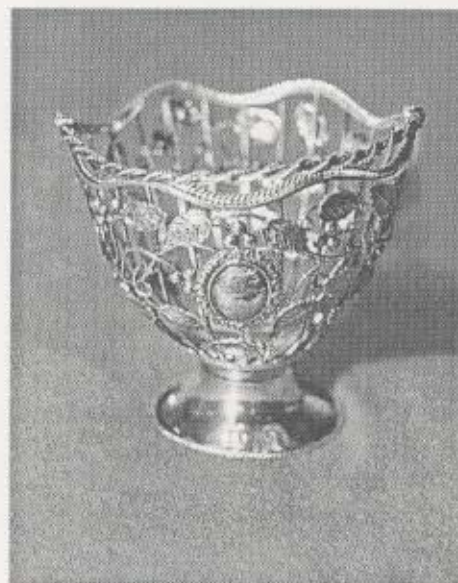
In 1850, Beth Elohim finally selected the Rev. Julius Eckman, an able minister, who turned out to be too traditional for the congregation. Two factions developed, a liberal one around Poznanski, who remained a member, and a traditional one around Eckman. The climax came when Eckman, who had been extremely critical of certain liberal practices in Beth Elohim, made an issue of the creed which had been, supposedly, translated by Poznanski; he complained that it omitted reference to the coming of a messiah and the resurrection of the dead and that the free translation of the remainder of the Maimonidean creed did not reflect its true meaning. The outcome was that the congregation decided to remove the controversial creed from the walls of the synagogue, Eckman was forced out, and several more members withdrew to join the Orthodox congregation Shearith Israel.

When Beth Elohim sought a successor to Rev. Eckman, it tried to avoid any misunderstandings by potential candidates as to its practices and requirements. The Board of Trustees issued a circular which clearly revealed the congregation's Reform nature. It stressed the importance of English in the services and sermons; it indicated that services were conducted with the accompaniment of an organ and that hymns and psalms were sung by a choir in English as well as Hebrew. It made clear that the Torah was read through once in three years (not annually), that certain Hebrew portions of the services were omitted, and that the second days of holidays were not observed.

Eckman's successor was the Rev. Doctor Maurice Mayer, a highly educated German lawyer and a student of Jewish literature who had taken an

active part in the unsuccessful 1848 revolution in Germany. He was too liberal for part of the congregation, and was soon reproached for presenting doctrinal points in conflict with "the cherished principles of some members." At another time, he was criticized strongly for appearing in court and taking an oath with uncovered head. In his response, he chided the Board of Trustees for attempting to teach their minister the laws and usages of his religion. "If," said he, "the usages have really such a great authority, then indeed you must remove the organ from your Synagogue, reinstate the second day of festivals, in a word, abolish all Reforms introduced since the consecration of our Temple." In 1855, Rev. Mayer instituted the first confirmation ceremony in Beth Elohim, a Reform ritual which had originated in Germany about 40 years before and involved girls as well as boys.

When Beth Elohim started its reforms in 1840, it was the only synagogue in America making changes. At that time, there were few Jewish congregations in this country, but the number began increasing rapidly as a result of the large migration of German Jews to the United States in the 1840s. Since each congregation was autonomous and free to adopt whatever practices met its needs, concern arose as to what would happen in those congregations which were without easy access to learned authorities and were free of the governmental and communal controls to which they had been subjected in Europe. Accordingly, the Rev. Isaac Lesser, a respected Orthodox minister of Philadelphia, sent out a call in 1841 to all Jewish congregations to send representatives to a conference to be held in Philadelphia for the purpose of creating a central authority in the United States to provide guidelines for congregational development. Beth Elohim rejected the invitation emphatically; congregants considered the establishment of any ecclesiastical authority whatsoever as "Alien to the Spirit and Genius of the Age in which we live, and wholly inconsistent with



Silver basket, given by Joshua Lazarus for dedication of new synagogue, 1840.

the principles of American liberty." They thought it unwise to build a system "which from its very nature must be hostile to the march of progress of enlightened rational reform." The congregation's fears were justified, for although the Philadelphia conference produced no lasting results, a majority of the ministers meeting in Cleveland fourteen years later agreed to resolutions that were antagonistic to the spirit of Reform. When Isaac M. Wise and other leading advocates of Reform went along with this development, Beth Elohim's Rev. Mayer took issue with them. He reiterated the position taken by his congregation on the Philadelphia conference and said, "For the last fourteen years our congregation stood alone with its reforms and can now afford to wait a little longer until other congregations with their ministers have reached us in our progress."

As a result of its efforts to achieve reforms, by 1860 Beth Elohim had lost many of its members and was experiencing financial difficulties. Then the Civil War began and congregational matters became secondary to the war effort. Most eligible males were involved with the Confederacy and many families fled from Charleston



**KKBE... cont'd from page 5**

families fled from Charleston, which was under heavy bombardment from Union forces. The synagogues of Beth Elohim and Shearith Israel were severely damaged by Union shells; many refugees never returned to the battered city.

In 1866, Reform congregation Beth Elohim and Orthodox congregation Shearith Israel agreed to an amalgamation. Time and the trials of the Civil War softened attitudes. Benjamin S. Lazarus, the acting president of Beth Elohim, in resigning his position to permit a new election, said, "It must be an event of mutual gratification to all of us that the initiation and progress of the amalgamation under one fold of Shearith Israel and Beth Elohim, so long estranged and separated by unsubstantial differences, has been consummated with so much harmony and reciprocity." Charles H. Moïse, a member of the Orthodox faction, at his installation as the first president of the reunited Beth Elohim, declared, "I call myself an enlightened Jew...I do not reject all propositions for changes in externals simply because they are new, nor do I favor alteration of forms because they are old"

The contract of amalgamation, which was to be reconsidered after five years, contained compromises which indicated a temporary retreat from Reform in Beth Elohim. The document stipulated that the Portuguese service was to be used, but that it would be shortened. No instrumental music would accompany the service, but a choir of men and women would sing psalms and hymns in both English and Hebrew. The synagogue was to be open on the second day of festivals, and the minister was to be present for those who wanted to attend. This bond of union was scrupulously observed. Any moves to make changes were vigorously debated and decisions to change were made by the entire congregation, not just a Board of Trustees.

Reforms thereafter came gradu-

ally and grudgingly as local conditions demanded. In 1871, when the terms of the contract of amalgamation expired, a new constitution was adopted to replace it. This document retained most of the earlier terms, with two important changes: the reintroduction of instrumental music (an organ) in the services and the use of more English.

The pace of change in Beth Elohim quickened after 1875. In that year a young religious leader came to the congregation. The Rev. David Levy, then only 21 years old and the first American-born minister to serve Beth Elohim, entered upon a tenure of 18 years. He had received his training at the short-lived conservative Maimonides College in Philadelphia, the first seminary established in the United States for the training of rabbis; but he was more liberal than its founders. Within two years he had earned such respect from the congregation that the Board of Trustees asked him to propose recommendations to make the services more attractive to the membership.

Levy suggested that Saturday morning services should begin at 10 AM instead of 9 AM, that they should be shortened further by eliminating certain irrelevant prayers, and that the practice of reading the Torah through triennially should be reintroduced. He advocated a greater use of English and elimination of the observance of the second day of festivals. His strongest plea was for the installation of family pews, permitting husbands and wives to sit together during services. The congregation accepted most of his suggestions.

In 1879, the congregation adopted a new prayer book – one compiled and edited by the Rev. Levy especially for Beth Elohim. The membership thereby abandoned the old Orthodox prayer book which they had used, with increasing omissions, since its first publication in the United States in the 1830s. Levy's new volume conformed with the order of the service which had

evolved in Beth Elohim; it retained, at the insistence of the Board of Trustees over the mild objection of Rev. Levy, the beliefs in the coming of a messiah and the resurrection of the dead. The Levy prayer book continued in use until 1896, when the congregation replaced it with the *Union Prayer Book*, edited and published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

By accepting the *Union Prayer Book*, Beth Elohim entered fully into the ranks of liberal Reform congregations. It had moved from one prayer book, which was a modification of the Portuguese Orthodox service still containing some Orthodox principles, to a new one, which embodied the Reform principles adopted by Reform rabbis at a conference in Pittsburgh in 1885 – some of which were similar to those advanced by the members of the Reformed Society of Israelites. The Pittsburgh Platform, which has been considerably altered by succeeding rabbinical conferences, held that the Bible was written by man and did not have to be accepted literally; it rejected the dietary laws as obligatory; it considered Judaism a religion, not a nationality, so a return to Palestine was not expected; it rejected the idea of the resurrection of the body and embraced the concept of the immortality of the soul; and maintained that it was the duty of the Jews to work for a better social order.

Under the ministry of the Rev. David Levy, Beth Elohim had finally returned to the spirit of progressive Judaism exhibited by the members of the Reformed Society of Israelites. It reintroduced confirmation as a meaningful ceremony and it initiated late Friday evening services. Levy's passionate defense of a faculty member, dismissed from the University of South Carolina in 1891 for being a Unitarian, reflects that spirit: "Human intelligence, weary of ecclesiastical tyranny and sick of the misty pabulum of a worn-out theology, is clamoring for a revision of religious confession and for a reasonable statement of the essentials of belief."

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**Sixth Annual Meeting**  
**Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina**  
**October 22-24, 1999**

Friday, October 22, 1999

- 11:30 AM – 1:15 PM                      Guided Bus Tour of historic Jewish Charleston\*  
 (Registration required, no additional charge)  
 Meet at Holiday Inn, Corner Calhoun and Meeting Streets
- \* If bus fills up for the 11:30 tour, we will schedule an additional guided bus tour from 9:30 AM – 11:15 AM. Please indicate if the earlier tour is feasible for you.
- 1:30 PM – 2:15 PM                      Proclamation by Mayor Joseph Riley  
 Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim
- 2:30 PM – 3:45 PM                      On-Site Tours:  
 Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim and Coming Street Cemetery
- 4:00 PM – 5:15 PM                      On-Site Tours:  
 City Hall and Jewish Heritage Collection
- 6:45 PM                                      Shabbat Dinner at Synagogue Emanu-El  
 Rabbi Edward Friedman, officiating
- 8:15 PM                                      Shabbat services at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (Reform)  
 Rabbis Anthony Holz and Eric H. Yoffie officiating (*Registration is required, very limited space.*)
- OR
- Shabbat services at Synagogue Emanu-El (Conservative)  
 Rabbi Edward Friedman officiating
- 9:30 PM                                      Oneg Shabbat: Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim  
*All* welcome.

Saturday, October 23, 1999

- 9:00 AM                                      Shabbat services at Brith Sholom Beth Israel (Orthodox),  
 Rabbi David Radinsky officiating
- OR
- 10:00 AM                                      Shabbat services at Kahal Kadosh, Beth Elohim (Reform)  
 Rabbi Anthony Holz officiating
- 11:45 AM                                      Kiddush at Brith Sholom Beth Israel (Orthodox)  
 Welcoming Remarks, Rabbi David Radinsky

*cont'd on reverse*



## Schedule of Events cont'd

### Saturday, October 23, 1999....cont'd

- 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM “Belonging: A South Carolina Jewish Family in the ‘40s and ‘50s”  
Talk by Judy Kurtz Goldman, born and raised in Rock Hill and author of the newly published novel *The Slow Way Back*.  
Sanctuary, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim
- 2:30 PM Coffee Break
- 2:45 PM – 4:00 PM “Jewish Belles: Ethnic Variations on a Regional Type”  
Talk by Deborah Dash Moore, Director of American Culture Program at Vassar College and author of *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.*  
Sanctuary, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim
- 7:00 PM Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Gala Banquet  
Charleston Place (*Reservations required*. Black Tie optional.  
Cocktails, Dinner, Dance. \$125 per person)  
OR
- 8:00 PM Film: To Be Announced  
Room 118, Education Center, College of Charleston

### Sunday, October 24, 1999

- 9:30 – 10:30 AM Bagel Breakfast, Stern Student Center
- 10:30 – 11:45 AM “All in the Family: Growing Up Jewish in the South”  
Talk by Jenna Weissman Joselit, winner of 1995 National Jewish Book Award for *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture*  
Stern Student Center Ballroom
- 11:45 AM Coffee and Sweets
- 12:00 PM Business Meeting, Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina  
Stern Student Center Ballroom
- 3:00 PM Organ Recital, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim

#### Locations

Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, 86 Hasell Street  
Brith Sholom Beth Israel, 182 Rutledge Avenue  
Emanu-El, 5 Windsor Drive (West of the Ashley)  
Coming Street Cemetery, 187 Coming Street  
Stern Student Center, Corner of George and Glebe Streets  
Simons Center for the Arts, 44 St. Philip Street  
Education Center, 81 St. Philip Street  
City Hall, Corner of Meeting and Broad Streets  
Jewish Heritage Collection, Robert Scott Small Library, College of Charleston



Maps provided in registration packet.



## A chapter from history...

### *A Sephardic Story*

by Robert A. Moses

The Inquisition in Spain lasted some 350 years, ending about 1834. About 100 years before the Inquisition ended, there lived in Lisbon, Portugal, a Dr. Samuel Nunes who, like most other Jews in Spain and Portugal, had long professed Christianity, while secretly remaining loyal to the Jewish faith of his ancestors. Dr. Nunes was a very successful and wealthy physician, was held in high esteem, and was a prominent citizen of Lisbon. He was also chief physician to the Grand Inquisitor. However, when he was discovered to be secretly adhering to the practices of his Jewish faith, he and his family members were summarily thrown into prison.

As luck would have it, his medical services were sorely missed and he and his family were liberated from prison. There was a strict condition on this freedom: two officials of the Inquisition would reside in the Nunes home, as spies upon their religious practices.

Dr. Nunes's elegant mansion stood high upon the banks of the Tagus River. A social and friendly man, he enjoyed entertaining. It was his custom to frequently hold lavish parties at his home and he held one such dinner party on a pleasant summer day in 1732. Among the guests were a young man, David Mendez Machado, and a British sea captain whose brigantine lay anchored in the Tagus River. Six months earlier, Machado's elder brother, David, had been discovered secretly practicing Judaism and was burned at the stake for refusing to give up his faith.

During the early afternoon of Dr. Nunes's party, while the guests were strolling about the lawn, the British sea captain invited everyone to come aboard the vessel, inspect the ship, and partake of light lunch. The family and guests, including the two Inquisition spies, walked down to the river and went aboard. While they were below-decks enjoying the refreshments, the anchor was weighed, the sails unfurled, and, on a fair breeze, the brigantine shot out of the Tagus and was soon at sea, carrying the party to England.

Dr. Nunes and his family had abandoned their house and home, complete with the table set and dinner prepared for the party. Their property was seized and confiscated by the government. Some time before, Dr. Nunes had quietly converted his assets to gold and hired the sea captain for the voyage. All the men of the family had obtained special leather belts and the gold was distributed among them. The women had sewn their silver and jewels into their long and voluminous skirts.

About the time the group arrived in London, there was much exciting and favorable speculation about the settlement of Georgia in the American colonies. The Nunes family and many of the friends who had escaped with them from Lisbon set sail for Georgia aboard the "William and Sarah." They departed from London in January 1733 and arrived in Savannah in July of that year, probably about five months after Oglethorpe's landing with the first group of settlers.

Jews were not welcome in Georgia. Back in England, the 21 Trustees for the colonization of Georgia made repeated requests not to allow them in, and after they arrived, to have them expelled. However, shortly before the arrival of Dr. Nunes's group, an epidemic had wiped out a large percentage of the first settlers, including the only physician. Dr. Nunes had skills in the treatment of contagious diseases and was able to stem the tide of a new plague that threatened the community. Oglethorpe himself had never opposed the Jews; Dr. Nunes's contributions and ready acceptance set the tone for the rest of the Jewish settlers. They became responsible and contributing citizens and gradually entered into every phase of life in the struggling settlement.

The constraints of years of non-Jewish living were not easy to shake off. It was said that, for many months after their arrival in Georgia, the women of the Nunes family were unable to recite their Jewish prayers without the assistance of the rosary because of their habits acquired under the eyes of the spies.

Of personal interest to the author of this article, David Mendez Machado, the young man who had escaped with the Nunes party, married Dr. Nunes's daughter, Zipporah, and they became my great-great, great-great grandparents. Other Sumter descendants of their union include members of the William and Catherine Moses Bryan family and members of the John and Andrena Moran Ray family.

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This information is drawn from three sources: the book, *Third to None, the Saga of Savannah Jewry*, by Rabbi Saul Jacob Rubin, 1983; Moses family genealogy records; and a paper entitled, "Family History of the Rev. David Mendez Machado," by N. Taylor Phillips (published by the American Jewish Historical Society, 1894)

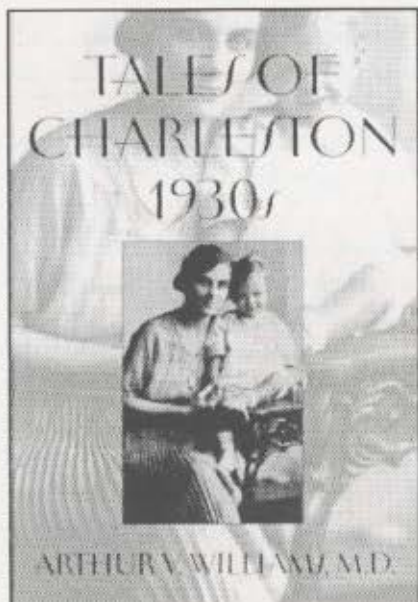


## Tales of Charleston, 1930s

by

Arthur V. Williams, M.D.

The College of Charleston Library, in association with the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, is pleased to announce the publication of *Tales of Charleston, 1930s* by Arthur V. Williams, M.D.



We had the oldest and best municipal college in the country, the oldest and best museum in the United States, famous authors like DuBose Heyward, a lot of painters, a church where George Washington had worshiped, the *News and Courier* that probably everyone in the country read, and we had the Ashley and Cooper Rivers that flowed together off the Battery to form the Atlantic Ocean. I never really believed that it formed the whole ocean, but I did believe our house was the center of everything really important geographically, spiritually, and culturally.

—from *Tales of Charleston, 1930s*

After a distinguished 40-year career at the Medical University of South Carolina, Dr. Williams retired in 1995. His many accomplishments include bringing artificial kidney surgery and peritoneal dialysis treatment to South Carolina. Upon retirement, he was named Professor Emeritus of Technical Nephrology at MUSC.

Dr. Williams says *Tales of Charleston* developed from a series of stories he wrote about his early life. The stories are told with the wide-eyed innocence of youth and in the language of the day. Williams holds few punches in the book but is also keenly aware of the positive influences of family, neighborhood, and congregation, in his case, historic Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, home of Reform Judaism in America.

"I see *Tales of Charleston* as a work of social history," says Dale Rosengarten, historian and curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection. "Charleston in the 1930s has been painted in rosy hues; it was the era of the Charleston Renaissance and the preservation movement. But Dr. Williams strips away the patina and reveals a much harsher reality — a racist, impoverished, scrappy town."

*Tales of Charleston 1930s* sells for \$15. All proceeds go to Friends of the Library to help underwrite future publications of the College's Special Collections Department. It can be ordered through the Jewish Heritage Collection Web site ([www.cofc.edu/~jhc](http://www.cofc.edu/~jhc)) or by calling the Jewish Heritage Collection Office at (843) 953-8028.



◀ Wentworth at King Street.  
Photography by M.B. Paine.  
Courtesy of the Charleston  
Museum.

Hebrew Orphan Society  
at 88 Broad Street.  
Courtesy of  
Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. ▶





Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina  
Annual Membership and Charleston Events Registration Form

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

DAY PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EVENING PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Registration for the weekend: includes meals, speakers, tours, and reception  
(Does not include Gala Banquet or hotel accommodations) \$75 per person \_\_\_\_\_

JHSSC Membership (through year 2000) \$35 per family \_\_\_\_\_

Gala Banquet (Saturday night, Charleston Place) \$125 per person \_\_\_\_\_  
(kosher food upon request)

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

Mail checks to: Martin Perlmutter, Jewish Studies Program, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC,  
29424

Accommodations are your responsibility. For special rates, mention the JHSSC and make your reservations by September 27. After that, rooms are subject to availability.

**Holiday Inn**, 125 Calhoun Street, Charleston (843) 805-7900 Toll Free (877) 805-7900, \$129 per night  
(1-2 persons)

**Days Inn**, Patriot's Point, 261 Johnnie Dodds Boulevard, Mt. Pleasant (843) 881-1800  
Toll Free (800) 329-7466, \$55 per night (1-4 persons)

**The Mills House**, 115 Meeting Street, Charleston (843) 577-2400 Toll Free (800) 874-9600, \$239 per  
night (1-2 persons)

*About....JHSSC cont'd from pg. 2*

Since the project commenced in January 1995, historian Dale Rosengarten and a dedicated corps of volunteers have recorded some 300 oral histories pertaining to South Carolina Jewish life and culture. Project staff have been compiling an extensive manuscript archives, including records of families, businesses, synagogues, and Jewish organizations. The archives already contains hundreds of manuscripts, historical photographs, genealogical records, and fieldwork files.

The project's Web site ([www.cofc.edu/~jhc](http://www.cofc.edu/~jhc)) contains an easy guide to the oral history archives and topically-organized excerpts from the interviews. Artifacts, photographs, and audio segments from the collection will be featured in "...A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in South Carolina," a museum exhibition co-sponsored by the McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina. The exhibit is scheduled to open at McKissick in 2001 and to travel nationally for two years.





Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina  
Jewish Studies Program  
College of Charleston  
Charleston, SC 29424

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### **Jewish Studies: Cooperative Venture**

The Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston provides extensive programming for the larger Charleston community. Other communities in South Carolina which have an interest in participating, either by attending events or by jointly sponsoring events, should contact the Jewish Studies Office at (843) 953-5682.



### **News Notes**

Beginning in the spring issue, the JHSSC newsletter we will have a regular column of news from synagogues around the state. To do this we need your cooperation! If you have any news, announcements, or notes of historical interest about your synagogue or congregation please contact Elizabeth Moses at the Office of Jewish Studies, College of Charleston. Phone (843) 953-5682 or E-mail: [mosese@cofc.edu](mailto:mosese@cofc.edu)



### **Jewish Heritage Collection looking for uniforms !**

We need military and athletic uniforms, from before 1950, to borrow for our upcoming exhibition about Jewish life in South Carolina. We are especially interested in Confederate and World War I and II wardrobe items, and AZA and JCC uniforms and jackets. For more information, call (843) 953-8028.

