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# SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

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# Southern Jewish History

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COVER PICTURE: *Stained-glass windows at Temple B'nai Shalom, Huntsville, Alabama. Four interrelated Jewish families in Huntsville, who were members of this synagogue, are the subjects of the article by Leonard Rogoff and Margaret Anne Goldsmith on pp. 33–67 of this issue. (Photograph by Bryan Alan Bacon.)*

*From the Editor . . .*

This year marks the twentieth volume of the journal and the fortieth anniversary of when I began studying southern Jewish history. The scope of the journal has evolved dramatically over two decades, as has the field over four decades. What began with a few regular articles has evolved so that now regular articles are complemented with primary source pieces and book, website, exhibit, and occasional movie reviews. Dozens of people have contributed as peer reviewers, proofreaders, and editorial board members. Eight individuals have served faithfully as section editors, and Rachel Heimovics Braun and Bryan Edward Stone provided innumerable and incomparable service as managing editors. Authors from a variety of backgrounds and throughout the United States and overseas have greatly contributed to our understanding of southern—and thus American—Jewish history in the pages of this journal. There are so many more fascinating, informative, and surprising things to learn, I look forward to the continuing saga of the journal and what coming generations of academics, public historians, and gifted laypeople will discover.

Bryan Stone, with the approval of the editorial board and support of Rachel Heimovics Braun, recruited Stephen Whitfield to compose a retrospective that appears as the first article in this issue. I thank them and those who provided comments for a hopefully very premature necrology.

The odyssey of the second article in this issue reflects the often serendipitous nature of the enterprise. Paul Woolf, a retired endocrinologist and hospital administrator turned museum docent, heard Margaret Anne Goldsmith deliver a presentation at the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, where she had donated a family collection. Paul—my brother-in-law—sent me a copy of the presentation and encouraged me to pursue an article. I contacted Goldsmith, exchanged correspondence, and connected her with Leonard

Rogoff for them to collaborate on a scholarly manuscript. The result uses five generations of a pioneering Huntsville, Alabama, family and its evolving and complex business interests as a model illustrating the changing demographic, economic, and social nature of Jewish life in small cities.

Goldsmith and Rogoff use aspects of the built environment as symbols of their primary themes. Although one typically thinks of written documents or oral interviews as primary sources, Hollace Ava Weiner and Lynna Kay Shuffield, like Goldsmith and Rogoff, look to the built environment for a different type of primary source: a monument to Jewish soldiers from Fort Worth, Texas, who fought during World War I. From the physical manifestation, they derive insights into perceptions through the decades written into the past.

Thanks go to outside peer reviewers Margaret Humphrey, Carolyn Light, Shari Rabin, and Paul Woolf, and proofreaders Rachel Heimovics Braun, Karen Franklin, Scott Langston, Bernie Wax, Hollace Ava Weiner, and Daniel Weinfeld.

The Lucius N. Littauer Foundation and the Gale Foundation helped fund the journal almost from the onset. Littauer changed its direction a few years ago, so this will be its last year of support. The Gale Foundation was unable to fund this issue. Nonetheless, these foundations deserve the gratitude of everyone associated with the journal and society. Through the intercession of Bruce Beeber and grace of executor Deborah Levinson, the Helen Marie Stern Memorial Fund has provided a substantial grant for this issue. Helen Marie Stern, who died in 2014, was a lifelong resident of Atlanta. Raised at The Temple, Helen spent her life immersed in the Jewish community serving many organizations. Helen was a lifelong Jewish learner and, in honor of her friendship with Linda and Bruce Beeber and family, Helen's memorial fund provides annual support to the Southern Jewish Historical Society. The donation to the journal further cements the debt the society owes to her memory and legacy.

Mark K. Bauman



## *From the Managing Editor . . .*

This issue of *Southern Jewish History*, the twentieth annual volume, offers an occasion to look back and evaluate the journal's impact on the field of southern Jewish history. That impact, however, cannot be separated from the contribution of a single person, Mark K. Bauman, who has edited every article in every issue of the journal since its inception. More than any other person, Mark has set the journal's tone, determined its content, guided its growth and development, and maintained its rigorous standards of scholarship.

Among researchers who have submitted their work to *Southern Jewish History*, as well as authors whose books he has peer-reviewed, Mark has a reputation as an uncompromising reader. He famously puts writers through multiple drafts and assigns piles of additional reading to help sharpen and contextualize their interpretations. While victims of "the Slasher" usually admit that the experience makes their work stronger and more substantive, most find it exasperating. I have submitted three articles to the journal, and Mark acted as a peer reviewer on both of my books. I know "the Slasher" well.

But working with him as an editor for the last four years, I have seen another perspective. Mark labors through every one of those drafts at least as much as the authors do. He ponders every line, considers every angle, and thinks about the unique contribution that each submission can make. He sees potential in even embryonic manuscripts, and through patient, often tedious effort guides authors—sometimes drags them—to the best possible version of their work. Authors may occasionally feel misused, but they should know that when they submit to *Southern Jewish History*, they will not suffer alone for their craft.

Readers of and contributors to *SJH* may know Mark best through his work here, but he has made tremendous contributions to southern Jewish history in other ways as well. He deserves recognition as a teacher and mentor, an interlocutor and antagonist, and for his immense

productivity as an author, reviewer, anthologist, and historiographer. In previous years, *SJH* has highlighted the careers of several pioneering scholars in southern Jewish history, and there is no doubt that Mark belongs in their company.

Nearly a year ago, as we were finishing work on the previous issue, I wanted to set some space aside in volume 20 for an essay about Mark. Worried that he might resist, I consulted first with Rachel Heimovics Braun, my predecessor as managing editor, who worked with Mark on the first seventeen volumes of *SJH*; if Mark's impact on the journal has been primary, Rachel's is a close second. She encouraged me to proceed, as did the members of the journal's editorial board. Together Rachel and I agreed that Steve Whitfield would be the ideal person to write the piece. Steve has contributed more articles to the journal than any other author; he is immersed in the same themes and interpretive questions that have occupied Mark and the journal for twenty years; and, not incidentally, he is a colleague whom Mark trusts and respects. I hoped that Steve's involvement would help persuade Mark to allow the project to go forward, so I was delighted when Steve accepted the offer enthusiastically and Mark, too, offered his full participation in the effort.

Steve solicited recollections and comments from a great number of Mark's associates, as well as from the editor himself, which he wove together, along with his own analysis of Mark's singular contributions, into the essay that follows. It is a portrait of an individual but also a summation of a field of study that, largely thanks to Mark Bauman's contributions to it and to its practitioners, continues to become richer, more popular, and more sophisticated.

Bryan Edward Stone

# The Achievement of Mark K. Bauman

by

Stephen J. Whitfield\*

This issue marks the twentieth annual volume of *Southern Jewish History*, and its editor has served from the beginning with distinction, conscientiousness, and unflagging energy. The role of Mark K. Bauman in furthering the understanding of the southern Jewish experience has been as incontestable as it has been inescapable, and the two decades of his selfless service mean that he has earned the right for attention to be paid. Although Bauman has been ambivalent about participating in this tribute, he has graciously and helpfully responded to a series of questions that were initially devised by managing editor Bryan Edward Stone, who also deserves credit for suggesting that a retrospective appreciation be mounted in these pages. Unless otherwise noted, Bauman's recollections and comments are taken from his written answers to Stone's questions, which were posed early in the spring of 2017. In addition, several of Bauman's colleagues and professional associates have contributed their own observations, and many of these are quoted below. Above all, this essay is intended to corroborate the claim of Janice Rothschild Blumberg, president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS) in 1986 and 1987, that *Southern Jewish History* has been the society's "crowning achievement."<sup>1</sup>

Editors come in two kinds. Some put themselves fully at the service of their contributors, showing little desire or aptitude for becoming writers themselves. For example, anyone trying to read something that

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Robert Silvers, who died earlier this year, published anywhere—such as in the *New York Review of Books*—will not succeed, although he coedited and then edited that publication twice a month for over half a century. Also silent are the voices of the first two great editors at the *New Yorker*, Harold Ross and William Shawn; their personal views remain concealed. Bauman has not fit that model. Instead he has advanced the cause of scholarship through his own writing, which has kept pace with the productivity that he exhibited even before becoming the editor of *Southern Jewish History*. Before its first issue appeared in 1998, he had authored or coauthored half a dozen monographs and biographies in southern history as well as in Georgia Jewish history, plus over two dozen scholarly articles. Bauman has published two dozen articles since then and

*Bauman in Austin, Texas, in 2014.*  
(*Photograph by Hollace Ava Weiner.*)

reviewed almost as many books in scholarly journals (eighteen) after becoming editor of *Southern Jewish History* as before (twenty-three). So ample a record therefore requires that this tribute address his ideas as a historian as well as his vocation as an editor, for he has doubly illuminated the southern Jewish past. Bauman is thus akin to such editor-authors as Philip Rahv of *Partisan Review*, Norman Podhoretz at *Commentary*, and currently David Remnick at the *New Yorker*. To be sure the editor of *Southern Jewish History* has never pursued a dual career as a novelist, however, so any parallel with the *Forverts'* legendary Abraham Cahan would certainly be a stretch. But Bauman is someone whom fans of certain kinds of fiction would instantly recognize—a serial character, familiar from his frequent appearances at scholarly conferences. There he presents his own research, orchestrates panel discussions, and has been known to criticize the work of other historians.

*The Making of a Historian*

Born in Brooklyn and raised on Long Island, where his family belonged to Conservative synagogues, Bauman majored in history at Wilkes College (now Wilkes University) and took two master's degrees, the first at Lehigh University. Later, at the University of Chicago, he remembers learning from Daniel J. Boorstin, who had never taken a history course himself, of "the primacy of mining and analyzing the primary sources and placing them within the historical literature."<sup>2</sup> Little did Bauman realize at the time that Boorstin's father, attorney Samuel Boorstin, had enlisted in the cause of helping his friend Leo Frank. In the terrifying wake of Frank's trial and lynching, from 1913 to 1915, the Boorstin family fled to Oklahoma, which is why Daniel Boorstin, born in Atlanta in 1914, grew up in Tulsa. There, as valedictorian of his high school class, he was honored with a banquet at a local hotel. Because the city's public schools were segregated, a senior from Booker T. Washington High School was also honored. That ceremony was conducted separately, so the two winners never saw one another, but it is almost certain that the other honoree was another of Bauman's future teachers at the University of Chicago: John Hope Franklin.<sup>3</sup> Had Boorstin revealed something of his background to Bauman, he might have begun exploring the vicissitudes of southern Jewish history over two decades earlier than he ended up doing.

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*Bauman and his wife, Sandy.*  
(Courtesy of Mark K. Bauman.)

Instead, after military service in Vietnam during the war and then graduate work at Emory University where he earned a doctorate in 1975, Bauman specialized in southern religious history while teaching at Atlanta Junior College (now Atlanta Metropolitan College). He and his wife, Sandy, who joined him for the annual meetings of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, raised two sons as well. He retired in 2002, having never taken a course in American Jewish history nor having taught the subject. The lone exception, after his retirement, occurred in 2005, when Marc Lee Raphael, the Nathan and Sophia Gumenick Professor of Judaic Studies, offered him a visiting professorship for a semester at the College of William and Mary. "He was extremely modest about his abilities," Raphael has reminisced. "He pointed out to me that his work was mostly on Jews, not Judaism. But I assured him that the word 'Judaism' was as wide as the Delta and that he would be fine. And he was, as students continually praised his teaching and urged me to convince him to stay another semester. He could not," despite the hospitality that William and Mary provided.<sup>4</sup> Bauman has recalled: "The quality of those students and the scholarly camaraderie in the Department of Religion demonstrated what I had missed."<sup>5</sup>

Although he had begun attending conferences of the SJHS as early as 1979, his "early allegiance remained with the Georgia Association of Historians, as I published more on Protestant than on Jewish history. Yet by the mid-1980s, my commitment to southern Jewish history prevailed."<sup>6</sup> Can a tipping point be located? If so, it would probably be the 1983 exhibit that the Atlanta Jewish Federation sponsored to commemorate 250 years of Jewish life in Georgia. Bauman served as historian of the exhibit. By the time the same federation sponsored an exhibit on Atlanta's century and a half of Jewish life in 1996, again with Bauman serving as historian, his commitment to the field had been consolidated. "I journeyed into American Jewish history with an emphasis on the South totally by accident," he realized, "and my research path within it was directed more by serendipity than design."<sup>7</sup> With the freshness of perspective that a newcomer and an outsider to a field enjoys, something had clicked. The challenges of southern Jewish history proved strikingly congenial.

#### *The Genesis of Southern Jewish History*

Although a modest *Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* had been inaugurated in 1958, it was virtually dead on arrival; the pool of talent in which to dip was then simply too small. The SJHS, which had been formed in the same era to sponsor the journal, sputtered out by the early 1960s as well. Four decades were needed before the very idea of a scholarly journal could be revived.<sup>8</sup> The rebirth occurred early during the 1996–1998 presidency of Berkley Kalin, with whom Bauman coedited *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights from the 1880s to the 1990s* (1997). Partly under Kalin's auspices, at least eight visionaries took upon themselves the creation of a durable journal. They included Solomon Breibart, Eli N. Evans, Belinda Gergel, Patricia LaPointe, Samuel Proctor, Saul Viener, Bernard Wax, and Beryl Weiner. They were decisive in realizing the dream of a journal that would showcase scholarship, while still appealing to the laypeople whose loyalty remains pivotal to the vitality of the SJHS.

Bauman, who could flaunt the experience of editing the papers and proceedings of the Georgia Association of Historians, became the first choice as helmsman, and he was happy to welcome Rachel B. Heimovics, who had served as society president in 1989 and 1990, on board as man-

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aging editor. By fall 1996, the deal was done. "It was a propitious time," Heimovics (now Braun) has recalled, "because I was then working as an editor for a major educational and academic publisher and had tremendous resources at my disposal including editorial, production, copyright, and photo research expertise." Proctor weighed in with "encouragement, wisdom and expertise," she added; he had edited the *Florida Historical Quarterly* for over three decades.<sup>9</sup> How fitting that in 2008, ten years after the first issue of *Southern Jewish History* was unfurled, Bauman became the first recipient of the Outstanding Scholarly Career Award in Southern Jewish History, a prize that is named for Proctor. On that occasion Emory University's Eric L. Goldstein, who had served as the first book review editor of the journal, hailed Bauman for having "played a major role in the transformation of southern Jewish history from a provincial field dominated by amateur writers to one respected in the academy and driven by professional standards."<sup>10</sup>

The passage of two years was still required for the society to launch the journal, which finally arrived in the hands of readers in fall 1998. That first issue, which clocked in at 144 pages, contained six articles, illustrated with eight photos, but with no book reviews. The authors who contributed to that first issue presciently included a graduate student, Bryan Edward Stone, who subsequently succeeded Rachel Heimovics Braun as managing editor, and a nonacademic, octogenarian born about half a century before Stone. By 1998 Braun had retired from Harcourt Brace, which enabled her to focus on *Southern Jewish History*. "My new 'job' was challenging and extremely fulfilling," she remembers, having been given "an opportunity to hone my own copyediting and production skills and to work with many inspired and inspiring authors." Bauman gets a large bouquet "for the latitude he provided me as well as his encouragement. He always welcomed my occasional intrusions into his editorial territory – where he listened, and more often than not, accepted my suggestions." The first managing editor of the journal quickly realized that "Mark is an expert teacher, interpreter, and synthesizer – and he brought these phenomenal skills to the journal."<sup>11</sup>

It was he who determined that the publication schedule be annual, and that the articles be placed in chronological order. Usually every February, Braun has recalled, "I would receive a panic call or e-mail from

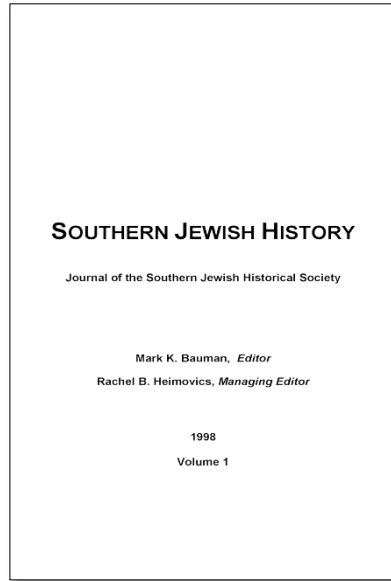
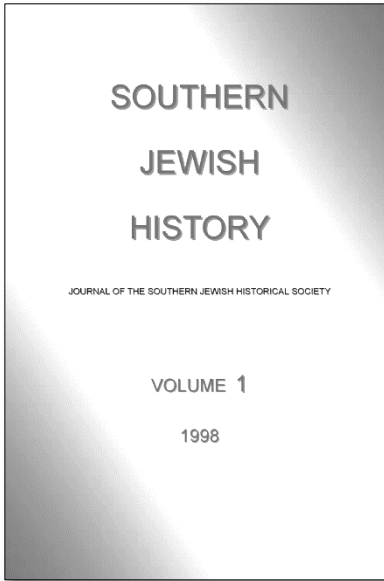


Mark, warning me he didn't have enough material for the next journal because author X was not fulfilling a promise to get the article written, and author Y decided not to submit one, and author Z had difficulty with someone objecting to having their story told." Yet somehow "we *always* ended up with sufficient material. Whatever problems arose, and there usually was at least one major, unforeseen crisis per volume, we always worked through them."<sup>12</sup> It was Bauman who insisted that articles in *Southern Jewish History* be peer-reviewed, and he recommended the policy of rotation among members of the editorial board so that participation from the society itself could be maximized; he wanted all hands on deck. It was also Bauman who proposed that an award be given every four years for the finest article to appear in the journal. Its pages have since been expanded to include sections devoted to book, exhibition, and film reviews, and primary sources. As if to show that a fascination with the past can be quite compatible with the advantages of

*Rachel Heimovics Braun receiving the SJHS Saul Viener Award from Bauman  
at the society's conference in Austin, Texas, in 2014.*

*(Photograph by Barbara Stone.)*

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*Cover and title page of volume 1 of Southern Jewish History, published in 1998. The issue was 144 pages long.*

the present, a section on websites was added to the journal as well. Bauman picked all the editors of these sections. Through such innovativeness, he asserts, *Southern Jewish History* has “remained an important venue that encourages scholarship and disseminates the results of research on the South far more than any other journal can do.”<sup>13</sup>

### *The Editor as Mentor*

Most importantly, Bauman understood his writ to be a responsibility to mentor potential contributors— independent researchers as well as academicians, amateurs as well as formally trained scholars, the young as well as the seasoned. The author of one article was even an undergraduate. Bauman has been a first responder. He “has found and brought to light not only the work of established and emerging professional academics but also the important findings made by those who work outside the academic world,” notes Scott M. Langston, president of the society (2006–2008) and a frequent contributor to the journal. Langston discerns “no academic elitism in Mark Bauman. He has cast a wide

net in facilitating the research of others and then making it available in the journal's pages." Such editorial hospitality has been central to Bauman's mission of "making southern Jewish history an acceptable and recognized field of study," and that has meant above all the duty to show researchers how they could improve their submissions.<sup>14</sup> These editorial labors have been forthright in conceptualization, painstaking in detail, and patient in the process by which a draft might become an acceptable article. Such up-close-and-personal advice to authors became central to Bauman's definition of his duties.

His tenacity and scrupulousness as an editor must be regarded as unsurpassed. Bauman has led many a would-be contributor on a forced march back into the stacks. Exacting in his expectations, he sometimes demanded four or five revisions before peer reviewers were invited to get a crack at the manuscripts. Such dedication has not only entailed an unusual level of attentiveness and forbearance but also hints at the likelihood that earlier versions would have been summarily rejected elsewhere. But the remorseless procedure needed to satisfy the editor has meant that excellent final drafts have for two decades found a home in *Southern Jewish History*. It "has helped create a community of scholars," Bauman adds, "not only through the articles and peer review process but also through the rotating board of editors and section editors. Neither *American Jewish History* nor the *American Jewish Archives Journal* has the sections and variety—or proofing—that are equal to *Southern Jewish History*."<sup>15</sup> In editing the prose of others, in making their work readable and even felicitous, in suggesting to contributors which other archival sources and previous articles should have been consulted, Bauman has made himself indispensable to the progress of scholarship. But let others testify to his success—and his selflessness—in meeting the terms of his contract.

#### *Editing as a Hard-Hat Job*

Hollace Ava Weiner was working at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* in the spring of 1994 when she learned of the anthology that Professors Bauman and Kalin were conceiving to record the role of southern rabbis during the crisis of civil rights. The editors "were short of Lone Star personalities," she recalled, "and had heard that I was profiling rabbis who had left a mark on Texas. The rabbi who most piqued their interest was

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Sidney A. Wolf, who had integrated public golf courses in Corpus Christi." Could Weiner's newspaper piece be revised and enlarged into a scholarly article?

"Enter Mark Bauman, editor extraordinaire. The next Sunday afternoon, we conferred long-distance. That phone call turned into a two-hour critique that changed the course of my career." After praising her writing, Bauman posed at least twenty questions: "What was the population of Corpus Christi during the rabbi's tenure? What was the percentage of Jews? Of African Americans? Of Hispanics? Was the rabbi involved in the Mexican American community?" These were the sorts of queries she could not answer. The research that she felt compelled to conduct resulted in "Harmonizing in Texas" in *The Quiet Voices*. When Bauman installed Weiner on a panel at the SJHS conference in Memphis, and gave her an opportunity to discuss a trio of Texas rabbis, she was hooked. Weiner served as president of the society in 2002 and 2003.

When he proposed that she write a piece on "the mixers" who had occupied pulpits in Texas, she complied. "I submitted a first draft," she has recalled. "He sent it back with a note that the essay read like a magazine piece, yet each page was slashed with a diagonal line. In the margins were scribbled questions, comments, and names of historians, books, and articles to consult for 'context.'" Three more drafts were

*Bauman with Hollace Ava Weiner at the SJHS  
meeting in Shreveport, Louisiana, in 2002.  
(Photograph by Bruce Weiner.)*

submitted, and over a year passed before Bauman expressed satisfaction. "Sometimes I was so angry and frustrated with his critiques that I referred to him as 'the Slasher.'" (She came up with that sobriquet at the Norfolk conference in 2001.) After putting aside the essay for months, Weiner remembers, "I labored, and I learned. We argued and laughed."<sup>16</sup> But she had "found my editor for life," someone who had facilitated a transition from journalist to the full-time historian whose volume on *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and Their Work* appeared in 1999. Bauman continued to think highly enough of her article on "the mixers" to include it in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History* (2006).

"We call Mark 'the Slasher,'" Janice Blumberg has explained, "because he seems to love slashing red lines across our manuscripts. We say it with great affection, of course. And with gratitude. It's indicative of his editorial perfectionism, his insights as a teacher, and his forthrightness as a true friend of those he slashes. I speak from experience," she hastens to add. "In the process of accepting my first submission to *Southern Jewish History*, Mark slashed and returned for more than a year before finally approving my piece as suitable for publication in the journal. In the course of doing so, he taught me rudiments of writing history, probably more than I would have learned in a year of study which I never had in school." Such contributors bear witness to Bauman's "enormous generosity of time and effort." Rather than fix a problem himself, however, he points it out instead "and waits patiently for the writer to figure out the solution, a process far more difficult and time-consuming but a lesson well-remembered. Had it not been for Mark," Blumberg states, "my work would have remained unpublished."<sup>17</sup>

A contributor to the first issue of *Southern Jewish History* was Leonard Rogoff, who would go on to become a two-time winner of the quadrennial prize for the best article published in the journal. He also became president of the SJHS, serving in 2010 and 2011. Rogoff's description of Bauman's vocation could scarcely be more succinct: "Mark has been the catalyst." The journal "became the agency through which he fulfilled his passion to inspire new scholars and scholarship. We have all benefitted from his encouragement, his insistence to do more." Even the author of three books—*Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (2001); *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (2010); and *Gertrude Weil: Jewish Progressive in the New South* (2017)—

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status as a "community" more a wish than a reality. In effect calling the Texas Jewish community into being, Goldberg continually emphasized the separateness of his Texas readers from the familiar centers of American Jewish life: "The Jews of Texas are interested in Texas," he wrote in an early editorial statement, "just a little bit more than they are in Ohio or New York," where the nation's most popular Jewish newspapers were edited. "Matters of interest to the Jews of Texas can be more thoroughly disseminated through the columns of the Jewish Herald than any other medium." He edited the *Herald*, he said, "in behalf of no particular faction of Jewry, but in the interest of the Jews of Texas as a unit. . . . 'Texas news for Texas Jews.'"4 Whatever the Jews of Texas were or were becoming, Goldberg was certain that they were not – or at least were no longer – New Yorkers, Yankees, or Europeans. Goldberg's regionalism sometimes approached chauvinism, as in one notable instance which will receive extensive treatment below, when Goldberg used the pages of the *Herald* to challenge the right of Jewish leaders in New York (whom he disparaged as a "syndicate") to speak on behalf of American Jewry as a whole.5 In this and in many other instances, Goldberg spoke for a Texas Jewish population that he felt had come into its own as a mature and distinctive community, fully the equal of any other in the country.6

While the story of the Jewish neighborhoods of New York is well-recorded, less is known about the development of Jewish communities in southern states like Texas. The first Jews in the state – the first Jews, in fact, anywhere in what is now the United States – were Sephardic fugitives from the sixteenth-century Mexican Inquisition, *conversos* whose forced conversion to Christianity may or may not have been sincere or lasting.7 A handful of Central European and American Jews found their way into Mexican Texas: at least one was part of Stephen Austin's original "Old 300" settlers, and a small number participated in the signal battles of the Texas Revolution including the siege of the Ajamo, the Goliad massacre, and the

didn't the creation of Jewish institutions do this? Water your hype hole!

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also Philly Chicago etc  
concerned Jews felt more  
better than sentence

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I'm a presumpter  
reality as it is, they expect  
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Known to colleagues as "the Slasher," Bauman is notoriously tough on early manuscript drafts. This page, from an article submitted to *Southern Jewish History* in 2004, reflects his editorial style. The author survived and made a full recovery. (Courtesy of Bryan Edward Stone.)

admits: "I always anticipate Mark's critiques with trepidation. Just when I smugly feel that I am finally done, Mark points me to overlooked sources and demolishes my cherished theses. However frustrated we may feel, he is almost always right, and he's made our work better." Rogoff expresses sympathy for "younger scholars who may feel charred after a Bauman grilling, but no one has done more to support a new generation."<sup>18</sup>

That age cohort includes Adam D. Mendelsohn, who would win a National Jewish Book Award for his foray into comparative economic history, *The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (2014). After teaching at the College of Charleston, Mendelsohn joined the faculty of the University of Capetown, the perch from which he has recalled his first "innocent" submission of a manuscript to an academic journal. It was *Southern Jewish History*, in 2002, when he was living in his native South Africa and working on a master's degree. "I knew little about the journal, less about its editor, and scarcely more what to expect," Mendelsohn adds. "What in retrospect was a happy accident did not feel so at the time. For the editor engaged in a form of gladiatorial combat with the text that I have never encountered since. The prose (and my ego) was left bloodied and pulped." After recovering from the shock, "I began to appreciate the editor's unflinching approach and his willingness to spend hours working and reworking text, pushing and probing until eventually satisfied. This rite of passage has served me very well. It was a lesson in rigor, and a lesson in devotion: no editor that I have worked with has matched his standard. And it was a lesson in patience." Bauman had not blown off a graduate student whom he did not know. Instead "Mark patiently mentored this manuscript, and much of my work since. For as so many have discovered, his pungent pen as editor belies a nurturing disposition and eagerness to assist and improve. To my mind, these attributes are at the core of the success of the journal. Mark is that rare combination: at once a truth teller and a mentor, a good cop and bad cop rolled into one."<sup>19</sup>

Another historian belonging to a younger generation is Marni Davis of Georgia State University. The author of *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* (2012), she found Bauman to be "an attentive and generous mentor—especially to the graduate students, early career academics, and public historians whose work has appeared in

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*Southern Jewish History*. Mark has edited and nurtured a generation of scholars." He did so by "inviting them to write reviews, encouraging them to flesh out conference papers for publication as articles, and—as I know from experience—pushing them to write better prose and make sharper arguments." Davis therefore found it difficult "to imagine that our field would be as vibrant as it is without Mark's two decades of devotion to the journal, and to the historians who have aspired to contribute to it."<sup>20</sup>

When Anton Hieke, the German author of *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (2013), submitted his first article to *Southern Jewish History*, he "truly realized Mark's excellence as an editor. Together with Rachel Heimovics Braun then and Bryan Stone since, Mark knows how to help authors reevaluate their texts, to avoid phony assumptions and generalizations in order to bring out the best product. There is no option of cutting corners, no room for sloppiness." Soon Bauman became "a trusted and extremely insightful colleague in the field. His comments and suggestions rarely missed the bull's eye," and Hieke came to "cherish Mark's insights ever since, his style of debate, and our discussions." What's more, he even "introduced my son to the beauty of American baseball."<sup>21</sup> No wonder then that Dan J. Puckett, the current president of the society, has asserted that "Mark has influenced a generation of scholars working in southern Jewish history."<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps few witnesses to Bauman's powers as an editor are as authoritative as Ellen M. Umansky, president of the society in 2015 and 2016 as well as the author of *From Christian Science to Jewish Science: Spiritual Healing and American Jews* (2005). "Of all the editors that I've worked with, none has been more demanding yet more caring than Mark Bauman." When he asked her for changes, "he thought that what I had written could be clearer. And on more than one occasion, he's pushed me to further research a fleeting reference or to answer questions either raised within the text or likely to be asked by a reader. The essays I've published in *Southern Jewish History* were significantly strengthened thanks to Mark's critical eye, love of good writing, great skill at editing, and insistence that the journal remain the first class, peer-reviewed journal that it has been under his editorship." Although Umansky's prose was apparently spared the butcher's knife with which he has gone after the drafts of others, she has confirmed that "Mark has helped make the



journal central to the academic fields of American Jewish history in general and southern Jewish history more specifically, and central to the scholarly commitments of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.”<sup>23</sup>

In 1982 Marc Lee Raphael and Jeffrey Gurock became the editors of *American Jewish History*, and they soon considered the pertinence of the Jewish experience in the South. The need for manuscripts could not be met immediately. But Bauman became the inevitable candidate, Raphael recalled, “to edit a special issue of the journal exploring this topic. It took time to cultivate a group of scholars and push them to engage in fresh research and writing, but the two special issues that resulted in 1997 doubled our expectations.” No wonder, for “Mark was not only an outstanding editor; he was one of the few who made our jobs almost invisible by the carefully edited copy he submitted when his work was done on an issue of the journal.”<sup>24</sup> One marker of the enhanced status of southern Jewish history occurred in 2008 when Raphael’s anthology, *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism*, appeared. Its topics were arranged both chronologically and thematically. Resisting the centripetal force that New York has exerted, Raphael did not deem it worthy of a separate chapter, but Bauman did supply “A Multithematic Approach to Southern Jewish History.”

Scott Langston, who teaches religion at Texas Christian University, notes that Bauman’s reputation as “the Slasher” is “well-earned.” “To my benefit I have experienced his meticulous editing many times.” But how exactly did Bauman make Langston, for example, into “a much better scholar and historian”? The editor of *Southern Jewish History* taught Langston “how to do historical analysis and to look for and assess patterns and draw conclusions, rather than just throw out facts and data. I can hear him saying quietly after listening to a paper presentation, ‘You’ve got to do analysis. You can’t just present data.’ He’s held my feet to the fire time after time with regard to conclusions I’ve made that needed more thought and consideration.” Langston’s 2001 article, “Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans,” won the first quadrennial award for the best article to appear in the journal. “The Slasher” has also exhibited a gift for “compassionate friendship. I cannot begin to adequately reflect how important Mark’s encouragement and support were to me during one of the hardest periods of my life,” Langston has revealed. “When I became the target of

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right-wing, fundamentalist administrators, trustees, and pastors, which ultimately led to my leaving the university where I was a tenured faculty member, the members of the Southern Jewish Historical Society were my greatest source of strength; and Mark Bauman was chief among them." His sympathy, counsel and encouragement did not exhaust the list of his virtues, for Bauman "helped me get another permanent job after many years had passed."<sup>25</sup>

### *The Editor as Scholar*

Had Bauman only performed the service to historiography that such testimonies record, *dayenu*. But the editorship of the annual journal is not the only way that he has nurtured – and sometimes jump-started – the careers of others. He has "helped numerous individuals in editing and encouraging their work formally as a peer reviewer for numerous university presses and other journals and, just as likely, informally. In this and in other ways, I've tried to mentor individuals and nurture networks of scholars."<sup>26</sup> He has found the chance to boost other scholars gratifying. They have enjoyed the advantage of Bauman's mastery of the secondary literature on the southern Jewish experience. This command of the historiography has not only been essential to researchers; his comprehensive knowledge has been unique. No one ever has read the articles and monographs as thoroughly as he has, nor is it likely that anyone ever will. "Nobody can surpass him," Langston has avowed. "When doing research for an essay, I routinely consult the databases of JSTOR, WORLDCAT, ARTICLEFIRST – and Bauman. Mark is a human database of southern Jewish research."<sup>27</sup> When Janice Blumberg cotaught a course with him on the history of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation of Atlanta (The Temple), she discovered that, despite being a lifelong congregant and the author of the book on the century of the synagogue's existence, "I learned from Mark far more than I taught. His talent for putting facts into context gives meaning that enables the listener to understand and retain them." Bauman's combination of knowledge and enthusiasm she praises as "extraordinary."<sup>28</sup>

A peculiarity of the process of learning is that the more one discovers, the greater the compulsion to discover still more. "Much as I have studied southern Jewish history," Bauman hastens to acknowledge, "I am fully aware that there is more that neither I nor anyone else knows.

What I and others continue to find continues to amaze me.”<sup>29</sup> To be sure, the oeuvre of southern Jewish historiography is, like every other field, erratic in quality, scope, and value. Studies of this subject are punctuated with esoterica and with works that meet the needs of filiopietism but of little else. A recent history of the tiny Jewish community of Valdosta, Georgia, for instance, stops in 1908; will a second volume still be needed to carry the story down to the present? Bauman’s appetite is unappeasable for community studies and congregational chronicles, for the portrayals of peddlers and the memoirs of mohels and the annals of burial societies and benevolent societies too. He seems to have read everything—no matter how obscure, no matter how marginal—that might somehow illumine what the society is consecrated to uncovering and explaining.

Proof of his mastery can be found in two historiographical essays. Bauman’s *The Southerner as American: Jewish Style* (1996) appeared just as he was about to become editor of the new journal. A little more than a decade later came a seventy-five-page behemoth of a bibliographical survey, which the *American Jewish Archives Journal* titled “A Century of Southern Jewish Historiography” (2007). The latter work is more than a catalog of articles and books but is also rich in information about historians and the institutions that sustained their careers. In producing such extensive essays, Bauman “demonstrated a breadth of knowledge and understanding that astonishes me, no matter how often I have consulted them,” Rogoff has exclaimed.<sup>30</sup> These two works—one a booklet, the other the length of a booklet—are not merely indispensable. They are unique.

Although Thomas Kuhn’s famous conceptualization of dramatic and disruptive “paradigm shifts” may well explain advances in the history of physics, scholarship on the southern Jewish past tends instead to evolve incrementally. Therefore no author wishing to tackle a subject destined for *Southern Jewish History* can ignore Bauman’s extraordinarily comprehensive overview and analysis of the research to date. The scale of documentation that he presents makes the voluminous citations for law review articles seem superficial. This situation is not only a matter of filling lacunae that Bauman happens to have identified in those two extensive historiographical essays. The very existence of the journal has undoubtedly inspired authors to submit articles that might otherwise

never have been written, on subjects that not even Bauman had realized needed to be done. That is how a lively and serious scholarly field develops and revises itself.

*Field of Dreams*

The editor of a journal like *Southern Jewish History* faces a challenge unfamiliar to his counterparts at the *American Historical Review* or even at *American Jewish History* (or, for that matter, to William Shawn and Robert Silvers). Bauman's readership is split between academicians and laypeople. Are their interests compatible? Can austere standards of research, in the quest to satisfy what Charles A. Beard famously diagnosed as "that noble dream" of objectivity, also pique the curiosity of the diverse laypeople whose generosity is necessary to sustain the society? Bauman has nevertheless insisted that the audience for the journal—and for the papers presented at the annual conferences—is not schizoid at all. "I do my best," he argues, "not to sacrifice scholarly integrity for the perception that our largely lay membership won't be interested. I believe sound, well-written scholarship should and does appeal to the membership and see no competing claims. This is also true of conference presentations."<sup>31</sup>

Marni Davis warns presenters at these annual events that, "if you're a panelist and you see Mark's hand up in the audience, you know that he will ask the kind of question that slices like a scalpel to the heart of your argument, so you'd better get ready."<sup>32</sup> His pugnacity, she explains, is just his way of insisting on scholarly rigor. Her warning was not issued in time, however, for Hieke, who had barely earned his German doctorate when he arrived in Atlanta for his first conference of the SJHS. That 2008 meeting also "marked the beginning of my first research trip in the United States, which is why so little to no original material troubled my argument." Hieke necessarily drew from "literature I could mail-order from Germany. That their authors sat in front of me now made it the more exhilarating. My German shelves had come to life." The responses were kind. But then "a hand rose along with the rest." It belonged to the editor of *Dixie Diaspora*, the anthology that could be found on Hieke's top shelf. For the first time Hieke was meeting Bauman, who had adopted the guise of bad cop. "In no uncertain terms did Mark outline where I was (first) wrong and (secondly) unaware of essential material. The remarks were crisp and blunt, poignant, and re-

grettably apt," Hieke conceded. Accustomed to studying under the austere regimen of Prussians, he "felt eerily at home."<sup>33</sup> That happy ending corroborates Bauman's own belief that "our membership is well-educated and interested in scholarly, well-written articles. This, I believe, is what draws the regulars to membership and attendance at conferences."<sup>34</sup> The rolls of the society indicate that Bauman's faith in that compatibility is warranted. "In a field given too often to nostalgia or antiquarianism," Rogoff has observed, "he has insisted on integrity and candor."<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, the journal remains receptive to improvements. It is still young. It is barely older, say, than the median age of the typical synagogue confirmation class, and over the course of twenty volumes, the changes in format and content have been striking. Dale Rosengarten, president of the society (2013–2014) and coeditor of *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life* (2002), formed a design committee and hired a graphic artist to make the covers of the journal more colorful and attractive. Stuart Rockoff, who served as president in 2011 and 2012, supervised the placement of several issues of the journal online. Issues have generally gotten thicker, even though Bauman has recently felt free to reject many more proposals and manuscripts than he did back in the twentieth century. Quality, he believes, has been enhanced. Now *Southern Jewish History* even brandishes an international profile. Bauman is quick to credit the transformations to his two managing editors: "Rachel and Bryan have been indispensable. They have undertaken innumerable tasks that they do amazingly well. Both have brought innovation to their positions and, without them, neither I nor the journal would be nearly as good as it is."<sup>36</sup> Troy University's Puckett, the author of *In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama's Jews, the Second World War, and the Holocaust* (2014), has noticed that "the breadth of the scholarship on southern Jews has greatly expanded."<sup>37</sup>

Retrospective judgments like these depend on a baseline, and no one is better positioned to assess the professionalization of the field than Mark Bauman. He notes that in the decade of the 1970s, when the society was reorganized in Richmond, Virginia, probably the only academic who pursued the subject full-time was Louis Schmier, an early stalwart of the society, although his scholarly interest was mostly confined to the Jews of the southern segment of Georgia. Academicians who participat-

ed in the inaugural conference in Richmond in 1976 have explored many topics besides southern Jewish history. It has been something of a sideline, although an important one, for Melvin I. Urofsky and myself, for instance. The keynote speaker in Richmond was Eli N. Evans. Two of his works—*The Provincials* (1973) and a scholarly biography, *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate* (1988)—are iconic. But Evans has operated outside the academy and is not trained as a historian. Leonard Dinnerstein moved on from *The Leo Frank Case* (1968) and an anthology on *Jews in the South* (1973), which he coedited, to wider topics like American anti-semitism and immigration policy. Although Breibart published steadily in the field over the course of more than half a century, mostly on Charleston, he taught high school for nearly four decades. Bauman praises several superb doctoral dissertations, but some of the authors, such as Bobbie Malone and Mark I. Greenberg, either pursued careers outside southern Jewish history or, like Steven Hertzberg and Mark Cowett, did not obtain careers in higher education. Fits and starts can also be the way that a scholarly field matures.

#### *A Turn to the South*

Opportunities to learn about southern Jewish history have now become ample, in ways that would have astonished the attendees at the Richmond conference. Courses are now offered in the subject, and some of Bauman's own works are staples on their syllabi. They include—or ought to include—his anthology *Dixie Diaspora*. Its publication was fortuitous, because all the previous works in that genre had gone out of print: *Jews in the South* (1973), coedited by Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson; *Turn to the South* (1979), coedited by Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky; and *Jews of the South* (1984), coedited by Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier with Malcolm H. Stern. *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil*, which Mark Greenberg and Marcie Cohen Ferris coedited in 2006, appeared soon after *Dixie Diaspora*. Bauman notes that, in contrast to the baby steps the society took in the 1970s, graduate students today face no impediments researching this subject. The number of state and municipal Jewish historical societies, museums, and archives in the South has grown exponentially, and Bauman claims that “at least two state societies were created directly because of the activities of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.”<sup>38</sup> The formation of a center for the study of southern

*“Meet the Authors” panel at the 2007 SJHS conference in Washington, D.C.  
Left to right: Marcie Cohen Ferris, Bauman, and panel chair Ronald Bayor.  
(Photograph by Leonard Rogoff.)*

Jewish history at the College of Charleston is a measure of such changes in the region. For little more than a century ago, Bauman has written, an undergraduate named Ludwig Lewisohn harbored feelings of “alienation from Judaism” as well as an “ill-fated adjustment” to the “closed social environment” that the College of Charleston imposed upon him.<sup>39</sup> A research institute located there now affirms the value of a subject like southern Jewry.

Editors of the two journals with a national writ—affiliated with the American Jewish Historical Society in New York and with the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati—were not always receptive to manuscripts on the region. That reluctance is no longer evident. The University of Alabama Press (UAP) has welcomed manuscripts in this field. Bauman serves as coeditor, with Adam Mendelsohn, of the UAP’s series “Jews and Judaism: History and Culture.” This particular academic press “published books in southern Jewish history when few other

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university presses did so," Bauman reports, and therefore he remains loyal to it, even though it now has rivals elsewhere. He betrays "no doubt that the field now receives far more recognition than when I started out."<sup>40</sup>

What he has wanted for the past of the region's Jewry is above all *respect*, to sit with the grown-ups by injecting "southern Jewish history into the mainstream of American Jewish historiography."<sup>41</sup> The journal is the most influential means of achieving that goal. For members of the SJHS, some of whom may absent themselves from the conferences, the scholarly annual "has also served as a major mechanism for nurturing these changes." In addition, the SJHS sponsors "student essay contests, grants, and other enterprises."<sup>42</sup> Such signs of vitality have ensured that the field has become far less vulnerable to the charge of "provincialism" that Stanley Chyet, in the first historiographical survey of southern Jewry ever undertaken, leveled. What remains on the agenda, however, is a synthesizing, state-of-the-art work of scholarship that might supersede Evans's classic "personal history" of *The Provincials*.<sup>43</sup>

Have the demanding tasks of editing and mentoring, of nurturing and promoting the writing of others compelled Bauman to neglect his own? One reassuring answer should come when a selection of his essays, currently under consideration at a university press, is published. Then readers can grasp between the covers of a single volume how smoothly he manages to integrate primary research with the contextualization of secondary literature, and how authoritatively he picks the lock of the past by interpreting documents and oral histories in the light of comparative history.

### *The Southerner as American*

Among Bauman's most important legacies as an author is almost certainly the claim that southern Jewish history is less distinctive than is commonly assumed. He is undoubtedly the most emphatic champion of the view that whatever singularity the saga of southern Jews may reveal matters less than resemblances to what their coreligionists experienced elsewhere in the United States. No one has advanced this thesis more persistently, especially in *The Southerner as American: Jewish Style*. But Bauman notes that he was not the first historian to do so. Lee Shai Weissbach, now an emeritus professor of history at the University of



Louisville, reached such a conclusion earlier. Bauman “hadn’t realized it when I wrote *The Southerner as American*,” he recalls, “but Lee Shai’s early articles on the Jews in the small towns of Kentucky emphasized their overwhelming similarities to the same types of communities as elsewhere,” an argument that Weissbach reinforced in his *Jewish Life in Small-Town America* (2005). Weissbach regards Bauman’s *The Southerner as American: Jewish Style* as “central to the scholarly debate over the significance of region as a factor in American Jewish history.”<sup>44</sup>

Like so many historians who have explored southern Jewish history, Bauman remembers having “started out as a strong proponent of the distinctiveness school” and having “immersed myself in its literature.”<sup>45</sup> Then Ronald Bayor and Aubrey C. Land, the editors, respectively, of the *Journal of American Ethnic History* and the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, challenged the claims that Bauman made in his articles on “The Rabbi as Ethnic Broker: The Case of David Marx” (1983) and on “The Emergence of Jewish Social Service Agencies in Atlanta” (1985). Bayor and Land independently expressed skepticism in reading Bauman’s descriptions of the city’s Jewry and persuaded him to consider accounts of Jewish life elsewhere in the nation. Reading these articles proved to be a revelation. “While there will always be variations and identities from one community to another,” he concluded, “similarities far outweigh differences.”<sup>46</sup>

Bauman has been careful not to overstate his case, which he first presented at the society’s conference in Charleston in 1990. Even *The Southerner as American: Jewish Style* makes his argument merely “exploratory” rather than definitive, and finds that the differences are of degree rather than of kind.<sup>47</sup> “I have never argued that there are not differences,” he avers, “but rather that those who stress uniqueness exaggerate [divergences].”<sup>48</sup> The variations do not outweigh the parallels elsewhere. “As I’ve argued all along,” Bauman asserts, “historians should not ignore those differences. But they should also use a realistic comparative perspective recognizing the very real and important similarities as well.”<sup>49</sup>

Certainly by 1997 his skepticism on the question of singularity had solidified into a credo. Although stubborn evidence of southern peculiarity cannot be ignored, such data should be placed within a broad perspective and treated with a due sense of proportion. “Region may not play the key role in analyzing issues of southern Jewish identity, and it

may prove more productive to examine other factors."<sup>50</sup> This position "must have seemed like apostasy," Georgia State's Davis has conjectured. "But this intervention has forced us to reconsider our preconceptions and assumptions and, perhaps, to acknowledge that southern Jewish 'distinctiveness' might be a limited concept."<sup>51</sup> Even within the region, Bauman points out, the "variations are so great that the idea of a homogeneous South working its will upon Jewish residents deserves to be questioned."<sup>52</sup> He cites communities like Charleston and Savannah, where Jewish life, he claims, differs from Charlotte and Atlanta—or Waycross and Valdosta—as much as from Jewish communities north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Gurock's *Orthodoxy in Charleston* (2004) specifies half a dozen episodes of synagogue history that can "fit into the larger saga of American Jewish life between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries."<sup>53</sup> His monograph can be read, as Gurock has indicated and Bauman agrees, as revealing "all of the themes of American Orthodox history." Or take the work of Anton Hieke and Daniel R. Weinfeld, who "have even questioned an aspect of distinctiveness that I once accepted—that southern Jews overwhelmingly supported the Confederacy."<sup>54</sup>

The concept of southern Jewish distinctiveness is not yet buried, although when it is Bauman would be happy to serve as honorary pallbearer. However forcefully he has maintained his resistance to notions about the indigenous character of Dixie's Jewry, the thesis has continued to attract defenders. Among them is Marcie Cohen Ferris, a historian at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In *Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South* (2005), Cohen traces the effect of southern cuisine on the Jewish palette. "At their dining tables," she writes, "Jewish southerners . . . created a distinctive religious expression that reflects the evolution of southern Jewish life."<sup>55</sup> She made her case forcefully enough that it led historian Jonathan D. Sarna, in his endorsement of the book, to infer that not only the meals but also the "faith [and] culture" of southern Jewry should be recognized as "distinctive."

Bauman's framing of the debate has opened the door to a variety of arguments and permutations of the themes he first introduced. Bryan Edward Stone, an expert on Texas, has shown reluctance to stress the uniqueness of southern Jewry. The group characteristics that have marked the Jewish people in modern times—family cohesiveness, civic

activism, business success, religious adaptation—do not betray enormous regional variation. But he is struck by how widespread is the *belief* in uniqueness. Evidently subscribing to the Platonic commitment to the supreme reality of ideas, Stone claims that the abiding faith in something distinctive has the effect of *making* southern Jewry distinctive. Full disclosure: I also hold to the thesis of singularity, even to the point of having recently been pitted against Bauman in Davis's account of the present state of southern Jewish historiography.<sup>56</sup> Her article underscores how unavoidable is the question of the differences that southern Jews have exhibited, even if the answers vary. In duking it out with his critics, Bauman retorts that conventional beliefs, no matter how fiercely held, can also be delusions. To pierce them, he has been most effective by invoking the method of comparative history, which is the only way to test claims of uniqueness.

Case in point: A common version of southern Jewish history highlights how a "small minority . . . fit in [to the region] and accepted southern mores, contributed disproportionately, held offices," and encountered "less antisemitism than anywhere else in the United States."<sup>57</sup>

But then Bauman urges his readers to examine the work of specialists on the Far West like Marc Dollinger, Ellen Eisenberg, Ava Kahn, and William Toll. They describe pioneers who managed to adapt smoothly to “the most tolerant section of the country,” who got elected to political offices, and who contributed disproportionately to the welfare of the Far West. Nor can the harrowing issue of race divide the two sets of regional experiences. The persecution of Latinos and Asians, whose fate may have moderated local hostility to Jews, constitutes a counterpart to the southern history of slavery and segregation, according to Bauman. That many of the Jews who installed themselves in the West came from the South also suggests lines of continuity, a mimetic phenomenon that he believes weakens the case against southern and western Jewish singularity. This capacious approach to the past has endeared Bauman to Hollace Weiner: “Mark taught me to make comparisons—among various religious groups, racial groups, subcommunities, and countries. My research had to be multidimensional, or it didn’t have weight.”<sup>58</sup> Bauman has refused to treat southern Jewry as exotic, eccentric, or anomalous, freeing other historians to incorporate the southern Jewish experience into America’s Jewish history—a goal that has animated his mission in editing the twenty volumes of the journal.

*“Why Do They Live There?”*

An essay that is devoted to Bauman’s achievements gives him the floor, sparing him from hecklers. But one set of questions cannot be suppressed: What happens to the rationale for a journal exploring a collective past that pretty much resembles the history of other Jews? Why bother to create and perpetuate a Southern Jewish Historical Society if an American Jewish Historical Society basically covers the same terrain? If southern Jewish identity is interchangeable with American Jewish identity, why pursue a separate inquiry into the region? Why uphold interpretations that generate so little friction with generalizations about Jewish life in North America? To invalidate the South as a coherent unit of study may therefore strike members of the Southern Jewish Historical Society as counterintuitive. The response that Bauman offers highlights the inherent value of studying southern Jewish history. The region provides a reminder that the Jewish experience is far richer and more varied than what happened in metropolises like New York City.

He adds that what happened in the South has often affected the course of American Jewish history.

The region certainly got off to a head start. Of the first five synagogues in North America, two were located in the South. After the congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, died, Richmond and Baltimore made the proportion four out of six. The first two Reform congregations were established in the South, where the first American Reform prayer book was composed. Most of the Jewish politicians from the colonial to the antebellum era were southern, as were pioneering philanthropists and even the first female poet of consequence. Nor, especially after World War II, can the pertinence of South Florida be ignored. Its demography may affect the course of Jewish historical continuity itself.

Bauman is also struck by the degree to which Jews did *not* belong in the region, which is a way of claiming that its impact should not be exaggerated. Treated differently from other whites in the South, bearing “cultural baggage” of their own from the Old World, linked to relatives elsewhere and to other businesspeople as though to defy the handicap of insularity, southern Jews have not managed to fit neatly into a section that “is typically depicted as agrarian, racist, anti-intellectual, evangelical/fundamentalist, Anglo-Saxon/Scotch-Irish Protestant, and backward,” he writes. Do such traits, he demands to know, come across “as representative of southern Jewish history”?<sup>59</sup> It teems with people who look more like Episcopalians or Unitarian-Universalists than like Southern Baptists, he remarks, and whose educational levels and urban residences diverge from the patterns of archetypal white southerners. (Here one might note that the 1960 census was the first to report that southerners had become more urban than rural. Thus Jews were ahead of the curve. One might also suggest that the South adapted to *them*, reducing the danger that they would stand out.)

The debate over distinctiveness has hardly been resolved; no consensus has yet emerged. But Bauman suspects that, as a result of such debates, his own research on other topics and his ideas on other issues have been overshadowed. Perhaps no topic that Bauman has addressed is more emotionally charged than the Jewish response to civil rights half a century ago, and his two edited volumes, *The Quiet Voices* and *To Stand Aside or Stand Alone* (2016), constitute what he considers to be his most important books. He writes that both volumes show, “many



*Books that Mark Bauman has written, edited, or coedited include (clockwise from top):*  
Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History (2006); Harry H. Epstein and the Rabbinate as a Conduit for Change (1994); To Stand Aside or Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement (2016);  
The Southerner as American: Jewish Style (1996); and The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s (1997).

more southern Jews supported civil rights and acted on their beliefs than we now know about.”<sup>60</sup> Here his work has been decisive in helping to revise, in a more favorable and sympathetic trajectory, earlier depictions of the southern rabbinate as helpless and even muted amid the epic struggle for racial justice. In 1980, when Proctor reviewed *Turn to the South*, which includes four chapters (out of fourteen) on the region’s rabbinate, he dismissed it as an “overworked topic.”<sup>61</sup> He was wrong. Instead Bauman demonstrated how rich it remained, most recently by editing and annotating the interviews that the late Allen Krause conducted with Reform rabbis in the South in the mid-1960s. (*To Stand Aside or Stand Alone* is reviewed in this issue.) Moreover the extant biographies of southern rabbis were mostly published after 1980, such as Mark Cowett’s on Morris Newfield (1986), Bobbie Malone’s on Max Heller (1997), and Janice Blumberg’s on her great-grandfather, Edward “Alphabet” Browne (2012). Biographies of Orthodox or Conservative clergymen are quite rare, so that Bauman’s 1994 study of Harry H. Epstein of Atlanta’s Ahavath Achim Congregation— who in fact was both, having switched his congregation’s denominational allegiances from Orthodox to Conservative by the early 1950s—stands out.

Bauman also wishes to remind his readers of his “pioneering use of role theory in American Jewish history,” while contributing to the developing sophistication in the study of “Jewish ethnic politics, Jewish social service agencies and leadership patterns, colonial Jews and their relationships with Native Americans, [and] the origins of Reform in Baltimore.”<sup>62</sup> Although John Adams ignored his wife Abigail’s famous injunction to “remember the ladies,” Bauman did not, and he has delved into southern Jewish women’s history. As early as volume 1 of the journal, its founding managing editor has recalled, “Mark showed his appreciation for the role of women in the South. Following egalitarian principles, we always used the woman’s actual first name (unless it was lost to history), instead of Mrs. [fill in the blank of the husband’s given name].”<sup>63</sup> The long list of Bauman’s scholarly interests goes on: “Intra- and intergroup relations, southern Jews as cosmopolitan leaders on the national and even international scene, the significance of internal migrations, center and peripheral communities, [and] acculturation and continuity of east European Jews.” According to Weissbach, this “note-

worthy series of articles in the realm of southern Jewish history" have added up to "an outstanding record of scholarly accomplishment."<sup>64</sup> Bauman's studies should be understood as intended to further the quest of one goal – to ensure that the history of southern Jewry is woven seamlessly into the history of other southerners, other Americans, and other American Jews. However tantalizingly elusive this objective has been, no one has aimed at this target with greater steadfastness and catholicity. In 2016 he wrote that "I have studied southern Jewish history for almost forty years, [and] I remain very aware of how little I know and how much remains to be explored concerning the field."<sup>65</sup> And no amount of work has quenched his thirst for more research and for more understanding. "Tell about the South," the Canadian Shreve McCannon urges his Harvard roommate, Quentin Compson of Mississippi, in 1909. "What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all."<sup>66</sup> Choosing to tell about the South's Jews, Bauman has enacted a "vision that has brought the journal *Southern Jewish History* to fruition; and entering its twentieth year, it maintains its standards and relevance," in Rogoff's estimation. "No one has explored the history of southern Jewry more insistently and more thoroughly than Mark Bauman."<sup>67</sup>

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Janice Rothschild Blumberg, "The Distance Traveled: Reminiscences of Twenty-five Years in SJHS," *Southern Jewish History* 10 (2007): 21.

<sup>2</sup> Mark K. Bauman, "A Meandering and Surprising Career," in *On Becoming an American Jewish Historian*, ed. Jeffrey Gurock (forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York, 2003), 341, 352, 393, 486, 499, 608; John Hope Franklin, *Mirror to America* (New York, 2005), 29.



- <sup>4</sup> Marc Lee Raphael, e-mail to author, March 6, 2017.
- <sup>5</sup> Mark K. Bauman, e-mail to author, April 3, 2017.
- <sup>6</sup> Bauman e-mail.
- <sup>7</sup> Bauman, "Meandering and Surprising Career," 8, 13, 19.
- <sup>8</sup> Bernard Wax, "Ruminations about the SJHS," *Southern Jewish History* 10 (2007): 3-4.
- <sup>9</sup> Rachel Heimovics Braun, e-mail to author, April 7, 2017.
- <sup>10</sup> Eric L. Goldstein, e-mail to author, January 26, 2017.
- <sup>11</sup> Braun e-mail.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Bauman e-mail.
- <sup>14</sup> Scott M. Langston, e-mail to author, February 25, 2017.
- <sup>15</sup> Bauman e-mail.
- <sup>16</sup> Hollace Ava Weiner, e-mails to author, January 26 and February 4, 2017.
- <sup>17</sup> Janice Rothschild Blumberg, e-mail to author, February 19, 2017.
- <sup>18</sup> Leonard Rogoff, e-mail to author, February 15, 2017.
- <sup>19</sup> Adam Mendelsohn, e-mail to author, January 27, 2017.
- <sup>20</sup> Marni Davis, e-mail to author, February 20, 2017.
- <sup>21</sup> Anton Hieke, e-mail to author, March 5, 2017.
- <sup>22</sup> Dan J. Puckett, e-mail to author, April 27, 2017.
- <sup>23</sup> Ellen M. Umansky, e-mail to author, February 13, 2017.
- <sup>24</sup> Raphael e-mail.
- <sup>25</sup> Langston e-mail.
- <sup>26</sup> Bauman e-mail.
- <sup>27</sup> Langston e-mail.
- <sup>28</sup> Blumberg e-mail.
- <sup>29</sup> Bauman e-mail.
- <sup>30</sup> Rogoff e-mail.
- <sup>31</sup> Bauman e-mail.
- <sup>32</sup> Davis e-mail.
- <sup>33</sup> Hieke e-mail.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Rogoff e-mail.
- <sup>36</sup> Bauman e-mail.
- <sup>37</sup> Puckett e-mail.
- <sup>38</sup> Bauman e-mail.
- <sup>39</sup> Mark K. Bauman, "A Century of Southern Jewish Historiography," *American Jewish Archives Journal*, 59 (2007): 14-15.
- <sup>40</sup> Bauman e-mail.
- <sup>41</sup> Mark K. Bauman and Bobbie Malone, "Introduction: Directions in Southern Jewish History II," *American Jewish History* 85 (December 1997): 352.
- <sup>42</sup> Bauman e-mail.

<sup>43</sup> Stanley F. Chyet, "Reflections on Southern Jewish Historiography," in *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville, 1979), 15–16; Bauman, "Century of Southern Jewish Historiography," 22.

<sup>44</sup> Lee Shai Weissbach, e-mail message to author, February 5, 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Bauman e-mail.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Mark K. Bauman, *The Southerner as American: Jewish Style* (Cincinnati, 1996), 5, 28.

<sup>48</sup> Bauman e-mail.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Mark K. Bauman and Bobbie Malone, "Introduction: Directions in Southern Jewish History," *American Jewish History* 85 (September 1997): 192.

<sup>51</sup> Davis e-mail.

<sup>52</sup> Bauman e-mail.

<sup>53</sup> Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston: Brith Sholom Beth Israel and American Jewish History* (Charleston, 2004), xiv.

<sup>54</sup> Bauman e-mail.

<sup>55</sup> Marcie Cohen Ferris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South* (Chapel Hill, 2005), 7.

<sup>56</sup> Marni Davis, "A Minority's Minority: Southern Jewish History," *Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter* 48 (Summer 2016): 1, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Bauman e-mail.

<sup>58</sup> Weiner e-mail, January 26, 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Bauman e-mail.

<sup>60</sup> Bauman e-mail.

<sup>61</sup> Samuel Proctor, review of *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*, *American Jewish History* 70 (December 1980): 253.

<sup>62</sup> Bauman e-mail.

<sup>63</sup> Braun e-mail.

<sup>64</sup> Weissbach e-mail.

<sup>65</sup> Mark K. Bauman, "From the Editor," *Southern Jewish History* 19 (2016): v.

<sup>66</sup> William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York, 1936), 174.

<sup>67</sup> Rogoff e-mail.

# Four German Jewish Families and the Built Environment of Huntsville, Alabama, 1852–2017

by

Leonard Rogoff with Margaret Anne Goldsmith\*

A stone building with *I. Schiffman* engraved above its arched doorway stands as a sentinel on the courthouse square of historic downtown Huntsville, Alabama. Built in 1845 as a retail store, it now houses offices of Margaret Anne Goldsmith, the sole remaining local descendant of four antebellum Jewish families. Buildings with Jewish provenance, often repurposed from their original functions, tell narratives of town history, including Jewish community change. Jews left their marks on the “built environment,” as historian Barry Stiefel observes, attesting to the ubiquity and longevity of their southern heritage.<sup>1</sup> Yet if Jewish material culture testifies to Jews’ enduring presence, their buildings were no more permanent in their identities than the people who owned them. The *I. Schiffman* building today stands as a monument to over a century of Jewish adaptation and continuity.

Buildings locate the Jewish place in a community even more than official records or texts documenting histories of entrepreneurs, benefactors, or civic leaders. The vernacular architecture of their homes and stores show the Jews’ willingness to acculturate to the local scene. So, too, their sacred architecture. Shuls and temples – whether neo-Gothic or neo-Romanesque, neoclassical or Queen Anne Victorian – maintained neighborly relations with nearby churches. Cathedral-style edifices blended in, like the congregants worshipping in them. Images of the Ten Commandments or Stars of David on their facades, or perhaps Moorish

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architectural elements, distinguished them as Jewish. The built environment attests to Jewish prosperity and permanence, rebutting stereotypes of carpetbaggers or a wandering people who “merely sojourns” but does not “dwell.”<sup>2</sup>

Through their landmark buildings the Jews’ presence in the American South has appeared larger than their numbers. The I. Schiffman building traces not just economic but also social and cultural history. The peripatetic peddler did not leave his mark on the material culture. Not until he opened his store did he—and his family—announce that the wandering Jew was here to stay. Their stores, centrally located near train stations or courthouses, gave Jews a visibility and significance beyond what the census recorded. Passersby would see storefronts or commercial buildings proclaiming that Jews were here. The South’s Jewish-owned department stores—Rich’s, Maas Brothers, Godchaux’s, Hecht’s, Thalheimer’s, and Neiman-Marcus among others—served as downtown focal points. In places where Jews moved away, a sign above an empty store, a peeling billboard on a wall, or a memorial plaque at a park or ball field serves as a reminder of their once vibrant place. In rural small towns a cemetery or an abandoned synagogue remains as a monument to a once thriving community.

The I. Schiffman building and other buildings in Huntsville underwent transformations in design and use that symbolize broader cultural and economic changes.<sup>3</sup> Simple portrayals of Jewish life in the small-town South and America generally would suggest that Jews often ventured to these places in their founding years and then departed as the localities declined economically or as other locations offered greater promise for success. The story appears as one of rise and decline. Yet a more complex pattern was closer to reality. Often, pioneering Jews of central European origin who settled in a town or small city did depart for economic reasons or to find larger Jewish communities where they could provide their children and themselves with greater religious, cultural, and other benefits. Their children pursued college and professional opportunities elsewhere. A few founding families persisted in these towns, augmented later by a new wave of Jews of eastern European origin. The process repeated itself as arrivals replaced departures from generation to generation. This pattern correlated to changes in the local economy. As one sector of that economy declined—agriculture yielding

to industry, for example – another took its place. Families that remained had to adapt.

The history behind the I. Schiffman building is a case study of four intertwined families who adapted to changing economic conditions in Huntsville, Alabama, from generation to generation. Their story illustrates the diverse reasons why some people departed while others remained. Although their choices were personal and varied, their experiences typified those of numerous Jewish families. The extended Schiffman-Goldsmith family, which preserved an unusual abundance of business and family records over five generations, offers an exceptional opportunity for study among the many families in Huntsville and other cities who followed a similar trajectory.<sup>4</sup>

The Schiffman-Goldsmith family history illuminates other important themes that challenge conventional stereotypes. A simplified narrative tells of peddlers who build dry goods stores that grow into department or chain stores only to have their children depart for university and then professional opportunities. What the I. Schiffman building represents is an alternative but no less common narrative: stores formed the foundation for diverse activities including investments in land, agricultural innovation, real estate development, banking and finance, transportation, and infrastructure. Although the pattern of people departing small towns suggests rootlessness, these investments often tied descendants to communities even if they lived in other locations.

The family store has been immortalized in Jewish folklore but, less nostalgically, Jews who persisted and prospered in the South often did so through real estate.<sup>5</sup> That indeed has been a pattern in southern and American Jewish history. In the early 1800s, Aaron Lazarus of Wilmington, North Carolina, and Jacob Moses of Charleston, South Carolina, were nominally merchants, but they owned plantations in the hundreds of acres. Resettling in Columbus, Georgia, in the 1830s, Moses built a brick store while also buying lots for homes and businesses for new settlers and obtaining Indian land after the Creek War. Joseph Andrews, an antebellum merchant and cotton broker in Memphis, held \$150,000 in property at his death. Polish immigrant brothers Jacob and Louis Bloomstein, antebellum settlers in Nashville, became successful grocers and storekeepers but then “parlayed into extensive real estate holdings.”<sup>6</sup>

The extended Schiffman-Goldsmith family of Huntsville began as purveyors of clothing, notions, jewelry, and dry goods. However as Huntsville expanded from a market town into an industrial city and then a military center, the family increased and diversified its holdings. Mercantile profits financed the purchase of commercial properties, whether farmland, rental houses, or urban commercial buildings. They took advantage of national investment opportunities by compiling a stock portfolio in railroads, mining, and utilities.

Jews arrived in the New South in ever more significant numbers when the region was experiencing its most rapid urban growth.<sup>7</sup> Railroad and highway expansion opened new markets and encouraged the building of factories, warehouses, and commercial edifices. In a historically cash-poor region where credit was sorely needed, Jews, with their access to outside sources of capital in Baltimore or New York, were investors. Scarcely a southern town was without its textile mill—not infrequently financed by out-of-state Jewish investors—and certainly the role of families like Elsas of Atlanta, Cone of Greensboro, and Erlanger of Baltimore is well known in manufacturing. Jews also financed the development of commercial agriculture through mortgages and crop liens and applied their business skills to the production and marketing of sugar and cotton. Some Jews became gentlemen farmers, not tilling the soil or herding cattle themselves, but owning dairy, cattle, or breeding operations, managing commercial croplands, or creating distribution networks that linked country to city. Merchant Jacob Lemann of Louisiana “shifted his business interests from commerce to land,” managing sugar plantations and, after the Civil War, interesting northern Jewish investors in his ventures. Nearly a century apart, Raphael J. Moses of Georgia and Morris Richter of North Carolina commercialized peach production and opened new northern markets. Although rarely rooted in the soil like native southern planters and farmers, many Jews felt nostalgic about their landholdings beyond their financial gain.<sup>8</sup>

As downtowns burgeoned with increasing commerce, Jews invested in hotels and retail and office buildings. The Goldsmiths and Schiffmans were hardly alone among Jewish entrepreneurs in recognizing opportunity in New South urbanization moving from mercantilism to unabashed capitalism. In Charlotte, Samuel Wittkowsky, a former retail merchant and wholesaler, earned the sobriquet of “Building

and Loan King of North Carolina" for underwriting new suburbs and spreading homeownership across the city. Jacob Cohen spurred the civic development of Jacksonville, Florida, in 1910 when, after a disastrous city fire, he purchased six acres and rebuilt downtown anchored by a landmark "Big Store." The farmlands that the merchants obtained either through foreclosure or as commercial agricultural investments now had value as sites for housing or enterprise. As real estate developers, Jews were among the entrepreneurs turning pasture and forest into new suburbs. The store may be emblematic of a Jewish presence, but it served as a springboard to more expansive enterprises. When former clothier Oscar Goldsmith of Huntsville died in 1937, his occupation was listed as "Capitalist."<sup>9</sup>

The spirit of the New South creed, as historian Paul Gaston describes it, was civic boosterism that emphasized industrialization and diversified, scientific agriculture. Northern investors would underwrite this commercialization, and African Americans and immigrants, unsupported by unions, would provide cheap labor. Gaston suggested that the dream for a southern transformation imagined by Henry Grady, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, and Henry Watterson, editor of the *Louisville Courier Journal*, as well as others, was more myth than reality.<sup>10</sup> The Jewish families of Huntsville exemplified a New South reality that belies a tidy periodization. Their commercial enterprise began well before a New South creed had been articulated.

*Adaptation and the Rise, Decline, and Rebirth of Jewish Communities*

The history of the extended Schiffman, Goldsmith, Herstein, and Bernstein families exemplifies how family and enterprise intertwined, a typical Jewish phenomenon seen, too, in other cities. The Kempners of Galveston "constitute a business clan, a family," a historian observes. Their entrepreneurship evolved from peddling and a grocery to an array of investments including banking, ranching, cotton factoring, sugar refining, and streetcars.<sup>11</sup> The Weils of Goldsboro, North Carolina, constituting four intramarried antebellum Bavarian families, followed a similar pattern, rising from peddling to mercantilism to diversified ventures in banking, stockholding, manufacturing, commercial agriculture, and real estate development. The H. Weil & Bros. store evolved into Weil Enterprises.<sup>12</sup> Family business was characteristic of Jews, a means to

*Card room workers at Merrimack Mill in Huntsville, Alabama, 1905.  
Their job was to "card," or smooth out, the cotton fibers as part of the milling  
process. (Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library.)*

preserve wealth within a kinship circle. But more was involved: as siblings, in-laws, and new generations of children joined the business with new interests and educational backgrounds, these enterprises evolved into private conglomerates that responded to changing economic opportunities.

The story behind the I. Schiffman building recounts a similar familial and economic history of mercantilism underwriting an expansive capitalism. Although Isaac "Ike" Schiffman arrived in Huntsville in the New South era, he was linked through ancestry and marriage to the town's antebellum Jewish settlers. In the 1850s Robert Herstein, a clothier, and Morris Bernstein, a watchmaker and jeweler, opened stores, establishing a permanent community. In 1852 Bernstein married Henrietta Newman in Huntsville, and she opened a notions store with the family residing in rooms above his jewelry shop.<sup>13</sup>



*Merrimack Mill Village, Huntsville, Alabama, 1923.*  
(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library.)

In 1855 the railroad arrived, linking Huntsville to the Mississippi River and eastern seaboard. Two years later brothers Daniel and Solomon Schiffman, having first tried Kentucky and Cincinnati, opened dry goods stores. Jewish merchants were welcomed as aspiring towns sought new capital and commerce, and Jews rapidly acculturated. The Bernsteins owned two slaves, likely for household use. The practice was not uncommon among urban southern Jews. When the Civil War came, Herstein cut cloth for some four thousand Confederate uniforms, and Daniel Schiffman joined the Confederate army. When federal troops occupied Huntsville, they found that the town, with its important river port and train depot, had survived the war intact.<sup>14</sup>

Huntsville after Reconstruction became a paradigmatic mill and market town of the New South, with a new railroad depot and ten textile factories in the surrounding county. Mill villages sprouted on the

periphery. The family prospered. Robert Herstein was city treasurer during Reconstruction, and Morris Bernstein directed a bank. Daniel Schiffman served on the town council. Jews joined the Masons, which included the town's male leadership. Family stores located these immigrants at the center of the civic, commercial, and Jewish communities not just as merchants, but also as citizens. As commerce expanded and Huntsville urbanized, more Jews were pulled to town, nearly doubling the community. In 1874 the Jewish population, approaching one hundred, was sufficiently large for the city to parcel land for a Hebrew cemetery, and a year later a B'nai B'rith lodge formed. In 1876 Congregation B'nai Sholom was established, and the following year it affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the governing body of the Reform movement. The Schiffman brothers were congregational and Jewish community leaders. Huntsville Jews founded their own Standard Club, taking a name popular in Jewish social circles nationally as well as in the South.<sup>15</sup>

Local Jewry moved in step with the city. Huntsville's population grew over 60 percent from 1880 to 1890, totaling nearly eight thousand. Small towns in heartland America received a trickle of the immigrant flow of over two million eastern European Jews who flocked to America after 1881. Huntsville's congregation in 1891 discussed the "Russian Question": whether these poor, Orthodox, Yiddish-speaking immigrants could be assimilated as Americans. The Jewish population nearly doubled from 72 in 1878 to 137 in 1905 as immigrants abandoned the sweatshops and crowded ghettos of the urban North and sought fresher air and economic opportunities as peddlers or storekeepers in southern small towns. In 1898 the congregation's membership was sufficiently numerous and prosperous, with Ike Schiffman as president, to erect a brick neo-Romanesque temple. Church building, synagogues included, was yet another sign of an urbanizing New South. In 1898 *The Huntsville Weekly Democrat* described the town's Jews as "leading merchants and desirable citizens," extolling how swiftly they rose from having "little" to prominence "in any movement for charity or public interest."<sup>16</sup>

*Isaac Schiffman*

The local history of the extended Schiffman family reflects the geographic and economic mobility that has characterized Jewish settlement

in the South and throughout the United States. The arrival of Ike Schiffman in 1875 followed a typical pattern of family chain migration. Solomon and Bertha Schiffman, childless and needing help in their dry goods store, brought Ike, their nineteen-year-old nephew, from Hoppstädten in the Rhineland. Their clothing store was located downtown at 119 North Side Square near the county courthouse. On the east side of the square, at 231, Robert Herstein had operated his dry goods store, Smith and Herstein, at least since 1860. In 1885 Ike Schiffman married Herstein's daughter Betty. The family circle expanded with the arrival in about 1879 of Oscar Goldsmith, the New York-born son of German immigrants, who was traveling on jewelry business. He met and married Morris Bernstein's daughter, also named Betty, who had recently returned from attending school in her parents' native Germany. Goldsmith began with dry goods before opening a men's clothing store. The pull of the family chain brought Goldsmith's parents to Huntsville from New York.<sup>17</sup>

As textile mills expanded in the surrounding county, and country folk abandoned farms for the factory, Jewish merchants saw opportunities beyond providing shoes and uniforms for factory workers or jewelry and ready-to-wear clothing for the growing middle class. Jews speculated in real estate, and, at least since antebellum days, merchant Jews owned tenements and timberlands plantations in the latter. After 1880 in New York, "tenement owning flourished as an ethnic enterprise" in Jewish neighborhoods. In Huntsville, Morris Bernstein began purchasing land in 1877 that by the time of his death grew into a "sizable estate."<sup>18</sup>

Ike Schiffman had been both his uncle's nephew and apprentice. After Solomon's death in 1894, Ike became the mainstay of the downtown dry goods store and increased the loans to farmers and speculated in corn and cotton. In hard times the business expanded, acquiring significant farm holdings through foreclosures, and Ike added a horse-and-buggy business.<sup>19</sup>

Oscar Goldsmith, a successful clothing merchant, saw opportunity, too, as Huntsville grew urban and industrial. According to family folklore, Oscar convinced a New York friend, an Irishman, to move to Huntsville to open the Dallas Mill. Goldsmith purchased stock in the company and served as a director and treasurer for the remainder of his

*Isaac Schiffman, 1905.*  
(Courtesy of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

*Betty Herstein Schiffman, 1915.*  
(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison  
County Public Library.)

*Oscar Goldsmith, 1895.*

*(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison  
County Public Library.)*

*Betty Bernstein Goldsmith, c.1885.*

*(Courtesy of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)*

life. He also developed land for the mill village and named it Lawrence after his son. In 1892 he became president of the newly incorporated Huntsville Land Company, which bought land and built houses for the mill workers. Goldsmith continued to develop properties, buying and building rental houses in town. After his Bernstein in-laws passed away, Goldsmith administered their estate, which “involved managing and leasing properties” throughout the town.<sup>20</sup> The roots of I. Schiffman & Company Inc. reflect that amalgam of family and business that typified Jewish enterprise. By 1896 Ike Schiffman expanded into farming. Tightening the family circle, Lawrence Goldsmith married Annie Schiffman, Ike’s daughter. In 1905 the firm formally took the name I. Schiffman & Company and diversified its investments; three years later Schiffman formed a partnership with his son Robert and son-in-law Lawrence Goldsmith. Intramarriages among the early Huntsville Jewish families—Bernstein, Herstein, Schiffman, and Goldsmith—consolidated their holdings within an extended family. By 1926, on three blocks near the courthouse square, the company held fifteen lots, all owned by extended family members or their estates, but managed by I. Schiffman & Company.<sup>21</sup>

The growth of the city certainly invited real estate investments, but neither form of expansion would have been possible without new transportation technologies. Streetcars and automobiles also offered investment opportunities. In Huntsville, as in numerous other urban locations, people walked or rode horses, and in 1896 Ike Schiffman added a livery to his holdings. As city limits stretched, the family invested in streetcars, and in 1910, the year of Schiffman’s death, the livery was turned into a Dodge auto dealership. Not only did the firm develop suburbs, but it also financed the means for homeowners to get there. Building infrastructure helped cities thrive. For astute business people, changing with the times, the evolving building environment provided important economic opportunity.<sup>22</sup>

**Opposite:** *Goldsmith-Bernstein-Schiffman-Herstein family tree.*

*(Courtesy of the National Museum for American Jewish History, Philadelphia.)*



Three generations of Bernsteins and Goldsmiths lived in close proximity. Oscar and Betty Goldsmith first resided with her parents in the affluent Gates Street neighborhood, but after their second child was born the Bernsteins built them a fine Victorian home next door. The Schiffmans lived on West Clinton Street within walking distance. All gathered for card playing and Sunday dinners. Memoirs of Jewish family gatherings often recall the men gathered in a corner talking business while women and children socialized.<sup>23</sup>

*An Evolving Community*

In the early 1900s the local economy stagnated, and the city's population declined during the next two decades. Huntsville's Jewish population fell by half. Southern Jewish communities were wracked by constant disruption as failure or ambition—a bankruptcy, the opening of a new mill, the desire for a larger Jewish community, or greater economic opportunity elsewhere—pushed and pulled at the town's Jews. The congregation struggled with departures. In 1907 B'nai Sholom counted but thirty-eight members. After 1913 the congregation could not support a pulpit rabbi for the next half century, and the religious school expired, a few Jewish children attending the Christian Science Sunday school even as they remained within the Jewish communal fold. The Great Depression further depleted the community as membership dropped to twenty-three in 1940. Huntsville seemed to be going the way of numerous disappearing Jewish communities.<sup>24</sup>

The story of Jewish communal life in small towns and cities is mixed. A few families typically persisted, forming a core, but many moved to places of greater economic opportunity only to be replaced repeatedly by others who arrived when opportunities improved. Jewish revival followed the city's economic fortunes. Franklin Roosevelt, for reasons of both security and economic development, funneled federal defense spending to the impoverished South, and military installations brought prosperity to towns like Huntsville. To recruit the military to bring a federal munitions complex to the city, the Chamber of Commerce appointed as one of its representatives Lawrence Goldsmith, Oscar's son, who, as a successful real estate investor, knew the local landscape. The opening of the Redstone Arsenal in 1941 on thirty-five thousand acres transformed the city and its Jewish population. In 1949 a



missile research center opened at the arsenal. Under German rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, it evolved into the Marshall Space Flight Center, site of NASA's missile development and space vehicle program.<sup>25</sup>

Huntsville was typical of industrial towns that succeeded in transitioning into the high-tech economy. The small town of sixteen thousand in 1950 grew into today's metropolis of nearly two hundred thousand. The Jewish population grew correspondingly as opportunities opened for engineers and scientists as well as those who serviced the growing population. From one hundred in 1937 the Jewish community numbered seven hundred in 1968. With the arrival of NASA, military, and contract workers, a Conservative congregation, *Etz Chayim*, organized in 1962. Seven years later its members purchased a former church as a synagogue. In 1963 the Reform Temple *B'nai Sholom* once again had a full-time rabbi, and a year later it added a new educational wing. In 1994 the building was extensively renovated. Community life had revived with the organization of a Sunday school in the 1940s, which eventually encompassed both congregations. *B'nai Sholom* is now the oldest synagogue in Alabama in continuous use.<sup>26</sup>

#### *The I. Schiffman Building and the Built Environment*

Jewish family and community history is written on Huntsville's built environment, emblematically on the I. Schiffman building in the courthouse square. Over the course of nearly 175 years its altered architecture and function attests to the evolution of the city's economy and the responses of a local Jewish family to those changes. In 1905 Ike Schiffman purchased the southern bay of the building at 231 East Side Square. A brick structure constructed in the Federal style around 1845, the building originally consisted of three bays, one of which had housed his father-in-law's clothing store. The last owner had been the Southern Building and Loan Association, which purchased the building to serve as its office headquarters.<sup>27</sup> Savings and loan associations, responding to growing home ownership in expanding cities, had grown popular as mortgage brokers. New industries brought new residents. Such growth led to new suburbs. In 1895 Southern Building and Loan remodeled the corner bay, transforming its original Federal style with a limestone neo-Romanesque façade.<sup>28</sup>

*The original Federal-style building on the east side of the courthouse square in Huntsville, Alabama, c. 1860. The southernmost bay (on the right), would eventually become the I. Schiffman building. Robert Herstein, Isaac Schiffman's father-in-law, operated a dry goods business there, indicated by the sign over the door.*

*(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library.)*

*The east side of the courthouse square in Huntsville, Alabama, c. 1875. The eventual I. Schiffman building is at the right end of the row. The picture illustrates the economic development of downtown Huntsville in the years after the Civil War.*

*(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library.)*

*Schiffman building (far right) following its 1895 renovation.  
(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library.)*

The remodel embraced the then-fashionable Richardsonian Romanesque aesthetic. This eclectic architectural style was inspired by architect Henry Hobson Richardson, a Louisianan who settled in New York and Boston after studying at the *Ecoles des Beaux Arts* in Paris. Reaching its pinnacle of popularity from 1885 through 1905, the neo-Romanesque style was also seen in landmark buildings like Boston's Trinity Church and the Marshall Field Warehouse Store in Chicago. The style was popular in synagogues, too, like Baltimore's Oheb Sholom and Huntsville's B'nai Sholom. Budding cities in the West and Midwest built schools, residences, and civic buildings in the style as symbols of civic progress. Although drawing on European roots, the Richardsonian Romanesque was regarded as distinctly American. Its eclecticism reflected a particularly American spirit of freedom and innovation. In commercial buildings the style marked the owners as progressive and cosmopolitan, belonging to a world more global than a southern mill town. It embraced the City Beautiful aestheticism popularized by the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.<sup>29</sup>

Although Ike Schiffman was not the agent of the building's architectural transformation, he certainly chose to identify with the modern, updated neo-Romanesque style in purchasing it and locating his business headquarters there. As president of B'nai Sholom and chair of the temple's building committee, he had engaged a leading southern church architect, B. H. Hunt of Chattanooga, who designed an elaborate edifice for the temple, also in the eclectic Romanesque Revival style.<sup>30</sup> Following the Beaux-Arts aesthetic of Richardson's Paris student days, the I. Schiffman building's rich details evoked grace, stability, and modernity. A dramatic keystoned arch doorway framed by pilasters welcomed visitors. A large window with a Romanesque rounded frame opened the interior to passersby on the street, the transparency necessary for a financial enterprise needing public confidence. An immigrant Jew whose credit business relied on trust would see such a structure as a symbol of his moral integrity, civic virtue, and progressive values. Rough-hewn, undressed limestone blocks evoked honesty, security, and stability. The rich surface detailing implied wealth, a proclamation for a Gilded Age: dental molding crowning the cornice; decorative bands wrapping the building; and stylized pilasters rising midway from the corner. A bay window in the second floor apartment overlooked the square.<sup>31</sup> In a lintel above the entrance archway, the enterprising investor declared his ownership by engraving in a highly stylized ornamental font, *I. Schiffman*. An emphatic period followed his name.

Schiffman purchased the bank building at a time when the city's economic fortunes were declining. The city lost population between 1900 and 1910, and its Jewish numbers fell even more precipitously. Fewer mortgage seekers hurt the prospects of an investment company like Schiffman's. He was taking a risk buying the building while the savings and loan was giving it up. That Schiffman chose to purchase a structure that stood out as a piece of symbolic architecture suggests that he was boldly expressing his faith in the city's future. Townspeople would notice. With its opulent detail, its break with the commonplace, it was a monumental building that suggested large ambitions. I. Schiffman & Co. prospered in a struggling economy by diversifying its holdings, not only in cotton and local real estate, but through investments in national banks, mines, utilities, and railroads. In hard times foreclosures made

*Front elevation of the Schiffman building as it exists today, showing the name that Isaac Schiffman had engraved above it. (Photograph by Bryan Alan Bacon.)*

more farmland available. Schiffman's rock-solid building inspired confidence.<sup>32</sup>

Given Huntsville's New South ambitions, Lawrence Goldsmith, Sr., lamented the lack of a first-class hotel that would communicate to outside investors that the city was sufficiently cosmopolitan to support their enterprises. He rallied local businessmen to the vision and became an investor in the Russel Erskine Hotel, a neoclassical building in the grand tradition of southern residential hotels. When it opened, Goldsmith and his wife established themselves in a twelfth-floor suite for the winter months, summering at the Bernstein home on Gates Street. Later their son and granddaughter Margaret Anne joined them.<sup>33</sup> Typical of small-town Jewries, which lacked the urban critical mass to establish Jewish residential enclaves, Jews lived among peoples of their socio-economic class. Having an address at a residential hotel marked their acculturation into the upper class.

*Postcard of the Hotel Russel Erskine,  
Huntsville, 1934.  
(Courtesy of the Southern  
Jewish Historical Society.)*

*Generational Change*

In the 1930s business leadership underwent a generational change as the elderly members of the extended family passed away. College-educated children built businesses on principles grounded in academic sciences and economics. Lawrence Goldsmith, Jr., after prep school and study at the University of Alabama, returned home to work first on a family farm at Green Grove, south of Huntsville near the Tennessee River, and then in the cotton shipping business. Finishing this apprenticeship, he joined his father at I. Schiffman & Co. His responsibility was to oversee the farming operations, which he expanded from cotton.<sup>34</sup> Following scientific principles of crop rotation, he introduced soy beans to enrich the soil and diversify the yields to hedge against the volatility of cotton prices. The family acquired significant agricultural holdings, including Big Cove Farm in 1926, as well as smaller farms that stretched across the county, limited only by surrounding mountain ranges. Throughout its years of operation, the company rented out farm land and city buildings. In 1940 I. Schiffman & Co. entered the cattle breeding business, which it maintained for more than a quarter of a century. In 1942 the company reported that it "is engaged principally in the business of holding and operating farms. In addition, it operates certain parcels of city property in Huntsville, Alabama, [and] carries some securities and loans."<sup>35</sup>

As Huntsville's borders expanded, farmland provided opportunities for real estate development. The firm's Green Grove Farm was sold to the federal government to become part of the Redstone Arsenal. During the 1950s and 1960s development began to spread into the mountainous areas surrounding the firm's crop and pasture lands. I. Schiffman & Co. sold lots and carried the mortgages for new housing. Big Cove Farm, the firm's largest rural holding, was developed for residential housing, transforming the region. Diversification allowed the company to prosper during times when crop prices or yields were less profitable.

*A Sunbelt City*

Huntsville's growth and prosperity was underwritten by its ability to transition into the postindustrial Sunbelt economy as a high-tech research center fueled not just by crop prices and textile manufacture but

by federal funds. More typically, as textile and cotton production succumbed to automation and foreign competition, New South mill and market towns like nearby Athens and Decatur, Alabama, declined. Jews in these places left empty stores. In many southern towns and cities Jewish demography reflected a typical generational declension as the upwardly mobile children of merchants and managers went off to college and from there to new careers, not in retail trades but as professionals in the rising Sunbelt centers. The Jewish ethnic economic niche in dry goods dissipated as discriminatory barriers eroded and Jews pursued education in fields previously closed to them. Rarely were merchants able to maintain their businesses through community changes. In 1962 I. Schiffman & Co. closed its car dealership after nearly half a century, and, through eminent domain, the housing authority took over family rental properties for urban renewal. Senator John Sparkman, a family friend, succeeded in winning federal funding to make Huntsville a Model City, one of 150 areas that the federal government designated for urban development and anti-poverty programs. The town underwent typical street widening, driving out pawn shops and small stores, many owned by Jews. The lack of city planning ruined the commercial viability of downtown as a retail center.<sup>36</sup>

As both Old and New Souths were leveled into a generic Sunbelt, family stores, factories, and offices gave way to the Bulldozer Revolution. In Atlanta, Lithuanian-born Ben Massell, the city's "preeminent real estate developer," built about a thousand buildings, remaking the city. Box chain outlets and shopping malls displaced downtown retail stores. The extended Goldsmith families were hardly alone among southern Jews in finding opportunity in the growing suburbanization. In Jacksonville, Florida, attorney Lonnie Wurn, in the late 1940s, turned to home construction and with his father and brother-in-law developed subdivisions in the city's Southside, pioneering a concept by adding clubhouses, playgrounds, and swimming pools to the housing tract. Russian immigrant Philip Belz, a builder of low-cost housing, was "one of the most successful real estate" entrepreneurs of Memphis. Belz Enterprises spurred the city's suburbanization, constructing shopping malls and industrial campuses.<sup>37</sup>

In Huntsville the historic courthouse across from the Schiffman building was demolished, and a massive modernistic structure arose



on its site that made no reference to its environment. Surrounding the square, historic buildings went vacant, their commercial enterprises no longer viable. At 231, two bays were demolished, leaving the Schiffman building a free-standing survivor, its exterior wall weakened.<sup>38</sup> Such downtown transformations were a national phenomenon as cities reconfigured themselves to accommodate the automobile and changing economy. As commercial town centers emptied and subdivisions arose on the periphery, economic life prospered in the rim economies of interstate loops and highway spokes heading out of town.

*Jewish Mobility in Changing Times*

The local history of the extended Schiffman family follows the trajectory of the city's evolution from mill and market town to Sunbelt center. The Alabama Goldsmiths had retained connections to New York, where their children went for schooling and spent summers with relatives. Besides young adults heading to New York, widowed Schiffman women joined family there. Lawrence Goldsmith's sister Theresa moved with her family to Chattanooga. However rooted southern Jews felt in their hometowns, they also maintained business and family links to metropolitan communities and retained cosmopolitan worldviews. They followed a common Jewish demographic course that, by 1980, revealed that about 45 percent of American Jewish wage earners were professionals or semiprofessionals, while an equal number were managers, agents, or sales personnel.<sup>39</sup> The Jews who left these towns, bemoaning nostalgically the fading of small-town Jewish life, brought their talents and energies to new centers, often regenerating Jewish community life.

Margaret Anne Goldsmith—descended from the pioneering Herstein, Bernstein, Schiffman, and Goldsmith families—followed the generational career path. Her religious education included Sunday school at Temple B'nai Sholom and Jewish summer camp in Maine. The family tradition was to send their children to boarding schools for their final years. For her last two years of high school, Margaret Anne was sent to Mount Vernon Seminary in Washington, D.C., and then to Newcomb College of Tulane University, where she graduated in 1963. After her marriage at the Huntsville temple and a reception at the Russel

Erskine Hotel, she settled in New Orleans, where her husband's family operated a coffee import business. With her children in school, she took accounting and real estate classes at Tulane and worked as an independent contractor, anticipating the day that she would take responsibility for the family's Huntsville business.<sup>40</sup>

For many southern Jews, New Orleans offered opportunities for higher education and to meet potential Jewish spouses as well as providing greater career choices and a larger Jewish community in which to raise a family. Goldsmith enrolled her children at Temple Sinai and joined the Jewish Community Center, where her children attended day camp and after-school programs. She was invited into the leadership of the Jewish Federation. Yet she remained tied to Huntsville, which she visited frequently. Upon her grandfather's death in 1972, although still resident in New Orleans, she became I. Schiffman & Co.'s vice president, while her father assumed the presidency. When he passed away in 1995, she returned permanently as president of the firm. She observed, "Today I am the only member of the original Goldsmith-Schiffman families to remain in Huntsville."<sup>41</sup>

The advent of a daughter into a business leadership role reflected changing gender roles, especially in a South rapidly losing its traditions of female domesticity as it merged into the national culture and economy. In 1975 a company report noted that, "For 38 years . . . the father and son team of Lawrence Sr. and Jr. have been growing the company. Now Lawrence Jr. is the only male left in the family and Margaret Anne Goldsmith Hanaw is the only next generation heir and advisor, but she had her own family life in New Orleans."<sup>42</sup> The firm began liquidating its assets, selling its fields and pastures. As executive, Margaret Anne Goldsmith continued to transform the family's farm property holdings to residential and commercial development. Symbolic of the changing economy, the firm sold part of the family's farm land for a Walmart.<sup>43</sup> Prior to developing the properties, titles were transferred to her children no longer resident in Huntsville, and one large tract was donated in trust to the grandchildren. Thus her property holdings ensure that her descendants will remain attached materially to Huntsville beyond nostalgia or family heritage. This attachment includes not only Goldsmith's daughter who remained in Huntsville, but also her children now living in Jerusalem and Portland, Oregon.<sup>44</sup>

*Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Jr., and his daughter, Margaret Anne Goldsmith, c. 1943. (Courtesy of the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.)*

### *Monuments and Memorials*

The I. Schiffman building, changing with the times, has undergone its own Sunbelt transformation. After urban renewal in the 1960s, when two bays were demolished, only the limestone Romanesque south bay, about one third of the building's original footprint, still stood. Surrounding it, abandoned buildings provided opportunities for redevelopment. Downtown retail and commercial centers were reinvented as cultural and entertainment spaces. Preservation replaced destruction as a city-planning mantra. Huntsville's transformation is being repeated across the South, indeed nationally, as urban revival has replaced renewal. Districts like Memphis's Beale Street, with the historic Jewish-owned A. Schwab general store at its center, are now cultivated as tourist attractions. Memphis developer Jack Belz's twenty-five-million-dollar renovation of the seedy but once grand Peabody Hotel was a "major stimulus and inspiration for the downtown revitalization that followed."<sup>45</sup> Like the Goldsmiths, the Weils of Goldsboro invested two generations ago in a landmark downtown hotel, but as the city declined as a retail center, a grandson converted it into a senior citizen residence, restoring its original architectural integrity. In Meridian, Mississippi, the former Marks and Rothenberg department store, stripped of its modern

corrugated front to its original nineteenth-century neo-Romanesque façade, now comprises part of the Riley Center, an arts and cultural emporium operated by Mississippi State University. The building's Jewish provenance is visible to all who visit. Although fewer than forty Jews now live in Meridian, the Institute for Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) town history observes, "The Jewish role in Meridian's history is etched in the city's downtown buildings where the names of the great Jewish leaders who helped build the city are still seen."<sup>46</sup>

Huntsville, Margaret Anne Goldsmith observes, followed the new urbanism theme as a place to live, work and play. Innovative city planners inspired a downtown reinvention. Vacant buildings surrounding the courthouse square were gutted and remodeled into apartments and condominiums. Nouveau southern restaurants and food trucks turned the square into a night-time destination. An architect added an art gallery to his office. Artisanal pizza and imported coffee attest to the local arrival of the global South. A cosmopolitan culture linked to foreign economic markets draws people from everywhere. Bordering the courthouse square are tourist attractions, a park, and historic districts, Old Town and Twickenham, filled with antebellum homes. Blending into the neighborhood, newer buildings replicate a traditional Americana, an invented style without reference to time and place.<sup>47</sup>

In 1980 the I. Schiffman building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a site worthy of preservation. After renovating the building, Goldsmith continued to use the first-floor offices as an investment company as it had been. The rest of the building is put to uses well-suited for the new economy: the second floor was subdivided for a business incubator, and the offices there now house professionals—lawyers and a therapist. The third floor was remodeled into an apartment to provide a downtown residence for Goldsmith and her visiting family, a place where she can live, work, and play. In a front room overlooking the square, Goldsmith hosts salons, inviting local artists, writers, actors, musicians, and storytellers to nosh and perform.<sup>48</sup>

Goldsmith's preservation of the Schiffman building and its designation on the National Register elevate the building's architecture from the vernacular of its commercial origins to monumentality, a memorial to family and community heritage. The building's qualification for the register was an assertion of local identity, of community rootedness, that

contrasted with the generic homogenization that had marked urban renewal and suburbanization.<sup>49</sup> That sense of attachment to place was true despite Jewish communal mobility, and the I. Schiffman name over the doorway expresses the exceptionalism of the family's multigenerational persistence. Indeed, Goldsmith discovered that her father, uncle, and grandfather had filled the basement and ground floor vaults not just with business records but also with family papers and household artifacts from the Schiffmans and Goldsmiths dating back to their Bernstein and Herstein ancestors. Among the items in the "treasure chest" was a Holocaust archive of her grandmother's German family.<sup>50</sup> As family businesses, Jewish enterprises represented an emotional investment independent of their commercial value. An ever-growing literature by native southern Jews who live elsewhere draws nostalgic portraits of their parents and grandparents' family store, a keepsake of memories that they wish to pass on.<sup>51</sup>

Beyond the courthouse building, the Goldsmith and Schiffman family legacy is also engraved in Huntsville's sacred architecture, notably at Temple B'nai Sholom. During her out-of-town years, Goldsmith had retained her congregational membership, the place that her ancestors had helped found and where she had received her Jewish upbringing. Visiting, she could still see stained-glass windows her great-grandmother Betty Goldsmith had purchased in memory of her parents, Henrietta and Morris Bernstein, and her husband's parents, Henrietta and David Goldsmith. A brass plaque still indicated "donated by Mrs. Oscar Goldsmith" on the Eastlake-style ark gracing the bimah. Her great-great-uncle Solomon Schiffman's widow, Bertha, had honored her late husband with a large stained-glass window and two Eastlake chairs on the bimah. A marble plaque in the temple vestibule listed Oscar Goldsmith as a member of the building committee. In the rabbi's former study, Goldsmith directed the creation of a Huntsville Jewish Heritage Center, which was dedicated in 2017. The historic ark, Torah mantles, and bimah chairs, among the displayed artifacts and documentary material, offer "members of the greater Huntsville community," according to one observer, "especially from churches and schools, [a way] to learn about the city's Jewish history and about Judaism in the historic setting."<sup>52</sup> B'nai Sholom remains a viable congregation, but its membership of seven hundred now consists largely of Sunbelt émigrés who lack local

*Temple B'nai Sholom in Huntsville, 2017. (Photograph by Bryan Alan Bacon.)*

historical roots. Some third-generation families remain, but among the founding families, Goldsmith observes, "I'm the last one."<sup>53</sup>

Sunbelt temples often maintain such memorial display cases or rooms which house archives, Judaica, or graphic and documentary materials preserving and honoring the founding generation, whose families, in many cases, have long since departed. Architectural elements from an old temple—an ark, a stained glass window, a reader's desk—may be incorporated into a new edifice, symbolic of Jewish continuity even when Jews have moved on. In Natchez, where the community has all but expired, the historic B'nai Israel is no longer a functioning congregation but rather a museum under the auspices of the ISJL that includes exhibitions and screenings of the documentary "The Natchez Jewish Experience." As Jews abandon smaller communities, they take not just their activism but their synagogue Judaica to their new places of settlement. Torah scrolls are passed on to thriving congregations. The Chapel Hill Kehillah Synagogue in North Carolina includes a Temple Emanu-El Chapel that replicates a sanctuary in rural Weldon that is now an African

American church. The Chapel Hill congregation, founded in 1996, has Judaica from shuttered temples including stained-glass windows from Suffolk, Virginia, a *Ner Tamid* from Norfolk, a Torah scroll from Goldsboro, and menorahs from Lumberton, North Carolina.<sup>54</sup> A synagogue stands as a house of worship and as a monument of communal memory.

Cemeteries are another aspect of material culture that speak perpetually of Jewish presence. In rural towns dead Jews frequently outnumber living ones. Overgrown cemeteries haunt rural communities as crumbling monuments of a vanished Jewish presence. The Jewish custom of visiting the graves of parents and grandparents kept distant Jews linked to their ancestral homelands. Like synagogues, cemeteries in extinguished communities may materially connect absent Jews to their southern ancestry. In Huntsville, the Goldsmith family over generations took fiduciary and administrative responsibility for cemetery upkeep. Through the Birmingham Jewish Foundation, the Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr., Cemetery Maintenance Fund now ensures the care of the Jewish sections of the city's historic Maple Hill Cemetery. If not through associated federations or congregations, "friends of" committees or other such institutional efforts often maintain historical Jewish cemeteries. Every summer the ISJL, with the Harry S. Jacobs Camp, sponsors a cemetery restoration, the most recent in Osyka, Mississippi.<sup>55</sup>

The family's philanthropy has also erected monuments attesting to Jewish presence in the larger civic community. In memory of their grandmothers, family members in 1934 donated land for the Goldsmith-Schiffman Field, the city's first night-time athletic field. A state historical marker acknowledging the families now fronts the stone gateway and stadium, built by the Civil Works Administration.<sup>56</sup> Margaret Anne Goldsmith's father and grandfather contributed land surrounded by the family farm in memory of their mother and wife, Annie Schiffman Goldsmith, to the Big Cove Community for Mountain View Cemetery. The Lawrence Bernstein Goldsmith, Jr., Garden of Meditation and Remembrance is located in the oldest Jewish section of the city-owned Maple Hill Cemetery. Using six family-owned grave plots, Goldsmith created a garden that incorporates the stone that Oscar Goldsmith used to mount his horse, Morris Bernstein's property marker, and a sandstone walkway using stones from the Bernstein house. Later, in memory of her

ancestors, Goldsmith donated land for the Goldsmith Schiffman Wildlife Sanctuary and the Goldsmith Schiffman Elementary School. Jewish philanthropy gives an enlarged sense of Jewish presence. Almost every southern city can claim a Jewish name on a school building or a hospital, an arts center or a ball field, leaving an indelible mark on the built environment.

As families depart and Jewish communities erode, they also leave behind documents and artifacts. In what amounts to southern Jewish folklore, visitors to antiques stores recount finding candlesticks or silver cups, wondering if they once graced a Sabbath table. Custodians of documents or artifacts must choose whether to seek their preservation in local, state, regional, or national archives or museums, secular or Jewish. In some measure such decisions depend not only on the nature of the object itself and the capabilities of the collecting archive or museum, but also on the issue of identity, whether the donor envisions himself or herself in local, regional, or national terms. Judaica from expiring congregations are oftentimes recycled for use in growing Jewish communities.

National depositories, like the American Jewish Archives, American Jewish Historical Society, and the National Museum of American Jewish History, preserve and make accessible personal and community records. The Bernstein, Herstein, Schiffman, and Goldsmith Collections of family artifacts were donated to the National Museum of American Jewish History, where they constitute one of its largest collections and the only one documenting five generations of a German Jewish family in America. There are also regional Jewish collecting institutions like the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta, the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience in Mississippi, and the Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston. Goldsmith decided to place her family's United Jewish Appeal and Holocaust papers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. During the 1980s, 150 boxes of papers documenting the Schiffman business and the family's personal and commercial affairs went locally to the archives of the Huntsville Madison County Public Library as the Margaret Anne Goldsmith Collection, now being relocated to the University of Alabama in Huntsville. More recently, Margaret Anne Goldsmith has donated her personal archives, those of her grandfather Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.,



and additional archives of the temple, four families, and the Huntsville Jewish community archives to the University of Alabama in Huntsville's archival collections. Other artifacts were dispersed to local institutions attesting to the family's Huntsville roots. A dairy keeper from the Bernstein home went to the Burritt on the Mountain folk museum for the restored Bernstein Spring House, and her grandfather's Southern Railway locomotive bell, a collectible souvenir, now graces the Huntsville Depot Museum. Finally, Goldsmith donated five paintings by local artist Howard Weeden, which the artist originally sold to a Goldsmith ancestor, to the Huntsville Museum of Art. These artifacts speak to local, regional, national, and international roots, the complexities of a multifarious Jewish identity.

*Goldsmith Schiffman Elementary School. (Courtesy of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)*

American Jewish memorialization, in contrast to that of Europe with its tragic evocation of vanished persecuted communities, is as much a tribute to endurance as to loss. The I. Schiffman Building, still a viable enterprise after more than a century of Jewish ownership, attests to the constant reinvention that speaks to the specifically American character of American Jewry. It inspires rethinking of the common narrative of Jewish mobility and small-town decline. As historian Elliott Ashkenazi has noted, "The typical southern Jew, pictured as a peddler, then a store-

keeper, and then a merchant prince, has taken his place in history without serious examination of his actual functions and how they altered over time."<sup>57</sup> The I. Schiffman building's evolving functions and its imaginative reuse demonstrate Jewish adaptation to changing times, challenging a conventional paradigm of Jewish mercantilism as representative. The Jewish building environment created a lasting legacy apart from Jewish numbers. That its ownership has persevered for more than a century speaks to Jewish persistence, to the fact that family ties that bind southern Jews to their hometowns encompass more than commerce. That the name I. Schiffman has endured for more than a century in the civic center of an evolving city testifies to southern Jewish continuity in the face of community change. That four intertwined families maintained prosperity in one location for generations attests to their ability to adapt and meet challenges.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of "built environment" in the Jewish context, see Barry L. Stiefel, "Beyond Synagogues and Cemeteries: The Built Environment as an Aspect of Vernacular Jewish Material Culture in Charleston, South Carolina," *American Jewish History* 101 (April 2017): 202.

<sup>2</sup> Zebulon Vance made such a claim in his celebrated philosemitic speech, "The Scattered Nation." See Maurice Weinstein, ed., *Zebulon B. Vance and "The Scattered Nation"* (Charlotte, NC, 1995), 81-82.

<sup>3</sup> *American Jewish History* 101 (April 2017) includes a special section on "Jewish American Material Culture." This essay provides an additional case study in the use of such physical dimensions to extrapolate and symbolize broader themes.

<sup>4</sup> For works that draw similar conclusions concerning multiple migrations into and out of communities see, for example, James Lebeau, "Profile of a Southern Jewish Community: Waycross, Georgia," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 58 (June, 1969): 429-44; Louis Schmier, "Jews and Gentiles in a South Georgia Town," in *Jews in the South*, ed. Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier with Malcolm Stern (Macon, GA, 1984), 1-16; Wendy Lowe Besmann, *A Separate Circle: Jewish Life in Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville, TN, 2001); Leonard Rogoff, *Homelands: Southern Jewish Life in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa, 2001); Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven, CT, 2005); and Ira M. Sheskin, "The Dixie Diaspora: The 'Loss' of the Small Southern Jewish Community," in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark K. Bauman (Tuscaloosa, 2006), 165-88.

<sup>5</sup> A quixotic indication of the Jewish fascination with landholding is Moses Elias Levy's investment in plantation lands in east Florida in the 1820s, which included a utopian colony for persecuted Jews. See Chris Monaco, "A Sugar Utopia on the Florida Frontier: Moses Elias Levy's Pilgrimage Plantation," *Southern Jewish History* 5 (2002): 103-140.

<sup>6</sup> Scott M. Langston, "Being Jewish in Columbus, Georgia: The Business, Politics, and Religion of Jacob and Isaac Moses, 1828-1890," *Southern Jewish History* 18 (2015): 2-4; P. Allen Krause, ed. Mark K. Bauman with Stephen Krause, *To Stand Aside or Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement* (Tuscaloosa, 2016), 138, 188; Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 25. Bernard and Michael Gratz of Philadelphia purchased southern timberlands, and the Richmond, Virginia, slave firm of Cohen and Isaacs hired Daniel Boone to survey tracts. Lazarus also owned timberlands.

<sup>7</sup> Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 7, identifies a "classic era" extending from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

<sup>8</sup> Elliott Ashkenazi, *The Business of Jews in Louisiana, 1840-1875* (Tuscaloosa, 1988), 62-63.

<sup>9</sup> Rogoff, *Down Home*, 113; Stephen J. Whitfield, "Commerce and Community: A Business History of Jacksonville Jewry," *Southern Jewish History* 12 (2009): 128-29; Krause, *To Stand Aside*, 190; Paul A. Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.: His Life and Endeavors* (West Conshohocken, PA, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York, 1970); see also Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Harold M. Hyman, *Oleander Odyssey: The Kempners of Galveston, Texas, 1854-1980s* (College Station, TX, 1990), xviii.

<sup>12</sup> See Leonard Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil: Southern Jewish Progressive* (Chapel Hill, 2017), 8, 10-11.

<sup>13</sup> See "Huntsville: Historical Overview," ISJL Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed May 2, 2017, <http://www.isjl.org/alabama-huntsville-encyclopedia.html>. See also Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> "Huntsville: Historical Overview," accessed May 2, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> "Huntsville: Historical Overview," accessed April 18, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "The Bernstein, Herstein, Schiffman, and Goldsmith Collection: A Catalogue," (unpublished paper, October 28, 2011), 60; Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Lawrence B. Goldsmith Sr. and the Huntsville Alabama Jewish Community," in Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 17, 19; Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585-1984* (Lanham, MD, 1990), 12; *Huntsville Weekly Democrat*, May 28, 1898.

<sup>17</sup> Goldsmith, "A Catalogue," 68.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Stiefel, "Beyond Synagogues and Cemeteries," 206-207, 222; Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Lawrence B. Goldsmith Sr. and His Family" in Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Goldsmith, "A Catalogue," 68, 149.

<sup>20</sup> Paul A. Hays, *I. Schiffman & Company, Huntsville's Most Diversified Entrepreneurial Business* (West Conshohocken, PA, 2013), 41.

<sup>21</sup> Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> The literature on the intersection of urban and transportation history is extremely extensive. Helpful works include George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815–1860* (New York, 1951); Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870–1900* (Cambridge, MA, 1962); Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985).

<sup>23</sup> See Hays, *I. Schiffman* and Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 30–31.

<sup>24</sup> Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 19–23; Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 306–307. Weissbach notes that of the Jewish communities in America that had more than one hundred Jews in 1878, more than half were no longer listed in Jewish census data by 1983.

<sup>25</sup> Goldsmith, “Lawrence B. Goldsmith and His Family,” 11–12.

<sup>26</sup> “Temple B’nai Sholom,” accessed April 18, 2017, <http://templebnaisholom.com/temple-bnai-sholom/>; “Huntsville: Historical Overview,” accessed April 18, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> The building has had a colorful history. In second floor apartments lived attorney William Brockman Bankhead, later a congressman, whose wife Ada gave birth there in 1902 to a daughter, Tallulah, star of stage and screen.

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Anne Goldsmith, telephone interview conducted by Leonard Rogoff, May 4, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context* (Hanover, NH, 1999), 185.

<sup>30</sup> “Temple B’nai Sholom”; Harvie P. Jones, “The Architecture of the 1899 Temple of B’nai Sholom,” *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly* 20 (Winter 1994): 184–97.

<sup>31</sup> Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, 184–85.

<sup>32</sup> Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 22–23.

<sup>33</sup> Margaret Anne Goldsmith, “Introduction,” in Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 9–10.

<sup>34</sup> The boll weevil, international competition, and ultimately the introduction of synthetic materials negatively impacted cotton production in the South. See, for example, D. Clayton Brown, *King Cotton in Modern America: A Cultural, Political, and Economic History Since 1945* (Jackson, MS, 2013).

<sup>35</sup> Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 47, 97, 122.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>37</sup> Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 125; Whitfield, “Commerce and Community,” 150–51; Krause, *To Stand Aside*, 190.

<sup>38</sup> Goldsmith interview.

<sup>39</sup> Goldsmith interview; Abraham J. Karp, *Haven and Home: A History of the Jews in America* (New York, 1985), 310.

<sup>40</sup> Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 168.

<sup>41</sup> Goldsmith, "Lawrence B. Goldsmith and Family," 36; Goldsmith interview.

<sup>42</sup> Hays, *I Schiffman*, 170.

<sup>43</sup> On the impact of Walmart on downtown stores, see, for example, Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Hays, *I Schiffman*, 170.

<sup>45</sup> "The Peabody Hotel," accessed June 18, 2017, <http://www.historic-memphis.com/memphis-historic/peabody/peabody.html>. The Schwab store includes its own in-house museum dedicated to local history. In the tourist mecca of Asheville, North Carolina, folklorists placed a dozen memorial panels at downtown sites—at least one is a parking lot—documenting "The Family Store: A History of Jewish Businesses, 1880–1990." "About the Family Store," accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.history-at-hand.com/about-the-family-store/>.

<sup>46</sup> "Riley Center: History and Revovation," accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.msurileycenter.com/index.cfm/about-us/history-renovation>; "Meridian: Historical Overview," accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.isjl.org/mississippi-meridian-encyclopedia.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Goldsmith interview.

<sup>48</sup> Margaret Anne Goldsmith, e-mail to Leonard Rogoff, May 15, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> For a discussion of civic identity and the changing urban landscape, see Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 239–41.

<sup>50</sup> Goldsmith e-mail, May 15, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York, 1973); Stella Suberman, *The Jew Store* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); and Edward Cohen, *The Peddler's Grandson: Growing Up Jewish in Mississippi* (Jackson, MS, 1999).

<sup>52</sup> "Jewish Heritage Center Opens in Huntsville," *The Rambler: Newsletter of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* 21 (Spring 2017): 3, accessed July 25, 2017, <http://www.jewishsouth.org/rambler>.

<sup>53</sup> Goldsmith interview.

<sup>54</sup> "Natchez Sites & Exhibits," accessed May 2, 2017, <http://www.isjl.org/natchez-site--exhibits.html>. See also, Leonard Rogoff, *A History of Temple Emanuel: An Extended Family, Weldon, North Carolina* (Durham, NC, 2007).

<sup>55</sup> Diana Kogan, "Osyka Cemetery Restoration," accessed May 2, 2017, <http://www.isjl.org/osyka-cemetery-restoration.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Hays, *I Schiffman*, 41.

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PRIMARY SOURCES

Monuments and Memory: Fort Worth's  
World War I "Tribute to Our Boys"

by

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**"Tribute to Our Boys," Congregation Ahavath Sholom,  
Fort Worth, Texas, 1920, restored 2017**

The massive marble montage, etched with the names of eighty-one Jewish doughboys, imparts lessons about monuments, memory, and changing perceptions of the Great War waged a century ago. Unveiled in Fort Worth with fanfare and news coverage on Armistice Day 1920, the towering "TRIBUTE TO OUR BOYS ❖ WORLD WAR ❖ 1914-1918" was embedded in a lobby wall at the Hebrew Institute, a recreation and education building on the grounds of Congregation Ahavath Sholom.<sup>1</sup> With two Stars of David and a pair of American flags, the ten-foot-tall tableau echoed with cultural pluralism, expressing ethnic pride in a patriotic context and adding layers of meaning to the three-story downtown structure.<sup>2</sup>

Yet in 1951 when the Hebrew Institute closed, there was no designated space for the monument in the building that replaced it. The marble honor roll was dismantled, separated into several vertical tablets, and stacked in a storage room. Forgotten for the next three decades, the war memorial was rediscovered in the autumn of 1980 as the congregation readied to move into a midcentury-modern building. Overjoyed at the discovery, the building chairman, whose father's name was on the monument, opted to frame the four marble tablets and hang them in a landscaped courtyard at the entrance to the new house of worship.<sup>3</sup>

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Amid the excitement, no one realized that part of the original montage was missing—a fifth slab of marble inscribed with the monument’s date of origin and its sponsor, the Ladies Auxiliary to the Hebrew Institute. “If we had found any other pieces, we would have framed them,” insisted former congregation secretary Ethel Schectman, who was present the day the tablets resurfaced. “There was plenty of room to hang more pieces if we had found any.”<sup>4</sup> Inexplicably, an element of community history acknowledging efforts of women on the home front had disappeared. Nonetheless, the newly framed and arranged marble roster looked artistic and dignified in its outdoor setting. The veterans’ names, etched in black, were visible from afar: *Adelberg, Burling, Cohn, Gernsbacher, Jacobs, Katz, Rosenthal, Sturman, Veit*. Descendants of these soldiers still lived in the city. The monument conveyed continuity, *l’dor vador*.

With exposure to the sun and rain, however, the dark ink highlighting each veteran’s name faded. The colors on the American flags chipped away until the monument appeared virtually white-on-white. Only upon close examination could onlookers discern the deeply etched letters on the roster. Pedestrians walked by without noticing. Few members of Jewish War Veterans Post 755—the local men and women who had served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and Afghanistan—realized that a World War I memorial was in their midst.<sup>5</sup>

“Although monuments are built and dedicated with great enthusiasm,” observed G. Kurt Piehler, director of the Institute of World War II and the Human Experience, “interest in them frequently diminishes rapidly. In many places, monuments are not adequately maintained, and they deteriorate from the continual assault of pigeons and acid rain. . . . To most Americans the First World War—the war to end all wars—is not even a distant memory.”<sup>6</sup>

**Opposite:** *On Armistice Day 1942, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram ran this photograph of Rabbi Philip Graubart standing beside the original World War I Jewish honor roll, a marble montage embedded in a wall at the Hebrew Institute in Fort Worth. To the left was an easel with the names of local Jewish men and women then serving in World War II. (Courtesy of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries, Arlington, Texas.)*

In 2016, as the nation readied to mark the centennial of America's entry into World War I, three Texas historians began researching the names, biographies, and wartime experiences of the eighty-one soldiers listed on the tablets.<sup>7</sup> A call for World War I memorabilia reaped vintage photographs, mess kits, helmets, bayonets, and keepsakes that had belonged to grandfathers and great-uncles. These were displayed in curated exhibits at the city's two synagogues, for the doughboys had ties to both congregations—Ahavath Sholom (known as “the Shul”), a Conservative synagogue founded as Orthodox in 1892, and Beth-El (called “the temple”), a Reform congregation that dated to 1902. Among Fort Worth Jews, there had always been a degree of intermingling and intramarriage among families from the temple and the shul. During the World War I centennial year, Sunday school students from both congregations toured the exhibits. The United States World War One Centennial Commission added Fort Worth's Jewish monument to a map of First World War sites. A photo of the honor roll, along with a soldier's pocket-size siddur, was included in the multicultural section of a citywide World War I exhibit.<sup>8</sup> Ahavath Sholom's cemetery caretaker, a Catholic Air Force veteran, volunteered to darken the eighty-one names, install lighting, and return the monument to visibility.

During the centenary celebration, the Tribute to Our Boys reemerged as a cherished shrine and valuable primary source that provided facts about the Fort Worth Jewish community in the late 1910s, insight into the psychology of ethnic immigrant groups, and perspective on the Great War during the decades since. It became a hallowed place where descendants, veterans, and history buffs observed the mitzvah of honoring those who preceded them. The renewed interest demonstrates how anniversaries and commemorations can turn into highly reflexive moments, occasions to reframe and collectively analyze the past. As sociologist James W. Loewen writes in *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*, a monument is a “tale of two eras,” reflecting the present as well as the year when it was unveiled.<sup>9</sup> Thus this is the story of the monument and its multiple meanings.

#### *Wartime Roots*

On its face, Fort Worth's Tribute to Our Boys relayed the pride and optimism of its originator, the Ladies Auxiliary to the Hebrew Institute.

Jewish women on the home front were deeply connected to the war. At the downtown Hebrew Institute they wrapped bandages for the Red Cross, knit foot warmers for troops in the trenches, chaperoned Saturday night socials for soldiers, and invited Jewish personnel stationed in the region to Purim balls, Passover seders, and Hanukkah parties. In the educational sphere, the auxiliary supervised the Sabbath school at the Hebrew Institute, paid teacher salaries, upgraded kitchen equipment, and filled its treasury with profits from an annual New Year's Eve dinner for up to 250 guests.<sup>10</sup>

The Ladies Auxiliary dated to November 1915, the year the Hebrew Institute opened its doors. The auxiliary's forerunner, the Ladies Hebrew Relief Society (LHRS), boasted a membership of over two hundred women who organized in 1903 to help resettle destitute immigrants fleeing the Kishinev pogroms. According to its president, Texas-born Sarah Levy (Mrs. L. F.) Shanblum, whose spouse was a Polish immigrant, the relief society provided refugee families with food, coal, clothing, "friendship and sociability," and raised "many hundreds of dollars . . . for hospital fees and doctors."<sup>11</sup> In 1909, when Ahavath Sholom bought land for an Orthodox Jewish cemetery, an offshoot of the LHRS organized the Ladies Cemetery Society. This group's perennial president, Rebecca Goldstein, was an unmarried woman addressed as "Aunt Becky." Under her domineering leadership, the Ladies Cemetery Society stitched burial shrouds, paid a sexton, and raised money for concrete curbs around children's graves, walkways, fence repairs, topsoil, fertilizer, and shrubs.<sup>12</sup>

These assertive women combined forces in 1915 to form the Ladies Auxiliary to the Hebrew Institute. Although women held no seat on the board of the Hebrew Institute and had no vote at synagogue meetings, they had clout. They had developed the means and the moxie to steer projects through to completion. After the World War, their goal was to research, create, and underwrite the massive soldier honor roll that would become the focal point in the lobby of the Hebrew Institute. This project fit into their history of fostering unity and pride among the diverse elements within the Jewish community.

The auxiliary's charter president was Betty Gordon (Mrs. Sam) Rosen, a Beaumont native married to a Russian immigrant who was a leading builder in Fort Worth. Betty Rosen, along with auxiliary vice president Rebecca Goldstein, Sarah Shanblum, and others, initially gathered

local soldiers' names through word of mouth. They then publicized the project in the November 21, 1919, edition of the *Jewish Monitor*, a weekly ethnic newspaper published in Fort Worth. In the paper's widely read social column, "Mrs. Sam Rosen" announced the auxiliary's intention "to put up a tablet in the lobby of the Hebrew Institute upon which will be engraved the names of all Jewish boys who participated in the world war." The article listed sixty-eight soldiers, asked if any names were misspelled, and gave readers a four-day deadline to notify Rosen of additional sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers who merited inclusion on the tableau.<sup>13</sup> She received thirteen additional names.

Not surprisingly, the auxiliary missed several soldiers—among them 2nd Lt. David Carb, who enlisted at the war's outbreak and fought with the French Foreign Legion.<sup>14</sup> One soldier's name is misspelled—Private Sam Sheinberg, a Russian immigrant whose last name is incorrectly etched in stone as "Shoinberg," likely the way he pronounced it. The eighty-one soldiers ultimately listed on the tablet are grouped by rank, yet ten of their military grades are incorrect.<sup>15</sup> The tablet demoted one soldier from lieutenant to private. Nine soldiers, among them Betty Rosen's son, got promotions for posterity. In the early decades of the century, there was no feasible way for a volunteer association to comb through War Department records to verify names, ranks, and hometowns of soldiers.<sup>16</sup> Despite these omissions and flaws, Fort Worth's Tribute to Our Boys demonstrates the optimism and determination typical of grassroots groups that believed the conflict in Europe was the "war to end all wars."<sup>17</sup>

The United States entered the war in Europe on April 6, 1917. Less than six weeks later, Congress enacted the Selective Service Act requiring that males between ages twenty-one and thirty register for the National Army.<sup>18</sup> The war had begun during the summer of 1914 after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, triggered a chain reaction that pulled Russia, France, Germany, Belgium, and Great Britain into the conflict. Entangling alliances led to the involvement of more than one hundred countries and a conflagration soon characterized as the Great War. Meanwhile, Fort Worth, a southwestern city nicknamed Cowtown and home to more than eighty thousand residents, was keenly connected to wartime events. During summer 1916, the city's stockyards shipped 13,950 horses and mules to Allied cavalry troops overseas.<sup>19</sup>

*Camp Bowie from the air, taken from a page of the photograph album compiled by Sergeant C. P. Devos while the Royal Flying Corps was training in its winter quarters near Fort Worth, Texas, c. 1918.*  
(Wikimedia Commons.)

Following Congress's declaration of war, Fort Worth lobbied the War Department to construct a military post on the city's west side to train recruits from Texas and Oklahoma. The result was Camp Bowie, a 2,285-acre base with cavalry stables, barracks, trenches, a hospital, and a preexisting trolley line extending downtown. All local clergy, including the city's two rabbis, Ahavath Sholom's Charles Blumenthal and Beth-El's G. George Fox, became part-time chaplains.<sup>20</sup> The army camp brought the war into everyone's home. More than one hundred thousand soldiers passed through the facility for basic training. Three airfields opened around the city's periphery, drawing experienced Canadian fliers and American aviators in training. Air combat was in its infancy, and the Texas prairie, with its mild winters, was deemed ideal for flying runs.<sup>21</sup>

A fatal crash on January 15, 1918, killed Cadet James Jacob Joffe, a Jewish pilot from Manhattan. His "machine," an Airco de Havilland bomber, "crashed to the ground," according to news reports.<sup>22</sup> The local Jewish community responded with Orthodox rituals carried out by the

men's *chevra kadisha*, a white linen shroud sewn by the Ladies Cemetery Society, a funeral service conducted by Rabbi Blumenthal, and interment in a plain pine casket at Hebrew Cemetery. The aviator's name is not etched on the Hebrew Institute's marble honor roll. Technically, he was not one of "our boys" — not a local youth. Yet the local Jewish community tended to his burial and months later unveiled a granite tombstone inscribed in Hebrew and English with the epitaph: "Died in Service of His Country."<sup>23</sup>

*Gravestone of James Jacob Joffe, the Jewish pilot from Manhattan who died in a training flight near Fort Worth and is buried at Ahavath Sholom's Hebrew Cemetery. A Hebrew inscription reads: Here lies Yaakov Yokol, a Volunteer in the Army Pilot Unit, Son of Father Joffe, Born 5th of Elul 5655. (Courtesy of the Fort Worth Jewish Archives at Beth-El Congregation.)*

#### *Statistical Analysis of Honor Roll and Motivations to Fight*

The eighty-one soldiers listed on the Fort Worth tablets represented 3.6 percent of the local Jewish population of 2,250. (Citywide, the percentage of men in uniform was comparable.)<sup>24</sup> The Jewish roster includes twenty-two immigrants — all but one born in lands under imperial Russia. Twenty-three of the Fort Worth doughboys served in France. Family ties were common among these servicemen. The marble roster lists thirteen sets of brothers, four sets of brothers-in-law, and five clusters of cousins.

The interrelationships among these soldiers illustrate the tight-knit nature of the Jewish community. These connections also explain Betty Rosen's confidence that an item published in the social columns of the *Jewish Monitor* would adequately spread word of the Ladies Auxiliary's plans for an honor roll set in stone.

One soldier listed on the honor roll has a star by his name, indicating death in combat. He was twenty-seven-year-old Private Samuel Elly Raiz. Raiz, a naturalized American from Lithuania who had come to the United States eleven years earlier and moved in with an aunt and uncle, was reported missing in action September 19, 1918, during the bloody battle of Saint-Mihiel. His remains were never recovered. Thus his name is among 284 inscribed on the Tablet of the Missing at Saint-Mihiel American Cemetery and Memorial in Thiaucourt-Regniéville, Lorraine, France. In Texas, he had managed an office in Wichita Falls for his extended family's pipe and supply business. Although working 115 miles away from Fort Worth, he was registered with a local draft board. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported that Raiz was Tarrant County's fourteenth overseas casualty.<sup>25</sup>

Another immigrant on the honor roll, Polish-born Private Tony Bergman, a naturalized American, survived the battle of Saint-Mihiel. He returned to Texas still carrying a flame for his childhood sweetheart, Rosa Oberhaut, a Warsaw girl he yearned to bring to America and marry. After the war, she was still in Poland, contending with bureaucracies on both sides of the ocean. She finally reached Ellis Island in January 1921, only to be blocked by skeptical U.S. immigration officials who doubted her story of a fiancé in Fort Worth, a shoemaker with his own shop. Authorities detained Rosa several days until Tony arrived in New York, armed with a marriage license issued from the Tarrant County Courthouse.<sup>26</sup>

Also named on the monument is Sergeant Byron Gernsbacher, a second-generation Texan assigned to the Army's Graves Registration Service. His gruesome task had been to oversee "seventy-five men, looking everywhere for the bodies of the Americans, through thickets, bushes and briars, with deep snow on the ground." In a letter to his hometown newspaper, he wrote, "The majority of the men that the battalion has buried are men of the Ninetieth Division, who were killed in the great Saint-Mihiel drive." The sergeant, whose father was among the founders of Beth-

*Items related to Private Samuel Raiz, a Texas soldier missing in action, are part of Fort Worth's exhibit "Our Jewish Soldiers in 'The Great War.'" Raiz, who fought with the 360th Infantry, died September 19, 1918, during the Battle of Saint-Mihiel. The helmet, on loan from the Military Museum of Fort Worth, is identical to equipment issued to Raiz. On the underside of the rim, the soldier who wore the helmet printed the names of the battles in which he fought. Raiz's picture and World War I service card are included in the exhibit, as is text from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reporting his death.*

*(Courtesy of the Fort Worth Jewish Archives at Beth-El Congregation.)*

El Congregation, returned to Fort Worth and his family's kitchen supply business in 1919.<sup>27</sup> The names of two of his brothers, Roy and Laurence Gernsbacher, are also etched on the honor roll.

Although no draft dodging was reported among Jews from Fort Worth, a twenty-two-year-old recruit listed on the Hebrew Institute's monument took his own life in a central Texas hotel room near his training base and was buried in Ahavath Sholom's Hebrew Cemetery.<sup>28</sup> His death is not alluded to on the tablets.



*The Melting-Pot Army*

During and even after the wartime era, questions of dual loyalty plagued Jews and other ethnic immigrant communities across the United States. Would German immigrants fight the Kaiser? Would Irish loyalists rally behind Great Britain and champion the Allies? Could Italian Americans be loyal to both the United States and the Pope? Irish and German coalitions that lobbied for U.S. neutrality provided reason for suspicion.<sup>29</sup> Advertisers boycotted German-language newspapers, forcing many out of business; high schools dropped German-language classes; "volunteer watchdog societies" spied on previously popular and jocular German-American gatherings and reported afterwards to federal officials. "Any phrases that sounded German were changed."<sup>30</sup>

In Fort Worth, Ella Behrens, an Army nurse at the Camp Bowie hospital, was overheard conversing in German with a colleague and singing a German lullaby to a patient. Although born in Texas, Behrens was of German descent. She was jailed for eight days on suspicion of being an enemy agent and contaminating soldiers' food with influenza germs. Upon her release, she received a dishonorable discharge for being AWOL during her stay in the city jail. "For years, she lived with the stigma of being 'the German spy,'" and she could not find employment. She fought to clear her name. In 1949, when Behrens turned sixty-seven, an army review board exonerated her, describing the nurse as a victim of "war time rumors." The review board changed her military discharge to "honorable" and ordered her reimbursement for back pay.<sup>31</sup>

The stigma against Germans even affected the British-born rabbi at Houston's Congregation Beth Israel. In 1920 he legally changed the spelling of his surname from *Barnstein* to *Barnston* after New York customs officials, suspecting he was German, rudely detained him when he reentered the U.S. after a visit to England.<sup>32</sup>

Wild xenophobia seeped into every corner of American life, and Jews also faced concerns about possible dual loyalties. Would Jews who had fled conscription in the Czar's army fight under the Stars and Stripes? Was Zionism in sync with the Allied cause? For Jews, the answer was "yes" to both questions. American Jews, similar to Slavic Americans, had multiple motives for fighting, mainly the relief of relatives stranded in

war-torn eastern Europe and the hope for self-determination and nationhood for their people. The Great War gave Jews reason to believe that “the early Zionist vision” might be “transformed from fantasy to reality.” When the Ottoman Empire entered the Great War on the side of the Central Powers, Jews took heart. Among the Allies’ goals was ousting the Turks from Jerusalem. Great Britain, moreover, issued the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, favoring “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”<sup>33</sup>

When Jerusalem fell to the British in December 1917, Jews in Fort Worth rejoiced with a celebration at the Hebrew Institute. Rabbis delivered speeches. Children from Beth-El and Ahavath Sholom performed a “historical sketch, portraying the principal events in the history of Palestine for centuries past . . . and show[ed] the capture of Jerusalem and the return of the Jews to the Holy Land.” At the pageant’s conclusion, adults elected delegates to the Texas Zionist Association’s upcoming convention. The evening ended with musical renditions of *Hatikvah* and *The Star Spangled Banner*. Several soldiers whose names are etched on the World War I honor roll came from families active in the Fort Worth Zionist chapter. These included Sol Wolffson, who worked with the Jewish Welfare Board before being drafted, and the Jacobs brothers: Sam, who served in an infantry unit, and Harry, who trained for the cavalry. In Fort Worth, many young Jewish men of their generation grew up observing Judaic traditions and embracing their dual identity, the same sentiment broadcast on the marble honor roll with its images of American flags and Stars of David.<sup>34</sup>

War memorials elsewhere across America reflect similar pride and ethnic pluralism among minority communities. For example, a bronze honor roll attached to two vertical standards in Ossining, New York, is dedicated to Swedish Methodist soldiers. In Richmond, Virginia, a bronze honor roll and a stained-glass window honoring Jewish participation in the war are in the vestibule and sanctuary at Congregation Beth Ahabah.<sup>35</sup> An honor roll unveiled in 1919 at the Jewish Hospital in Philadelphia listed eighty-four staff physicians and nurses who took part in the war, among them three with gold stars next to their names. In other locales, memorials to Russian, Slavic, and Polish doughboys are part of the landscape. Native Americans, too, drew attention to their American patriotism with monuments in Arizona, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin that highlight

wartime service of Choctaw, Osage, Pima, and Winnebago soldiers. African Americans erected at least nineteen memorials, a dozen located in southern and border states.<sup>36</sup> Blacks touted their service even though the War Department assigned African Americans to segregated platoons with white commanding officers. The military, nonetheless, worked hard to “forge a new relationship between new immigrant[s] . . . and their adopted country.”<sup>37</sup>

The armed forces had little choice but to foster pride in America’s ethnic pluralism. Eighteen percent of United States troops were foreign-born. The army counted among its ranks soldiers of forty-six nationalities and sixty-seven different religions.<sup>38</sup> To mold soldiers of such diverse backgrounds into fighting units, the War Department consulted sociologists and ethnic organizations. Where needed, bilingual soldiers fluent in Italian, Polish, Russian, Yiddish, and an array of Slavic languages were assigned to platoons with a multitude of immigrants. Regulations forbade officers from using ethnic slurs. In concert with the YMCA, Knights of Columbus, and Jewish Welfare Board, the War Department adopted measures to help soldiers maintain “pride in ethnicity” and “instill American patriotism and loyalty.” Chaplains (among them twelve rabbis assigned to the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe) learned to administer rituals of many faiths. Soldiers received furloughs for cultural holidays. Greek soldiers, for example, received furloughs for the Feast of St. Nicholas.<sup>39</sup> Jews were allowed days off to attend observances for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Passover. Historian Christopher Sterba, who examined Jewish and Italian American enclaves in New York City and New Haven, Connecticut, concluded that those who served in uniform were no longer “as culturally and politically isolated as they were before 1917.”<sup>40</sup>

Fort Worth’s Jews, comprising a mere 0.3 percent of the local population, were already deeply entwined in their local civic community because there were not enough Jews to remain isolated or ghettoized. In Fort Worth, for example, as early as 1896, the mayor attended the Jewish community’s annual Purim Ball.<sup>41</sup> At the groundbreaking for the Hebrew Institute in 1914, according to the *Star-Telegram*, children sang “both patriotic melodies and the sacred songs of Zion.”<sup>42</sup> The mayor presciently spoke of the “patriotism” of American Jews, noting that two months earlier, when President Woodrow Wilson had ordered Marines to intervene

in Mexico, “one of the first soldiers to die for the flag at Vera Cruz” was Jewish.<sup>43</sup> Six years later, when the Tribute to Our Boys was unveiled, similar speeches and music were an integral part of the occasion.

*Postwar Letdown*

Following the armistice and pronouncements of pluralism surrounding the Allied victory, recession and unemployment gradually gripped the nation. Unemployment fed nativism, antisemitism, and the Ku Klux Klan. “The anti-foreign animus of the native white stock” grew vocal.<sup>44</sup> Pressure to be “100% American” increased. Optimistic, altruistic words mouthed during Victory Day celebrations and etched on marble monuments no longer rang true. In the early 1920s, Congress enacted restrictive immigration laws. In Fort Worth, veterans of the Great War aged as they weathered the Great Depression. In the wake of the disastrous treaty ending the war, the threat of another war could not be denied. Cynicism and disenchantment developed toward the Great War.<sup>45</sup> Americans realized how naïve they had been to believe in a war to end all wars. With Hitler’s Nazi army on the march in 1939, the Great War became the “First” World War. Monuments that “legitimize[d] the war” seemed obsolete.<sup>46</sup>

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Fort Worth Jewish community began posting an alphabetical list of local men and women who joined the armed forces. This time no grassroots movement arose to etch names in stone. Rather, the Ladies Auxiliary’s long-range plan was to engage a scribe to write each soldier’s name in calligraphy on a paper scroll, a less permanent, less costly endeavor. Finances had little to do with this decision. Both congregations were booming, as was Fort Worth’s aeronautics industry, which recruited hundreds of out-of-town engineers and assembly-line workers. “After World War II ended, communities were not about to rush out to commemorate it,” sociologist Loewen observed. “[T]heir experience with World War I memorials had soured them on the enterprise. . . . Moreover, the Cold War began immediately, so no one could be sure that the fruits of victory included peace.”<sup>47</sup>

In 1951, Fort Worth’s Jewish World War I memorial was disassembled and put into storage when the Hebrew Institute’s doors were shuttered. At that time, twenty-four of the veterans whose names were

*Pvt. Samuel Sheinberg, a Russian immigrant and western-wear salesman, applied for citizenship while in uniform. On the honor roll, his name is misspelled as "Shoinberg," likely the way he pronounced it.  
(Courtesy of Nancy Sheinberg.)*

*Pvt. Shady Sankary, a Syrian immigrant, was the father of Al Sankary, the building committee chairman who in 1980 rediscovered the marble honor roll.  
(Courtesy of the Fort Worth Jewish Archives at Ahavath Sholom.)*

*2nd Lt. David Greines, a quartermaster during World War I and an attorney in civilian life, was Ahavath Sholom's building committee chairman in 1950 when the marble honor roll was dismantled and placed in storage.  
(Courtesy of the Fort Worth Jewish Archives at Beth-El Congregation.)*

inscribed on the honor roll still lived in the city. Many of those men were active in Jewish and civic affairs. Surprisingly, no space was reserved in the next house of worship to display the honor roll. This was likely a conscious decision, because the building committee's general chairman was David Greines, a veteran whose name was among the eighty-one inscribed on the war monument.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the Ladies Auxiliary was still active; its existing minutes from the early 1950s make no mention of the marble tablets. Americans were experiencing war fatigue. With World War II in the past and the Korean War under way, the Great War had lost its relevance and luster.

Elsewhere, many World War I memorials fell to neglect. In the Baltimore suburbs, a granite monument to Jewish veterans erected during the 1920s on the grounds of the Mt. Pleasant Sanatorium Jewish Home for Consumptives was abandoned to weeds when the hospital closed in the 1960s.<sup>49</sup> On monuments at Stevenson Park in Oak Park, Illinois, and Forest Hills in Boston, metal memorial plaques disappeared. At Saratoga Park in Brooklyn, New York, thieves stole a doughboy sculpture. In Omaha, Nebraska, a statue lost its left hand in 1941 and vanished altogether in 1974. Art historian Mark Levitch, who in 2009 embarked on a quest to inventory World War I monuments across the U.S., documented damaged, vandalized, and crumbling statuary nationwide. "In our country, we give most attention to World War II and the Civil War," he said in a 2014 interview. "World War I is very much overlooked."<sup>50</sup>

In Fort Worth, what was stowed away and forgotten in the 1950s resurfaced as a treasure in 1980. "I remember how excited we were when we found it," said Ethel Schectman, former congregational secretary. "It was in a storage room behind the main sanctuary. We didn't even know it was there. It shows we still remembered our roots."<sup>51</sup> Among those who shared her excitement was building chairman Al Sankary, whose father's name is inscribed on the monument. Another familiar name on the monument was eighty-four-year-old philanthropist Leo Potishman, one of the Jewish community's few surviving World War I veterans. Fittingly, Potishman was honorary building chairman. Sankary made the decision to frame each of the four tablets and mount them outdoors, where their colors faded as the war once again receded into the past.<sup>52</sup>

*Centennial Observations*

The World War I centenary has led to reexamination of the Great War from its origins to its battles, its scope, its peace treaty, and its relevance. The Great War ushered in an era of potential mass destruction. Its outcome shaped events as well as the map of the world for the next century. The United States emerged as a world policeman. Ethnic hostilities in the Balkans, which touched off the war, simmer still. War turned into a "continuum," and Armistice Day became Veterans Day.<sup>53</sup>

If, as the sociologist James Loewen observed, a war memorial is a "tale of two eras," what sort of stories emerge from Fort Worth's Tribute to Our Boys and from the myriad stone, metal, and glass monuments across the nation that pay homage to the war? One trend is honor rolls.<sup>54</sup> World War I, which introduced aerial bombs, mustard gas, and indiscriminate carnage, minimized the individual. The database of the World War I Memorial Inventory Project reveals a nationwide movement to produce honor rolls that listed not only those who perished, but all soldiers regardless of their role. High school and college alumni groups, fraternities, railroad employee unions, postal workers, and churches produced soldier honor rolls. These countless community honor rolls served to elevate the "status of the common soldier" and "democratize the memory of modern war."<sup>55</sup> Thus, Fort Worth's Tribute to Our Boys was part of a national trend.

In 1921 the numbing machinery of modern war and the post-World War I grassroots emphasis on the individual led Congress to follow the lead of Britain and France to create the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. The ritual caught on. Acknowledging that in every war many battlefield dead go unidentified, more than forty nations from Argentina to Zimbabwe today commemorate with honor and pageantry an unknown soldier. Despite rising body counts, honor rolls and homages to unknown soldiers remind people that wars are waged by solitary soldiers, each with a poignant story.

The stories told in 1920 when the Fort Worth monument was unveiled were of youths ready to conquer the world and celebrate their hyphenated, bicultural identities. Biographies of these same men, researched over the past year, reveal that "our boys" went into retailing, real estate, medicine, law, philanthropy, politics, electronics, engineering, and

international business. One soldier, Ephriam Rosen, is the namesake of a Fort Worth city street. Another, Ben Rosenthal, has a small park named in his honor. A third, Leo Potishman, set up an eponymous foundation that contributes to the arts and social causes. A fourth, Abe Greines (whose brother David is also listed on the monument) became president of the school board and was honored with his name on an athletic complex. Most of "our boys" married, had children and grandchildren, and moved far afield. Twenty of the eighty-one doughboys named on the monument have relatives who remain part of the Fort Worth Jewish community. The honor roll has echoes of past and present as well as meaning for the future.

To some analysts, a war memorial is a comforting way to see the past "through a veil of nostalgia."<sup>56</sup> To others, a memorial is never "stable and objective" but rather a place for an "interpretation of history."<sup>57</sup> "Perceptions of irony prevail," declared cultural historian Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Referring to World War I as a "terrible and apparently pointless war of attrition," he conceded that monuments offer the "comfort of remembering."<sup>58</sup> His views resonate in the works of Viet Thanh Nguyen, a Vietnamese American who links America's victories in the world wars with its continuing military involvement in third-world nations. With echoes of cultural pluralism and ambivalence, Nguyen writes, "America promises hybridity to its newcomers, the dream of becoming something different on American soil." As he wrestles with the validity of war monuments, particularly those that record names, he concludes that a wall is "a site of memory [and] it is better to have a memorial that can be ignored than no memorial at all."<sup>59</sup>

Although Fort Worth's Tribute to Our Boys was unveiled in 1920 in a small Jewish enclave in a far corner of the diaspora, those who created the monument were neither small-minded nor myopic. The war monument demonstrates deep religious roots and continuity of tradition stretching to biblical times and the Book of Joshua. After Joshua led forty thousand soldiers across the Jordan River, his warriors constructed a monument of twelve heavy stones, each representing a tribe of Israel. While consecrating the monument, Joshua said, "When your children shall ask . . . in time to come. . . What mean these stones? . . . let your children know."<sup>60</sup> Biblical liturgy also provides precedent for rosters of remembrance. The prophet Isaiah declared that even those who have no



descendants shall have “within my walls a monument . . . an everlasting memorial.”<sup>61</sup> The words Isaiah used were *yad vashem*, implying a towering monument to memorialize names and deeds. The prophet’s enduring phrase became the name of Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Center, which seeks to record the honor roll of individuals who perished in the Shoah. War monuments, from ancient days to the present, stand as primary sources that bring a search for meaning, remembrance, and identity to their surroundings.

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**“Tribute to Our Boys,” Congregation Ahavath Sholom,  
Fort Worth, Texas, 1920, restored 2017**

*(Photograph by Ellen Appel. Courtesy of the Fort Worth Jewish Archives  
at Congregation Ahavath Sholom.)*

## NOTES

Special thanks to Bob Sumien, owner of Professional Irrigation landscapers, for volunteering to restore the World War I memorial. Kudos to Joann English, secretary at Ahavath Sholom, who formatted the earliest drafts of this article for an eight-page, fold-over booklet, "Our Jewish Soldiers in 'The Great War': Commemorating the Centennial of WWI." The booklet, which accompanies the exhibits at Beth-El and Ahavath Sholom, provides a chronology of the tablets' whereabouts and names the sets of brothers, brothers-in-law, and cousins among the local veterans, as well as the doughboys who were immigrants and those who served overseas. An article published in the *Texas Jewish Post* on March 30, 2017, commemorating the World War I centenary and publicizing a service at Ahavath Sholom, summarizes the history of the tablets and includes eight paragraphs from this essay.

<sup>1</sup> "Tablets in Honor of Jewish Veterans to be Unveiled," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 13, 1920; "Jewish War Memorial Slab to be Unveiled," *Dallas Morning News*, November 14, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> James M. Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond* (New York, 1988), 4; John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 1992), 59.

<sup>3</sup> The building chairman was Abraham "Al" Sankary, whose father, Sh'Hade "Shady" Sankary, was a Syrian immigrant whose World War I photo in uniform is in the Ahavath Sholom anniversary book. *Congregation Ahavath Sholom, 5741-1980* (Fort Worth, 1980), 77, 81.

<sup>4</sup> "I think whatever they found they used. It's possible one of the pieces got broken in the earlier move, or been damaged for all we know when they were taking it off the wall. What we found is what was put out there. If we had found any other pieces, it would have all been together in that place. There was plenty of room in the storage room to have more pieces." Ethel Schechtman, interviews conducted by Hollace Weiner, November 16, 2016, and March 2, 2017. Schechtman was secretary of the congregation in the early 1950s and president of the Ladies Auxiliary from 1970 to 1971. Existing Ladies Auxiliary records from the early 1950s do not mention the war monument. Ladies Auxiliary Collection, Fort Worth Jewish Archives, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Fort Worth, TX (hereafter cited as Ladies Auxiliary Collection and FWJAAS).

<sup>5</sup> Fort Worth's Jewish War Veterans Martin Hochster Post 755 was started in 1994, when the monument had already faded to white-on-white.

<sup>6</sup> G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC, 2014), 5.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the coauthors of this article, the third historian is Julian Haber, who wrote biographical vignettes of more than twenty soldiers and their military roles. Julian Stuart Haber, *The Yanks are Coming, Over There, Over There: Stories of Fort Worth Jewish American Soldiers in World War One* (Fort Worth, TX, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> *Abridged Prayer Book for Jews in the Army and Navy of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1917); *From Cowboy to Doughboy; North Texas in World War I: Mobilizing for The Great War*, Fort Worth Central Library, July 9, 2017–October 20, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York, 1999), 21, 23.

<sup>10</sup> Information gleaned from auxiliary minutes (1925–1927), president reports, and anniversary summaries. Ladies Auxiliary Collection. Similarly, in Charlotte, NC, the local section of the National Council of Jewish Women “turned the temple basement into a rec room for soldiers at [nearby] Camp Greene.” Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 187.

<sup>11</sup> Mrs. L. F. [Sarah Levy] Shanblum, “Ladies Hebrew Relief Society,” in “Sketch of Jewish Institutions of Fort Worth,” *Jewish Monitor*, September 10, 1915.

<sup>12</sup> “Minutes of the Ladies Cemetary [sic] Society of Ahavath Sholom,” 1915–1934, FWJAAS. These delightfully written minutes are in English, while the men’s *chevra kadisha* minutes were in Yiddish until 1939 with only a few pages translated into English. The Ladies Cemetery Society minutes describe how diligently they collected dues, observed Jewish burial rituals, and upgraded the cemetery. They bought yards of linen when it went on sale at L. G. Gilbert’s department store and sewed shrouds—a major source of income. After years battling the city to extend water mains within reach of the cemetery, the Ladies Cemetery Society supervised the installation of pipes to connect to the municipal water supply. The pipes were donated by the Ginsburg family, which operated Missouri Iron and Metal, a pipe-and-supply business.

<sup>13</sup> “Fort Worth News,” *Jewish Monitor*, November 21, 1919. “The Ladies’ Auxiliary to the Hebrew Institute is prepared to put up a tablet in the lobby of the Hebrew Institute upon which will be engraved the names of all Jewish boys who participated in the world war. The names on the tablet will be arranged alphabetically and in accordance with their ranks. The following names were recorded with the committee for this purpose and the committee requests that if there is any omission or name or rank or misspelling, same should be reported at the Hebrew Institute not later than Monday morning, 12 a.m., either by calling personally or through the phone, Lamar 6872.” The names of sixty-eight men followed. Many misspellings—such as *Cohen* for *Cohn*, *Greinis* for *Greines* and *Grensbacher* for *Gernsbacher*—were corrected on the tablet.

<sup>14</sup> David Carb, a Harvard graduate, poet, critic, and playwright, was among the idealists who romanticized the Great War. In June 1915 he volunteered for the American Red Cross Ambulance Service and ultimately became a soldier with the French Artillery, 29th Battery, 244th Regimente Colonial Artillerie and saw action at the 2nd Battle of Ypres, Champagne-Marne Defensive, and Meuse-Argonne. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre with a silver star. The citation reads: “David Carb, Cadet, an American citizen having already served France as a stretcher-bearer in 1915, volunteered in the French Artillery in 1918, and was during his stay in the battery a constant example for the personnel by his enthusiasm, his courage and his high morale.” War Records Committee, MIT Alumni Association, *Technology’s War Record: An Interpretation of the Contribution Made by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Its Staff, Its Former Students, and Its Undergraduates to the Cause of the United States and the Allied Powers in the Great War, 1914–1919* (Cambridge, MA, 1920), accessed August 23, 2016, <https://www.classicbooksandephemera.com/pages/books/002883/technologys-war-record-an-interpretation-of-the-contribution-made-by-the-massachusetts>. Another American Jewish soldier who volunteered for the ambulance service and the French

Foreign Legion was North Carolina's Arthur "Bluey" Bluethenthal, a Princeton University graduate and an aviator shot down and killed during a German attack over France in June 1918. Twice awarded the Croix de Guerre, Bluethenthal became the namesake of Bluethenthal Field, the forerunner of Wilmington International Airport. His portrait, which for decades hung in the airport lobby, was removed during recent renovations and is to be replaced with a wall panel and photos describing his service and the airfield's 1928 dedication. Heather Yenco, curator Cape Fear Museum, New Hanover County, NC, telephone conversation with Hollace Ava Weiner, April 19, 2015. See also, Rogoff, *Down Home*, 185.

<sup>15</sup> Lynna Kay Shuffield and Hollace Ava Goldberg Weiner, "Tablet of World War I Veterans Dedicated on 11 Nov. 1920 by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Hebrew Institute, Fort Worth, Tarrant Co., TX, As Well As Additional [Jewish] WWI Veterans of Tarrant Co., TX: A Biographical Collection" (Fort Worth, 2016). The tablet of World War I veterans consists of 118 typewritten pages, one or two for each local Jewish soldier. The complete collection is in a three-ring binder at each synagogue exhibit and is available from the authors as a pdf file. Conclusions about discrepancies in rank are based on county courthouse discharge documents and records at the Texas Military Forces Museum at Camp Mabry, Austin, TX. Among local soldiers omitted from the final tableaux but included in this biographical collection are Sgt. Lee Gernsbacher (whose three nephews made the roster), Isaac Sturman (whose brother Joseph is on the list), Robert Katz, whose brother Irving is named, and Abe Greines, whose two younger brothers made the honor roll.

<sup>16</sup> Lynna Kay Shuffield has found discrepancies in ranks on numerous county honor rolls erected by local Texas groups dating back to the Civil War. Some errors reflect veterans' boasts, while others reflect civilians' unfamiliarity with ranks within each branch of service.

<sup>17</sup> During August 1914, H. G. Wells wrote articles in London newspapers, later published in a book titled *The War That Will End War*. The title morphed into "war to end all wars," an idealistic catch phrase that turned sardonic with the outbreak of World War II. Wells wrote: "The way will open at last for all these Western Powers to organise peace. . . . Every sword that is drawn against Germany is now a sword drawn for peace. . . . The creation of this opportunity [is] the great ends for which we are so gladly waging this war." H. G. Wells, *The War That Will End War* (London, 1914), 11, 14, 19, 37, 38, 43–44. President Woodrow Wilson used the phrase once, yet it became cynically associated with him. Joyce Goldberg, e-mail exchange with Hollace A. Weiner, August 18, 2016. See also Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (Louisville, KY, 1998); Adam Hochschild, *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914–1918* (Boston, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> "The greatest number of deferments, 43 per cent . . . , went to married men with dependents to support." Rather than drafting married men, Congress expanded the age range of recruits from eighteen to forty-five. Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, The Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore, 2001): 18–19.

<sup>19</sup> *Fort Worth Record*, July 5, 1916, cited in Dawn Youngblood, "Tarrant County Archives World War I Timeline," accessed May 18, 2017, <https://www.northtexasworldwar1centennial.org/resources>. "In 1917, at the height of World War I, Fort Worth was the largest horse and mule market in the world," according to "Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District," accessed April 2, 2017, <http://www.fortworthstockyards.org/history>; *Texas Almanac*,

"City Population History from 1850-2000," accessed February 14, 2017, <https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Blumenthal, who received *semicha* in Europe, had a son, Sam, in uniform during the war. Sam Blumenthal's name appears on the Fort Worth honor roll. G. George Fox, a Reform rabbi raised in Chicago, took a seven-month leave of absence in 1917 to become interim secretary of the B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League office in Chicago, where he worked with that organization's Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare League. The league competed with the Jewish Welfare Board to become the "prime Jewish war agency," working with the War Department to provide services to Jewish soldiers. G. George Fox, "The End of an Era," in *Lives and Voices: A Collection of American Jewish Memoirs*, ed. Stanley Chyet (Philadelphia, 1972), 283-84. For details on the turf war between the Jewish Welfare Board and B'nai B'rith, see Jessica Cooperman, "The Jewish Welfare Board and Religious Pluralism in the American Military of World War I," *American Jewish Archives* 98 (October 2014): 237-61.

<sup>21</sup> Hollace Ava Weiner, *River Crest Country Club: The First Hundred Years* (Fort Worth, 2011), 78-84; The only hardback book on Camp Bowie's history is the pastiche of news articles, recollections, and photographs compiled by Bernice B. Maxfield and William Jary, Jr., *Camp Bowie, Fort Worth, 1917-1918, An Illustrated History of the 36th Division in the First World War* (Fort Worth, 1975).

<sup>22</sup> "Hicks Field Airman Falls to His Death," *Houston Post*, January 16, 1918; "Fort Worth Deaths and Funerals," *Dallas Morning News*, January 18, 1918, and January 19, 1918. Airman Joffe's tombstone at Ahavath Sholom's Hebrew Cemetery, 415 N. University Drive, Fort Worth, TX, refers to his rank as lieutenant, but while in training airmen remained cadets.

<sup>23</sup> Translated, the Hebrew inscription reads: "Here lies Yaakov Yokol, a volunteer in the Army pilot unit, son of father Joffe, born on 5th of Elul in 5655," which was September 5, 1895, on the western calendar, a three-week discrepancy from the August 14, 1895, birth date on his military records. The use of his Yiddish nickname, "Yokol," is an indication that Rabbi Blumenthal was acquainted with the aviator. Apparently, no one knew the name of the pilot's father, who is simply identified in Hebrew as "father Joffe." According to the 1910 U.S. Census, the pilot's father was Abraham Joffe, who emigrated in 1903 from Russia with his wife and six children. The 1910 census lists the aviator's first name as Jake, but military records identify him as James J. Joffe. He apparently anglicized his name. Joffe's draft registration cites his birthplace as "Asia Minor." Military death records cite his birthplace as "Baku, Asia Minor, Russia," in present-day Azerbaijan. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, New York County, New York. Joffe served in the Aviation Section Signal Reserve Corps, according to his death certificate. Texas State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Standard Certificate of Death, Reg. Dis. No. 4307, Tarrant County, January 15, 1918.

<sup>24</sup> "Statistics of the Jews," *American Jewish Year Book, 1919-1920* (Philadelphia, 1919), 608. More than 4.7 million men and women served in the American armed forces during World War I. The U.S. Census recorded the nation's population at around 103 million. "Historical National Population Estimates: July 1, 1900 to July 1, 1999," Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 30, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/population/estimates/nation/popclockest.txt>.

<sup>25</sup> "Tarrant County Wounded List Contains 36 Names Now; Slain Soldier Left Parents in Russia," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 24, 1918; Find a Grave Memorial No. 56341782,

accessed March 25, 2017, <https://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSvcid=665499&GRid=56341782&>.

<sup>26</sup> Tony Bergman served with the 111th Engineers, 36th Division. He received a Victory Medal with Major Operation Clasps for participation at Saint-Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne. "Will Fulfil Marriage Vow of Childhood," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 28, 1921; Shuffield and Weiner, "Tablet of WWI Veterans."

<sup>27</sup> Byron Gernsbacher served overseas from August 22, 1918, to July 18, 1919. "Sergeant Describes First Real American Cemetery in France," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 25, 1919; Shuffield and Weiner, "Tablet of WWI Veterans."

<sup>28</sup> Private Isadore Persky, twenty-two, died December 23, 1917, in a Belton, TX, hotel room. A military inquest ruled his death "self-inflicted by carbolic acid." Persky had entered the Army ten weeks earlier and was assigned to the Thirty-Third Company, Ninth Battalion, 165th Depot Brigade, Ninetieth Division. "Young Soldier Ends Life Here, Isadore Persky of Belton Found Dead in Local Hotel Yesterday Afternoon," *Temple Daily Telegram*, December 24, 1917; Shuffield and Weiner, "Tablet of WWI Veterans"; Gertrude M. Teter and Donald L. Teter, *Texas Jewish Burials: Alphabetically by Name* (Austin, 1997), 297.

<sup>29</sup> Christopher M. Sterba, *Good Americans: Italian and Jewish Immigrants during the First World War* (Oxford, 2003), 31–33; "World War I Ireland: Exploring the Irish Experience," exhibit brochure, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Mary J. Manning, "Being German, Being American: In World War I They Faced Suspicion, Discrimination, Here at Home," *Prologue Magazine, Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration* (Summer 2014): 15–22.

<sup>31</sup> *Investigative Case Files of the Bureau of Investigation, 1908–1922. Series: Old German Files, 1909–1921, Case No. 8000-140042, Base Hospital Investigation; Suspect: Ella Behrens*, National Archives & Records Administration, microfilm: M-1085, roll 530; "After 25 Years She Got Honorable Discharge," *The Caldwell (TX) News and The Burleson (TX) County Ledger*, February 18, 1949.

<sup>32</sup> *Texas Jewish Herald*, March 25, 1920, quoted in Ninetieth Anniversary Issue, *Jewish Herald-Voice*, April 11, 1998, 10; "Barnston Family, Barnstein/Barnstijn, Barnston," Genealogies File, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

<sup>33</sup> Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880–1920* (Baltimore, 1992), 210. Nancy Gentile Ford observes that Serbs and Croats were fighting to free the Balkans. In addition to the Jews, World War I gave Poles, Slavs, Czechs, Syrians, Arabs, and Armenians the opportunity to fight for the independence of their homelands from the bondage of the Austro-Hungarian and Turkish empires. "They learned to redefine the patriotic culture of the US as they honored their adopted country and fought for their homelands." Nancy Gentile Ford, *Americans All! Foreign-born Soldiers in World War I* (College Station, TX, 2001), 44. Referring to the 1918 money-raising effort for the Jewish War Sufferers campaign, Rogoff comments that "fitting in did not require loss of Jewish difference. . . . Jews asserted their difference even as they universalized their cause." In North Carolina, Jews were high-profile participants in drives for Liberty Bonds, War Savings Stamps, and the Red Cross. Leonard Rogoff, *Homelands: Southern Jewish Life in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa, 2001), 187–88.

<sup>34</sup> "Local Jews Plan Celebration Over Fall of Jerusalem; A Fulfillment of Scripture Which Foretells of Restoration of Palestine to the Jewish People," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 11, 1917; "Jews to Celebrate Capture of Jerusalem Next Sunday," *Dallas Morning News*, December 12, 1917. Stuart Rockoff observes that Fort Worth had one of the most active Zionist chapters in Texas. One of the city's early Reform rabbis, Joseph Jasin, was elected president of the Texas Zionist Association in 1907 and coedited a Zionist newspaper, *The Jewish Hope*. Stuart Rockoff, "Deep in the Heart of Palestine: Zionism in Early Texas," in *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, ed. Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman (Waltham, MA, 2007), 93–107. Rabbi Fox, who called himself a "stubborn anti-nationalist and anti-Zionist," apparently was not at the celebration. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* article reported that Reform Rabbi Jacob Turner was to speak. It is unclear why Jacob Turner, a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College, was in Fort Worth. Fox was once invited to a Fort Worth Zionist meeting to introduce a local minister who had returned from Palestine extolling Zionism. Rather than challenge the minister's endorsement of a Jewish national homeland, Fox writes that he held his tongue. When he wrote about the gathering for the *Jewish Monitor*, Fox reported that the Hebrew Institute band played *Hatikvah*, the Zionist anthem, *Dixie*, and *The Star Spangled Banner*. *Jewish Monitor*, November 26, 1920; Shuffield and Weiner, "Tablet of WWI Veterans."

<sup>35</sup> Richmond's brass plaque, located in the sanctuary vestibule at Congregation Beth Ahabah, has an honor roll with ninety-four names, a Jewish star, and reliefs of a battle ship, biplane, and soldiers loading cannon. "Honor Roll of The Sons of Beth Ahabah who answered their Country's Call in the Great World War, 1914–1918." The congregation also has a stained-glass window that reads: "Commemorative of Peace Resulting from the World War." The window pictures the Ten Commandment tablets with Hebrew writing, English quotes from the Book of Isaiah, two pillars representing King Solomon's temple, a Jewish star, crossed American flags, and two American emblems. Thanks to Bonnie Eisenman, administrator and researcher at the Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives, who relayed photos and information on these memorials. Bonnie Eisenman, e-mail to Hollace Weiner, December 12, 2016. "Ossining Group Seeks Info about 'Virtually Unknown' WWI Memorial," *Ossining (NY) Daily Voice*, January 29, 2017. A World War Memorial building to African American soldiers was erected in Kendall, WV, in 1928. These memorials are among more than a thousand documented in the World War I Memorial Inventory Project, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/the-world-war-one-memorial-inventory-project.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Mark Levitch, "Ethnic Memorials," memo listing ethnic monuments documented to date, e-mailed to Hollace Weiner, February 20, 2017. The survey identifies similar memorials to African American soldiers in Georgia, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. It is unclear what became of the plaque at Jews Hospital in Philadelphia because the facility merged with other health institutions, changed its name, and moved into a larger building complex. See also the World War I Memorial Inventory Project website and Facebook page. The survey, which is still under way, shows that Texas has at least eighty-eight such monuments, including the University of Texas football stadium which has a plaque listing more than five thousand soldiers, a number of doughboy statues, and two memorials to African American men in uniform. Besides the Fort Worth Tribute to

Our Boys, the only other known memorial in Texas to a Jewish doughboy is a plaque beneath a stained-glass window at Beaumont's Temple Emanuel. Hollace Ava Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and Their Work* (College Station, TX, 1997), 35.

<sup>37</sup> The efforts to create a melting-pot army "helped diminish the importance of European local and regional ties." Sterba, *Good Americans*, 7.

<sup>38</sup> While expecting loyalty from the soldiers in the American army, the military brass remained "mindful of the traditions" of the foreign born. War Department policies resulted from a "complex alliance" with leaders from immigrant communities and activists in ethnic organizations who pressured the military to meet soldiers' cultural needs. Resulting military policies created "an atmosphere that made dual identity and dual pride acceptable and the nonnative soldiers' duty personally easier." Ford, *Americans All*, 3, 9, 11-12, 107, 119, 136-37, 143. See also Lee J. Levinger's moving memoir, *A Jewish Chaplain in France* (New York, 1921). Levinger was among the twelve Jewish chaplains assigned to the American Expeditionary Forces.

<sup>39</sup> Keene, *Doughboys*, 21.

<sup>40</sup> Sterba, *Good Americans*, 4, 7, 212.

<sup>41</sup> "Purim Masquerade Ball, A Splendid Affair," *Fort Worth Gazette*, February 28, 1896. Photos from a World War I-era Purim ball show partygoers masquerading as Catholic nuns and geisha girls, rather than Queen Esther or King Ahasueros. Purim folder, Oversized Photos Box, Fort Worth Jewish Archives at Beth-El Congregation.

<sup>42</sup> At the cornerstone ceremony for the Hebrew Institute, speakers said the building was for "all Hebrews, regardless of distinctions . . . [a building] where all can meet on common ground . . . whether rich or poor, conservative or radical." "Jews Praised at Ceremony of Starting New Institute," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 8, 1914.

<sup>43</sup> The incursion into Mexico was in retaliation for the arrest of a party of American sailors in Tampico as well as Wilson's attempt to influence Mexican president Victoriano Huerta, who was cozy with Germany. American troops occupied the port city for five months. Marine Private Samuel Meisenberg, an immigrant living in Chicago, was the first American soldier killed at Veracruz in April 1914. Lee Stacy, *Mexico and the United States*, vol. 1 (Tarrytown, NY, 2003), 846; "Expect 100,000 at Sammy's Funeral: Boy Scouts, Marines, Militia, Regular Army to be Represented in March; Vera Cruz Hero Will Lie in State in City Hall," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 29, 1914.

<sup>44</sup> Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 58.

<sup>45</sup> Piehler, *Remembering War*, 116.

<sup>46</sup> Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape*, 78.

<sup>47</sup> Loewen, *Lies Across America*, 44. Fort Worth's scroll, titled "Honor Roll—They Fought for Freedom—World War II," lists 225 men and one woman who served in uniform. Four have gold stars next to their names. Three of those casualties are buried at Ahavath Sholom's Hebrew Cemetery, with their tombstones side-by-side at the front of the cemetery. The original framed scroll hangs in the library at Beth-El Congregation, and a duplicate hangs in a corridor at Congregation Ahavath Sholom.

<sup>48</sup> *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Fort Worth, Texas 5653-5728, 1892-1967* (Fort Worth, 1967), 16, 19.



<sup>49</sup> In 1997, a Baltimore-area Jewish War Veterans post rediscovered the forgotten monument amid weeds and brush. Newspaper publicity and a rededication ceremony led to the monument's relocation in 1999 at Garrison Forest Veterans Cemetery in Owings Mills. It is listed on the Maryland Historical Trust inventory of monuments as the Mount Pleasant (Jewish Hospital for Consumptives) Memorial. "Maryland World War I Military Monuments," accessed December 15, 2016, <https://mht.maryland.gov/documents/PDF/monuments/MMM-Inventory-WWI.pdf>. "New Site sought for old memorial; Veterans: A more visible home is sought for the World War I memorial which was once lost amid brush and trees," *Baltimore Sun*, June 15, 1997, accessed February 18, 2017, [http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1997-06-15/news/1997166092\\_1\\_jewish-veterans-war-i=jewish-war](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1997-06-15/news/1997166092_1_jewish-veterans-war-i=jewish-war); "Monuments & Memorials," 13, notes by researcher Earl Pruce attached to type-script, received via e-mail from Joanna Church, collections manager, Jewish Museum of Maryland, December 15, 2016.

<sup>50</sup> "A D.C. historian is hunting down forgotten monuments in memory of 'the Great War,'" *Washington Post*, February 7, 2014, accessed February 19, 2017, [http://wwi-inventory.org/In\\_the\\_News.html](http://wwi-inventory.org/In_the_News.html).

<sup>51</sup> Ethel Schectman, interview conducted by Hollace Weiner, March 2, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Leo Potishman, through his charitable Leo Potishman Foundation, was a major donor to the new synagogue. *Congregation Ahavath Sholom*, 77, 81; Shuffield and Weiner, "Tablet of WWI Veterans."

<sup>53</sup> Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); Piehler, *Remembering War*, 117.

<sup>54</sup> Art historian Mark Levitch, who in 2009 launched the World War I Memorial Inventory Project, says honor rolls that list not just those who died but "those who served as well" came into vogue among municipalities, religious groups, businesses, high schools, and colleges. Christopher Klein, "The Hunt for Forgotten World War I Monuments," May 23, 2014, accessed February 16, 2017, <http://www.history.com/news/the-hunt-for-forgotten-world-war-i-monuments>.

<sup>55</sup> Piehler, *Remembering War*, 117; Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Michele H. Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (Chicago, 1989), 2.

<sup>57</sup> Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, ed., *Places of Commemoration: Search for Identity and Landscape Design* (Washington, DC, 2001), 2.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, 1975), 2. See also Hochschild, *To End All Wars*, xi-xx, which focuses on Great Britain and conscientious objectors to the war.

<sup>59</sup> Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 200.

<sup>60</sup> Joshua 4:21-22 (JPS).

<sup>61</sup> Isaiah, 56:5 (JPS).



## Book Reviews

**Memories of Two Generations: A Yiddish Life in Russia and Texas.** By Alexander Z. Gurwitz, translated by Amram Prero, and edited by Bryan Edward Stone. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2016. 416 pages.

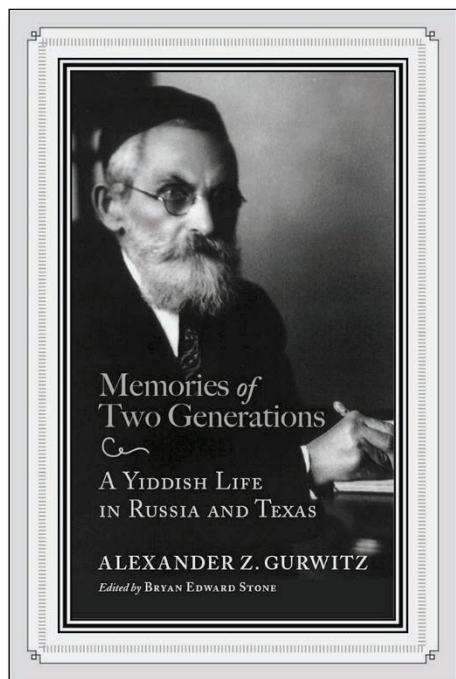
“It is almost two thousand years that the Jew, staff in hand, has been wandering over the face of the world” (314), writes Alexander Z. Gurwitz, an eastern European Jewish teacher and ritual slaughterer who left tsarist Russia for San Antonio, Texas, in 1910. Gurwitz was fifty-one years old, and, after a life of moderate economic success, two marriages, family, and fervent Torah study, he decided to abandon the increasingly troubled Pale of Settlement for the land, it was said, where a Jew could be free and gold rolled in the streets. Like so many among the two million Jews who left the shtetl in the three decades leading up to World War I, Gurwitz believed that the Old World was a time and place forever lost. War, revolution, and antisemitism reduced it to memory, and it fell upon “simple, ordinary” (xii) people such as himself to present “a collective portrait” (x) of this Yiddish-speaking world, so different from what his immigrant eyes later encountered in America’s southern borderlands.

The result of Gurwitz’s literary endeavor is *Memories of Two Generations*, an evocative and informative memoir, written in Yiddish between 1932 and 1935, translated into English by San Antonio rabbi Amram Prero in the 1970s, and now edited by Bryan Edward Stone. Given the literary productivity of Gurwitz’s generation coupled with the hunger of later generations to discover the vanished world of their ancestors, Gurwitz’s memoir finds itself in a fairly crowded cultural landscape. Those wishing to explore beyond *Fiddler on the Roof* and the stories of Sholem

Aleichem and Abraham Cahan have access to a wealth of autobiographies, novels, and other material in multiple languages—English, Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, and Polish—that ostensibly recreate the prelude and aftermath of the largest mass resettlement in Jewish history. Yet *Memories of Two Generations* has much to offer and, contrary to Gurwitz's own claim that "all the Jews of nineteenth-century eastern Europe comported themselves the same way," his experience augments our increasingly complex picture of Russian Jews and their American descendants. His memoir reveals how a self-professed ordinary Jew coped with precipitous change and social dislocation by embracing an uncertain present, confident in the power and relevance of his heritage.

This English edition of Gurwitz's memoirs, the majority of which recounts his life in Russia, is approximately three hundred pages long and divided into sixteen chapters. In the first half of the book, which provides remarkable details about his childhood and youth, he takes the reader on a journey through the small shtetlach and large cities of the Pale, where he lived and received his education. This included several years at the prestigious Volozhin Yeshiva, "the center, the very heart of the Jewish world's spirit," as Gurwitz puts it (164), where numerous eminent rabbis received their training. But the need to secure a living and to support his future family led him to abandon his quest to become a rabbi, opting instead to settle down as a certified *shochet* and *melamed*. Gurwitz thus provided a comfortable life for his family and, unlike so many of the destitute masses who left Russia for economic mobility, his decision to sail to the United States in 1910 was a product of mounting antisemitism: "How long would it be before a pogrom would overtake the next town? And the next? The same story might well be repeated and where would we be then?" (271). Determined to ensure his family's safety and their right to be Jewish without obstacle and fear, Gurwitz brought his family to America.

Perhaps the limited space devoted to his emigration and subsequent two decades in Texas is due to Gurwitz's discomfort in his new land. He did not learn English well and, as Stone notes in his introduction, "he describes San Antonio as if it were just another shtetl, where Jews were central to the community while a few Christians floated around the periphery" (8). This peculiar perspective does not, however, detract from the value of his reminiscences. Unlike the majority of



Russian Jews who settled in New York, the Gurwitzes went south via the Galveston Movement, a philanthropic program to divert Jewish immigrants from the poverty and dirt of the Lower East Side's sprawling tenements. Although only a few thousand Jews settled in Texas through this program, it is a fascinating story that complicates our New York-centered narrative of the era and, as Stone writes, Gurwitz's "may be the only complete account of the Galveston Movement from an immigrant's point of view" (5). Gurwitz's section on his transcontinental voyage

may be brief, but it is an invaluable resource for the historian who seeks to understand the hardships involved in choosing to abandon one's home yet having limited control over one's destination. His life upended and bifurcated in time and space, Gurwitz titled his work *Memories of Two Generations*, "because," he writes, "mirrored here are the life and times of two distinct eras" (xii).

For Gurwitz, it is his Jewishness—his religious beliefs and practices, his heritage, his outlook—that bridges these two eras. This sense of peoplehood framed his childhood and shaped the course of his life, even when economic need, cholera outbreaks, and political turmoil rudely intruded. His boyhood proceeded to the rhythm of the Jewish calendar. Daily prayer, Torah study, and the Sabbath defined his weeks, which were connected by the anticipation and commemoration of the numerous holidays: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Hanukkah, Passover, Shavuot. Then the cycle repeated itself. Much like Sholem Aleichem's Tevye, albeit with far greater accuracy, Gurwitz frequently quotes from the Bible and Talmud, and he likens his various

predicaments and opportunities to those of his putative Israelite ancestors. He believes that the Jew “does not live like other nations. He does not really live in the present. He lives in the past, with his wistful memories, or in the future, with the hope that it will be better” (88). And although much about the United States remained alien and distasteful to him, and although he reproaches Jews who gave in to the lures of assimilation, he understood that “American Jews should consider themselves among the most fortunate in the world,” because they enjoy “the rights and privileges of citizenship like all other people” (314). Gurwitz wrote these words in his concluding chapter, penned in 1935 when state-sponsored antisemitism had become the norm in Germany and Poland, when the Bolshevik Revolution had rendered his former homeland unrecognizable, and when a Jewish state was still a distant possibility. The deep ideological and theological ruptures that divided America’s Jewish community did not particularly trouble Gurwitz, because “no matter our individual and separate doorways, we all enter the same room. . . . Whatever we are, we are. But Jews we are” (331–32).

Most of Gurwitz’s narrative is infused with this spirit of optimism, and it unfolds through such lyrical prose. That it comes out elegantly in English is an enormous credit not only to Prero’s translation skills, but to Stone’s painstaking effort to ensure that this edition is as reliable, lucid, and well documented as possible. Stone’s succinct yet comprehensive introduction provides the necessary historical context for the memoir and explains why he, as a historian, decided to publish it. Over sixty pages of meticulous endnotes elucidate Gurwitz’s references to people, places, and events, as well as his numerous quotations from scripture and adages from Jewish lore. *Memories of Two Generations* will appeal to scholars, students, and anyone curious to learn about the rich heritage bequeathed by ordinary Russian Jews to their American progeny, including Texans.

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**To Stand Aside or Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement.** By P. Allen Krause, edited by Mark K. Bauman with Stephen Krause. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2016. 424 pages.

In 1966 a young student named P. Allen Krause, working on his rabbinical thesis regarding the subject of southern rabbis and the civil rights movement, travelled to the convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in Toronto and interviewed thirteen attendees from southern Reform congregations. One of the questions he asked several of the interviewees was: "If in fifty years someone wanted to write a history of the civil rights movement in the South, what role do you think will be assigned to the rabbis?" That half century has passed, and one of the strongest pieces of evidence on which to base such an analysis remains Krause's own work, published in its entirety for the first time here.

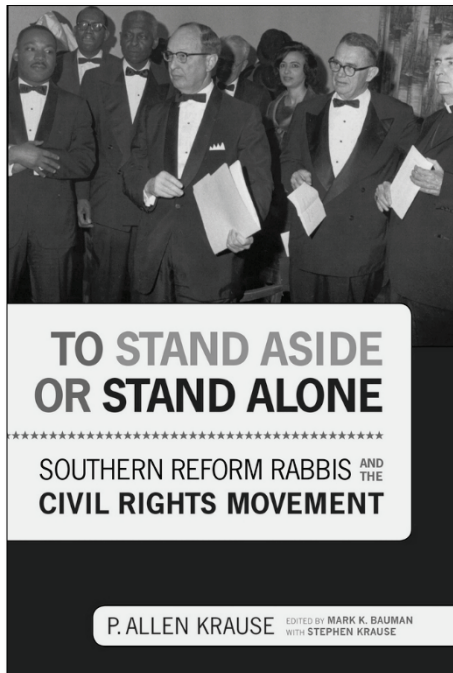
Krause published a summary of his findings in 1969 as "Rabbis and Negro Rights in the South, 1954-1967" in *American Jewish Archives*. When that essay was reprinted in the groundbreaking anthology *Jews in the South*, edited by Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson in 1973, Krause's research was quickly recognized as the foundational work on the topic. His article was pivotal for all subsequent discussions, including those in *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s-1960s* (1997), edited by Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin. In the introduction to the new volume, Bauman notes that Krause's research "provided the basis for the study of the topic for virtually every study thereafter" (xiii).

Krause went on to become a noted pulpit rabbi in California while continuing to work on producing a book-length version of his thesis—part of which had been "sealed" for twenty-five years because of a promise he had made to his interviewees that he would conceal their identities. Unfortunately, however, Krause died in 2012 before he was able to complete the project. Now the rabbi's son, Stephen, and Bauman have finished the work that Krause so ably undertook. The result is a volume that will no doubt be invaluable to researchers for many years to come.

The individual interviews are fascinating. Some are conducted with well-known figures of the era such as Jacob Rothschild of Atlanta, James Wax of Memphis, and Perry Nussbaum of Jackson, Mississippi. Other

interviews bring to light the work and views of lesser-known rabbis such as Martin Hinchin of Alexandria, Louisiana, and Moses Landau of Cleveland, Mississippi. All the rabbis give the impression of good will and noble intentions, although they were often constrained or stymied by the environments in which they found themselves. While some of the rabbis were more outspoken than others, they all describe the pressures that were placed on them and on their congregants by the members of their communities (and by national groups as well) who took strong stands on both sides of the desegregation and civil rights issues of the era. Taken together, they tell a story of tension and occasional triumph as the rabbis worked to put the message of prophetic Judaism into practice during troubled and heated times.

Having lived in Nashville for thirty years, I found the interview with William Silverman to be of particular interest. Silverman became known as “the pistol-packing rabbi” when, following the bombing of the Nashville Jewish Community Center in 1958, he publicly announced that he would be carrying his gun when he accompanied his two sons to school, lest anyone should attempt to harm them. I was also especially intrigued by the interview with Milton Grafman of Birmingham, Alabama. Grafman has often been condemned for having signed the letter that precipitated Martin Luther King Jr.’s famous response written from the Birmingham jail, but his interview shows that he was actually a strong proponent of desegregation who, like many of the other rabbis, was working behind the scenes to try to achieve change. In the spring of 1963, Grafman feared that dramatic demonstrations such as King’s actually made that process more difficult. Other readers





will no doubt find other chapters especially interesting for their own personal reasons.

By putting the various interviews together in one place, furthermore, this volume allows readers to make important comparisons between them. We can see the differences that faced rabbis in smaller communities like Hattiesburg, Mississippi, versus those in larger cities like Atlanta or Memphis, for example. We can see the differences between rabbis who were able to join in larger ministerial associations with Protestant and, especially, Catholic clergymen versus those who were pretty much compelled to go it alone. We can also see the different experiences of rabbis whose congregants were mostly merchants, and thus vulnerable to economic reprisals, versus those whose congregants were more concentrated in the professions. As a result, we quickly become aware that the notion of “the Solid South” was indeed a fiction, as each rabbi faced a special set of circumstances that influenced his actions and reactions.

The scholarly apparatus that Krause *files* and Bauman have provided for the interviews is also very adroit and quite helpful to the reader. Each chapter begins with a discussion of the particular community in which that rabbi held his position, both in general and in terms of the history of its Jewish residents; a biographical sketch of that rabbi; and a brief “Editor’s Introduction.” Very useful footnotes throughout the book explain certain historical events or personalities to which the rabbis allude. As a result, much can be learned from the book beyond the strict parameters of its focal subject.

I do have two minor complaints to register, however. The first problem is unavoidable: Krause asked all of the rabbis essentially the same questions, which was certainly the correct methodological approach, so the answers become somewhat repetitive. Rabbi Grafman even refers to this problem when he says, “I dare say there hasn’t been too much variation in what you have been getting in your various interviews” (249). One footnote—explaining a march in Mississippi that was taking place simultaneously with the interviews—is even repeated verbatim four times. I suspect, however, that many (if not most) readers will look to individual chapters focusing on a particular rabbi or locality rather than reading the book from cover to cover, as I did in preparing this review, so I don’t think this redundancy will prove to be significant.

The second problem has to do with the order in which the interviews have been presented. While the book is divided usefully into two main sections – “In the Land of the Almost Possible” and “In the Land of the Almost Impossible” – the sequencing, particularly in the first section, is not always as helpful as it could have been. Most notably, there is only one instance in which two rabbis from the same community are interviewed, Julian Feibelman and Nathaniel Share of New Orleans. Yet their interviews are not presented consecutively, which would have made it easier for readers to compare the differing views of two individuals whose local circumstances are similar. Having the interviews with the rabbis from Memphis and Nashville next to each other would also have provided for some interesting intrastate comparisons. An individual reader could certainly adjust the order in which the chapters are read to emphasize these connections, but it would have been nice if the editors had done that for us already, or at least done more to explain why they did not.

Even so, these caveats are very small given the overall excellence and importance of the volume. No one who is interested in this subject will henceforth be able to understand the full picture without consulting *To Stand Aside or Stand Alone*. Rabbi Krause is to be commended for conducting the interviews so thoughtfully and for laboring to bring them to light in their complete form, and Bauman and the younger Krause are to be applauded for seeing the work to its conclusion in such a professional and instructive manner. This is truly a volume that can be recommended to all students of southern Jewish history.

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**Gertrude Weil: Jewish Progressive in the New South.** By Leonard Rogoff. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017. 368 pages.

**G**ertrude Weil is not a well-known figure in American Jewish history, and that is a shame. Perhaps it is because she is from the South, and in particular from a small southern town—Goldsboro, North Carolina, population eleven thousand, with about 150 Jews for most of Weil’s life. Perhaps also it is because she was not a rabbi, professor, politician, or

business leader, but a lifelong activist and club member who never married or had children. That neglect does not do her justice.

In his interesting and informative biography, *Gertrude Weil: Jewish Progressive in the New South*, Leonard Rogoff paints a vivid portrait of an intelligent, charming woman, modern and traditional, radical and conservative. More than that, Rogoff ably chronicles Weil the difference-maker. She held leadership roles in many major political efforts of the Progressive Era, from the woman suffrage movement to anti-lynching campaigns to labor reform. She was also deeply engaged with issues facing the American Jewish community, actively involved in Reform Judaism, helping German family members escape the Nazis, and promoting Zionism. Born in 1879 in the same house where she would die ninety-two years later, Weil had a large impact on her local and state communities, advancing causes of national and global significance.

In chronicling Weil's early life, including her family's history as German Jewish immigrants to the United States and her formal education, Rogoff wisely opts for a loosely chronological but largely thematic approach. A thoroughly chronological narrative of Weil's life would have left readers lost in a flurry of disparate activities. The thematic approach, instead, shows the depths to which Weil was dedicated to her various causes, the leadership roles she played, and the thoughtful approach she took to complicated issues. The one consistent fact is that Weil looked to solve national problems at the local and state level. She mostly limited her activism to Goldsboro or North Carolina, remaining loyal to her roots throughout her life.

Weil grew up in privilege surrounded by loving parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins, as well as servants black and white. Her family was among the town's first residents, German Jewish immigrants and former peddlers who owned a prosperous department store and held diverse stakes in local industries. Although there is no record of the Weils owning slaves, Weil's uncles and maternal grandfather served in the Confederate army, declaring loyalty to their state and regional identity as thousands of Jews did across the South. Gertrude Weil maintained this loyalty for her entire life, despite breaking with the majority of her peers by supporting the civil rights movement after World War II. The first chapter, titled "German, Jewish, and Southern," encapsulates the particular identity of the Weil family.

Smart, athletic, witty, and wealthy, Gertrude Weil had a happy childhood. She lived seamlessly among gentiles, befriending non-Jewish classmates in primary school, boarding school, and college. After graduating from Smith College in Massachusetts in 1901, Weil returned home, ironically describing herself as a “lady of leisure” (55). Her “leisure” pursuits included running a nursery school with her mother Mina, traveling across North America and Europe, reading voraciously, auditing summer classes at Cornell and Vassar, and attending lectures on Christian Science, Unitarianism, and Ethical Culture. The Goldsboro Jewish community recruited Weil to teach in the synagogue’s religious school, which she did for over fifty years. She became the school’s principal in 1918.

The Weil family helped found Goldsboro’s first Jewish congregation, Oheb Shalom, in 1883. Weil attended regularly. A town legend has it that she was once the sole congregant present but still insisted that “the rabbi conduct the entire service and deliver his sermon” (238). In describing Jewish life in Goldsboro, Rogoff’s book makes an excellent contribution to the recent scholarship on Jews in the South and Jews in small towns. Oheb Shalom formally affiliated with the Reform movement in 1890 and hired Rabbi Julius Mayerberg, a Lithuanian Jew raised Orthodox, educated in Germany, and trained as a lawyer. When Jewish immigrants began trickling in from eastern Europe, Mayerberg offered Goldsboro’s “Russian contingent” separate Orthodox holiday services after Reform worship had finished (28). In bigger cities, these traditional newcomers would have had more options, but in small towns they were forced into greater interaction with the Reform community. Weil showed no prejudice to their children when she taught them in the religious school.

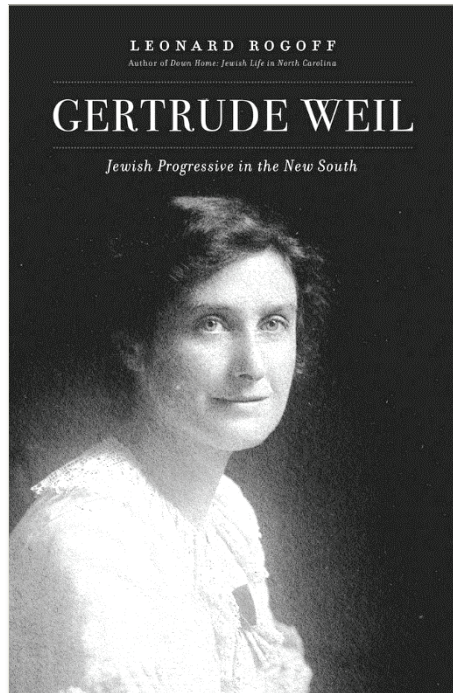
Weil’s father, Henry, opposed Zionism in the tradition of the Classical Reform movement that understood Judaism as religion and not as ethnicity or nationality. Weil, although emerging from that same tradition, embraced Zionism, largely because of her mother’s friendship with Henrietta Szold. In 1912, Mina and Gertrude both joined Hadassah, Szold’s Zionist organization for American women. Weil eventually became a regional officer. She was also a three-time president of her local chapter of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and followed in her mother’s footsteps as president of the Goldsboro Woman’s Club in

1908, 1916, and 1932. The Woman's Club embraced progressive reform and social justice. Weil supported birth control and eugenics. The club pressed local and state politicians for labor reform, improvements to public health and education, and the creation of libraries.

Although she pursued romantic relationships when she was a young adult, by her mid-thirties Weil had "committed to an unmarried life" (62) of political activism. Passionate about earning women's right to vote, Weil joined the National American Woman Suffrage Association

(NAWSA) in 1911, served as president of the Goldsboro Equal Suffrage League in 1914, and as president of the North Carolina Suffrage League in 1919. Along the way, she befriended NAWSA leader Carrie Chapman Catt. As Rogoff notes, while her class and educational background was "typical of suffragists," her religion was unusual (107). Although many Jewish suffragists existed, they did not organize as Jews but in secular progressive women's organizations. This was Weil's experience with the movement.

Weil's battle for woman suffrage came to a head in 1919 after Congress approved the Nineteenth Amendment, but passage by thirty-six states was needed for ratification. Although North Carolina failed to ratify the amendment in 1920, suffragists across the state celebrated Weil's tireless efforts. They rallied behind her as she came to lead the newly founded North Carolina League of Women Voters. She made national news in 1922 when she went to vote in Goldsboro but was given a ballot "marked for the Democratic machine" (152-53). Weil tore up the marked ballot and dozens more stacked on a nearby table. Nominally a Demo-



crat, Weil nonetheless eschewed partisan politics and hoped woman suffrage would lead to progressive reform regardless of which party won power.

After World War I, Weil directed more of her charity and volunteer work to helping African Americans, although she still trafficked in pernicious racialized stereotypes about the "idle, mischievous, and often vicious habits of the negro youth" (160). In 1930, she attended the Anti-Lynching Conference for Southern White Women in Atlanta. The next year, she joined the North Carolina Interracial Committee Woman's Section and gradually increased her activism. Her racial views evolved over time from progressive paternalism to an "appreciation of black agency" (161). Weil's relationship to her two black servants, Mittie Exum and Haywood Spearman, demonstrates this dualism. Rogoff notes that Weil paid them generously and considered them "family" (261). "When chauffeured by Spearman, Miss Gertrude, unlike Miss Daisy, sat beside him in the front seat rather than in the back" (262), but this seating arrangement hardly changed the power dynamic between the two.

Like her activism in behalf of African Americans, Weil saw her involvement in Jewish organizations as part of her broader commitment to progressivism. "Though her methods were founded on scientific principles," Rogoff writes, "she drew inspiration from the Hebrew prophets." Led by faith and intellect in all her activism, she "would not compartmentalize her life" (247), helping local millworkers or the nascent state of Israel under the same principles. In 1921, Weil began her "principal Jewish organizational commitment" (102) with the North Carolina Association of Jewish Women (NCAJW). The fifty-seven founding members who met at Oheb Shalom, including Weil's mother Mina and aunt Sarah, agreed to cooperate with national Jewish women's organizations like the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, or Hadassah, and some were members in all of these. The unifying principle was not denominational, ethnic, or political, but rather their identity as Jewish women from North Carolina. The NCAJW was one of the few state-based, independent Jewish women's organizations in America.

Weil did not regard antisemitism as a major part of her life. Rogoff cites a 1946 national survey and concludes that "antisemitism was weaker in the South than in the North and in small towns than in cities" (211).

A small-town southerner, Weil rarely spoke of antisemitism, preferring to emphasize “Jewish agency” (236). To Weil, antisemitism was something that occurred far away that prompted her to try to rescue her cousins caught in Nazi Germany and occupied France, or something the beleaguered state of Israel faced from its Arab enemies.

After Israeli statehood in 1948, Weil would visit Israel twice, but she directed her final activist push toward equality for African Americans in the South. She fought resistance to *Brown v. the Board of Education* in North Carolina, inviting Harry Golden, the editor of the *Carolina Israelite* and a Jewish civil rights activist, to speak at Oheb Shalom in 1955. When a Democratic gubernatorial candidate invited supporters to bring a “neighbor” to a campaign event at a segregated Goldsboro hotel, Weil “led a parade of African Americans into the lobby” (256). In 1963, when local progressives created a sixteen-man Bi-Racial Council, Weil joined their Women’s Goodwill Committee of 140 women and hosted the first meeting in her house.

Toward the end of her life, Weil moved even further to the left. “I grow more radical every year,” she observed. “Who knows? I may live long enough to become a communist” (280). This trajectory is the opposite of several “New York Intellectuals,” who went from leftism to neoconservatism. Weil’s uniqueness here is suggestive of another way to evaluate her historically: as an intellectual.

In American history, there is a tendency to venerate righteous women without taking them seriously as thinkers. This was the case with Jane Addams before Christopher Lasch shone light on her intellectual heft as a philosophical pragmatist. In terms of American Jewish history, we see this with Henrietta Szold, friend to Weil’s mother. In *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, Melvin Urofsky wrote that “Judaism does not canonize, but if it did, nearly everyone would demand sainthood for Henrietta Szold.” Similarly, Rogoff calls Szold “a revered, even saintly figure” (99). Yet Szold was also an intellectual, contributing countless articles and delivering numerous speeches to Zionist publications and groups, designing educational curricula and programming for thousands of young Jews, and translating the work of Russian-born Jewish historian Simon Dubnow into English.

Rogoff primarily presents Gertrude Weil as an activist, but she was also a serious thinker. She wrote her senior thesis at Smith College on

Kant and decades later continued using terms like *noumena* in her writing. Although their four-year epistolary romance eventually dwindled, her love letters to suitor Victor Jelenko “were witty, intense, and literary” (60). Independently and in book clubs, she read voraciously from Tolstoy to Thoreau. She could cite the Hebrew Bible chapter and verse. One of her favorite books, mentioned multiple times by Rogoff, was William James’s *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Gertrude was not simply pious but “a well-read student of religion” (229). And her religiosity did not render her a prude. We can imagine the twinkle in her eye when at age ninety she quipped, “People think that I don’t know anything about sex just because I never got married” (279). Faith, reason, wit: these were all parts of Gertrude Weil’s intellect.

If we define an intellectual as someone who uses ideas to enact political change, Weil again fits the bill. Rogoff knows this but states it only implicitly, writing that Weil “expressed frustration with academic elitists who did not move beyond research and policy into direct action.” Weil’s dual nature as a religious intellectual enabled her activism. As Rogoff writes, “spirituality balanced Gertrude’s rationalism.” This flowed into her intellectual style: “Although a student of surveys and statistics, she was more likely to cite case studies and personal stories when making her arguments” (289). Without essentializing a feminine style of intellect, it is important here to note that Weil was making arguments. Gertrude Weil was not just a “Jewish Progressive in the New South,” she was a small-town female intellectual, a category too long erased from history. That, as much as anything, makes her worthy of a biography.

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## Exhibit Review

**The First Jewish Americans: Freedom and Culture in the New World.** New-York Historical Society, October 28, 2016, through March 12, 2017. Curated by Dale Rosengarten and Adam Mendelsohn.

During winter 2016–2017, the New-York Historical Society (NYHS) turned over several of its lofty gallery rooms to showcase the experience of early American Jewry. Through the display of historic maps, original documents, paintings, and material objects, it presented the exhibit *The First Jewish Americans*, subtitled “Freedom and Culture in the New World,” which covered the period from the seventeenth century into the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. It explored the ways in which Jews, mostly in what became the United States, went about the process of making homes for themselves as individuals and creating space for their Jewish communal institutions, primarily synagogues.

*The First Jewish Americans* evolved out of the original exhibition *By Dawn’s Early Light: Jewish Contributions to American Culture from the Nation’s Founding to the Civil War*, organized by the Princeton University Library; curated by Adam Mendelsohn, director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research at the University of Cape Town, South Africa; and cocurated by Dale Rosengarten, archivist of the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston Library in Charleston, South Carolina, and codirector of the college’s Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. The original exhibition, on display at Princeton in Spring 2016 had not been intended to travel until the board chairperson of the NYHS read the accompanying catalogue and requested the show. The NYHS took some creative liberties and changed the exhibit to be more New York-focused.

The exhibit moved along both a temporal and a geographic arc. It began in Suriname and other parts of the Caribbean region where in the sixteenth century the first Jews settled and, for the most part, prospered through commerce. It then moved visitors on to the mainland of British North America telling, one by one, a well-known tale of New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, looking in that order at the eighteenth century, the age of the American Revolution, and then the early Republic period, respectively. A final two sections of the exhibit abandoned spatial specificity to explore first the rise, nationally, of a distinctively American form of Judaism and then highlight the contributions of Jews to the artistic and cultural life of the new nation.

*Materials related to Charleston, SC, from The First Jewish Americans.  
(Photo by Glenn Castellano, courtesy of the New-York Historical Society.)*

For each place, the exhibit's organizers displayed artifacts and images as well as key documents that accomplished two purposes. The items on display told about the life of the Jewish community, be it in New York or Charleston, Philadelphia or Newport, stressing the growth of Jewish life in the form of congregations and cemeteries and, for the later period, voluntary Jewish associations outside of the synagogue orbit. For each of these places, the viewer could engage with the formal apparatus of public Jewish life. For Charleston, for example, visitors had a chance to see Penina Moïse's hymnal used for Sabbath services at Kahal Kodesh Beth Elohim, the first of its kind in American and indeed world Jewish history. But the exhibit also featured the more quotidian lives of individual early American Jews, exploring through a range of eye-catching objects how Jews lived. It showed how they made a living, mainly in commerce and artisanship, snippets about the interior furnishings of their homes, details about gender and family relationships, and importantly how they interacted as individuals with the non-Jews among whom they lived. *The First Jewish Americans* struck a fine balance between the formal life of the Jewish communities and the details about Jews as ordinary women and men, who, for the most part, took advantage of an expansive set of civic options.

As to the aesthetics of *The First Jewish Americans*, the organizers prepared a beautiful and rich show, assembling material never seen together, and all complementing each other. Silver objects crafted by Myer Meyers, the portraits of the Franks family, a circumcision log of slaves from a Jewish-owned plantation in Suriname, and paintings by Camille Pissaro and Solomon Nunes Carvalho offered much to see, enjoy, and think about in this exploration of the journeys undertaken by the small number of European Jews who joined the risky journey to what they understood to be the "new world."

For all the richness of the material and the care in the selection process, the exhibit stumbled for its conventionality and lack of probing of certain key concepts. It claimed to be dedicated to the theme of "freedom," as do so many other renditions of American Jewish history. But it never interrogated the term's meaning and how freedom for one group, particularly in that time and place, depended on the denial of freedom for others. We learned little about the Jews' involvement with slavery, their interactions with indigenous people, or the historic reality that the

*Oil painting of Kahal Kadosh Beth  
Elohim interior, 1838, by  
Solomon Nunes Carvalho  
(Courtesy of Special Collections,  
College of Charleston.)*

freedom Jews enjoyed made them different from Catholics who suffered grievously in these places. The exhibition texts consistently employed such self-congratulatory terms as “remarkable” and “resilience” without asking if the experience of these early American Jews stood out as particularly notable or different from that of other white people who cast their lot with the Americas.

Likewise, “resilience” as a positive word assumes that an individual or a group made a mighty effort in the face of extraordinary difficulty. But the term ignores the fact that the Jews of the Americas occupied a highly advantageous position given their ability to activate their own global trade networks and their family and communal ties that linked them commercially to Jews around the world. Jews benefitted the colonial authorities who founded these outposts purely for the purpose of making a profit, and, inasmuch as Jews helped in this effort, they needed less in the way of their own sterling qualities and more in the way of kin and community around the Atlantic and Mediterranean worlds. Additionally, we know that Jews, like other free white people, moved around the colonies, and many went back to Europe for longer or

shorter periods of time, making the definition of them as “American” Jews less than convincing.

This exhibit failed finally to deal with the internal struggles and differences within the world of early American Jewry, for the most part paying no attention to the presence and then numerical superiority of Jews from northern and eastern Europe. It did not treat the rise of second congregations by the beginning of the nineteenth century as newly arriving Jews, Ashkenazim, rebelled against the domination of the old-timers. It did not highlight the general loosening of cultural and economic controls in the new nation with the rise of a culture of *laissez-faire*, nor did it treat the emergence of Jewish institutions outside the sphere of the congregations, which challenged the hegemony of the synagogues, as freedom came to mean freedom to be Jews as they wanted.

Despite these limitations, the decision of the New-York Historical Society to stage *The First Jewish Americans* provided New Yorkers and tourists to the city a chance to learn much and have a visually inspiring experience.

*Hasia Diner*, New York University



## Film Review

**Rosenwald.** Directed, produced, and written by Aviva Kempner. Ciesla Foundation, 2015. 100 minutes.

Julius Rosenwald is best known as the leading executive of Sears, Roebuck & Company from 1895 to 1924, when he retired as its president. During these years, he guided the department-store chain as it became the greatest mail-order business of its time. His Chicago philanthropic efforts are legendary to that city's residents. Less well known to white America is his extraordinary generosity to black Americans. He instigated construction of YMCAs and YWCAs for African Americans, led the effort to build 5,357 Rosenwald schools for black children in the rural South, and created the Julius Rosenwald Fund. One question animating *Rosenwald*, Aviva Kempner's recent documentary, is why a northern Jewish business magnate would try to help African Americans.

The answer in a nutshell is *tikun olam*, the Jewish principle of repairing the world. Aviva Kempner's fast-paced, witty, illuminating film covers a great deal of biographical ground as it traces the career of Julius Rosenwald, the son of a German-Jewish émigré, who became one of the greatest philanthropists of his era. The film's structure closely follows grandson/biographer Peter Ascoli's excellent 2015 book, *Julius Rosenwald: The Man Who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South*. As Julian Bond says in the film, "It's a wonderful story of cooperation between this philanthropist, who did not have to care about black people but who did, and who expended his considerable wealth in ensuring that they got their fair shake in America."

Julius R. Rosenwald, or J. R. as his closest friends and family called him, was born in 1862, eleven years after his father, Samuel Rosenwald,

immigrated to Baltimore, embarked on a career of peddling, and eventually married. (Kempner chooses some lively clips from Gene Wilder's 1979 film *The Frisco Kid* for this section, as well as a hilarious scene from the 1960s television series *Rawhide* in which Clint Eastwood's Rowdy Yates is asked by a traveling Jewish peddler if he knows what a *shlimazel* is.) J. R. grew up in a house just across the street from Abraham Lincoln's in Springfield, Illinois, and was greatly inspired by the sixteenth president. After a sojourn in New York in the clothing business, in 1885 J. R. opened his own concern in Chicago. He began working with Sears, Roebuck, supplying in record time a thousand ten-dollar suits after Richard Sears, the impulsive marketing genius, advertised them just to gauge consumer demand. Richard Sears and J. R. made a winning team until Rosenwald bought Sears out in 1908.

Richard Sears had a marvelous knack for sales, improving on the concept and design of rival Montgomery Ward's mail-order catalog. In the film, two observers note that the Sears, Roebuck & Company catalog was the equivalent of both the traveling peddler's outspread blanket of wares and today's Amazon.com. Georgia congressman John Lewis, the civil rights activist, recalls ordering baby chicks for his family's farm from that catalog, the "wish book" that inspired him to get an education so he could become a happy American consumer. To illustrate rural America's enthusiasm for ordering from the Sears catalog, Kempner provides an excerpt from *The Music Man*, with residents of River City singing "The Wells Fargo Wagon."

By contrast, J. R. possessed a strong, less flashy management style and strong personal financial ties, as evidenced by his ability to organize Sears's chaotic order-fulfillment operations. Goldman Sachs's Henry Goldman, for example, underwrote an initial public offering to help the chain-store operation build its manufacturing plants.

Although J. R. admired Lincoln, he credited Chicago rabbi Emil G. Hirsch as his greatest influence. The rabbi consistently preached about social justice and improving the lives of the poor. In 1912, on his fiftieth birthday, J. R. adopted a public "Give While You Live" campaign, donating seven-hundred thousand dollars to charity, the equivalent today of sixteen million dollars. Seeing a parallel between Russian Jews killed in pogroms and America's oppression of African Americans, J. R. felt



*Ridgeley Rosenwald School, Capitol Heights, Maryland, following its completed restoration in 2011. (Courtesy of Preservation Maryland.)*

compelled to act. He funded early planning meetings leading to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The third greatest influence on J. R.'s thinking after Lincoln and Hirsch was educator Booker T. Washington. After reading Washington's 1901 book *Up From Slavery*, J. R. began the Progressive Era's finest chapter in Jewish-black collaboration. Although initially giving outright, J. R. preferred to use challenge funds to construct YMCAs across the country: he contributed twenty-five thousand dollars but insisted that local white and black communities match it with seventy-five thousand. Everyone had to have skin in the game. If Jewish paternalism was a powerful engine, it would be combined with community efforts.

This proved a winning formula. Between 1913 and 1932, twenty-seven YMCAs were built from Atlanta to Los Angeles, Detroit to Dallas. Washington D.C.'s black community raised twenty-seven thousand dollars in just one month. At the dedication of the Chicago branch, J. R. announced, "This enterprise we are dedicating today evidences a contact of the white and the Negro races which should lead to a better understanding of each other."

*Julius Rosenwald in 1918.*  
(*Wikimedia Commons.*)

*Booker T. Washington, c. 1905.*  
(*Library of Congress.*)

After meeting Washington in 1911, J. R., along with Hirsch and an entourage of friends and family, visited the educator's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama to inspect the premises. This was their first encounter with southern black life. The thirty-four student-built buildings, the school's self-sufficiency ethos (since the white South surrounding them offered little or no help), the beautiful campus, and the wide array of student skills being taught impressed the business titan. He thereupon joined the institute's board. On the final night of their visit, J. R. and his friends were especially moved to hear students sing the black spiritual "I Want to Be Ready." As historian Stephanie Deutsch says in the documentary, J. R. realized that Washington, like him, was a man of action.

When asked, Washington informed J. R. that southern blacks' most pressing need was for new schools in rural communities. He urged J. R. to take \$2,800 out of his \$25,000-dollar donation to Tuskegee and construct six schools near the campus. Rosenwald agreed and was bowled over by the photographs that Washington, a superb marketer in his own right, sent him. But when Washington returned to ask for more funds for more schools, J. R. revived the challenge-grant scheme: he would supply one-third of the funds, Tuskegee would raise another third, and the white community (largely the education board of a state or school dis-

trict) would provide the remainder. One significant detail is recounted here: when J. R. suggested that the schools be built from prefabricated homes sold in the Sears catalogue, Washington reminded him of the essential requirement that local black residents build the schools, thereby improving their own skills and benefitting local businesses and workers.

The 5,357 Rosenwald schools built across the South meant that over several decades, until the 1954 *Brown v. the Board of Education* ruling made them obsolete, more than one-third of all black children in the South attended a Rosenwald school. (The Rosenwald Fund covered a third of the NAACP's litigation costs in the *Brown* case.) Although J. R. died in 1932, his legacy continued. He established the pilot-training program that ultimately sent 450 black pilots—the Tuskegee Airmen—to the European theater during World War II. Meanwhile the Rosenwald Fund supported the work and studies of W. E. B. DuBois, Ralph Bunche, John Hope Franklin, dancer Katherine Dunham, painter Jacob Lawrence, Langston Hughes, Zora Neal Hurston, Marian Anderson, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Gordon Parks, and many more. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner Rita Dove calls the Rosenwald Fund “the single most important funding agency for African American culture in the twentieth century.” The fund ended its operations in 1948, per J. R.'s wishes.

*Rosenwald* is the award-winning filmmaker Aviva Kempner's third documentary about the lives of little-known or barely remembered outstanding Jewish Americans. Her breakthrough film, *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg* (1998), provided a compelling portrait of the Jewish baseball slugging star who battled antisemitism before becoming the first American League player to enlist for World War II. Her *Yoo-hoo, Mrs. Goldberg* (2009) profiled American actress, screenwriter, and producer Gertrude Berg, a pioneer of radio and television sitcoms, who portrayed an immigrant Jewish mother, wife, and neighbor.

As in her earlier films, Kempner weaves together a rich array of historical photos and footage as well as interviews with prominent personalities (Maya Angelou, theater director George C. Wolfe, biographers, grandchildren, school presidents, historians, and school alumni) to bring Rosenwald's legacy to life. The historical footage of Rosenwald schools under construction and in use are particularly powerful, given that they were built in defiance of the South's effort to stamp out education efforts

in order to keep blacks illiterate and subservient. There is a great deal of moving testimony from those who attended Rosenwald schools on the importance of having a clean and bright place as a haven in their lives. Kempner deploys music to great effect, evoking the film's period, for example with ragtime piano tunes. *Rosenwald* is bookended with a children's choir singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing," accompanied by footage of black children entering and studying at Rosenwald schools, and a revamped choral rendition of the traditional spiritual "I'm Building Me a Home" as "I'm Building Me a School." This seems appropriate given the way southern spirituals inspired J. R. into action.

After watching the film, one might wonder what impact, if any, J. R. had on other Jewish philanthropists of the period in the South or elsewhere. Some viewers may find monotonous the length of Kempner's segment near the end of the film listing the honor roll of Rosenwald Fund recipients. Yet these are quibbles in the face of Kempner's achievement here. Learning about Julius Rosenwald's remarkable efforts and impact in *Rosenwald* is enlightening, inspiring, and deeply moving. The self-effacing J. R. takes his place alongside his better-known contemporaries like the Rockefellers and especially Andrew Carnegie, who funded numerous public libraries. This highly informative and entertaining film serves as an outstanding educational tool for anyone interested in learning why and how one Jewish philanthropist changed the landscape of life in the South for so many.

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## Glossary

**Bimah** ~ platform from which services are led in a synagogue

**Chevra kadisha** ~ literally, *holy society*; Jewish burial society

**Dayenu** ~ literally, *It would have been enough*; popular song from the Seder, which recounts God's many miracles, each with the declaration "Dayenu"

**Hanukkah** ~ Festival of Lights, eight-day holiday commemorating the victory of the Maccabees over Syrian rulers, 167 BCE

**Hatikvah** ~ literally *the hope*, the national anthem of the State of Israel; before 1948, the anthem of the Zionist movement

**L'dor vador** ~ literally, *from generation to generation*; a statement of Jewish continuity

**Melamed** ~ Jewish teacher

**Menorah** ~ a candelabra with seven or nine lights that is used in Jewish observances

**Mitzvah** ~ commandment; good works or deeds

**Mohel** ~ person who performs ritual circumcision

**Ner Tamid** ~ eternal light used in synagogue

**Pale of Settlement** ~ region of tsarist Russia in which Jews were required to live between 1791 and 1917.

**Passover** ~ spring holiday commemorating the deliverance of the ancient Hebrews from Egyptian bondage

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**Pogrom** ~ organized violent attack; a massacre against Jews

**Purim** ~ holiday celebrating the heroine Esther, who saved the Jews from the villain Haman

**Rosh Hashanah** ~ literally, *head of the year*; the new year on the Hebrew calendar; one of holiest days of the Jewish year

**Schnorrer** ~ moocher, someone who always lets the other person pick up the tab

**Seder** ~ ceremonial meal, usually held on the first and second evenings of Passover, commemorating the exodus from Egypt

**Semicha** ~ rabbinical ordination

**Shavuot** ~ literally, *weeks*; spring harvest celebrated fifty days after Pesach on the anniversary of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai

**Shlimazel** ~ an inept, bungling person; a born loser

**Shoah** ~ the Holocaust, from the modern Hebrew word for catastrophic destruction

**Shochet** ~ ritual slaughterer, kosher butcher

**Shtetl** (*plural: shtetlach*) ~ small town or village in eastern Europe associated with Jewish residence

**Shul** ~ congregation or synagogue

**Siddur** ~ prayer book for holidays and festivals

**Simchat Torah** ~ literally, *Rejoicing in the Law*; annual celebration marking the beginning of the annual cycle of Torah reading

**Sukkot** ~ fall holiday or Festival of Tabernacles commemorating the Hebrews' wanderings in the desert after the Exodus from Egyptian bondage

**Talmud** ~ collection of postbiblical writings justifying and explaining Jewish law and texts

**Tikun olam** ~ literally, *repairing the world*; the Jewish ideal that each individual acts in partnership with God in behalf of social justice to improve the world

**Torah** ~ Five Books of Moses; first five books of the Bible; the body of Jewish law and ritual tradition

**Yad vashem** ~ literally, *an everlasting name*; words from Isaiah later used to name Israel's memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust

**Yom Kippur** ~ Day of Atonement; holiest day of the Jewish year





## Note on Authors

**Matthew H. Bernstein** is Goodrich C. White Professor of Film and Media Studies at Emory University. He is the editor or coeditor of four anthologies and, most recently, the author of *Screening a Lynching: The Leo Frank Case in Film and TV* (2009). He is currently working on a history of Columbia Pictures and *Segregated Cinema in a Southern City: Atlanta, 1895 to 1963*. Bernstein also serves on the National Film Preservation Board, which advises the Librarian of Congress on matters of film preservation and the annual American film registry selections.

**Hasia Diner** is the Paul and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at New York University. The author of numerous books, her most recent, *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migrations to the New World and the Peddlers Who Forged the Way* (2016), examines the role of peddling in shaping Jewish migrations and modernity, with the American South a prominent location. She received her doctorate from the University of Illinois–Chicago. She is now writing an immigration history textbook for Yale University Press.

**Margaret Anne Goldsmith** graduated from Newcomb College of Tulane University in 1963. After her father's death in 1995 she returned to Huntsville, Alabama, to take over the family business, I. Schiffman & Co. Inc. She became interested in family history after writing an article for the *Huntsville Historical Review*, "My Family and the Huntsville, Alabama Jewish Community 1852–1982." Recently Goldsmith collaborated with Paul Hays on several books on her family and family business including writing the introduction for his book about her grandfather, Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr. She is currently writing a collection of vignettes about her family members and their artifacts to give to the museums, archives, and other institutions that house her family archives and other materials.

**Adam Meyer** holds degrees from Kenyon College, the University of New Mexico, and Vanderbilt University, where he currently serves as associate professor in the program in Jewish studies. He is a specialist in

twentieth-century American literature and culture, particularly the relations between blacks and Jews, as seen in his book *Black-Jewish Relations in African American and Jewish American Fiction: An Annotated Bibliography* (2002) and numerous articles. He is currently working on an essay about the late writer-comedian Bill Dana and a longer project about blacks, Jews, and Passover seders.

**Leonard Rogoff** is former president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and winner of its Proctor Outstanding Career Scholarship Award. He is the author of *Gertrude Weil: Jewish Progressive in the New South* (2017).

**Lynna Kay Shuffield**, a military historian, holds degrees from the University of Houston–Downtown and attended Rice University's Navy ROTC program as a cross-enrolled student. Her research on nineteenth-century Houston newspaper abstracts and her biographical collection on Republic of Texas political figures have won awards from the Texas State Genealogical Society. Shuffield edits the Greater Houston Jewish Genealogical Society quarterly, serves on the board of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, is president of the Oran M. Roberts Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and is a genealogy consultant for the Daughters of the American Revolution.

**Jarrod Tanny** is Associate Professor of History and the Charles and Hannah Block Distinguished Scholar in Jewish History at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. A Schusterman Post-Doctoral Fellow in Jewish Studies at Ohio University, he received his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. His monograph, *City of Rogues and Schnorrers* (2011), examines how the city of Odessa was mythologized as a Jewish city of sin, celebrated and vilified for its Jewish gangsters, pimps, bawdy musicians, and comedians. He is currently working on a larger study on Jewish humor in postwar America and its place within the larger context of the European Jewish past.

**Hollace Ava Weiner**, director of the Fort Worth Jewish Archives, has written or edited four books on Texas Jewish history. She has an undergraduate degree from the University of Maryland and a master's from the University of Texas at Arlington. Weiner is a past president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, a longtime board member

of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, and serves on the North Texas World War I Centennial Committee. She is the author of articles in two forthcoming anthologies: *Women Ranchers of Texas* and *Desperados Waiting for the Train: Stories from the Fort Worth Police Department Wanted Posters, 1894–1903*. She is at work on her family history, tentatively titled *Exodus from Lithuania: A World War I Odyssey*.

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### *Errata for Volume 19 (2016)*

The following is a correction for an error found in *Southern Jewish History*, volume 19:

p. 5, Hebrew is reversed. It reads: “הכחם ואב בית דין” but should read “מכה באו תיב ויד” (*hacham v’av bet din*).

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## ***Book, Exhibit, and Website Reviews***

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## *Research Grants Available*

The Southern Jewish Historical Society awards annual grants to support research in southern Jewish history. The application deadline for each year's awards is in June. Information is available at <http://www.jewishsouth.org/sjhs-grants-applications>.

**The Project Completion Grant** is intended to facilitate the completion of projects relevant to Jewish history in the Southern United States. Such projects might include the publication of books or exhibit catalogs or the preparation of exhibit modules. Grants may not be used to fund research or travel.

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NOTE: Full contents of Southern Jewish History volumes 1–10 and all three issues of The Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society are available free online at <http://www.jewishsouth.org/contents-southern-jewish-history-volume>.

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Lilly Zalkin Bebergal in the doorway of Zalkin's Meat Market, 535 King Street, Charleston, SC, 1942. Photo courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.



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