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Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

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COVER PICTURE: Sarah Bentschmer Visanska of Charleston, South Carolina. Visanska's social activism and club leadership is documented by Diane C. Vecchio in the article on pp. 43–75. (Courtesy of the Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston.)

From the Editor . . .

This issue features articles by a recent Ph.D., a junior faculty member, two senior academics, an independent scholar, and an award-winning genealogist, as well as a full array of book, exhibit, website, and movie reviews.

Commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, Leonard Rogoff investigates the involvement of southern Jews in the fight for women's right to vote. He finds divisions in methodology paralleling those of the national movement and notes that, while often behaving as southern ladies, advocates can be categorized as rooted cosmopolitans.

In a companion article Diane C. Vecchio provides case studies of Jewish women activists in South Carolina. Middle- and upper-class Jewish women tended to pursue careers as volunteers. Vecchio demonstrates how these activities expanded gender-defined boundaries including for those women who pursued professional endeavors. They served in the vanguard of progressive reform and community development.

David Weinfeld delves into commemorations in Richmond, Virginia, honoring the one-hundredth anniversary of the Civil War and the 250th anniversary of the first Jewish community in what became the United States. He finds that Jews were influenced by a Lost Cause mindset, although they shied away from the support of slavery that this implied and sought to include African Americans in a positive fashion. They clearly faced a balancing act to maintain acceptance.

Much has been written about Reform rabbis in the South who supported the African American civil rights movement. Yet Timothy R. Riggio Quevillon breaks new ground with his study of Conservative rabbi Moshe Cahana. Cahana brought his experience and mixed philosophy from British Mandate Palestine and Israel to bear in his pulpit in Houston, his work with the Rabbinical Assembly, and the South. Unlike rabbis in the South who tended to work behind the scenes and through ministerial

associations, Cahana marched alongside his friend Martin Luther King, Jr., and other rabbinic and ministerial allies.

Normally primary source articles highlight specific documents. In this issue, however, Karen S. Franklin and Anton Hieke stress the use of two different types of sources while recreating the history of a family from the German states in South Carolina and beyond. Had anyone asked me in graduate school or early in my career about the use of genealogy, I would have shrugged the idea off. Yet, it is now hard to imagine understanding southern and American Jewish history without considering family ties that intertwined with business and communal networks and transcended regions and even the Atlantic. Franklin introduces the reader to a variety of genealogical sources, while Hieke joins her to weave his magic with German-language materials. Articles such as this remind the historian of the myriad of materials and methodologies to be explored.

This journal has evolved over time from the suggestions of SJHS board members, editorial board members, and managing editors Rachel Heimovics Braun and Bryan Edward Stone. Thank you again to proof-readers Rachel Heimovics Braun, Karen Franklin, Bernie Wax, Hollace Weiner, and Dan Weinfeld. This year editorial board member Paul Finkelman suggested the expansion of the states covered by the journal beyond those defined by the census. After extensive discussion, the decision was made to add Delaware and Oklahoma to the journal's definition of the South.

Mark K. Bauman

Southern Jews, Woman Suffrage

by

Leonard Rogoff*

This year marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment granting women the right to vote. Southern Jews lived in a region that was largely hostile to that proposition. Of the ten states that failed to ratify by 1920, nine were southern. The national suffragists, as one journalist observed, “had given up entirely on much of the South.”¹ For a southerner to advocate for woman suffrage took courage, but southern suffragists pressed forward challenging a conservative polity that was entrenched in gender and racial prejudices. Among them were Jewish men and women, who played leading roles.

The major suffrage campaign took place during the Lost Cause and Jim Crow eras, times when the racial, civic, and social status of southern Jews was questioned. The campaign climaxed after World War I, when anti-immigrant nativism was sweeping the nation and the Ku Klux Klan expanded in prominence. Seemingly, southern Jews, especially after the Leo Frank lynching in 1915, were determined not to be conspicuous, not to make noise, to avoid anything controversial that might make them targets of discrimination.² Yet woman suffrage was a loud argument that threatened the entire social, political, and even racial order of southern society. Suffragism promised to overturn the gender hierarchy that had placed the southern lady on a pedestal, silent and immobile, too pure and elevated for dirty politics. Woman suffrage, many southerners feared, would reopen doors to black enfranchisement.

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Where Jews stood on woman suffrage had bearing on their regional and national, racial and religious identities. Jewish culture was certainly patriarchal, although the Reform movement was, in principle if not in practice, evolving toward egalitarianism. Certainly, too, southern Jews rooted themselves in their local communities as citizens and neighbors, but most were also either immigrants or the children of immigrants, with family and commercial ties beyond the region. They were mobile and well-traveled members of the global Jewish community, and their regional identity was often more geographical than cultural. Even as they integrated into their hometowns, they responded to suffrage developments nationally and abroad. This tension between localism and cosmopolitanism marked their suffrage careers as they negotiated between their ideals and political reality, between their aspiration to realize America's promise of inalienable rights and the civic, social, and political possibilities in a southern society ordered on white male privilege and conservative Christianity.

Jews lived in many Souths and claimed diverse class and ethnic roots. Southern Jewish suffragists included a Lithuanian-born, proletarian college student in Baltimore; a third-generation Sephardic woman with plantation roots in Charleston, South Carolina; and a country lawyer, the son of an Alsatian-born Confederate in Opelousas, Louisiana. Their local environments, rural or urban, isolated or communal, also varied, and what was politically possible in urban Tennessee did not play well in rural Alabama. Nor did Jews hold a consensus on the issue. A few were outspoken antisuffragists. Still others were indifferent. Southern Jewish suffragists, like those nationally, included both militants arrested in street protests and ladies who regarded such confrontations as unseemly. Some rooted their positions in a specifically Jewish sense of social justice while others asserted their Americanism. Southern Jewish suffragists, again like those nationally, brought their egalitarianism into the sanctuaries of their temples, advancing the democratic values that were a distinct feature of American Judaism.

Southern Suffragism

The links between woman suffrage and abolitionism had long disqualified it in the South. In 1848, at the celebrated Seneca Falls Convention

for women's rights, a suffrage resolution passed, despite objections that it was too radical. After the Civil War the pressing question became citizenship for liberated slaves. The Fifteenth Amendment granted the vote to black men but not to white women, which many white suffragists took as an insult. To southerners, furthermore, federal intervention on the franchise violated states' rights.

In 1869 two national woman suffrage organizations formed: the American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Lucy Stone, and the more radical National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. When Anthony attempted to vote in 1872, she was arrested. In 1875 the Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution did not grant women the right to vote. In 1890 the two national suffrage associations merged under Anthony's leadership as the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), which organized local and state leagues.³

Suffragist leaders tended to come from urban middle-class families involved in commerce, a profile that fit Jews. Often they were women of wealth, college educated, and free of domestic responsibilities, with the leisure and means to forge independent paths. As New Women in the New South, suffragists were imbued with the Progressive era's spirit of civic uplift, but they retained the social manners and racial attitudes of southern ladies, wanting to dispel stereotypes that suffragists were radical feminists—aliens to the South. Newspapers commented on their social status and southern breeding, often complimenting their comely appearance. Southern suffragist leaders included socially elite women like Madeline MacDowell Breckenridge and Laura Clay of Kentucky.⁴

For women the right to vote was a means to larger social and civic reform, not an end in itself. Typically, women's activist careers began through involvement in church—or synagogue—voluntary benevolence societies.⁵ These efforts were at best ameliorative, inadequate to solve systemic problems associated with the rising industrial economy and growth of cities. Progress, they recognized, could be achieved only through the vote as their calls for reform grew louder. The South lagged perhaps a decade behind the nation in realizing these trends, and it was slower, too, to embrace social reform.

As textile mills spread across the New South, progressive southern women responded to the exploitation of white child and woman labor.

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Rather than foster charity, they lobbied for legislation and regulation. Gertrude Weil of North Carolina spoke for many suffragist women when she explained, "Social welfare—that's the chief interest I have ever had."⁶ The term *municipal housekeeping* describes how women took their domestic concerns—childcare, education, maternal health, sanitation, and home economics—into the public marketplace. Christian women were motivated by the Social Gospel, while Reform Jews drew on the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885. The letter described Judaism as a "progressive" religion and called upon Jews to participate in the reorganization of society.⁷ The woman suffrage movement became the battlefield of a larger social, political, and cultural war fought between Old and New Southerners, between traditionalists content with agrarian ideals and male paternalism and modernists committed to social welfare and political reform.

The women's club movement, founded after the Civil War, evolved from social and literary societies into agencies for civic reform and women's rights, especially after coalescing into a general federation in 1890. For Jewish women the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), founded in 1893, was a portal into civic organizations, including suffrage campaigns. Suffragist Rebecca Rosenthal Judah of Louisville traced a typical activist's career. A volunteer with the Hebrew Relief Association, she helped found Louisville's NCJW chapter in 1893, which affiliated in 1906 with the Federation of Women's Clubs. By 1913 Judah was an officer of the Kentucky Equal Rights Association.⁸

When a regional suffrage movement emerged in the 1890s, it spread unevenly across the South. Local and state societies proved ephemeral, fading as legislatures and constitutional conventions decisively rejected proposed legislation and amendments. In North Carolina a suffrage bill was referred to the committee on insane asylums. The national movement's momentum slowed in the early 1900s as U.S. Supreme Court rulings denied women's rights, and legislative efforts failed. Without popular support, state leagues declined or expired. The South's lag followed the nation's, but more so. The period from 1896 to 1910 is conventionally labeled the movement's "doldrums."⁹

After 1910 the movement revived as more groups endorsed suffrage and a new generation of college-educated women assumed leadership.

Local suffrage societies coalesced into state associations. To arouse support, leading suffragists like Laura Clay, Anna Howard Shaw, and Carrie Chapman Catt crisscrossed the South on speaking tours. NAWSA sent field workers to organize and train women, enlisting affiliates. The 1912 election proved critical. Woodrow Wilson, a native southerner, was regarded as at best a lukewarm advocate favoring a states' rights approach. In 1913 Alice Paul formed the Congressional Union, a NAWSA committee, to advocate for a federal amendment. Paul, though a Quaker, had been a suffrage militant in England along with the celebrated Pankhurst sisters, whose tactics included setting fires, smashing windows, and assaulting police. At Wilson's inaugural in 1913, Paul organized a protest parade of eight thousand that was witnessed by half a million. As they marched, bystanders hooted and rioted. That event proved a turning point. By 1913 every southern state had a suffrage association. In November women gathered in Charlotte to organize the Equal Suffrage Association of North Carolina (ESANC) and joined NAWSA. In 1914 teachers and professional women created the Equal Suffrage Party of Georgia, and a year later it claimed branches in thirteen counties. That year, too, local societies organized the South Carolina Equal Suffrage League, which affiliated with NAWSA. In 1914 two associations formed in Tennessee, merging in 1918 also as NAWSA affiliates.¹⁰

Those opposed to woman suffrage, the "antis," were slower to organize. Their ranks drew from governing elites centered in the Democratic Party. The northern-based National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage created southern affiliates that enlisted plantation aristocrats, conservative churchmen, and industrialists. Liquor interests feared that women's votes would bring prohibition. Mill owners wanted a free hand to exploit cheap labor. Christian conservatives cited biblical chapter and verse in asserting that a woman's scripturally ordained role was as wife and mother within the home. "The most powerful reason of all," a sympathetic North Carolina state senator told a suffragist, "is that it would bring on race problems."¹¹

In the South, race was the overriding factor against woman suffrage. Many feared that enfranchising black women would overthrow white supremacy. Having resolved the so-called "Negro problem" with segregation and disenfranchisement, southerners did not want to let the federal government again dictate to the states who was eligible to vote.

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Suffragists had to assure southern legislators, whose votes were necessary for ratification, that women's votes would not return suffrage to African Americans.¹²

Thus many white southerners were not endeared to the suffrage movement, which was led by northerners and had its earliest successes in western states. Whereas national suffragists pushed for a federal amendment, southern advocates supported states' rights. Which approach would be most effective? In 1913, after NAWSA committed to a federal amendment, Kate Gordon of Louisiana organized a Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference (SSWSC) under the motto "Make the Southern States White." National suffrage groups deferred to southern racial sensitivities. Alice Paul assured South Carolinians that "Negro men cannot vote in South Carolina and therefore Negro women could not." In the 1913 Washington, D.C., parade, Paul had permitted black women to march—in the back. NAWSA President Carrie Chapman Catt employed the "statistical argument": white women's votes would strengthen white supremacy since they outnumbered black women *and* men. However, NAWSA leaders rejected southern demands that "whites-only" clauses be added to suffragist amendments even when southerners threatened to withhold funds. NAWSA's commitment to a federal amendment precipitated a split with the SSWSC. Some states' rights suffragists allied with the antisuffragists rather than support a federal amendment, but most southern women remained with NAWSA.¹³

Carrie Chapman Catt, c. 1909.
(Library of Congress.)

Alice Paul and Carrie Chapman Catt split over tactics. Paul pledged to oppose all Democratic candidates, even those who were prosuffrage, to force Wilson's hand, a position Catt and NAWSA ardently opposed. In 1916, Paul, expelled from NAWSA for her militancy, turned her Congressional Union committee into the National Woman's Party (NWP) and sent workers to organize state campaigns. Among them were two Jews, Russian-born Mary DuBrow of Passaic, New Jersey, who worked West Virginia, and Rebecca Hourwich Reyher of New York, daughter of a Columbia professor, who traveled the southern states. In response, Catt put forward her "Winning Plan" to secure a federal amendment with ratification campaigns in thirty-six states. In Charleston and other communities, women debated remaining with NAWSA or joining NWP.¹⁴

By 1916 both Democratic and Republican party conventions endorsed woman suffrage, but President Wilson was still regarded as a weak advocate. By 1917 he focused on waging a war to make the world safe for democracy rather than risking political capital on democracy for women at home. NAWSA, despite the pacifism of its leaders, declared a wartime moratorium, arguing that to engage in antigovernment protests while fathers, sons, and brothers were dying on battlefields overseas would brand the movement as unpatriotic and prove counterproductive. In contrast, Paul's NWP paraded by the thousands in 1916 and picketed the White House, actions which the respectable women of NAWSA disavowed as harmful to their cause. In Gallatin, Tennessee, NWP organizer Rebecca Hourwich hired a wagon and rode through town yelling, "Come to the schoolhouse! Hear the White House pickets!"¹⁵

Starting as Silent Sentinels, NWP protesters chained themselves to the White House fence, burned Wilson's speeches in urns, and threw an effigy of the president in the fire. Mobs attacked the women, and police clubbed them and dragged them away by their hair. Those arrested, often on frivolous charges, were incarcerated in a dungeon-like, vermin-infested workhouse serving as a prison. They went on a hunger strike that police answered with brutal force feedings. Mass arrests inspired more women to travel to Washington to take the place of those arrested. The NWP sponsored a Prison Special, a train of previously incarcerated women that traveled the country, including stops in Charleston, Chattanooga, Jacksonville, and New Orleans, where women held rallies against government brutality. Among the ex-inmate passengers was Caroline

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Katzenstein, a North Carolinian who had moved to Philadelphia. Even opponents felt sympathy. By 1917 South Carolina reported three thousand suffragists in twenty-five leagues.¹⁶

NAWSA, two million strong, decried the NWP's tactics as radical. Antisuffragists played into regional fears of another northern invasion, this time of money and outside agitators who did not know how things were done in the South. As Kentucky suffragist Madeline Breckenridge observed, southerners were "trying to get suffrage in the most lady-like manner."¹⁷ Belligerence was alien to the character of a southern lady. They hoped that women's wartime service as nurses and teachers, meeting manpower shortages, demonstrated that they qualified for citizenship so that Wilson would reward them with the vote.

Jews, Judaism, and Suffragism

Complicating the choices confronting Jews, the suffrage movement was tainted with antisemitism in its early days. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a freethinker disdainful of religion, wrote a *Women's Bible* that held Judaism responsible for male chauvinism. A suffrage newspaper published by Stanton and Anthony in 1869 described Jews as a "a useless portion of society," and, at an 1885 NWSA conference, Stanton blamed "religious creeds derived from Judaism" for patriarchy. Nor were Jews drawn to the largest women's organization to advocate suffrage, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which targeted southerners. Its feminism, pacifism, and progressive social agenda might have appealed to Jews—and the WCTU was willing to accept Jewish members and cooperate with Jewish organizations—but Jews did not sympathize with its Christian evangelism or its advocacy of prohibition.¹⁸

Early in their careers, NAWSA leaders Anna Howard Shaw and Carrie Chapman Catt expressed nativist, anti-immigrant views targeting Jews. They resented that an "ignorant" male immigrant could vote while a native-born American woman could not. Still, Catt in her domestic and international activism associated with Jewish women as friends and colleagues and regularly addressed NCJW conventions. Also allegedly antisemitic (the evidence is thin), Alice Paul, too, worked closely with Jews, notably Anita Pollitzer of Charleston. Mabel Pollitzer described Paul as a "marvelous woman" and cited her as an "inspiration," with "every good quality and wonderful thing you can think of." Nonetheless, Paul

expressed racial views common among patrician classes. In Great Britain, where Paul had served her suffragist apprenticeship, Jewish women had segregated into a separate Jewish League for Woman Suffrage, but American Jews were welcomed into mainstream suffrage organizations. In Kentucky Rebecca Rosenthal Judah and Madeline McDowell Breckenridge fundraised for suffrage.¹⁹ Jews did not feel excluded or the need for a separate organization.

Jewish interest in woman suffrage reflected public sentiment generally. In 1874 when courting Mina Rosenthal, Henry Weil, a Goldsboro, North Carolina, merchant, wrote her wanting to know, "Are you a woman's rights man?" In 1886 members of the Montefiore Literary Society of Selma, Alabama, debated the question. Jews could be found among all parties in the campaign, but the reluctance of local and national Jewish organizations to endorse suffrage suggests a more tempered if not indifferent membership. Indeed, suffragists generally often expressed frustration over their inability to arouse womanhood. Sophie Weil Brown of Columbus, Georgia, was a suffrage league activist, but her Jewish society, the Century Club, considered the issue without taking a stance. In 1908 Charleston's NCJW presented a program, "Various Methods of Voting," and six years later the Atlanta chapter held a program to promote suffrage. However much Atlanta Jewish women's organizations debated suffrage, not one formally endorsed it.²⁰

In their suffragism, or lack thereof, southern Jewish women were not likely different from their sisters elsewhere. Eastern European Jewish immigrants settling in rising New South towns and cities had more pressing needs in overcoming their poverty and acculturating to America than in exercising their civil liberties. In 1914 Atlanta attorney Walter Visanska organized a Civic Educational League to inspire these immigrants to shed their apathy and obtain citizenship and register to vote. This problem transcended regions. Rhode Island suffragist Esther Abelson, a 1913 NAWSA convention delegate, expressed the need "to rouse the Jewish contingent from its extreme indifference." That organizations like the NCJW were unable to pass suffrage resolutions, despite the open support of its leadership—notably its founding president Hannah Greenebaum Solomon—suggests widespread apathy or significant opposition to suffrage among its members. Two matriarchs of American Jewry, sisters Maud Nathan and Annie Nathan Meyer, opposed each other vehemently

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on the question. Maud, leader of New York's Consumers League, was an outspoken suffragist, marching in the streets, while Annie, founder of Barnard College, recoiled at what she saw as her sister's undignified militancy.²¹

Although the Reform movement was egalitarian in principle, and its rabbis, notably Isaac Mayer Wise, took progressive positions, it, too, showed reluctance. The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the Reform rabbinic body, qualified its endorsement of woman suffrage by leaving it to the individual rabbi and congregation. Not until 1917 did it unambiguously pass a formal resolution endorsing it. Rarely did women serve as synagogue officers or hold voting rights as independent members.²² For the Jewish masses—eastern European Orthodox immigrants especially—patriarchy was engrained in the religion and culture, and Conservative and Orthodox congregations did not grant women rights. However, if Jewish women were hostile or indifferent to suffrage, they did not apparently lead or affiliate with antisuffrage organizations in appreciable numbers. In contrast to suffragist associations, opponents did not meld into a mass movement. Their leadership tended to be elitist, upper class, and high church, not a likely society for a Jewish crowd.

National figures like Rebekah Kohut saw their work within the traditions of Judaism and linked political suffrage with religious reform. The southern Jewish suffrage leaders tended to be Reform and second- or third-generation Americans of German ancestry. Although the Reform movement did not formally endorse suffrage, women still took inspiration from it. They rooted their social activism in spirituality and specifically cited the Jewish prophetic obligation to be a "light unto the nations" as motivation. When the NCJW rejected a suffragist resolution, Anita Pollitzer, although not notably observant, wrote an article, "Women and the Law," for *The Jewish Woman*, a quarterly published by the NCJW, in which she cited the Talmud and analyzed modern womanhood, noting that Reform Judaism had recognized their equality.²³

Jewish woman suffragists did not see any incompatibility between women's rights advocacy and Judaism, and they performed double duty as civic activists and Jewish organizational leaders across regions. Dr. Rosa Hirschmann Gantt served as both president of the South Carolina Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and legislative chair of the South Carolina Equal Suffrage League. Suffragist Sadie Crockin of Baltimore headed

her local Hadassah and League of Women Voters. Ida Friend of New Orleans, a member of the suffragist Era Club, founded her city's Hadassah chapter, serving as its president. In Tennessee Jennie Lowenheim Lusky, her sister-in-law Lettie Nassauer Lusky, Helen Wile Mills, and Sarah Lowenstein Teitlebaum prominently led suffrage and Jewish organizations. Also active was Sophie Goldberger Friedman, an immigrant from Austria-Hungary and leader of the Memphis Council of Jewish Women and her temple sisterhood. In 1919 Friedman served as secretary of the Memphis Women's Congress that united the city's suffrage societies. Her role in Tennessee's ratification has been described as "pivotal."²⁴

The Southern Jewish Suffragists

Although Jewish women were not national suffrage organizational leaders, they worked closely with the national leadership. Foremost among them was Rachel Brill Ezekiel, born in Charleston and raised in Richmond, who established NAWSA's legislative headquarters in Washington, D.C., in 1909 and later worked as Catt's personal secretary. Ezekiel, as NAWSA's lone paid staff member, coordinated its national petition drive and served as its Washington spokesperson. Catt, in tribute, wrote that "among the faithful thousands . . . none was more patient, helpful, understanding and efficient" than Ezekiel. In the NWP Anita Pollitzer worked at Alice Paul's side. Following the lead of her older sisters Mabel and Carrie, Anita began her suffrage career in her native Charleston where she drew posters, sold lemonade, and debated antis on the streets. After graduating from Columbia, she worked in the art department at the University of Virginia but traveled to Washington to join the woman suffrage movement. Paul, recognizing her talents, sent her to Capitol Hill to lobby senators and representatives. Anita, a member of NWP's ratification committee, stood over the politicians to ensure that they made a promised phone call or sent a telegram. By 1915 she was established in New York as a suffragist, where she marched in a celebrated parade down Fifth Avenue. Anita traveled the South—Florida, Virginia, and Tennessee—as a NWP organizer, returning to Charleston often. Pollitzer's climb in the ranks culminated in the party's chairmanship in 1945. The northerner Paul, with a reputation as abrasive, sent the personable Pollitzer to organize eastern Tennessee as the ratification battle reached its climax.²⁵

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*Anita Pollitzer (standing) with Alice Paul at the grave of
Susan B. Anthony, Rochester, New York, July 1923.
(Library of Congress.)*

More so at the local and state levels, Jewish women served in upper leadership. Rebecca Rosenthal Judah rose from long-time treasurer of the Kentucky Equal Rights Association to its vice presidency. When Georgia organized its Equal Suffrage Party, Matilda Reinhardt Elsas was state organizer and Sara Cohen Schlesinger treasurer. Carrie Pollitzer served as a Charleston Equal Suffrage League officer in various capacities, and in 1912 she opened a stand on King and Broad streets where she distributed suffrage literature. Mabel Pollitzer rose to state chair of the NWP. When Carrie Chapman Catt promulgated her Winning Plan, she appointed Gertrude Weil as field commander of North Carolina. In 1913 an Equal Suffrage Association of North Carolina organized and affiliated with NAWSA with Weil as vice president. By 1914 she organized and presided over the Goldsboro Equal Suffrage League. By 1919 Weil was elected president of the state league, leading the campaign to ratify the Nineteenth

Amendment. Her friend Laura Weill Cone, wife of a Greensboro textile magnate, served as treasurer.²⁶

Southern Jewish women followed common suffrage career paths. Like suffragists generally, they typically came from religiously affiliated families and started in benevolence societies. Brill's father was an Orthodox rabbi, and Weil and the Pollitzer sisters recalled pious mothers active in the synagogue. Their first public service was as Sunday school teachers. Their mothers were pillars of benevolence societies and educated their daughters in charity. Many began their civic involvement in woman clubs, a movement dating to the late 1860s. Gertrude Weil, known as Federation Gertie, pushed the state's clubs to evolve from social and literary societies to agencies of prison reform, public health, clean government, maternal care, public education, and women's rights—all municipal housekeeping chores they had failed to achieve without the vote. Carrie Pollitzer, as a member of her local woman's club executive board, was instrumental in opening the College of Charleston to women. The Pollitzers, charter members of Charleston's Equal Suffrage League, joined the city's leading families in organizing settlement houses and advocating for libraries, public schools, and labor rights.²⁷

Like other suffragist leaders, Jews prominent in the movement often came from illustrious families. Weil and the Pollitzers came from wealthy families with reputations as entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and civic leaders. Their grandparents had emigrated from central Europe in the late antebellum years. Weils were city councilmen and university trustees, while Pollitzers served on school and health boards as well as the Cotton Exchange. Their parents set models of public service and decorum. Wealth afforded them a measure of independence, and their family's civic engagement opened doors. Cultured and acculturated, they mixed socially with high society. Laura Cone's family, among the state's leading industrialists, enjoyed baronial wealth, and they endowed schools, hospitals, and YMCAs. Her extended family included a mayor, lawyers, and university trustees. Jewish suffragists, too, like Rebecca Rosenthal Judah of Louisville, came from the rising urban middle class, the archetypical builders of a New South whose wealth had freed them for club and civic work.²⁸

The Pollitzers described themselves as a "South of Broad" family, clearly identifying with southern genteel society. Upper-class women

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among southern Jewish suffragists had their counterparts among Jewish and non-Jewish suffragists elsewhere. The national movement included Sephardic grandees Maud Nathan of New York and Selena Solomons of San Francisco, who traced their ancestry to the nation's first Jewish families. Rose Pastor Stokes became a national celebrity when the poor, Polish-born Jewish activist married a socially elite Episcopalian millionaire. Rachel Brill was born into a poor eastern European immigrant family in Charleston, but in marrying Jacob Levy Ezekiel of Richmond, she carried the name of a Sephardic family with colonial roots and Confederate service.²⁹

Older, aristocratic southern Christian women whose status offered security mentored Weil and the Pollitzers. Such collaborations affirmed the social acceptance of Jews. In Weil's case, a prominent plantation lady, Sallie Southall Cotten, known as the Mother of Woman's Clubs, groomed her for leadership, and their relationship was warm and collegial. Active in the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Cotten was esteemed as the model of southern womanhood, a well-published author who exalted white Anglo-Saxon blood. For the Pollitzers, Susan Pringle Frost, a historic preservationist and founding president of the Charleston Equal Suffrage League, served as mentor. Despite her Old South heritage, Frost, whom the sisters called Miss Sue, ardently supported a federal rather than a states' rights approach. Her status as a Charleston aristocrat was such, Mabel Pollitzer recalled, that she did not suffer the calumny more typically directed at NWP suffragists for their alleged radicalism. Like many in the movement, Weil and the Pollitzer sisters took the mantle from their elders, Old South to New.³⁰

Many of these southern Jewish daughters received the finest college educations available for women. At the time women were traditionally destined for marriage and motherhood, and their college enrollment was numerically insignificant. Southern Jews were among those who attended elite northern colleges. Gertrude Weil matriculated at the Horace Mann School at Columbia and then became the first North Carolinian to graduate from Smith. Anita, Carrie, and Mabel Pollitzer held degrees from Columbia Teachers College in New York. They were not alone in graduating from Columbia, and other Jewish suffragists were alumnae of Goucher, Richmond, and Memphis. Ida Weis Friend's parents left

Natchez in 1882 to educate their children in Europe, and Ida spoke French and German fluently.³¹ These women were hardly southern provincials.

Suffragists were disproportionately unmarried or relatively free of family and domestic duties. Neither Gertrude Weil nor Mabel and Carrie Pollitzer married, and Anita was childless. Like other suffragists, too, professionals were highly represented. Returning to Charleston, Mabel Pollitzer pioneered science education and environmentalism, while Carrie advanced the kindergarten movement and women's education. Anita taught at the University of Virginia before embarking on her career as a feminist organizational activist. Dr. Rosa Hirschmann Gantt of South Carolina was a pioneering physician. Anita Pollitzer returned to Columbia to earn a degree in international law, and at forty-four, suffragist Sophie Friedman of Tennessee entered law school at Memphis University. Anita Pollitzer, Marguerite Rosett Bishow, and Theresa Pollak of Richmond were professional artists for whom freedom of expression was inherent in their work. Pollak, who had attended the Arts Student League in New York, founded what became the art department of Virginia Commonwealth University and is credited with introducing modern art to conservative Richmond.³² As wage-earners, professional women echoed revolutionary calls for no taxation without representation. They were pioneers in fields beyond suffrage, conscious of their rights, and not dependent on a father or a husband.

Younger Jewish New Women were less deferential than their mothers' generation. Those who engaged in civil disobedience and subjected themselves to arrest tended to be college-aged youth educated in new ideologies of class and gender. In 1917, when the NWP sent Silent Sentinels to picket the White House, Anita Pollitzer joined the line and was arrested. Answering the NWP's call for a College Day of White House picketing, Dorothy Gertrude Sterne of Anniston, Alabama, and Ida Glatt McCarthy of Baltimore were among thirty Goucher students who defied their college president's explicit directive not to do so. A month later Glatt, who had joined the founding meeting of the Congressional Union, returned to picket. In 1919 Marguerite Rosett Bishow, who attended the Maryland Institute of Art, pulled her Russian-born mother, Sophie, to a watch-fire protest at the White House. Marguerite was arrested, spending forty-eight hours in jail, only to return the next month for the final watch-fire demonstration, which earned her five more days in district jail. Mother and

Suffragists picketing at the White House, Washington, D.C., 1917.
(*Wikimedia Commons.*)

Ida Glatt McCarthy, 1917.
(*Donnybrook Fair, AlexanderStreet.com.*)

daughter were awarded the NWP's prison-door pins. Mabel Pollitzer described the picketers as "dear little young women" who kept the fires burning. She recalled the excitement when the prison special train of released prisoners arrived in Charleston, drawing a large crowd to the Academy of Music.³³

*Admission ticket for "Prison Special" meeting in Charleston, February 10, 1919.
(National Woman's Party Records, Library of Congress.)*

Generational conflicts sometimes opened, but not in all cases, given the gamut of opinion. Suffragist mothers drew their daughters into the movement at an early age. Marguerite Rosett Bishow's suffrage baptism had been at thirteen when her mother took her on a celebrated Baltimore-to-Annapolis "pilgrimage." Elizabeth Jonas Jacobs of Tennessee donned a suffragist white dress when she marched with her mother to Nashville's Hermitage Hotel, the ratification campaign's headquarters. Her daughter Adèle pulled Estelle Goodman Clark to suffragist meetings in Richmond. Yet, even in progressive households, the woman's vote might be a bridge too far. The Pollitzer family ethos was "all that was good for the city," but there was no discussion on "the injustice of women not voting," Mabel recalled, "I don't ever remember either mother or father ever speaking of that." Her mother, a normal school graduate, was a "traditional homemaker" involved with family and synagogue. In contrast, Gertrude Weil's mother and aunt, founders of the city's Woman's Club, fought to have women serve on school and library boards. Mina Weil hosted radical feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman for a lecture series. Yet neither mother nor

aunt joined Gertrude's suffrage societies although the older women committed to expand women's civil, marital, and property rights. In 1914 the national Federation of Women's Clubs endorsed suffrage, but not until 1918 was the North Carolina Federation able to pass a similar resolution.³⁴ Southern public opinion opposed woman suffrage, and not every progressive woman endorsed the vote as necessary to secure women's rights.

Jewish antisuffragists may not have been numerous, but if Tennessee was representative, they were prominent. Yetta Levy of Memphis wanted it known that she should be "put . . . down as emphatically against" woman suffrage. Levy had served thirty-one years as president of the Ladies' Hebrew Relief Association in Memphis. Her opposition was not based on specifically Jewish sources, but she expressed domestic gender views common in antisuffragist literature. Levy told a reporter: "Woman suffrage would degrade womanhood: her household duties would be interfered with by her political duties." She did not see how a woman could leave home and children to do jury duty, nor would a respectable woman go to the polls. She "trusted" men "to guide the ship of state." Also expressing traditionalist views was Rosa Small of Memphis. A Russian immigrant, she would not cast a ballot out of respect for her husband, Louis, who could not even abide talk about women's rights. Elizabeth Bloomstein's background as a highly educated professional seemed more typical of suffragists, but a 1914 profile listed her as "against woman suffrage." A member of the first graduating class of George Peabody College in Nashville in 1877, she did graduate work at Wisconsin and Chicago. Bloomstein spent her life on the Peabody campus as a historian and librarian, active in the Woman's Club and temperance society. Born in 1859, she belonged to an older generation, and her affiliations included the United Daughters of the Confederacy as well as the Southern Women's League for Rejection. Socially conservative publisher Adolph Ochs, raised in Knoxville, was a fervid antisuffragist, and his *Chattanooga Times* editorialized against ratification. Like their suffragist coreligionists, these antis were affiliated Jews and just as various in their histories and identities.³⁵

Militants or Moderates?

For southern Jewish suffragists, no less than others, the viable choices were whether to join the moderate NAWSA with its meetings, lobbying, and letter-writing or the militant NWP with its picketing,

protesting, and mass arrests. Jewish women allied with each camp. When the NWP sent field workers to North Carolina to enlist women, Gertrude Weil organized NAWSA-affiliated ESANC chapters. While NWP protesters chained themselves to White House gates and engaged in hunger strikes, Weil issued a statement dissociating ESANC from “undignified demonstrations” and disavowing “so-called militant methods.”³⁶

*Gertrude Weil, seated at left, at the Equal Suffrage Association
of North Carolina (ESANC) office in Raleigh.
(State Archives of North Carolina.)*

South Carolina offers another story. Mabel Pollitzer recalled a Charleston parlor meeting that Susan Pringle Frost convened in December 1917 with thirty to forty women. According to Frost, the choices were between a state-by-state approach, which she attributed to Catt and NAWSA, and the federal amendment as advocated by Paul’s NWP. Her account is mystifying since by then NAWSA as well as NWP had committed to a federal amendment. Perhaps the states’ rights position was still endorsed by the South Carolina Suffrage League, which remained affiliated with NAWSA, or perhaps Mabel Pollitzer’s memory—she was interviewed in 1974, nearly sixty years later—was faulty. She explained, “We felt that getting it state by state . . . would be a great mistake. . . . It would delay it for years.” In any case Mabel remembered Frost calling on those who chose to join the NWP to rise to their feet. Among them were Mabel and Carrie Pollitzer. Anita Pollitzer signed on too, likely from New

Mabel Pollitzer, 1906.

*(Courtesy of the Jewish Heritage
Collection, College of Charleston.)*

Carrie Pollitzer, c. 1925.

*(Courtesy of the South Carolina
Historical Society.)*

York as a NWP organizer. Other Jewish women stood as well, some descendants from Old South families. They included the elderly Mrs. Ansley Cohen from the Moïse family of Sumter and Nina Ottolengui, an actress and café owner from a plantation family that had lost its fortune during the Civil War. Narrowly outnumbered, these women withdrew to form a NWP chapter.³⁷

Dora Rubin, a legal secretary whom Mabel recalled as “very intellectual,” from a more recently arrived Jewish family, remained seated with the Equal Suffrage League affiliated with NAWSA. The Charleston NAWSA women issued a “declaration of principles” affirming that they, too, were committed to a federal suffrage amendment but would “subordinate” their efforts to “war work.” Moreover, they declared their

disapproval of "picketing," NWP's primary tactic. That declaration addressed the root of their national schism: militancy.³⁸

Contrary to the national acrimony, Mabel Pollitzer described the Charleston split as excited but amicable: a "gentle splitting." She could not recall anything "denunciatory," or a "community reaction." Such polite behavior was typical of the southern campaign and suggests a regional distinction. Neither suffrage group was ever large, and the local NAWSA seemed to fade away. South Carolina, like its sister southern states, was notoriously antisuffragist, and women could not vote in state elections until 1921. The legislature failed to ratify the federal amendment until 1969, in time for Mabel's eighty-fourth birthday.³⁹

Although these Jewish suffragists aspired to be New Women, they responded as southern ladies. Rather than picket, light bonfires, and confront police, southern suffragists met, paraded, and lobbied. Sadie Jacobs Crockin of Baltimore marched and lobbied, but she recoiled from the idea of picketing the White House or undergoing arrest. Anita Pollitzer subjected herself to arrest in Washington, but her older sisters Mabel and Carrie in Charleston did not. The NWP deliberately sent the twenty-five-year-old Anita Pollitzer to lobby lawmakers because they thought that southern gentlemen would courteously receive a young, vivacious woman gifted with southern charm. "In order to grip the Southern heart a cause must have its glamour," wrote suffragist Anne Dallas Dudley of Tennessee. Newspapers described Weil as a model of southern womanhood, complimenting her fashion and gentility.⁴⁰

Sadie Jacobs Crockin, late 1890s.

*(Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
of Maryland, Baltimore.)*

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To counter the claims of radicalism, Jewish suffragists, like others, downplayed feminism and emphasized domesticity. The unmarried Weil explained to the Woman's Club that with the vote women "shall use it in our old, time-honored business of housekeeping" in ways that would be "beautiful for our families."⁴¹ In their polite demeanor, southern suffragists, including Jewish ones, may have been acting in character, but their domestic posture was also strategic. Suffragism was not popular in the South, and its female adherents were attacked as unwomanly. The Southern Women's Rejection League alleged that suffrage would wreck homes, violate the Bible, and soil women's purity. It warned of abandoned babies and prostitution. Taking on the entrenched Democratic political machine would be confrontational. Political bosses believed that the woman's vote would open the floodgate to blacks, trade unionists, and progressives.

Suffragism and Class Lines

Southern Jewish suffragist leaders, like others, typically came from the urban middle and upper classes. As benevolent women, they often knew the working classes through their support of settlement houses and Americanization programs for immigrants. They joined the National Consumers League, which advocated for workers. A desired but unrealized suffragist ambition was to establish a sisterhood across class lines. Southern Jewry, which tended to be mercantile, did not have the proletarian culture of the urban north, but the eastern European Jewish immigrants recently settled in the South were not far removed from it.

The first stage of their American migration typically began in Baltimore or New York. There they lived in communities which included proletarians committed to socialism and trade unionism, both of which identified with the suffrage movement. Yiddish-speaking southern Jews subscribed to the New York newspaper *Forverts*, which reported on the suffrage movement in the U.S. and abroad. The subject was intensely debated in its pages, including letters from women who feared that the vote would undo family life. Heavily Jewish immigrant voting districts in New York, following the Jewish press, endorsed suffrage referenda in 1915 and 1917. In 1917 the Workmen's Circle/Arbeiter Ring, a leftist, Yiddish-culture fraternal society, endorsed suffrage. The organization had chapters in six southern states, mostly in cities, but its members tended to be petit bourgeoisie rather than working class. Suffragists like Marguerite Rosett

Bishow of Baltimore, Naomi Silverman Cohn of Richmond, and Joe Hanover of Memphis were children of immigrant storekeepers. Raised in a Yiddish-speaking immigrant milieu, they did not have the wealth or social status of the grand dames of suffragism but were aspirational Americans. Suffragist Sadie Jacobs Crockin worked with trade unions and on Americanization programs in Baltimore's immigrant neighborhoods. Henrietta Szold, committed to women's rights, also worked with immigrants in her native Baltimore, and her Hadassah movement was linked with the socialist ethos of labor Zionism. In 1918 Hadassah, which appealed to eastern European immigrant women, telegraphed President Wilson in support of suffrage, noting that women in Palestine had the vote.⁴²

Although southern Jews were rarely laborers, they responded to the exploitation of white child and woman labor in the textile mills, which drew them to suffrage as an agency of reform. Suffragists like Gertrude Weil, Naomi Silverman Cohn, and Rebecca Rosenthal Judah took up the cause of child and woman's labor. Some, too, joined or donated to the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL). Weil boldly declared that the "the platform and aims of the Equal Suffrage League and Labor Unions [are] the same." A union trademark appeared on state suffrage league literature. WTUL's president was Rose Schneiderman, a Polish-born New Yorker who traveled the country on behalf of NAWSA. Those committed to improving the lives of working women were drawn to NAWSA, which was linked to social reform movements, rather than to the NWP with its single focus on the vote. Southern Jewish women of eastern European ethnicity would not have felt differently than their northern sisters, with whom they were likely intimately familiar. But with the exception of Ida Glatt McCarthy of Baltimore, they did not have the histories of northern trade unionists like New Yorkers Clara Lemlich, Nina Samordin, or Rose Pastor Stokes, whose radicalism led them to the Communist Party (CP). McCarthy had become a socialist at Goucher College, where she presided over both the Menorah Society and Equal Suffrage League. A WTUL member, she married an Irish immigrant labor organizer. She affiliated with the CP—she was a *Daily Worker* journalist—but only after she left the South for Chicago and Los Angeles.⁴³ Southern red baiters conflated suffragism with communism, feminism, trade unionism, and race mixing.

A Cosmopolitan Movement

College-educated and well-traveled, southern Jewish suffragists had a cosmopolitan perspective, viewing their native South as both insiders and outsiders. They measured their efforts less in terms of the conservative South than by the progress of the national and international movements they knew well. In this regard they were clearly aligned with leading suffragists like Maud Nathan and Carrie Chapman Catt who attended international feminist, suffrage, and peace conferences where European Jewish women often took leading roles. Anita Pollitzer represented South Carolina at the International Feminists Conference in Paris in 1916. A year later she participated in the World Women's Party and International Council of Women. Gertrude Weil and Sadie Jacobs Crokin, among others, joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Their most common international cause was Zionism, and many were Hadassah leaders or chapter organizers.⁴⁴

As cosmopolitans, southern Jewish suffragists echoed Enlightenment rhetoric of human rights. After World War I, they questioned how America claimed to have fought for democracy when tyrannical Germany and Bolshevik Russia had granted women voting rights. When debating woman suffrage in 1886 in Selma, Alabama, Jacob Rothschild, a Confederate veteran, cited "Rousseau [*sic*], Voltaire, Locke" on "principles of universal liberty & emancipation." He began a historical survey of women leaders with the Hebrew warrior-prophetess "Debra," then continued through Queen Victoria to a Mrs. Gaines, a New Orleans lawyer. When urging Louisiana to ratify a state suffrage amendment in 1918, state senator Leon Haas evoked President Wilson, Britain's Lloyd-George, and Belgium's King Albert as well as "suffrage sentiment" in Canada, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland.⁴⁵

Southern Jewish Male Suffragists

Like their wives and mothers, southern Jewish men took bold stands in support of the woman's vote. Southern Reform rabbis, aligned with the CCAR, spoke out in public forums for the woman's vote. For Atlanta's Rabbi David Marx, a pillar of classical Reform Judaism, woman suffrage was consistent with his social justice agenda, which included improved race relations. He addressed woman suffrage societies. Memphis rabbi

William Fineshriber of Temple Israel, active in the Equal Suffrage Association, was described as "one of the most forceful speakers in the city" for suffrage. At the Tri-State Fair of 1913, he was the lone male speaker. Rabbi Isadore Lewinthal of Nashville also wrote in support. New Orleans rabbi Max Heller once held traditional views on woman's domesticity, but noting the rising numbers of educated women, he sermonized that woman had a place in the "World" as well as the "Home." His writings on suffrage were printed in the *Woman's Journal*.⁴⁶

Joe Hanover of Memphis was among the leading male spokespersons for woman suffrage in Tennessee and played a critical role as floor leader for the amendment's ratification as a member of the state legislature. This Polish-born son of immigrants had earned a law degree from the University of Memphis, and after a stint in the state legislature worked as a city attorney. In 1919, he resigned to reclaim his House seat as an independent against the Democratic machine so he could commit himself to the suffrage cause. A thirty-year-old bachelor, he spoke passionately and eloquently of the women's vote as a patriotic cause.⁴⁷

Attorney Leonard Grossman of Atlanta provided legal counsel to suffrage organizations and founded the Georgia Men's League for Women Suffrage, an affiliate of a national organization. A member of The Temple in Atlanta, he had the support of his rabbi, David Marx. Grossman, a Republican, and his wife, Trudel, attended the 1913 NAWSA convention in Washington. Georgia equal suffrage league president Mary Latimer McLendon recalled, "Mr. Grossman toured the state . . . drafted proposed bills and ratification resolutions . . . appeared before annual conventions . . . occupied church pulpits and addressed women's clubs, civic bodies, city councils, and legislative committees." In 1918 he was elected to represent Fulton County in the legislature. His testimony and politicking was to no avail. The Men's League presence was "nominal," with little influence beyond Atlanta. Georgia legislators expressed pride in being the first state to reject ratification.⁴⁸ The character and success of his and others' activism, as with the women, reflected the political realities of their states.

In Louisiana state senator Leon Haas cosponsored a bill authorizing a public referendum on a state constitutional suffrage amendment. The *New Orleans Times-Picayune* succinctly summarized the bill's intent: "Passage of the state suffrage bill, it is believed, presages the defeat of the

federal suffrage amendment pending in the Legislature, which will leave Louisiana standing pat on states' rights." Haas was caught in the crossfire of Louisiana politics. Born in Bayou Chicot to an Alsatian Jewish immigrant storekeeper who had served as a Confederate officer, his family had ties to suffragist Rabbi Heller of New Orleans. After receiving a law degree from the University of Virginia in 1901, he returned home, where he took state leadership posts in civic societies. He represented St. Landry Parish for twenty-one years in the state senate. In defending his bill, Haas argued that woman suffrage was an age-old "question" that "has commanded attention in every civilized country in the world." Despite his effort to universalize the proposition, Haas was responding specifically to Kate Gordon, the suffragist leader of the SSWSC, who was so ardent about states' rights that she would rather have suffrage fail than a federal amendment ratified. The resolution passed the two-thirds threshold in the senate by one vote. When Governor Ruffin Pleasant signed the bill, Gordon excluded members of the NAWSA-affiliated Woman Suffrage Party, and Haas was "shut out." The newspaper reported that the "sensational . . . clash between the suffrage factions" left Haas expressing reservations, "almost shaking my confidence in the wisdom of votes for women." Haas's support for suffrage was principled, but his endorsement of states' rights was expedient. Given Louisiana's politics, he did not take issue with the NAWSA women who wanted ratification of the federal amendment. A study of suffragism in Louisiana noted that Jews were prominent in NAWSA but were wholly absent from the states' rights suffrage organization.⁴⁹

Southern Jewish Suffragists and the Race Question

Behind the states' rights argument was white supremacy. Governor Pleasant said that he signed the Haas-Powell bill because he feared that a federal amendment "will force the negro back to the ballot box." In her campaign for states' rights suffragism, Kate Gordon was a virulent, unabashed racist, so much so that she alienated the national suffrage leadership that was otherwise willing to accommodate to the South on race. That Gordon excluded Haas from the "glory" suggests, to his credit, that he was not a fellow traveler in her racist campaign. The linkage between black and woman enfranchisements had bedeviled the movement since abolitionism. When testifying in support of woman's suffrage to the

Georgia legislature in 1914, Leonard Grossman reassured the lawmakers that woman's vote would not lead to black enfranchisement but would rather uphold "white supremacy for a white man's country."⁵⁰

The racial debate on suffrage occurred during an era when antisemitism evolved from a religious to a racial prejudice, and social discrimination became commonplace. Southern Jews certainly had to tread cautiously on the race line. Taking a stand as a white citizen, Grossman shared the general sentiment among suffragists that a tactical support of white supremacy was necessary to persuade southern legislators to ratify. To win over lawmakers, Gertrude Weil employed the statistical argument, as did Carrie Chapman Catt, that woman suffrage would increase the numerical majority of white voters. However, Weil neither race-baited nor disparaged African Americans, as both southern antis and states' rights suffragists did, nor did she endorse or refute white supremacy other than to argue that woman suffrage would not change the political status quo.⁵¹

Weil's argument assumed that black women would vote, which was a bold and radical position for any white southerner, much less a Jew, during an era when the Jews' whiteness was questioned. The conflation of race, gender, religion, and politics was evident in a letter that Weil received after ratification from a Wayne County neighbor: "Can't help being surprised at you, you being a Jew and knowing the Jews were God's choosen [*sic*] nation to be a light to the gentiles. . . . And knowing the children of Ham the negro was cursed and made servants to Shem." He lamented, "the negro will be put back in politics, then woe to our free South land." He got "cold chills" at the thought of "two negro women" next to a white woman at the polling place, then invoked the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Antisuffragism was stronger in agrarian regions, where most blacks but fewer Jews resided, like Weil's Wayne County, while suffragism was stronger in commercial, New South cities, where most Jews lived.⁵²

Some Jews unequivocally equated the rights of blacks and white women. In 1886 Jacob Rothschild, echoing the language of the Fifteenth Amendment, which granted the vote to African American men, affirmed "principles of universal liberty & emancipation irrespective of race, color, or previous condition" in justifying the woman's vote. Whether he held these views as points of debate or from personal conviction is moot. They

were brave arguments to make in post-Reconstructionist Alabama. More exceptionally, Jacob Trieber of Arkansas, the first Jew to hold a federal judgeship, argued that the franchise was a fundamental civil right regardless of sex or race. For Trieber the Constitution was foremost. Recalling the antisemitism of his childhood in Prussia, he was outspoken in defending the "inherent" rights of African Americans as well as of women. He "feared any country's future that would allow such discrimination against its citizens." Appearing often before women's groups, Trieber asserted, "A woman is a person and should be entitled to all the rights guaranteed by the constitution to a male person."⁵³ As a judge, Trieber, unlike Grossman, did not hold a politically partisan position, and his federal appointment conferred a measure of security and independence.

Jewish Suffragists and the Fight for Ratification

In 1918 Woodrow Wilson finally endorsed a federal amendment. Many fellow southerners felt betrayed. Despite continued southern congressional opposition, the amendment passed the House of Representatives in January 1918 and the Senate in June 1919 before being sent to the states for ratification. The approval of thirty-six states was required to ratify. Georgia legislators rushed to be the first state to reject, dismissing suffragist appeals to take no action. By 1920 only Texas, Arkansas and Kentucky ratified among southern states, although Mississippi, Florida, and Louisiana had granted limited voting rights in local elections. By summer 1920, thirty-five states had ratified. The battleground came down to North Carolina or Tennessee.⁵⁴

In August 1920 the Tennessee and North Carolina legislatures met in special sessions to consider ratification. Telegrams flew back and forth between Gertrude Weil in Raleigh and NAWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt, now stationed in Nashville. Alice Paul sent Anita Pollitzer in a three-person delegation to Nashville to lobby state legislators and organize a grassroots campaign. Rumors flew of bogus petitions, out-of-state hordes, and sudden influxes of northern cash. North Carolina legislators sent their Tennessee counterparts a telegram urging them to reject. Although North Carolina's governor expressed support, however tepid, the legislature voted to postpone consideration.

While North Carolina dithered, Tennessee became the last state capable of achieving the "Perfect 36." Anita Pollitzer worked closely with

Sue White, the state NWP chair and its most prominent suffragist, who assigned Pollitzer East Tennessee as her territory to lobby lawmakers.⁵⁵ Among these was Harry Burn, who like many backcountry politicians seemed to be uncertain or reconsidering. Could Pollitzer trust an antisuffrage Republican county chairman who assured her that Burn was a sure yes vote for ratification? Rumors flew of plots and boycotts, bribes and payoffs. Pollitzer called on former governor Ben Hooper, a Republican suffragist, who agreed to telephone wavering legislators.⁵⁶

That Tennessee did ratify owes in measure to the tireless effort of Representative Joe Hanover. He had taken residence in the Hermitage Hotel, just doors from the room of Carrie Chapman Catt. Nightly, Hanover was in Catt's suite formulating strategy and bringing her money he had raised.⁵⁷ The suffragists, led by Catt, chose Hanover to be floor leader for ratification in the House. He cashed in political debts from old-timers for whom he had drafted bills, convincing one rustic that an offered anti bribe was too cheap to justify a change in his vote. For his advocacy, Hanover was jostled in an elevator, accused of taking bribes, and denounced as a Bolshevik. Seductive females telephoned, attempting to compromise him,

*Tennessee state representative Joe Hanover, right, with leaders of the Tennessee suffrage campaign. From left: U.S. senator Kenneth McKellar, state senator Ernest Hoston, Sue Shelton White, Tennessee governor Albert. H. Roberts.
(Tennessee Woman Suffrage Heritage Trail,
tnwomansuffrageheritagetrail.com.)*

while thuggish males called to threaten his life. Prosuffrage governor Albert Roberts was so concerned that he summoned Hanover to his office and assigned him a police captain as a bodyguard. The officer answered his phone, read his mail, and slept next door.⁵⁸

Catt wrote Weil that she had never seen such “excitable men” or such “drunkenness.”⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Anita Pollitzer continued to cajole lawmakers, including Harry Burn. Although Burn assured her that “my vote will never hurt you,” he wore the antis’ red rose in his lapel.⁶⁰ Pollitzer crossed him off her list. Burn’s moment of immortality was the climax of the Tennessee—indeed, of the national—suffrage campaign. With the House vote drawing to a tie, Burn, carrying a letter from his suffragist mother in his pocket, dramatically cast the decisive ballot that turned the Nineteenth Amendment into the law of the land.⁶¹

The Aftermath

Woman suffrage was achieved through the militancy of the NWP and the political lobbying of NAWSA, through parades and picketing, meetings and letter-writing, quiet diplomacy and violent confrontation. As each state passed suffrage legislation or ratified the federal amendment, NAWSA turned its state suffrage association into a League of Women Voters (LWV), often with little or no change in leadership. In 1920 Gertrude Weil and Laura Cone continued their suffrage roles as president and treasurer of North Carolina’s LWV. After hearing national LWV president Maud Wood Park deliver an inspiring speech, suffragist Sadie Jacobs Crocker of Baltimore became founding president of her city’s league. Josephine Heyman founded the DeKalb County League, and women from The Temple constituted a “significant percentage” of Atlanta’s league membership.⁶² To inspire women to vote, the national LWV sponsored citizenship schools and distributed literature to educate women on civic issues. Sophie Friedman of Memphis organized the LWV’s voting campaign in Tennessee. The LWV’s issues were maternal health, child labor, and working women’s wages and hours. In 1924 Naomi Silverman Cohn cofounded (with Adèle Goodman Clark) the Virginia Women’s Council of Legislative Chairmen of State Organizations to promote women’s issues. Cohn told LWV members that through education they would elect “only liberal progressive citizens.”⁶³ The national LWV’s first great legislative victory was convincing Congress to pass the

Sheppard-Towner Maternal and Infancy Protection Act, which established social welfare and aid to the states as federal principles.

Those who anticipated women providing progressive votes were disappointed; they seemed to vote no differently than their husbands and brothers. League organizers struggled to enlist members and inspire chapters. The league's progressive agenda aroused conservative opposition. It bravely took on the cause of child and woman's labor, which in the 1920s brought charges that it was communist. Naomi Silverman Cohn was a one-woman labor lobbyist in the Virginia legislature. As labor strife stuck the South during the 1920s and 1930s, its identification with unions contributed to its decline. Like many industrialists' spouses, Laura Cone, who had dipped into her wallet to keep her state LWV alive, ended her involvement in respect to her mill executive husband. By the 1930s, with the Depression, state leagues across the country faded, and the national organization was moribund, only to revive a generation later.⁶⁴

Jewish women, like other activists, found other outlets for their social justice work, joining political parties or social welfare advocacy groups. Naomi Silverman Cohn was appointed an inspector in the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry's children and women division. Sophie Friedman served as an officer in the Memphis women lawyers association and was influential in securing protective legislation for woman workers and against child marriage. Political parties, now open to women, drained talent. In 1920 Ida Friend became the first woman from Louisiana to serve at the Democratic National Convention and a year later was one of two women delegates to a state constitutional convention. In 1936 Friedman was a delegate to the Democratic Convention. Women generally now found party activism more efficacious than the nonpartisan LWV.⁶⁵

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which Alice Paul presented to Congress in 1923, proved to be a divisive issue among former suffragists. Its passage became the NWP's single focus. At Paul's side was Anita Pollitzer, now in Washington, who lobbied senators, representatives, priests, rabbis, and ministers to encourage its passage. Seeking support, she wrote women across the country from housewives to aviator Amelia Earhart and met with Eleanor Roosevelt. Whereas Pollitzer lobbied for an equal rights amendment, Weil followed the national LWV policy in opposing the ERA. Joining in opposition was the NCJW. That organization argued that the ERA would disallow legislation with specific protections

for women's health and labor, like maximum work hours or maternal care. When the NWP revived its campaign in 1927, the LWV, claiming to speak for the "majority of women," responded by disparaging the "so-called Equal Rights Amendment" and the "sudden agitation of a small group."⁶⁶

Although white suffrage groups had been reluctant to ally with African American societies, Jewish suffragists by the 1930s shared the growing realization that social justice could not be achieved without addressing the so-called Negro Question. In the 1930s Weil and Ida Weis Friend of Louisiana were appointed to their states' Commissions on Interracial Cooperation. Weil also joined an antilynching society, while Friend helped found New Orleans's Urban League. In her eighties Weil was widely known as a civil rights activist and benefactor to black causes. Laura Cone was also a civil rights activist and benefactor and trustee of a local black college. When Naomi Silverman Cohn ran for Richmond city council in 1950, an alliance of black organizations listed her on its slate.⁶⁷

Women continued their commitment to internationalism, now turning to support the World Court and League of Nations as well as peace and feminist causes. In 1926 Anita Pollitzer represented South Carolina at an international feminist conference in Paris. With Alice Paul she served as vice chair of the World Women's Party. In 1945 Paul picked Pollitzer to head the NWP, but a breakaway group sued, wanting the party to focus on the national movement. Paul thought that the insurgents were antisemites who were upset that Pollitzer was so "pronouncedly Jewish."⁶⁸ Antisemites in the U.S. and abroad threw allegations of cosmopolitanism at Jews as rootless internationalists without loyalty to their home countries.

Women also brought their suffragist activism into the synagogue and Jewish organizations. They transformed Jewish communal life. In 1922 a committee of the CCAR that included New Orleans rabbi Max Heller stated, "woman cannot justly be denied the privilege of ordination." The committee attributed this position to the "evolution" of woman's place in civic life. In 1919 Stella Bauer, president of the sisterhood of Atlanta's Temple, spoke on "Congregational government." She argued, "in this age of woman's suffrage" it no longer sufficed for women's representation to be the "figure-head type that we have now that permits us to be present and talk, but gives us no power to vote." She continued, "The Sisterhood should demand the right to have a real working voice in the

deliberations of the Temple Board." She added that "women naturally" know more about "management which concerns the child." Mabel Pollitzer, who became state chair of the NWP, was appointed a trustee at K. K. Beth Elohim. In 1923 suffragists Miriam Lindau and Etta Spier won membership status at Greensboro's Temple Emanuel, and a year later Gertrude Weil's Oheb Sholom granted women "full privileges of membership . . . with voting rights." When in 1928 Memphis's Temple Israel invited women to attend its annual meeting, Sophie Friedman was the first to do so. As historian Karla Goldman notes, every change in woman's role in the synagogue can be traced to woman's progress in public life.⁶⁹

Suffragism and the Jewish South

In joining the woman suffrage campaign, being a southern Jew was not disqualifying, nor were Jews so insecure or fearful that they were afraid to court controversy, challenge tradition, or support an unpopular cause. They did so in the wake of the Leo Frank lynching and during an era when nativism was spreading and intensifying. Those Jews who spoke out did not seem inhibited by the caution—the fitting in—supposedly characteristic of southern Jews.⁷⁰ As both civic and Jewish activists, they identified with progressivism, a persistent if suppressed strain in southern political culture. Southern suffrage societies welcomed Jews into their ranks.

Southern Jews were thus acting as Americans precisely when southerners were debating the terms of their reentry into the national cultural and political mainstream. As early as 1886, ex-Confederate Jacob Rothschild argued that the "fundamental law" of the Constitution was "that government derives its just power from the consent of the governed. This is the American idea."⁷¹ Indeed, one motive for action was a patriotic assertion of Americanism. Raised in an immigrant household grateful for America's gifts, Joe Hanover believed that his mother deserved full citizenship. Most suffragists were immigrants or first-generation native born. Aspirational Americans, they fit a national suffragist profile. They tended to be middle class and college graduates, some from elite northern schools. Like other suffragist women, wage-earning professionals were overrepresented: for those exercising the entitlements of citizenship, their Americanism—more than their Judaism—explains their motivation. Certainly some suffragists did cite the Jewish prophetic obligation to bring

light unto the nations, but suffragists brought American democracy to Judaism more than they brought Judaism to American democracy.

Woman's suffrage was not a specifically Jewish issue. Jewish organizations commonly discussed suffrage even without resolving in support or opposition. The likely explanation for the reluctance of these local Jewish organizations to commit in favor of suffrage, like that of the NCJW, is that their membership included antis as well as pros. Or, like other women, Jewish women, despite the high visibility of the suffragists, were indifferent or not strongly committed to the cause. They were less likely to speak out or to be heard. The histories of the indifferent, like those opposed, have been less researched and recorded in the celebratory annals of woman suffrage. Jews in the South—and nation—did not achieve consensus on suffrage.⁷² Although most active in suffrage campaigns for a federal amendment, Jews could be found in nearly all camps though were notably lacking among suffragist advocates of states' rights.

Was there a distinctively southern element to Jewish suffragism? "Well-behaved" and "ladylike" are terms applied to the southern suffragist movement generally. In this regard Jewish women seemed to have conformed even as they espoused a cause that would undermine the foundations of society. Southern Jews, like others, were not only acting in character but pursuing a strategy intended to dispel accusations that the woman's vote would upset the racial, social, and economic order. In emphasizing domesticity and decorum, southern suffragists more often aligned with NAWSA. Those who were willing to risk arrest or to turn communist invariably left the region. That southern Jewish suffragists were well-behaved, however, differed only in degree rather than kind from their northern sisters. As the "pleasing" founder of Nevada's Non-Militant Suffrage Society, for example, attorney Felice Cohn, author of the state's suffrage bill, was representative of "a great majority of woman suffragists in this country," a newspaper lauded.⁷³

Race, however, was peculiar for southerners, including Jews. Southern Jewish suffragists judiciously parsed the race question. Rarely are southern Jews recorded as advocating for the black franchise. The absence of such evidence may suggest that southern Jewish women, too, shared the reluctance that led national suffrage organizations to avoid allying with African American women. The gamut of opinion ranged from Leonard Grossman's justification of white supremacy to Gertrude Weil's

*Anita Pollitzer with Democratic Party national finance chairman W. J. Jameson,
checking the tally of the Tennessee legislature's vote on suffrage, 1920.
(Library of Congress.)*

pragmatic moderation to Judge Trieber's call for black and woman enfranchisement as a universal right.

Yet whatever regional acculturation marked their activism, southern suffragists very much fit the profiles of national Jewish activists. The example of southern Jewish suffragists suggests that southern Jews were not, as Eli Evans described them, provincials, but rather cosmopolitans.⁷⁴ Jewish suffragists were almost invariably involved in transnational causes like labor rights, disarmament, and world peace. Virtually all were also Zionist. Highly educated and well-traveled, these Jewish suffragists acted locally but thought globally. Citizens of their hometowns and citizens of the world, southerners and Americans, advocates for the Jewish people and believers in universal rights, Jewish suffragists were rooted cosmopolitans. They lived with complexity and contradiction. They sat in their neighbors' parlors for meetings and traveled to Europe on behalf of global movements. As Carrie Chapman Catt reflected, "No stronger characters

did the long struggle produce than those great-souled southern suffragists."⁷⁵ More so were the southern Jewish suffragists.

NOTES

¹ Casey Cep, "The Imperfect, Unfinished Work of Women's Suffrage," *New Yorker*, July 1, 2019, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/07/08/the-imperfect-unfinished-work-of-womens-suffrage>.

² Eric L. Goldstein, "'Now Is the Time to Show Your True Colors': Southern Jews, Whiteness, and the Rise of Jim Crow," in *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil: A New History*, ed. Marcie Cohen Ferris and Mark I. Greenberg (Waltham, MA, 2006), 136. Goldstein cites race as a complicating factor in "the desire to fit in."

³ "Woman Suffrage and the 19th Amendment," National Archives, accessed September 4, 2019, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/woman-suffrage>.

⁴ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York, 1993), 48.

⁵ See Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Charlottesville, VA, 1995), 141.

⁶ *Goldsboro News-Argus*, May 3, 1971, quoted in Leonard Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil: Jewish Progressive in the New South* (Chapel Hill, 2017), 107.

⁷ "Article Declaration of Principles: 1885 Pittsburgh Conference," Central Conference of American Rabbis, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.ccarnet.org/rabbinic-voice/platforms/article-declaration-principles/>.

⁸ Randolph Hollingsworth, "Biographical Sketch of Rebecca Rosenthal Judah, Biographical Database of NAWSA Suffragists, 1890-1920, accessed January 7, 2020, <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1009656388>.

⁹ Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill, 1997), 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8, 12; Sarah H. Case, "Woman Suffrage in the Southern States," National Park Service, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/woman-suffrage-in-the-southern-states.htm>; Sidney R. Bland, "Women's Suffrage," *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, accessed October 12, 2019, <http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/women%C2%92s-suffrage>.

¹¹ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 124.

¹² See Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill, 1996), 204.

¹³ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 12.

¹⁴ Mabel Pollitzer, interview conducted by Constance Myers, June 16, 1974, accessed September 2, 2019, https://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/html_use/G-0047-2.html.

¹⁵ Inez Haynes Irwin, "'Telling the Country': The National Woman's Party in Tennessee, 1917," in *Votes for Women! The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Knoxville, TN, 1995), 173.

¹⁶ "Caroline Katzenstein papers," Historical Society of Pennsylvania, accessed June 15, 2020, <http://www2.hsp.org/collections/manuscripts/k/KatzensteinAm8996.html>; Green, *Southern Strategies*, 13.

¹⁷ Quoted in Green, *Southern Strategies*, 59.

¹⁸ Melissa R. Klapper, *Ballots, Babies, and Banners of Peace: American Jewish Women's Activism, 1890-1940* (New York, 2013), 32. On the WCTU and race, see "Willard, the WCTU and Race," New York Heritage Digital Collections, accessed October 15, 2019, <http://www.newyorkheritage.org/exhibits/albion-tourgee-civil-war-civil-rights/willard-wctu-and-race>.

¹⁹ Mabel Pollitzer, interview conducted by Constance Myers, September 19, 1973, accessed September 2, 2019, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/G-0047-1/menu.html>. During the 1930s, Catt created and led a Protest Committee of Non-Jewish Women Against the Persecution of Jews in Germany. Paul also committed to rescue European Jewry. Amy Roe, "Rebecca Rosenthal Judah," Kentucky History, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://explorekyhistory.ky.gov/items/show/341>.

²⁰ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 30; Untitled manuscript, 1886, Gail Cohn Family Papers, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History, William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta (hereafter cited as Cohn Family Papers and Cuba Family Archives); Klapper, *Ballots*, 51, 52; Melissa R. Klapper, "Jewish Feminists and Intersectionality: New World, Old Story," *Lilith*, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.lilith.org/blog/2017/10/jewish-feminists-and-intersectionality-new-wordold-story>.

²¹ Mark K. Bauman, "Factionalism and Ethnic Politics in Atlanta: German Jews from the Civil War to the Progressive Era," in *A New Vision of Southern Jewish History: Studies in Institution Building, Leadership, Interaction, and Mobility* (Tuscaloosa, 2019), 120; Scott Beattie, Melisa Erdal, Anya Lamarre Anderson, Dan Le, Brian Wang, Jacob Wang, "Biographical Sketch of Esther H. Abelson," Biographical Database of NAWSA Suffragists, 1880-1920, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1010026785>; Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 61, 78-83; Pamela S. Nadell, *America's Jewish Women: A History from Colonial Times to Today* (New York, 2019), 105-107.

²² Klapper, *Ballots*, 56; Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 55-58. Widows, Goldman notes, might be granted independent membership but without voting privileges.

²³ "Anita Pollitzer," The Pollitzer Family of South Carolina, Lowcountry Digital History Initiative, accessed September 3, 2019, https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/pollitzer_family_sc/anita_pollitzer.

²⁴ Diane Vecchio, "Rosa Hirschmann Gantt: Pioneering Doctor and Suffragette," Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, accessed June 19, 2020, <http://jhssc.org/2020/04/15/rosa-hirschmann-gantt-pioneering-doctor-and-suffragette>, and see also Vecchio's article in this volume; Nadell, *America's Jewish Women*, 107; Eric L. Goldstein and Deborah R.

Weiner, *On Middle Ground: A History of the Jews of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 2018), 231; “Friedman, Sophie G. (Sophie Goldberger),” Social Networks and Archival Context, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://snaccooperative.org/ark:/99166/w6fn56hh>; Karen Trahan Leathem, “Ida Weis Friend, 1868–1963,” Encyclopedia, Jewish Women’s Archive, accessed June 5, 2020, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/friend-ida-weis>; Mark K. Bauman, “Southern Jewish Women and Their Social Service Organizations,” in Bauman, *A New Vision*, 96.

²⁵ Jewish labor or social activists like Maud Nathan, Alice Goldsmith Brandeis, and Rose Schneiderman were prominent suffragists, but not national organizational leaders. Jewish women did lead international organizations. Rosika Schwimmer of Hungary and Rosa Manus and Aletta Jacobs of Holland worked closely with Catt in the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. Diane Vecchio notes that Anita Pollitzer served as national secretary of the NWP (1921–26), national vice chairman (1927–38), and national chairman (1945–49), but she held these posts after the suffrage fight had been won. Diane Vecchio, email to Mark Bauman and Leonard Rogoff, February 12, 2020; Judith Ezekiel, “Biographical Sketch of Rachel Brill Ezekiel, Biographical Database of NAWSA Suffragists, 1890–1920, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1009859983>; Elaine Weiss, *The Woman’s Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote* (New York, 2018), 162.

²⁶ Mark K. Bauman, “The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation: Living Up to the Name and the Legacy; The Temple and Its People” (forthcoming), 55. The Fulton and DeKalb chapters enjoyed the home hospitality of Mrs. Albert Herskowitz. Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 146. At the first meeting of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia in 1909, Adèle Goodman Clark was elected recording secretary. Clark was born to a Christian father and Jewish mother, who was buried in Richmond’s Hebrew Cemetery. Clark was baptized and confirmed an Episcopalian but converted to Catholicism in 1942. She enlisted her mother and sister in suffragism. An artist, she designed campaign literature besides speaking, writing, touring, and organizing new chapters. Her spirited debates with an antisuffragist enlivened Richmond newspapers. When the legislature considered the federal amendment, Clark chaired the league’s ratification committee. Jennifer Davis McDaid, “Biographical Sketch of Adèle Goodman Clark,” Biographical Database of NAWSA Suffragists, 1880–1920, accessed June 4, 2020, <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1009860065>.

²⁷ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 76–78; Betsy Newman, “The Pollitzer Sisters: Fighters for Women’s Rights,” Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, accessed October 12, 2019, <http://jhssc.org/2020/04/15/the-pollitzer-sisters-fighters-for-womens-rights>.

²⁸ Weil was a third-generation American on her mother’s side and second-generation on her father’s. “Moritz Pollitzer,” The Pollitzer Family of South Carolina, Lowcountry Digital History Initiative, accessed October 12, 2019, http://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/pollitzer_family_sc/moritz_pollitzer. Gladys Avery Tillett, “Cone, Laura Weil,” NCPedia, accessed October 13, 2019, <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/cone-laura-weil>; Hollingsworth, “Rebecca Rosenthal Judah.”

²⁹ Mabel Pollitzer interview, June 16, 1974; Ezekiel, “Biographical Sketch of Rachel Brill Ezekiel.”

³⁰ Mabel Pollitzer interview, June 16, 1974; Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 23, 49, 76–79.

³¹ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 35–36; Leathem, “Ida Weis Friend.”

³² As an artist, Anita Pollitzer famously introduced college classmate Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz. Mabel Pollitzer interview, September 19, 1973; The Pollitzer Family of South Carolina, Lowcountry Digital History Initiative, accessed October 15, 2019, https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/pollitzer_family_sc; "About Theresa Pollak," VCU Libraries Gallery, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://gallery.library.vcu.edu/exhibits/show/remembering-theresa-pollak/about-theresa-pollak>. Pollak, a graduate of Westhampton College of the University of Richmond, had studied at Harvard and was a professional educator. Bonnie Eisenman, e-mail to author, May 13, 2020.

³³ Mabel Pollitzer interview, September 19, 1973; Clara Hartman, "Biographical Sketch of Dorothy Sterne," Online Biographical Dictionary of Militant Woman Suffragists, 1913–1920, accessed September 2, 2019, <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1008342606>; Clara Hartman, "Biographical Sketch of Ida Glatt McCarthy," Online Biographical Dictionary of Militant Woman Suffragists, 1913–1920, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1008342620>; Jessi Stickel, "Biographical Sketch of Marguerite Rosett Bishow," Online Biographical Dictionary of Militant Woman Suffragists, 1913–1920, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1008297983>.

³⁴ Stickel, "Marguerite Rosett Bishow"; Jean Roseman, e-mail to author, November 27, 2019; Mabel Pollitzer interview, September 19, 1973; Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 30. The one Weil woman to join Gertrude's suffrage society was her aunt, Elizabeth McDonald Rosenthal, a local Christian married to her uncle Joseph Rosenthal. Her cousin Lionel – a prominent business, civic, and Jewish leader – publicly endorsed the suffrage campaign. When Gertrude's brother Leslie mentioned woman's rights at the dinner table, cousin Etta Spier, later a pioneer professor at North Carolina's Woman's College, opined that they "were not capable of arguing about them." Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 30.

³⁵ *Nashville Tennessean*, February 23, 1913; *Nashville American*, February 23, 1913; John William Leonard, ed., *Woman's Who's Who of America: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Women of the United States and Canada, 1914–1915* (New York, 1914), 109; Jean Roseman, *Shalom Nashville: A Jewish History* (Nashville, 2010), 57; Weiss, *Woman's Hour*, 12–13.

³⁶ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 123, 128.

³⁷ Mabel Pollitzer interview, June 16, 1974.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Dora Rubin's brothers included Dan, a Hollywood playwright, and Manning, a Charleston journalist. Her nephew Louis D. Rubin, Jr., was a noted publisher, professor, novelist, and critic, labeled the "Dean of Southern Literature." See Louis D. Rubin, Jr., *My Father's People: A Family of Southern Jews* (Baton Rouge, 2002).

³⁹ Mabel Pollitzer interview, June 16, 1974.

⁴⁰ "VOTE! The Life and Works of Sadie Jacobs Crockin, 1879–1965," Jewish Museum of Maryland, accessed January 15, 2020, <http://jewishmuseummd.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/SJC-brochure2-12-1-10.pdf>; "Anita Pollitzer"; Anne Dallas Dudley, "The Southern Temperament as Related to Woman Suffrage," in Wheeler, *Votes for Women!*, 163; Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 85–86.

⁴¹ Quoted in Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 126.

⁴² Klapper, *Ballots*, 60, 44, 54; Josh Parshall, "In Southern States: Historical Texts from the Arbeter Ring's Southern District (English Translation from the Yiddish)," *Southern Jewish History* 17 (2014), 149–50.

⁴³ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 119; Klapper, *Ballots*, 48. New York labor organizer Pauline Newman founded a Wage Earner's Suffrage League, which affiliated with NAWSA. Hartman, "Ida Glatt McCarthy."

⁴⁴ Wheeler, *New Women*, 63, 65. See Melissa R. Klapper, *Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America, 1860–1920* (New York, 2005), 98–99, 103–104; "Anita Pollitzer"; "Sadie Jacobs Crockin."

⁴⁵ Jacob Rothschild Speech, Cohn Family Papers; *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, June 19, 1918; "Leon Samuel Haas," Fanta-Levey Genealogy, accessed May 15, 2019, <http://www.fanta-levey.com/showmedia.php?mediaID=228&medialinkID=1044&ss=1>.

⁴⁶ Berkley Kalin, "William Fineshriber in Memphis," in *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s*, ed. Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin (Tuscaloosa, 1997), 54; Bobbie Malone, *Rabbi Max Heller: Reformer, Zionist, Southerner 1860–1929* (Tuscaloosa, 1997), 199.

⁴⁷ Carol Lynn Yellin and Janann Sherman, *The Perfect 36: Tennessee Delivers Woman Suffrage* (Oak Ridge, TN, 1998), 99.

⁴⁸ A. Elizabeth Taylor, "Revival and Development of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 42 (December 1958): 352.

⁴⁹ Armatine M. Smith, "The History of the Woman's Suffrage Movement in Louisiana," *Louisiana Law Review* 62 (Winter 2002): 556, accessed January 15, 2019, <https://digitalcommons.law.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5926&context=lalrev>; Fanta-Levey Genealogy, accessed May 15, 2020, <http://www.fanta-levey.com/showmedia.php?mediaID=228&medialinkID=1044&ss=1>; Green, *Southern Strategies*, 144.

⁵⁰ Smith, "Woman's Suffrage Movement in Louisiana," 556; Bauman, *A New Vision*, 102; Elizabeth Stephens Summerlin, "'Not Ratified but Hereby Rejected': The Women's Suffrage Movement in Georgia, 1895–1925" (master's thesis, University of Georgia, 2009), 69, 77–78.

⁵¹ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 130. Weil, like Catt and the LWV, endorsed an educational requirement, a literacy test, for the franchise as a solution to the "Negro problem," but she spoke of it as a universal requirement, not targeted to race, yet its effect would inevitably have discriminated against African Americans given their greater illiteracy. Glenda Gilmore alludes to Weil's assumption of a black woman's vote as a break with the southern past in *Gender & Jim Crow*, 210.

⁵² Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 139; L. J. H. Mewborn to Gertrude Weil, August 26, 1920, Equal Suffrage Association of North Carolina Papers, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, quoted in Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 139; Green, *Southern Strategies*, 71.

⁵³ Jacob Rothschild Speech, Cohn Family Papers; "Jacob Trieber (1853–1927)," Encyclopedia of Arkansas, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/jacob-trieber-26>; Carolyn Gray LeMaster, "Civil and Social Rights Efforts of Arkansas Jewry," in Bauman and Kalin, eds., *Quiet Voices*, 101. Several men of Jewish origin played critical roles in state suffrage campaigns, but their Jewish identity was problematic. Martin Behrman, mayor of New Orleans from 1904 to 1920 and boss of its Democratic machine, was born to Jewish parents in New York but had no Jewish affiliation. His opposition to a 1918

state suffrage amendment led to its defeat. West Virginia became the thirty-fourth state to ratify only when state senator Jesse A. Bloch dramatically raced five days by train from California to cast the decisive vote. His rush to beat the deadline and cast a last-second vote riveted the national media. Bloch warrants an asterisk as a Jew. He was born into a Jewish family affiliated with the Wheeling temple, but they subsequently left Judaism and joined the Presbyterian Church. See "Jesse A. Bloch," *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, accessed January 12, 2020, <https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/551>. Also born to Jewish parents was David Sholtz. In 1917, as a member of the Florida House of Representatives, he supported woman suffrage, arguing that no "gentleman" would disrespect a woman for voting. Sholtz, however, had intermarried and joined an Episcopal church. He was elected governor in 1933. See A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 36 (July 1957): 57.

⁵⁴ Cep, "Imperfect, Unfinished Work." By contrast, Wyoming in 1869 was the only state that allowed the woman's vote. Forty years later four more western states joined it. In 1916 Montana elected Jeannette Rankin, the first woman in Congress.

⁵⁵ Yellin and Sherman, *The Perfect* 36, 93, 94.

⁵⁶ Weiss, *Woman's Hour*, 169-70.

⁵⁷ Yellin and Sherman, *The Perfect* 36, 99.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁵⁹ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 138.

⁶⁰ Yellin and Sherman, *The Perfect* 36, 103.

⁶¹ Weiss, *Woman's Hour*, 305-306.

⁶² Bauman, "Hebrew Benevolent Congregation," 67.

⁶³ Jennifer Davis McDaid, "Woman Suffrage in Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, accessed April 3, 2020, https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/woman_suffrage_in_virginia.

⁶⁴ "Naomi Silverman Cohn," *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, accessed April 3, 2020, https://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/dvb/bio.php?b=Cohn_Naomi_Silverman.

⁶⁵ "Sadie Jacobs Crocker"; "Friedman, Sophie G."; "Naomi Silverman Cohn"; Leathem, "Ida Weis Friend."

⁶⁶ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 171.

⁶⁷ "Naomi Silverman Cohn."

⁶⁸ "Anita Pollitzer."

⁶⁹ Selma S. Lewis, *A Biblical People in the Bible Belt: The Jewish Community of Memphis, Tennessee, 1840s-1960s* (Macon, GA, 1998), 112; Malone, *Rabbi Max Heller*, 154; Klapper, *Ballots*, 66; Stella Brauer, "What Has the Sisterhood Done for the Cause of Judaism," Box 4, file 5, Mss 042, The Temple Sisterhood Records, Cuba Family Archives; Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 108; Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, 202.

⁷⁰ Goldstein, "'Now Is the Time to Show Your True Colors,'" 136. See also, Leonard Rogoff, *A History of Temple Emanu-El: An Extended Family* (Durham, NC, 2007), 63.

⁷¹ Jacob Rothschild Speech, Cohn Family Papers.

⁷² Klapper, *Ballots*, 24.

⁷³ "Felice Cohn," Nevada Women's History Project, accessed June 1, 2020, <https://www.nevadawomen.org/research-center/biographies-alphabetical/felice-cohn>.

⁷⁴ See Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (Chapel Hill, 2005 [1973]).

⁷⁵ Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* (New York, 1923), 81. Rooted cosmopolitanism is the brainchild of Kwame Anthony Appiah. See *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York, 2006). Also germane is James Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans: Jews and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, 2018).

New Jewish Women: Shaping the Future of a “New South” in the Palmetto State

by

Diane C. Vecchio*

In an address to the clubwomen of South Carolina in 1900, Sarah Visanska of Charleston, president of the South Carolina Federation of Women’s Clubs, spoke on “The American Woman of To-day,” proclaiming:

We daughters of the South, as well as our brothers, realize how crowded is the present hour with vast opportunities and grave responsibilities. Each one of us, whose heart throbs responsive to the cause of country and of womanhood, should proudly assume the task to improve the one, and faithfully discharge the other.¹

Visanska then issued a call for reform, exposing the problems facing women and children in her state.

At the turn of the twentieth century, a handful of Jewish women activists embarked on a series of reforms in the Palmetto State. They were part of a larger movement of female activists in the South and nation following the Civil War who forged new roles for women both within and outside the household.

In this article I examine two lesser-known southern Jewish activists: Rosa Hirschmann Gantt of Spartanburg and Sarah Bentschner Visanska of Charleston. Like their Jewish sisters elsewhere in the state and region, Gantt and Visanska were activists and reformers who sought to improve the communities in which they lived. Like many other activists, they were educated women who were deeply involved in religious organizations, enthusiastic clubwomen, and social reformers.

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Following separate but parallel paths, Rosa Hirschmann Gantt, a practicing physician, and Sarah Bentschner Visanska, a full-time club-woman and social activist, brought Progressive-Era reforms to South Carolina. They shared many commonalities: both were daughters of German Jewish immigrants, both were educated, and their activism was rooted in Jewish societies and values. With Gantt's role as president of the South Carolina Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and Visanska's position as president of the Charleston section of the National Council of Jewish Women, each developed leadership skills and proficiency as public speakers. As clubwomen and social reformers, they were civic activists who worked alongside Christian women. As acculturated Jews who were solidly middle- and upper-middle class, they were welcomed into Christian-dominated organizations. Visanska's election as president of the South Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs is testimony to her acceptance in southern female society.

Overview of Women and Progressive-Era Reform

The Progressive movement was a crusade that swept the country beginning in the late nineteenth century. Led by the middle class, it was comprised of men and women, both black and white, who were determined to expand local, state, and federal government to effectively regulate big business, democratize government, and promote social justice. Women were particularly involved in movements to remedy the problems associated with industrialization, urbanization, child labor, education, and public health. Some reformers joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and advocated for the prohibition of alcoholic beverages, and others joined female suffrage organizations to gain the vote. Progressive reform was a complex and varied movement that brought women out of the household and into the public sphere.²

However, reformers were often at odds with each other and the people they sought to help because of race, religion, and ethnicity. They organized and pursued reforms based on their race and an understanding of their place in society. While many southern white women sought to uphold the racial divide, African American women struggled for rights of citizenship and inclusion.³ Protestant women made up the rank and file of the WCTU, whose goal was to evangelize, and thus they alienated Catholics and Jews who, furthermore, did not support their

efforts to prohibit the use of alcohol. Immigrant women, frequently the objects of well-meaning reformers, resisted attempts to alter their ethnic food traditions for “well-balanced American meals” of meat, potatoes, and white bread. In Endicott, New York, Italian and Slavic shoe workers started the North Side Ladies Progressive Society to enact neighborhood improvements without interference from local middle-class activists.⁴ Consequently, Progressive-Era reform was charged with contradictions and conflicts.

In the South women quietly entered public life, leading them to progressive reform through religious organizations. Anne Firor Scott expounded on the social changes occurring among women in southern states following the Civil War: “It was some time before many people noticed, or reflected upon, what was taking place in the woman’s sphere of southern life.” Scott was one of the first historians to recognize that “the public life of nearly every Southern woman leader . . . began in a church society.”⁵ For Jewish women, public life started in a synagogue. Whether Jewish, Protestant, or Catholic, religious associations were the first to welcome women’s talents and activism in a voluntary setting, where women saw to the needs of their congregations and formed their own prayer groups, auxiliaries, and ladies aid societies.

In addition to raising funds by baking, holding rummage sales, selling their needlework at bazaars, and marketing canned and preserved fruits, women in religious associations conducted fundraising drives and used what they raised to purchase stained-glass windows and pews and to restore their churches and synagogues.⁶ Mark K. Bauman adds that Jewish “women supervised the religious schools, prepared the facilities for occasions, maintained cemeteries, created foundations, and nurtur[ed] religious observance.”⁷

“Charitable activities were well rooted in Jewish religious tradition,” as Eric L. Goldstein and Deborah R. Weiner maintain in their study of Jews in Baltimore.⁸ Jewish women’s involvement in the welfare of their synagogues, and later in community benevolence, was motivated by ethics rooted in Judaism, especially the concept of *tzedakah*.⁹ As Leonard Rogoff makes clear, these values emphasized moral conduct, “uplift, leadership, and dedication to principles imbued with the ethics of prophetic Judaism.”¹⁰ Furthermore, acculturating Jewish women wanted to fashion a more public role for themselves, much like their Christian

counterparts were doing in missionary work, temperance societies, and charitable organizations.¹¹

Jewish women's organized benevolence dates to 1819 when Rebecca Gratz of Philadelphia helped establish the first Jewish charity in America, the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society. "Soon," according to Dianne Ashton, "women's benevolent societies were among the first organizations created in new American Jewish communities."¹² Throughout the nineteenth century, Jewish women, like middle-class women in the United States and Europe, were held to Victorian gender norms that defined women as pure, pious, domestic, and submissive. The historian Barbara Welter characterized those values in American terms as "the cult of true womanhood." Like the Victorian concept of separate spheres, "ideal" women were portrayed as selfless and naturally religious.¹³ Toward the end of the century, dramatic changes brought about by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration took place that required radical change. From their exalted position in the domestic sphere, women gradually moved to the public sphere by transferring these "inherent traits" to help solve problems beyond the household.

Women from all religious backgrounds became aware of the poverty and poor health conditions plaguing the poor and helped create hospitals, schools, orphanages, and rescue homes for prostitutes.¹⁴ Donaldina Cameron, for one, was a well-known Presbyterian missionary in San Francisco who rescued Chinese girls from sexual slavery and converted them to Christianity.¹⁵ African American women worked for similar goals, albeit in a segregated environment. Religious organizations helped sustain African American women as they moved from slavery to freedom, and they, too, gained a voice by participating in church organizations and fundraising activities, which empowered them and prepared them for public roles.¹⁶ Rogoff notes that Jewish women's involvement in Hebrew benevolent and ladies aid societies "paralleled the home and missionary societies of Protestant churches but without evangelical intent or outreach."¹⁷ Protestant missionaries also organized Sunday schools for the purpose of evangelization, particularly in urban settings with large immigrant populations. Jewish women attempted to counter these activities through the creation of free kindergarten and social settlement organizations designed to aid and Americanize Jewish immigrants.

Another important step on the road to women's public engagement was the women's club movement. Women's clubs often started as literary societies and could be quite diversified in their aims. They began to appear in the mid-nineteenth century and spread rapidly with hundreds more following throughout the country. In the small town of Union in the South Carolina upcountry, members of one women's club read Shakespeare aloud and corrected each other's pronunciation, while the Ladies Literary Club of Spartanburg veered away from literary endeavors and focused on building a free library for the town.¹⁸ Middle- and upper-class women joined clubs to read literature, study history, nurture friendships, share ideas, and improve their communities. Through these clubs they learned parliamentary procedure and obtained experience speaking, leading, and managing finances. As one club leader explained: "Club experience has been the university in which they [women] have learned about themselves. . . . [T]hey have gained respect for their own opinions, toleration for the opinion of others and the necessity of cooperation for the successful accomplishments of all aims."¹⁹ Whatever their goals, middle-class women became increasingly determined to improve their communities by "extending their domestic responsibilities from home to city."²⁰

By 1900 women's clubs had "shifted emphasis from literature and learning to the pressing social and political needs of towns, cities, and states," according to Elizabeth Hayes Turner.²¹ Clubwomen became involved in causes such as urban beautification, the need for juvenile courts, education reform, public libraries, reformatories, suffrage, and child labor reform. Bauman demonstrates how Jewish women "moved from denominational concerns to civic uplift and politics" and, simultaneously, moved from working solely with other Jews for the needs of their congregations to working with non-Jewish women for greater social causes at the community, state, and even national levels.²² Consequently, religious organizations and women's clubs became incubators for middle-class women's activism and reform in the early twentieth century throughout the country. Recent studies of Jewish activist women in the South, including the works of Joan Marie Johnson, Leonard Rogoff, Marjorie Julian Spruill, Amy Thompson McCandless, and Belinda Friedman Gergel, reveal that Jewish women, most of whom

were daughters of European immigrant parents, were at the forefront of reform and activism.²³

From Spartanburg in the upcountry to Columbia in the midlands and Charleston in the low country, educated Jewish women represented a generation of middle-class activists committed to improving life in South Carolina. In the process, Jewish activists created what Belinda Gergel calls “a new place for women in American Judaism.”²⁴

Several excellent published studies highlight Jewish women in South Carolina who were religious activists, clubwomen, reformers, and suffragists.²⁵ These include works on Irene Goldsmith Kohn of Columbia and the incomparable Pollitzer sisters of Charleston: Carrie, Mabel, and Anita.²⁶ Anita Pollitzer is especially noteworthy as a suffragist and officer in the National Woman’s Party and trusted aide to NWP founder Alice Paul.²⁷ Among these South Carolina reformers were Rosa Hirschmann Gantt of Spartanburg and Sarah Bentschner Visanska of Charleston, the subjects of this case study.

*Dr. L. Rosa Hirschmann Gantt.
(Courtesy of the Waring Historical
Library, MUSC, Charleston.)*

*"With Strength of Purpose, Foresight, and Undaunted Courage":
L. Rosa Hirschmann Gantt, M.D.*

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, economic developments transformed the upcountry from a cotton-producing economy to the site of major textile manufacturing. By the early 1900s, Spartanburg County boasted forty textile mills and a drastically changed landscape, bringing hundreds of new jobs and a host of social problems associated with mill villages.

L. Rosa Hirschmann was born in Camden, South Carolina, in 1874.²⁸ Her mother, Lena Nachman Hirschmann, a German Jew, and her father, a Jew from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, immigrated to the United States in 1870.²⁹ Solomon Hirschmann started peddling in the countryside of Williamsburg County, located in the outer coastal plain and in the southern tip of South Carolina's Pee Dee region, until he accumulated sufficient savings to open a general store in Cades. Because no high schools existed in these rustic regions of the state in the late nineteenth century, Hirschmann moved his family to Charleston so that his five children could attend secondary schools. There he opened a wholesale grocery and provisions store on King Street.³⁰

Relocating from the small, rural village of Cades to Charleston with its large Jewish population enhanced opportunities for the entire Hirschmann family. Solomon's store was located in the heart of Charleston's Jewish business sector. In this historic and well-established city, the family had access to synagogues and an active Jewish community. As a young woman, Rosa was exposed to the activities of Jewish clubwomen, sisterhood members, and community reformers.

When she was fourteen years old, Rosa lost her mother to cancer, and she stepped in to take care of her father and younger siblings. Her numerous responsibilities, however, did not deter her from excelling in her studies. After completing school in Charleston, Rosa aspired to a career as a doctor and did what few women ventured at the turn of the century: she enrolled in medical school. She graduated from what is now the Medical University of South Carolina in 1901, one of the first two women to obtain a medical degree from that institution.³¹

She and the other female student endured gender discrimination from their male colleagues as William Chapman Herbert described years

*Solomon Hirschmann, seated right, with son Henry, seated left, and
Henry's sons Lionel, Victor, Joseph M., Jerold, and Edgar, c. 1912.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Heritage Collection,
College of Charleston.)*

*S. Hirschmann & Sons store, photograph by Melcher Studio, 1924.
(Pinckney-Means Family Papers, courtesy of the
South Carolina Historical Society.)*

later: "How those two must have suffered the teasing and the torments of the male medical students of the class, for women were not acknowledged as being capable of becoming physicians."³² Ultimately, the women responded to the contempt of their male peers in the most satisfying of ways, by earning their medical degrees and pursuing successful careers.

Since no accredited internship opportunities existed for female physicians in South Carolina in the early 1900s, Hirschmann moved to New York for postgraduate training at the Aural and Ophthalmic Institute and the New York Ear and Eye Hospital. At the completion of her training, she was appointed resident physician at Winthrop College in Rock Hill, South Carolina, a school that trained women teachers.³³

In 1905 she married Spartanburg attorney Robert Gantt, a writer, poet, and political polemicist, moved to Spartanburg, and established a practice as an ear, nose, and throat specialist.³⁴ Based on her treatment of patients with rare disorders, Gantt wrote several studies in medical journals such as, "Report of a Case of Angio-Myxo-Sarcoma of Larynx with Expulsion of Large Tumor," published in the *Laryngoscope*, an international monthly journal devoted to diseases of the nose, throat, and ear, and "Congenital Cataract-Hereditary Influences," published in the *Southern Medical Journal*.³⁵

In later years, other female practitioners joined Gantt, notably Dr. Hilla Sheriff, who became a close friend after she moved to Spartanburg in 1929 and started a pediatrics practice. Gantt mentored Sheriff, and together they pursued public health initiatives.³⁶ Thus in her training and career, Gantt broke gender barriers and served as a pioneer.

Sisterhood President and Clubwoman

Rosa Gantt was active in women's organizations and fundraising events at Temple B'nai Israel in Spartanburg. As an educated, professional woman, she readily assumed leadership positions including winning election as the first president of the Women's Auxiliary of Temple B'nai Israel. Gantt became deeply involved with the temple and led efforts to meet the needs of the small Jewish community that had recently organized in her city. She led fundraising activities for the stained-glass windows and seating in the newly constructed temple in downtown Spartanburg.³⁷

Gantt traveled to Charleston with other elected delegates to consider the advisability of establishing a state federation of temple sisterhoods. The federation was created with the Spartanburg sisterhood among the four charter members, along with those of Charleston, Columbia, and Camden.³⁸ In 1919, Gantt was elected president of the South Carolina Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. In 1924, in a somewhat unusual role for a woman, Gantt negotiated with Oakwood Cemetery for a Jewish section, thereby making Jewish burials possible locally. Before this, Jewish funerals were held in Columbia or elsewhere in the state.³⁹

*Dr. Rosa Gantt with a pellagra patient.
(Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library,
University of South Carolina, Columbia.)*

Gantt's activism started in her religious community but expanded to involvement in local women's clubs largely composed of Protestant women. Some of the most forceful clubwomen, including Emily Evans, Martha Orr Patterson, and Margaret McKissick, were from the upcountry and were dedicated to progressive reforms related to the problems of

industrialization, urbanization, and education.⁴⁰ Gantt was the only known Jewish woman active in the New Era Club. Founded by Emily Evans in 1912 as a "study group," the club drew like-minded women of Spartanburg who met twice a month to discuss education and public health. The goal of thirty white, middle-class women was "to stimulate interest in civic affairs and advance the industrial, legal, and educational rights of women and children." The members expanded their original mission to pursue voting rights for women. In 1914 the New Era Club created the first statewide woman's suffrage organization and joined the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Charleston and Columbia followed their lead and established suffrage organizations in those cities. In May 1914, the three clubs, totaling more than four hundred members, united as the South Carolina Equal Suffrage League.⁴¹ Gantt's participation in Protestant-dominated women's organizations reflected the commitment of Jewish and Christian women to work together for shared goals.

Public Health Advocate

"The low standard of public health in the South," according to C. Vann Woodward, along with a shortage of physicians, a high incidence of typhoid and malaria, and "a virtual monopoly within the nation of hookworm and pellagra . . . combined to make the South's public health problems unique in the country."⁴² Furthermore, South Carolina "had a long history of neglecting the health-care needs of poor whites and African Americans."⁴³ Thus women who sprang into action in the twentieth century, like Rosa Gantt, were embarking on a crusade to improve the health and well-being of people who were dispersed, isolated, and often impoverished.

Among Gantt's early crusades was advocacy in behalf of the medical inspection of schools. Yet her arguments to convince the state of its responsibility for inspecting public schools in 1910 reflected middle-class, white women's biases that were often espoused by clubwomen and reformers. In an appearance before a state board Gantt stated that since public schools mixed children of all conditions in the classrooms, they were responsible for protecting the "normal child" from children "whose parents through ignorance or neglect have not corrected deformities which are easily correctible."⁴⁴

*South Carolina governor
Coleman L. Blease, c. 1910.
(Library of Congress.)*

Irrespective of the middle-class prejudices exhibited in her plea, Gantt was joined by other medical professionals, as well as the South Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs, who sponsored the adoption of medical inspection for the South Carolina school system. Governor Coleman L. Blease, the most antireform governor in the state's history, vetoed a bill providing for compulsory inspection. Gantt published a derisive reply to Blease and others in South Carolina who would oppose the bill. At the annual meeting of the Southern Medical Association in Jacksonville, Florida, in November 1912, she indicted the "laity" in their failure to educate children:

They fail to appreciate that everything which tends to promote the moral, mental and physical well-being of the pupil should be embraced in the educational system of the State. . . . [T]he unlearned and ignorant think that medical inspection means a thorough medical examination and diagnosis; that the privacy of the person of the pupil is invaded and that indignities are offered.⁴⁵

Gantt mockingly restated Blease's veto message:

I would consider it a most outrageous intrusion upon my family affairs to have any physician to examine my child and expose its deformity or condition to the world. . . . [D]o you wish to force every poor man to bow down to the whims of all the professions? . . . This money is voted and appropriated for the education of the child and for development of

its brain and you have no right to take it to pay doctors' bills or for having children examined at the insistence of some cranks.⁴⁶

Gantt concluded her talk by soliciting support from her colleagues to help in the fight for the medical inspection of school children. She pleaded that she stood "in common with 8,000 clubwomen of my State, and as a physician."⁴⁷ Her reference to the solidarity of South Carolina's clubwomen speaks volumes for the sense of power and moral authority clubwomen exuded. Club activities offered the women agency they would not have had otherwise.

In the early 1930s, Gantt established a mobile health unit that provided public health services to the poor in upcountry South Carolina and in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. In a feature story Gantt wrote about the Rural Health Program sponsored by American Women's Hospitals (AWH) in cooperation with the Spartanburg County of Health and Spartanburg County Department of Education, Gantt described the services she and her staff would offer.⁴⁸

Gantt and her colleague and mentee, Hilla Sheriff, dispatched mobile units to rural areas lacking physicians. The "health mobiles" were

*American Women's Hospitals "health mobile."
(Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library,
University of South Carolina, Columbia.)*

staffed with physicians, nurses, and nutrition workers who offered immunizations, examinations, and prenatal and dental care. Their slogan was “Bringing Health to the Country.”⁴⁹ In addition to providing health services, Gantt and Sheriff promoted habits of good hygiene and healthy nutrition. The prevalence of pellagra and hookworm in the upcountry, especially in the mill villages, had attracted national attention.⁵⁰ In 1931, as president-elect of the American Medical Women’s Association, Gantt asked AWH, known for its work in alleviating health crises faced by wartime refugees during and after World War I, to address the poor health of “economic refugees” in the textile South.⁵¹

The AWH subsequently hired Sheriff to direct its first American units. Sheriff built on Gantt’s initiatives by offering health care for women and their babies and promoted family planning services.⁵² She continued to institutionalize AWH programs after 1933, when she joined the Spartanburg County Health Department as its assistant director, the only female county health officer in the nation.⁵³

Gantt was also actively involved in the Spartanburg Baby Hospital located across the state border in Saluda, North Carolina. Dr. Daniel Lesesne Smith, a pediatrician from Spartanburg, who believed the healthy climate of the mountains would benefit sick babies—particularly during the hot, humid, South Carolina summers when cases of dysentery resulted in high death rates—founded the baby hospital as a charitable institution. Gantt was appointed a board member of the hospital and supported it financially.⁵⁴

Social Reform

Gantt was active in many social reforms initiated by clubwomen across the state, including the need to provide guidance for “wayward girls.” Women’s clubs were concerned with children and their education, especially women and girls, and struggled to provide the victims of poverty, illiteracy, and inadequate parental supervision with opportunities for uplift.⁵⁵ This was one of the avenues in which women expanded their roles as mothers into public advocacy. Joan Marie Johnson maintains that “clubwomen hoped to build Southern prosperity through increasing the number of efficient men and women citizens of their state.” The movement to build a reformatory therefore addressed issues of economic progress.⁵⁶ South Carolina clubwomen spoke publicly of the need for

reformatories, raised funds, and lobbied the legislature for support. Through her participation in these efforts, Gantt helped establish the Girls Reform School in Columbia and served on its board of directors.⁵⁷

A highly respected physician, Gantt rose to leadership positions in several medical societies. She served as an officer for the otherwise all-male Spartanburg County Medical Society and was one of the first female members of the Southern Medical Association. In addition, she was elected president of the American Medical Women's Association, a national organization founded in 1915 in Chicago at a time when women physicians were an underrepresented minority.

While Rosa Gantt was actively engaged in efforts to improve the health of upcountry South Carolinians and raise their political awareness for woman's suffrage, Sarah Bentschner Visanska was changing the future of Charlestonians through her campaign to bring much-needed reforms to the low country.

"An Asset to Any Organization of Which She Was a Member":

Sarah Bentschner Visanska

Sarah Bentschner Visanska was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on July 16, 1870. She was the daughter of David (Daniel) Bentschner of Neustadt, Prussia, and Hanne Jacobi Bentschner of Copenhagen, Denmark. Their residency in Charleston can be traced to the early 1860s.⁵⁸ Sarah's father operated a clothing business known for its fine quality men's attire, and Sarah's mother was a "woman of great literary and artistic tastes and was especially remarkable for her fluency [and] linguistic talent."⁵⁹

The Bentschners were influential in the Jewish community and in their adopted city. David Bentschner's business success made it possible for him to purchase an imposing estate, known as the Cameron House, in the historic district of the city in 1861. The original owners were wealthy planters, and the colonial revival style in which the home was built was popular in Charleston at the time. When Bentschner took over the residence he added neo-Georgian ceiling medallions and colonial revival mantels, paneling, parquet flooring, and tiles. His mark is seen today in the gate with his initials on the front entrance.⁶⁰ His stylish additions reflect an individual who had acquired the discriminating tastes

*Portraits of Sarah B. Visanska and Julius
Visanska, taken for their season passes to
the South Carolina Inter-State and
West Indian Exposition, 1901.
(Courtesy of Charleston County
Public Library.)*

*Cameron House, later the Bentschner family home, at 12 Bull Street
in Charleston. David Bentschner's initials adorn the iron gate.
(Courtesy of Sarah Fick for Mapping Jewish Charleston.)*

*Former home of Julius and Sarah Visanska,
19 East Battery Street, Charleston.
(Google Street View.)*

of a wealthy Charlestonian. Thus Sarah grew up in an upper-middle-class home with the accoutrements and values consistent with bourgeois family life in the late nineteenth century.

Perhaps the most significant influences on Sarah's reform-minded convictions were learned as a student at the Charleston Female Seminary. Founded by Henrietta Aiken Kelly in 1870, the seminary provided wealthy white girls in Charleston with access to higher education. The young women who attended the seminary received a classical education, underpinned by training in benevolence—a hallmark of the school and its students.⁶¹ Sarah graduated Latin salutatorian, First Honors, from the seminary in 1889.⁶²

Like many educated women from wealthy families, Sarah traveled extensively in Europe, then in 1895 she married Julius Visanska, the proprietor of a "Gents Furnishings Store" on King Street. Julius Visanska served as treasurer of the city Chamber of Commerce and president of the Charleston Hebrew Benevolent Society.⁶³ Visanska entered a textile business with his father-in-law and substantially increased his wealth, making it possible for him and Sarah to purchase one of the grandest and most expensive homes in Charleston. Located on East Battery Street, the 6,872-square-foot mansion included double piazzas and incredible views of Charleston Harbor.⁶⁴

Sarah's marriage to Julius and his position in the city's business community gave them prestige and status in Charleston society. As a woman of means with no children of her own, Sarah committed her life to helping children and the poor. Her activism began in her synagogue, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE), founded in 1749, one of the oldest congregations in the United States, and the birthplace of American Reform Judaism.

Sarah helped found and presided over the Charleston section of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) as well as the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society. The oldest volunteer Jewish women's organization in the United States still in existence, the NCJW was founded in 1893, and the Charleston council section thirteen years later. Based on Jewish values and a progressive commitment to social justice, "the Council was often the portal through which Jewish women entered secular organizations."⁶⁵ The local section focused on the public health care of Charleston's poor, while the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, estab-

lished in 1896, provided charitable and educational funds for the local Jewish community.

Leading South Carolina Clubwoman

Visanska's passion for social reform guided her to Charleston's women's clubs, where she became an inspiring leader. Many dynamic clubwomen, black and white, engaged in reform in Charleston, including Louisa B. Poppenheim, Marian B. Wilkinson, Mabel Pollitzer, and Susan Pringle Frost. Sarah's commitment to women's clubs and her activist vision led to her election as the first recording secretary of the South Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs (SCFWC). She subsequently served as corresponding secretary from 1905 to 1907 and then as president from 1901 to 1912. In the latter capacity, over an organization with thousands of members across the state, she had a powerful platform for motivating clubwomen to embrace progressive reforms.

Visanska expressed her pride as a southerner in talks addressed to the clubwomen of her state. Her plea for clubwomen to take up the banner of social reform was reinforced with pride in the South, where she linked her incentive for social reform with southern identity. Johnson offers a persuasive explanation for understanding how leading southern clubwomen and activists linked social reform with southern pride by "invoking their sense of place." She maintains that Visanska's espousal of southern identity was based on her belief that "the New South should be built upon the Old South."⁶⁶ This was clearly revealed in her 1900 address to clubwomen titled "The American Woman of To-Day." Visanska reminded clubwomen that, as one of the original thirteen colonies, South Carolina sounded "the bugle call of progress and reform" and that, despite the region's suffering during the war, "those clarion notes have been stilled but never quite forgotten. . . . Once again, the eyes of the nation are turning Southward." She continued, "We, daughters of the South, as well as our brothers, realize how crowded is the present hour with vast opportunities and grave responsibilities."⁶⁷

In other words, according to Johnson, Visanska and other southern female reformers believed that "their duty as daughters of the Confederacy was the improvement of the New South."⁶⁸ With pride in the past, clubwomen would bring attention to the badly needed reforms that cor-

related with industrial changes in the New South. Ida Lining, a member of the SCFWC, also raised the issue of southern identity in an article, "What the South Needs," and declared that the efficacy of women reformers to help bring about a "New South was in large part, based on their love of home, combined with pride in the past." She urged clubwomen to establish schools and libraries, aid the poor, and end illiteracy in order to be "self-respecting southerners."⁶⁹

Visanska's platform for southern reform was pivotal to her position, and she intended for women to be the driving force. Elucidating the importance of women's clubs, she reinforced their new focus on community service and asked South Carolina women to come to the aid of mill children who required education, cleanliness, and nutrition, and growing cities that needed playgrounds, parks, and libraries.⁷⁰

In 1904, Sarah Visanska won election as one of South Carolina's delegates to the General Federation of Women's Clubs national meeting in St. Louis.⁷¹ This opportunity brought her into contact with thousands of clubwomen from across the nation, where they discussed topics ranging from the need to combat tuberculosis to woman suffrage. These interactions strengthened Visanska's ties with female Christian reformers and reinforced their commonalities, "underscoring," according to Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, "the values and teachings that Jews and Christians share."⁷²

Tuberculosis was a dreaded disease at the turn of the century, and Visanska viewed it as a public health issue that clubwomen must combat. Local women had been involved with the disease as early as 1814, when the Ladies Benevolent Society of Charleston began volunteer care of those stricken with it. Thirteen years after the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis (NASPT) was established, Charleston organized a chapter in 1917. By that time tuberculosis was the leading killer of young adults in South Carolina.⁷³

In December 1909, Visanska invited clubwomen from the state to attend a series of lectures, illustrated talks, and an exhibition in Charleston sponsored by the NASPT:

I ask the interest and co-operation of every federated clubwoman in South Carolina to this fight against the "great white plague." . . . In thus doing your share to aid in this war against the most fatal of modern ills; in thus extending a message of hope to the afflicted, of enlightenment to

the ignorant, of a life of cleanliness and sunshine to those who walk amid darkness, filth and disease, you will be fulfilling the highest and best object for which we are bound together – the upbuilding of our citizenship and the uplift of humanity.⁷⁴

Visanska's words reflect an image that clubwomen projected of themselves as protectors of the South. Like female reformers throughout the country, South Carolina clubwomen identified as "municipal housekeepers" who were compelled to clean up their cities and rid them of disease and contamination. In 1908, Charleston established its first tuberculosis clinic, and clubwomen continued their mission to educate the public concerning the disease.

Visanska's most passionate cause was education. She understood the primacy of educational reform and asserted that it should begin with the young child. Thus she began a crusade for the establishment of kindergartens in a state whose education system was marred by problems of class, race, poverty, and geography.⁷⁵ If clubwomen could establish kindergartens, they could provide care to the poor children of working mothers. She flamboyantly implored clubwomen to work toward this goal: "[T]he feeble cry of the children of the poor has been heard in the land, and fortunately, with the want has also come its relief – the free kindergarten."⁷⁶

Visanska campaigned relentlessly for a free kindergarten and, with other clubwomen, successfully established these preschools on the local level. With her as the initial president, the Kelly Kindergarten Association opened the first free kindergarten in the South in 1891, named after Henrietta Aiken Kelly, the founder of the Charleston Female Seminary. The first free kindergarten served the children of factory operatives in a mill village in Charleston.⁷⁷

Clubwomen continued to work for the establishment of additional kindergartens, particularly in the mill districts of the upcountry, the hub of textile manufacturing in South Carolina. Visanska remained committed to the kindergarten movement throughout her lifetime and chaired the Kindergarten Department of the South Carolina State Federation of Women's Clubs.⁷⁸

The free kindergartens, like the Kelly Kindergarten, were funded by charitable donations. However, during the 1920s clubwomen petitioned the South Carolina legislature to fund local public kindergartens.

Despite their efforts, a kindergarten bill was killed in committee and never came to a vote.⁷⁹ Fortunately, with the unrelenting work of clubwomen, free kindergartens were established in South Carolina long before the state took the initiative to provide public funding.⁸⁰

Progressives urged their local governments to construct playgrounds to improve the mental, moral, and physical well-being of children.⁸¹ Playgrounds were an important component of the progressive agenda, and some of the first playgrounds were started by settlement houses in large cities or civic groups on land donated by philanthropists. Serving as president of the Charleston Civic Club from 1904 to 1910, Visanska fought for the establishment of playgrounds. Under her leadership and savvy fundraising acumen, substantial donations provided by Charleston's elite made the first municipal playgrounds possible in South Carolina.⁸² Once again, clubwomen's initiatives preceded municipal and state government reforms as women expanded their realm from family to community needs.

The Evils of Child Labor

In a state dominated by textile manufacturing, child labor was a way of life for many children from poor families. Cotton mills were the most child-labor intensive industries in the United States. In 1900, children under sixteen comprised twenty-five thousand of the nearly one hundred thousand textile workers in the South. By 1904, overall employment of children had increased to fifty thousand with twenty thousand children under twelve working.⁸³

South Carolina clubwomen and reformers focused attention on the child labor issue because of the dangers associated with young children working in the mills, besides the fact that working children did not attend school. Motivated as they were by the need to educate children, reformers focused on the needs of mill children "who were overwhelmingly more likely to be illiterate."⁸⁴

Visanska was among the first federation leaders to raise the problem of child labor in South Carolina mills. In an address on "The City Woman in Club Life," she described the problems associated with the New South: the impact of industrialization and child labor. As the child labor problem in the South attracted national attention, she recommended a legislative program to abolish child labor, mandate compulsory

*Lewis Hine, "Spinners & doffers in Mollahan Mills, Newberry, S.C.
 Many others as small," 1908.
 (Library of Congress.)*

education, and pass maximum hours and minimum wage laws. In her appeal she asked, "Shall our men, women, and children progress towards a higher citizenship or be allowed to deteriorate through adverse surroundings, unwise legislation and avarice?"⁸⁵

Middle-class progressive reformers like Visanska and the clubwomen she represented became the targets of antireform politicians. According to historian Walter Edgar, they were accused of neglecting their families, and "running around, doing society."⁸⁶ Coleman Blease, South Carolina's governor from 1910 to 1913, resisted any intervention in the lives of millworkers and fought against child labor legislation.⁸⁷

Visanska and other clubwomen were also faced with a degree of awkwardness concerning child labor. Their class status proved problematic for several reasons. First, many clubwomen were married to mill owners. Second, clubwomen were often friends or their husbands were associates of mill owners. Finally, their "pride of place" in the state's industrial progress affected their struggle.⁸⁸ These issues created divisions

among clubwomen in advocating fully for child labor reforms. Thus, knowing she could not garner support from most clubwomen to pressure the legislature for child labor laws, Visanska appealed to women to improve opportunities for education in mill towns. Yet this provided another example of how Visanska and other activists were frequently thwarted from realizing their reform agenda because of antireform governments and state legislators who were unwilling to appropriate funding or challenge the status quo.

After years of political opposition to state government intervention in the lives of millworkers, child labor legislation, and compulsory education, however, the election of Governor Richard Manning in 1914 signaled a new era for progressive reform. Under Manning's leadership, the state legislature of South Carolina passed compulsory education and child labor laws with the minimum age set at fourteen.⁸⁹

Like many clubwomen, Visanska realized that it was difficult to get men to vote for their social reforms, so they sought the ballot to better influence politicians. Nonetheless, she was simultaneously concerned

*South Carolina governor
Richard Manning.
(Library of Congress.)*

that the suffrage movement might jeopardize women's reform initiatives. Concerned that "suffragists were marking all women's clubs political," Visanska suggested that it "would be beneficial for the suffragists within clubs to moderate their actions so that they would not cause 'outsiders' to associate all clubs with suffrage."⁹⁰

The changes that occurred in women's roles as a result of their involvement in clubs and reform activities threatened traditional southern and American male expectations of woman's proper place. Southern women often faced resistance "from those who believed that clubs threatened women's traditional gender roles."⁹¹ Consequently, they stepped cautiously into the public sphere by emphasizing their "womanly" qualities and maternal intentions. Thus it comes as no surprise that Visanska and other southern activist women walked a fine line balancing what Johnson defines as "traditional notions of Southern womanhood that encompassed both traditional ideals of the Southern Lady and more progressive norms of the New Woman."⁹²

At the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Charleston City Federation of Women's Clubs, Visanska proudly stated: "In City, State, and Nation, the Federated Clubwoman has long been recognized as an uplifting force, a power in every 'Battle for the Right.'"⁹³ Acknowledging the struggles, defeats, and the frequent lack of support they experienced over the years, the members of South Carolina's women's clubs successfully raised the public's awareness of the problems facing the New South. They lobbied the legislature, raised money, and brought about significant reforms that improved the lives of South Carolinians.

Visanska never slowed down and rarely took a break from her good works. She continued to be active in many Charleston organizations, as a charter member of the Charleston Female Seminary Alumnae Association, the Charleston Guild of Arts and Crafts, and the Roper Hospital Auxiliary. When the South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Regional Trade Exposition (known as the Charleston Exposition) took place from December 1901 to June 1902, Visanska served on the Board of Administration, a position signifying her status in the community.⁹⁴

Conclusion

Rosa Hirschmann Gantt and Sarah Bentschner Visanska were progressive reformers whose actions were rooted in Jewish values that

stressed women's obligations to their religion and to the community.⁹⁵ Moving from leadership roles in Jewish women's organizations to involvement in women's clubs, they transformed charitable and benevolent work into reform "and began to generate new solutions to social problems."⁹⁶ Few things hindered their determination, and even in wartime they poured their energies into local patriotic causes and civic responsibilities.

During World War I in Spartanburg, Rosa Gantt organized five hundred local women to serve in the Red Cross, sell Liberty Loans, and engage in hospital work for soldiers. She was the only woman appointed to serve on a draft board in the United States and advanced to a position on the District Advisory Medical Board of Appeals. Gantt also held a commission from the Department of Commerce as a medical examiner of air pilots. In true Progressive-Era fashion, Gantt served on the Fosdick Committee on Training Camp Activities to develop a recreational morale program for the soldiers stationed at Camp Wadsworth in Spartanburg.⁹⁷

Visanska, meanwhile, turned her attention to the home front in Charleston where she organized the Women's Division of the American Red Cross and conducted the city's food conservation campaign. She directed several drives on behalf of Liberty Loans, the Red Cross, and War Savings Stamps and helped organize the Community Club for enlisted men.⁹⁸

Imbued with a progressive spirit seeking to improve the health, education, and general well-being of women, children, and the deserving poor, Gantt and Visanska left an indelible mark on the health and welfare of South Carolinians. As the historian Katherine Kish Sklar commented, "these [issues] highlight the most crucial features of women's reform activism in the Progressive Era—the ability of women to speak for the national welfare."⁹⁹

There is no evidence that Rosa Gantt and Sarah Visanska ever met, yet they shared similar goals and often advocated for the same reforms, like medical inspection of schools and guidance for wayward girls. Gantt and Visanska were part of a larger, nationwide movement led by reforming women during the early twentieth century. While they were not well-known like the women at the forefront of national reform movements such as Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, Julia Lathrop, Ida B. Wells, or Mary McLeod Bethune, they were leaders in statewide reform move-

ments.¹⁰⁰ They joined the ranks of women like Gertrude Weil of North Carolina, who advocated for southern farmers and millworkers, birth control, and suffrage; Suzanne Scruggs, who founded the Children's Protective Union in Memphis, Tennessee; and Mary Munford, president of the Richmond, Virginia, Educational Association.¹⁰¹ They were among a group of South Carolina reformers like Emily Plume Evans of Spartanburg, who fought for the cause of women and children workers in the state; Wil Lou Gray, the education reformer and advocate for adult literacy; Martha Orr Patterson, who championed reformatories for delinquent boys; and the Pollitzer sisters of Charleston, who promoted education reform, free libraries, public health, and woman suffrage.¹⁰²

Furthermore, Rosa Gantt and Sarah Visanska managed to achieve major city and state improvements while retaining conventional appearances as southern and American women. When Rosa Gantt died in 1935, she was praised for her many accomplishments: "Aside from her skill and genius as a practitioner, her gentle, cultured womanly bearing and sympathetic personality endeared her to those with whom she came in contact."¹⁰³ Another tribute commented that her personality "shone with the gentle radiance of a star. A soft-spoken gentlewoman, devoted wife, and gracious hostess, she was also endowed with strength of purpose, foresight and the undaunted courage of the pioneer."¹⁰⁴ When Sarah Visanska passed away in February 1926 a local newspaper writer noted that "in addition to her gifts as a lecturer [and] her ability as an organizer and executive, Mrs. Visanska was a woman of charming personality."¹⁰⁵ The tributes written in honor of Gantt and Visanska reflect not only their contributions as professional women but their attributes as southern ladies.

As Bauman demonstrates in his study of female activists, southern Jewish women did not avoid serious civic involvement, nor did they "shr[i]nk from controversy because of their desire for acceptance."¹⁰⁶ Rosa Hirschmann Gantt and Sarah Bentschner Visanska exemplify New South progressives who served their communities in leadership positions and challenged gender barriers. They are examples of the positions that numerous Jewish women carved out in activist women's organizations in South Carolina and elsewhere during the early twentieth century.

NOTES

I would like to thank Mark K. Bauman for prompting my interest in this topic. His recommendations and excellent editorial skills made this article possible. I am also indebted to the work of Joan Marie Johnson, whose work on *Southern Ladies, New Women*, provided a much-needed framework for understanding the lives of southern female activists.

¹ Quoted in Joan Marie Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region, and Club-women in South Carolina, 1890–1930* (Gainesville, FL, 2004), 134.

² For classic books on the Progressive movement, see Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (1955; repr. New York, 2011); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York, 1967); and Arthur S. Link, *Progressivism* (New York, 1983). For books specifically on Progressivism in the South, see Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville, TN, 1983); William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880–1930*, (1992; repr. Durham, NC, 2000); Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York, 2007).

³ For African American women and the Progressive movement in the South, see Dorothy Salem, *To Better Our World: Black Women in Organized Reform, 1890–1920* (New York, 1990); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–1920* (Chapel Hill, 1996); Nancy A. Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women’s Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s–1920s* (Urbana, IL, 2001).

⁴ Diane C. Vecchio, *Merchants, Midwives, and Laboring Women: Italian Migrants in Urban America* (Urbana, IL, 2006).

⁵ Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (1970; repr. Charlottesville, VA, 1995), 107, 141.

⁶ Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Women and Gender in the New South, 1865–1945* (Wheeling, IL, 2008), 71.

⁷ Mark K. Bauman, “Southern Jewish Women and Their Social Service Organizations,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22 (Spring 2003): 34–78.

⁸ Eric L. Goldstein and Deborah R. Weiner, *On Middle Ground: A History of the Jews of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 2018), 72.

⁹ Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Be a Jew: A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life*, (New York, 1972), 48.

¹⁰ Leonard Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil: Jewish Progressive in the New South* (Chapel Hill, 2017), ix.

¹¹ Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 73.

¹² Dianne Ashton, “Expanding Jewish Life in America, 1826–1901,” in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York, 2008), 47–69.

¹³ Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860,” *American Quarterly*, 18 (Summer 1966): 151–74.

¹⁴ Turner, *Women and Gender*, 76.

¹⁵ Julia Flynn Siler, *The White Devil's Daughters: The Women Who Fought Slavery in San Francisco's Chinatown* (New York, 2019).

¹⁶ Turner, *Women and Gender*, 74–76.

¹⁷ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 22.

¹⁸ Scott, *Southern Lady*, 152.

¹⁹ Sallie Southall Cotton, "Accomplishments of Women's Clubs," quoted in Scott, *Southern Lady*, 151.

²⁰ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 73.

²¹ Turner, *Women and Gender*, 91.

²² Bauman, "Southern Jewish Women," 44.

²³ These publications include Johnson, *Southern Ladies*; Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*; Marjorie J. Spruill, "Forward," *Southern Women in the Progressive Era: A Reader*, ed. Giselle Roberts and Melissa Walker (Columbia, SC, 2019), ix–xii; Amy Thompson McCandless, "Anita Pollitzer: A South Carolina Advocate for Equal Rights," in *South Carolina Women: Their Lives and Times*, ed. Marjorie Julian Spruill, Valinda W. Littlefield, and Joan Marie Johnson (Athens, GA, 2010), 2:166–89; and Belinda Friedman Gergel, "Irene Goldsmith Kohn: An Assimilated 'New South' Daughter and Jewish Women's Activism in Early Twentieth-Century South Carolina," in Spruill, Littlefield, and Johnson, *South Carolina Women*, 2:190–214.

²⁴ Gergel, "Irene Goldsmith Kohn," 193.

²⁵ In a recent issue of *The Journal of American History* (December 2019, pp. 662–94), an interchange on "Women's Suffrage, the Nineteenth Amendment, and the Right to Vote" featured several leading historians discussing the Nineteenth Amendment, suffrage, and women's political activism. The participants discussed major themes in the scholarship and the scholarly work that influenced them most. The discussion centered on issues of race. Immigrant women were largely left out of the discussion except for one reference to Chicanas. When asked about the gaps in scholarship on these topics, one discussant suggested digging into local records to examine activism at the rank-and-file level (p. 693). I would suggest pushing that further to examine local records that reveal the role of ethnic women in these endeavors.

²⁶ See Gergel, "Irene Goldsmith Kohn" and McCandless, "Anita Pollitzer."

²⁷ Pollitzer's artistic talents introduced her into a lifelong friendship with Georgia O'Keeffe. Pollitzer authored a book based on their shared letters, *A Woman on Paper: Georgia O'Keeffe, The Letters & Memoir of a Legendary Friendship* (New York, 1988).

²⁸ Her full name was Love Rosa Hirschmann, but she dropped Love, and preferred to use L. Rosa, or simply Rosa.

²⁹ Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Charleston County, South Carolina.

³⁰ Biographical Information, folder A, Hirschman Family Papers, MSS 1034-045, Special Collections, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC (hereafter cited as Hirschman Family Papers).

³¹ William Chapman Herbert, "L. Rosa Hirschmann Gantt, M.D.," in *A Brief History of Medicine of the Spartanburg Region and of the Spartanburg County Medical Society, 1700–1900* (Spartanburg, SC, 1992), 164.

³² *Ibid.*, 163–66.

³³ “Love Rose Hirschmann Gantt, M.D.,” in *Opening Doors: Women at the Medical University of South Carolina*, accessed December 17, 2019, <http://waring.library.musc.edu/exhibits/MUSCwomen/Gantt.php>.

³⁴ D. A. Russell, South Carolina Writers’ Project, “Life History, Robert Joseph Gantt,” February 15, 1939. Robert Joseph and Dr. Love Rosa H. Gantt Collection, Kennedy Room, Spartanburg County Public Library, Spartanburg, SC (hereafter cited as Gantt Collection).

³⁵ Rosa H. Gantt, “Report of a Case of Angio-Myxo Sarcoma of Larynx with Expulsion of Large Tumor,” *Laryngoscope* (St. Louis, 1908), and “Congenital Cataract-Hereditary Influences,” *Southern Medical Journal* 9 (March 1916): 266–68. Gantt Collection.

³⁶ Patricia Evridge Hill, “Dr. Hilla Sheriff: Caught between Science and the State at the South Carolina Midwife Training Institutes,” in Spruill, Littlefield, and Johnson, eds., *South Carolina Women*, 3:78–94.

³⁷ Marsha Poliakoff, *Portraits of a People: A History of Jewish Life in Spartanburg, South Carolina* (Spartanburg, SC, 2010), 64.

³⁸ *Southern Israelite*, March 24, 1927; Sisterhood files, Temple B’nai Israel, Spartanburg, SC.

³⁹ Poliakoff, *Portraits of a People*, 64.

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Southern Ladies*, 151–52.

⁴¹ Walter Edgar, “The New Era Club,” *The South Carolina Encyclopedia* (Columbia, SC, 2006), 666–67. See also Antoinette Taylor, “South Carolina and the Enfranchisement of Women: The Later Years,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 80 (October 1979): 298–310.

⁴² C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge, 1971), 425.

⁴³ Hill, “Dr. Hilla Sheriff,” 79.

⁴⁴ Medical Inspection of Schools, Columbia, SC, April 22, 1910, February 21, 1912, and December 23, 1912. Gantt Collection.

⁴⁵ L. Rosa Gantt, “Medical Inspection of Schools in South Carolina,” reprint from *Southern Medical Journal* 4 (April 1913): 239–43.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁸ L. Rosa Gantt, M.D., “American Women’s Hospitals,” *Annual Report*, Spartanburg General Hospital file, Gantt Collection.

⁴⁹ “Love Rosa Hirschmann Gantt,” *Opening Doors*.

⁵⁰ L. Rosa Gantt, “American Women’s Hospitals,” *Annual Report*, Spartanburg County Department of Health; General Hospital; County Health Department; TB Department, and Negro Department, 1930, 5/41, Gantt Collection.

⁵¹ Hill, “Dr. Hilla Sheriff,” 82.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Herbert, *Brief History of Medicine of the Spartanburg Region*, 41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 199–200.

⁵⁵ Johnson, *Southern Ladies*, 179.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵⁷ Biographical Information, folder A, Hirschman Family Papers.

⁵⁸ I could not locate immigration records for the Bentschner family but was able to establish that they were living in Charleston from the 1860s. See JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR), Ancestry.com, accessed May 21, 2020, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/1411>.

⁵⁹ "Sarah Visanska," Field Work Files, Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC (hereafter cited as JHC-CC).

⁶⁰ Erin Smith, Thomas Wingard, and Michael Jowers, "Historic Report of 12 Bull Street: The Cameron House," accessed February 19, 2020, <http://wardj.people.cofc.edu/Historic%20Report%20Cameron%20House%20historic%20report.pdf>.

⁶¹ Debra Bloom, "Henrietta Aiken Kelly (1844-1916): The Correspondence of a Special Field Agent," in Roberts and Walker, *Southern Women in the Progressive Era*, 141-79.

⁶² "Sarah Bentschner Visanska," in *Woman's Who's Who of America: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Women of the United States and Canada, 1914-1915*, ed. John William Leonard (New York, 1914), accessed May 16, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/womanswhoswhoofa00leon/page/840/mode/2up>.

⁶³ "Sarah Visanska," Field Work Files, JHC-CC.

⁶⁴ Jim Parker, "19 East Battery: Classic South of Broad Mansion Known as 'Golden Home' Boasts Top-Notch Charleston Harbor Visages," *Post and Courier*, July 7, 2018, accessed February 19, 2020, https://www.postandcourier.com/business/real_estate/east-battery---classic-south-of-broad-mansion/article_1d30ce62-7e28-11e8-aa8d-afcc90f3c290.html.

⁶⁵ Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 75. See also Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993* (1993; repr. Tuscaloosa, 2005).

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Southern Ladies*, 133.

⁶⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁷¹ "Federation of Women's Clubs, The State Executive Committee Meets in Newberry - Delegates to the National Gathering in St. Louis," *Keowee Courier*, February 24, 1904.

⁷² Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, eds., *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives* (Hanover, NH, 2001), 5.

⁷³ Shea Rabley, "History of Tuberculosis in South Carolina," accessed February 19, 2020, <https://sntc.medicine.ufl.edu/Files/OnTheFly/Content/16%20-%20Hist%20of%20TB%20in%20SC%20-%20Rabley.pdf>. Combating tuberculosis (or consumption as it was commonly called) was a major national issue for Jews and Jewish organizations. The B'nai B'rith established the National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives in Denver, Colorado, in 1899.

⁷⁴ "Club Women Invited: Mrs. Visanska Addresses Open Letter to Women of South Carolina," *Watchman and Southron* (Sumpter, SC), November 24, 1909.

⁷⁵ Virginia B. Bartels, ed., "The History of South Carolina Schools," accessed February 18, 2020, https://www.carolana.com/SC/Education/History_of_South_Carolina_Schools_Virginia_B_Bartels.pdf.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Johnson, *Southern Ladies*, 138.

⁷⁷ Bureau of Economic Research, State of South Carolina, "An Outline of the History of the Free Kindergarten Association of Charleston, South Carolina," Anita Pollitzer Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Lowcountry Digital Library, accessed May 21, 2020, <https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/anita-pollitzer-family-papers>. Such free kindergartens with the added role of social settlement spread throughout the region and country with the support of Jewish women. The Free Kindergarten and Social Settlement of Atlanta, for example, was founded in 1906. Yet in Atlanta, unlike Charleston, this was a Jewish-organized and run facility. Bauman, "Southern Jewish Women," 44.

⁷⁸ "Sarah Visanska," Field Work Files, JHC-CC.

⁷⁹ Johnson, *Southern Ladies*, 139.

⁸⁰ A 1962 law made kindergartens mandatory in South Carolina. See South Carolina Code of Laws, Title 59—Education, accessed March 21, 2020, <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c065.php>.

⁸¹ Julia Sniderman Bachrach, "Playground Movement," *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, accessed February 19, 2020, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/976.html>.

⁸² "Sarah Visanska," Field Work Files, JHC-CC.

⁸³ History of Child Labor in the United States—Part 1: Little Children Working, accessed February 17, 2020, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2017/article/history-of-child-labor-in-the-united-states-part-1.htm>.

⁸⁴ Johnson, *Southern Ladies*, 152.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁸⁶ Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia, SC, 1998), 472.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 473.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁹⁰ Johnson, *Southern Ladies*, 20.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 167.

⁹⁴ 1901-1902 Charleston West Indian Exposition, accessed February 20, 2020, <http://www.stolenhistory.org/threads/1901-1902-charleston-west-indian-exposition.1567>.

⁹⁵ See Dorothy Schneider and Carl L. Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (New York, 1993), 96.

⁹⁶ Katherine Kish Sklar, "Organized Womanhood: Archival Sources on Women and Progressive Reform," *Journal of American History*, 75 (June 1988): 176-83.

⁹⁷ William Chapman Herbert, "Selected Biographies of Spartanburg County Physicians," in *A Brief History of Medicine in the Spartanburg Region*, 165; Brad Steineke, "Dr. Rosa

Gantt: A Medical Pioneer," Spartanburg County Public Libraries quarterly publication (Winter 2019): 8–9; Poliakoff, *Portraits of a People*, 64.

⁹⁸ "Sarah Visanska," Field Work Files, JHC-CC.

⁹⁹ Sklar, "Organized Womanhood," 177.

¹⁰⁰ Jane Addams, the social reformer and founder of Hull House in Chicago; Florence Kelley, a resident of Hull House whose investigations into slum conditions in Chicago led to social welfare legislation; Julia Lathrop, another resident of Hull House who committed herself to education reform and children's welfare; Ida B. Wells, the investigative journalist especially of lynching and a founder of the NAACP; Mary McLeod Bethune, the civil rights activist and educational reformer who founded Bethune-Cookman College in Florida.

¹⁰¹ For Gertrude Weil, see Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*; for Suzanne Scruggs, see Johnson, *Southern Ladies*; for Mary Munford, see Clayton McClure Brooks, "Unlikely Allies: Southern Women, Interracial Cooperation, and the Making of Segregation in Virginia, 1910–1920," in Angela Boswell and Judith McArthur, eds., *Women Shaping the South*, (Columbia, Missouri), 2006.

¹⁰² These women are discussed in Johnson, *Southern Ladies*.

¹⁰³ "Services Today for Dr. Gantt," *Spartanburg (SC) Herald*, November 20, 1935.

¹⁰⁴ Biographical sketch of Rosa Hirschman Gantt, *Journal of the South Carolina Medical Association* 83 (November 1987), folder B, Hirschman Family Papers.

¹⁰⁵ "Woman's Club News: Tribute to Mrs. Visanska," *Gaffney Ledger*, March 19, 1926, accessed February 21, 2020, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/5482777/tribute-to-mrs-visanska-1926>.

¹⁰⁶ Mark K. Bauman, "The Youthful Musings of a Community Activist: Josephine Joel Heyman," in *A New Vision of Southern Jewish History: Studies in Institution Building, Leadership, Interaction, and Mobility* (Tuscaloosa, 2019), 168–69.

Two Commemorations: Richmond Jews and the Lost Cause during the Civil Rights Era

by

David Weinfeld*

In 1954, Jewish communities across the United States celebrated the Tercentenary, the three-hundredth anniversary of the Jewish arrival in New Amsterdam. Although individual Jews had come before, when twenty-three Jews sailed from Recife, Brazil, into the New Amsterdam harbor in 1654, it marked the beginning of Jewish communal life in what became the United States, the largest diasporic Jewish community in the world.

Jews of Richmond, Virginia, were among those celebrating and felt they deserved a special pride of place. Richmond was not among the five colonial cities in America—New York, Philadelphia, Newport, Charleston, and Savannah—where Jews established congregations before 1776. However, it was the sixth community, the westernmost at the time, and the first after the creation of the United States of America. In 1789, a group of mostly Ashkenazic Jews founded the Sephardic congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Shalome, the ancestor to Beth Ahabah, the largest Reform congregation in the city today.

Seven years after the Tercentenary, Richmond's Jewish community participated in a nonsectarian, nationwide commemoration, the Civil War Centennial. As the former capital of the Confederate States of America, Richmond had a special relationship with the Civil War, one honored by many of its citizens, Jews included. The same man spearheaded both celebrations on behalf of local Jewry: businessman and lay historian Saul Viener, a president of the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) and

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a founder and first president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS).

The success of the Tercentenary inspired Viener to compose a letter in December 1956, sent to several interested parties: "In an effort to crystallize the interest in American Jewish history which has existed in the South for many years, and which was exhibited in the participation in the Tercentenary programs two years ago, I would like to invite your attention to the possible creation of a Southern Jewish Historical Society in Richmond."¹ Thus these commemorations led to the predecessor of the organization that sponsors this very journal, *Southern Jewish History*.

The larger Tercentenary and Centennial were national events. The Tercentenary organization was headquartered in New York, unofficial capital of American Jewry, and most scholarly attention has focused on Tercentenary events emanating from New York and other northern cities.² The Centennial had a strong presence in Richmond, but scholars have not investigated Jewish involvement there.

The Richmond Jewish community's commemoration of the two events demonstrated broad and implicit support for the Lost Cause narrative. Dominant in the South for at least a hundred years after the Civil War, the Lost Cause narrative celebrated the Confederacy. Although most American Jewish Tercentenary commemorations did not emphasize the Civil War, in Richmond the sectional conflict played front and center. The Civil War Centennial dealt directly with the Civil War, and the Lost Cause narrative was even more pronounced.

That Viener embraced the Lost Cause narrative is not surprising considering his unofficial status as chief lay historian of the Richmond Jewish community. Yet it is surprising given that Viener was originally from West Virginia, a southern state that had not seceded and had no connection to the Confederacy. His parents emigrated from Lithuania at the beginning of the twentieth century, and Viener was born and raised in Charles Town, West Virginia. In 1942, he enlisted in the army and served in Australia, where he married Jacqueline Wolman, the English-born daughter of a rabbi. After the war, he earned a master's degree in history from West Virginia University before moving to Richmond to oversee a branch of the family scrap metal business. Viener was undoubtedly aware that his home state had split from Virginia when the latter seceded from the Union in 1861 and entered the Union as a new state two years later.

Why would an American Jew obliquely connected to the Confederate South become so enamored of the region's history that he launched the first Southern Jewish Historical Society? Why would he focus so much on the Civil War to the point of celebrating Jewish involvement with the Confederacy? Why did he lead commemorations glorifying the Lost Cause?³ As shall be demonstrated, Viener's embrace of the Lost Cause echoed that of many Richmond Jews, reflecting broader attachment to the South.

Six former SJHS presidents, Alexandria, Virginia, 1991. Left to right: Sol Breibart, Sam Proctor, Jack Coleman, Saul Viener, Rachel Heimovics Braun, Janice Rothschild Blumberg. (Courtesy of Janice Rothschild Blumberg.)

The Richmond Jewish community's 1954 Tercentenary commemoration and its participation in the larger American Civil War Centennial from 1961 to 1965 demonstrate that for Richmond Jews, advancing the Lost Cause represented an assertion of whiteness, an entry into mainstream, "respectable" southern society. Through these commemorations, the Richmond Jewish community loudly and publicly performed whiteness, saying to the white Christian majority, "We're just like you; we're on the same team," an option unavailable to African Americans.

This was true not only for Jews with ancestors in the antebellum South, but also for descendants of recent immigrants, the foreign born, and northern transplants to Richmond, as well as West Virginian Saul Viener. As Myron Berman notes, throughout postbellum Richmond Jewish history, "recent immigrants and their children adopted the legends and ceremonials of the confederacy as their own."⁴ Foremost among these legends was the Lost Cause, and Richmond Jews imbibed and performed it with gusto, particularly during the Tercentenary and Centennial commemorations.

These commemorations gave the appearance of Jewish comfort and belonging in Richmond. They involved museum displays, lavish pageants, synagogue services, graveside ceremonies, and popular publications. These commemorations represented an effort at integration while resisting complete acculturation. Richmond's Jews wanted to say they could be American, they could be southern, and still be proud Jews. But these commemorations were also about unspoken factors, about whiteness, about where Jews would live and work and send their children to school. Celebrating the Lost Cause signified loyalty to the white South.

During the 1954 Tercentenary, not long after the Rosenberg trial and with McCarthyism rampant, many Americans still associated Jews with communism. Proving their loyalty was paramount, and in the South, loyalty often meant loyalty to the Confederacy. Richmond Jews used the Tercentenary and Centennial to integrate into Richmond, Virginia, and southern society. For Jews, becoming southern was different from becoming American, and becoming a Richmonder meant embracing the Lost Cause and Confederate past, even if the connection to that past was shallow. This was especially true during the African American civil rights movement, from *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 to the marches and protests that followed.

While northern Jews were disproportionately involved in civil rights activism, southern Jews kept a lower profile, muting their opposition to racism, and a few actively supported segregation. There were exceptions, including two outspoken Virginia rabbis, Malcolm Stern in Norfolk and Emmet Frank of Alexandria, who opposed segregation.⁵ But Jewish opposition to segregation in Richmond was personal and private, whereas the Richmond Jewish celebration of the Lost Cause was communal and public. It may have felt almost obligatory, like adhering to a civil religion.

Charles Reagan Wilson calls the Lost Cause the “civil religion” of the South, arguing “the Lost Cause was a mythic construct that helped white southerners define a cultural identity in the aftermath of Confederate defeat.” At the same time, he asserts that “evangelical Protestantism lay at the heart of southern identity and was central to southern efforts to wage a cultural war against northern influences after the war.”⁶ By the 1950s, however, the ecumenical era of Judeo-Christianity had begun. With religious barriers falling, Richmond Jews could perform the Lost Cause at the Tercentenary and Centennial to claim whiteness, solidifying their standing in white southern society while maintaining their Jewish heritage.

The Jews and Lost Cause Ideology

Caroline E. Janney defines the Lost Cause as “an interpretation of the American Civil War that seeks to present the war, from the perspective of the Confederates, in the best possible terms.” Developed by white southerners including many Confederate veterans, “the Lost Cause created and romanticized the ‘Old South’ and the Confederate War effort, often distorting history in the process.” The Lost Cause initially held sway in some academic circles, but today is rightly rejected by scholars as an inaccurate, racist myth used to uphold white supremacy. Nonetheless, it remains “an important part of how the Civil War is commemorated in the South and remembered in American popular culture.” There were three major tenets of Lost Cause mythology. First, the Civil War was a conflict over states’ rights, not slavery. Second, slavery was a benign institution, and African Americans were “content in their station” and “loyal to their masters.” And third, the Confederate war effort was noble, heroic, and tragic, with southern military icons like Robert E. Lee practically canonized.⁷

The Tercentenary and Civil War Centennial commemorations in Richmond show a Jewish community that had embraced the Lost Cause, but not in toto. They did not adhere to the second tenet, that slavery was benign. Insofar as they mentioned slavery, they condemned it. They did, however, implicitly adhere to the first tenet, namely, that the Civil War was primarily about states’ rights, and thus they did not emphasize slavery in any of their commemorations. Following that premise, they wholeheartedly endorsed the third tenet, that the Confederate war effort was noble and heroic. They added their own list of southern Jewish

heroes, including Judah P. Benjamin, who held three offices in the Confederate cabinet, and Maximillian Michelbacher, the Civil War-era rabbi of Richmond's Beth Ahabah congregation.

This partial but enthusiastic embrace of the Lost Cause allowed the Jews of Richmond in the 1950s and 1960s to appear moderate on the issue of African American civil rights, privately supporting integration while saying little on the matter publicly. Simultaneously, it enabled them to loudly and proudly assert their southernness and, by extension, their whiteness. As David Blight notes, the Lost Cause was primarily an effort to uphold white supremacy that "reverberated as part of the very heartbeat of the Jim Crow South." The idea's "very existence depended on dehumanizing a group of people."⁸ When Richmond Jews performed the Lost Cause at the Tercentenary and Centennial commemorations, they solidified their membership in the civil-rights era white southern community and, intentionally or not, buttressed the reigning notion of white supremacy.

The Broader Tercentenary

The Tercentenary was designed to commemorate all of American Jewish history, not just the 1654 arrival in New Amsterdam. In early plans for the commemoration, however, the South was largely absent. Revolutionary War heroes like Haym Salomon, figures such as Emma Lazarus and Louis Brandeis (ignoring his Kentucky roots), and the eastern European immigrant experience featured much more prominently. The Civil War, slavery, and Jim Crow were not major points of emphasis. Most Jews lived in the North, and most arrived long after the Civil War. Organizers of the Tercentenary seemed more concerned with conflict among Zionists, non-Zionists, and anti-Zionists than they did between North and South.

Some radical Jews felt that the official American Jewish Tercentenary Committee did not adequately represent Jewish life or values. Morris Schappes, the communist editor of *Jewish Currents*, excoriated an organizer for including a "reactionary" biography of Judah P. Benjamin on the Tercentenary reading list. It was likely Schappes, or at least his influence, that led to an unsigned call for the Tercentenary written in June 1953.⁹ It noted the arrival in New Amsterdam and the restrictions and antisemitism that American Jews faced before taking a radical turn:

*Tercentenary medallion, designed
by Nancy Dryfoos, 1954.
(Library of Congress.)*

The social system that marked out and sought to enforce restrictions against the Jews also marked other groups, notably the Negro people, for oppression and persecution. In the fight of such groups for the extension of democracy to them, Jews have played a part from the days of the resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law of the 1850s to the legal lynchings of Willie McGee and the Martinsville Seven in the 1950s.¹⁰

Jews "put their shoulders to the wheel of progress," particularly the "mass Jewish working class," and they continued to do so "despite McCarthyism." The author celebrated Yiddish writers who "expressed the aspirations of the Jewish workers and progressive masses."¹¹ Rather than liberal anticommunism, here was an expression of anti-McCarthyism. If the Tercentenary was originally imagined as a Cold War celebration of Americanism, at least some American Jews had other ideas.

The author concluded by delineating two traditional groups in American history: those who "place barricades on the road to progress" and those who "fought to clear the road." Then they further described these two groups as

the tradition of those who fought on the side of King George, and then of the slave owners, and then of the giant trusts, and the tradition of those who supported the American Revolution, and then the Union cause, and then the people against the trusts. These two traditions are also found in the Jewish life of our country. As the Tercentenary makes this conflict of values clear, the progressive-minded elements in the American Jewish population, continuing to be fired by the passion for progress will make the Tercentenary Celebrations the occasion for their rededication to the cause of peace, equality, and social progress.¹²

The Confederacy and slavery were thereby equated with the opponents of the American Revolution and the enemies of contemporary workers. This aggressively antisouthern document formed the ideological backbone for an alternative Tercentenary celebration, the Committee for the 300th Anniversary of Jewish Settlement in the USA, which celebrated American Jewish radicalism, labor activism, and Yiddish culture.¹³

Richmond Jews and the Lost Cause before the Tercentenary

The Tercentenary looked a lot different in Richmond, because Richmond Jews had adhered to the Lost Cause narrative for a long time. As Clive Webb observes, “Jews actively contributed to the Lost Cause.” This was true across the South, but the best example was the erection of the Confederate section in Richmond’s Hebrew Cemetery. The memorial ground was established shortly after the Civil War and overseen by the Hebrew Ladies Memorial Association, whose members decorated the graves with flowers every year. In addition, in 1893, Richmond printer Herbert Ezekiel, owner and editor of the weekly newspaper *The Jewish South*, compared Jews to Confederates: “Like Jews have often been, they have been crushed by irresistible odds, but the cause is still alive. . . . [W]e do not mean by this that a revival of the Southern cause is wished for or desirable, but nevertheless its sacredness will be inviolable so long as the sun shines in this fair land of ours.”¹⁴

Postcard of Monument Avenue, Richmond, Virginia.
(Wikimedia Commons.)

In his family history, Lewis Isaac Held, Jr., expressed similar sentiments. His father, Lewis Isaac Held, Sr., was a congregant at Beth Ahabah and a prominent member of the Jewish community. As a child in the interwar period, the senior Held strolled with his family to his grandmother's house on Monument Avenue, receiving friendly greetings from neighbors as they walked by. "Along this promenade are the monuments from which the avenue is named—majestic statues of the great Confederate generals R. E. Lee, J. E. B. Stuart, and 'Stonewall' Jackson." His son imagined that "those bronze giants must have had quite an impact upon boys like Lewis [Senior] who played nearby. Richmond had been the capital of the glorious Confederacy, and in those days the memories of the war were still fresh. As a boy Lewis used to visit the Confederate Soldiers' Home—wooden buildings on the Boulevard [where the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts now stands]—and the old men would tell him stories of the war."¹⁵ These stories undoubtedly depicted a sanitized version of the Confederate legacy, the Lost Cause that most Richmond Jews absorbed without reservation.

Another example came in 1942, when Richmond's new Conservative congregation, Temple Beth-El, began construction of a larger sanctuary next to its original building in the Museum District. The leaders of the project were all northerners or immigrants. Russian-born Isadore Richard Levet served as Beth-El president, while the chairmen of the Building Committee were Lithuanian-born Reuben Goldman and Herman November, a transplant from New York. During the dedication ceremony for the new synagogue, the leaders inserted three symbolic items into the cornerstone: a brief history of Beth-El, a list of congregants, and a prayer book donated by a non-Jewish friend that had belonged to that individual's grandfather, Confederate Colonel Kenton Harper, who served with Stonewall Jackson. As Myron Berman observes, even in 1942, in a synagogue dominated by Jews whose families came long after the Civil War, "a unique combination of Southern and Jewish tradition" dominated the ceremony, with southern in this case meaning respect for the Lost Cause.¹⁶

The 1954 Richmond Jewish Tercentenary Celebration

At first, when taking charge of Richmond's Tercentenary events, Saul Viener did not advance a Lost Cause narrative. When he appealed to the larger nationwide Tercentenary committee in October 1953 on behalf

*Saul Viener, right, and Irvin Markel holding Torah finials. They stand in front of a model of Beth Shalom Synagogue that was displayed as part of the Valentine Museum's 1954 exhibit "Salute to a Tercentenary."
(Courtesy of the Valentine, Richmond.)*

of the Richmond Jewish community, Viener told the story of the Jews of Richmond in a larger American context that took little note of the Civil War.¹⁷ He also took a broader approach as chair of the Tercentenary Committee of the Richmond Jewish Community Council.

On September 19, 1954, the Valentine Museum, an institution dedicated to Richmond history, launched an exhibit chronicling "Jewish involvement in the development of the city." The exhibit ran until November 7 and included "manuscripts, portraits, and ritual objects." The Tercentenary committee also published a commemorative booklet, "A Century and a Half of Civic Responsibility," that was distributed at local synagogues and schools.¹⁸

In addition to the exhibit and booklet, the committee sponsored "a rededication of the Jewish cemetery on East Franklin Street, the oldest Jewish burial ground in Virginia," purchased and inaugurated by Isaiah

Isaacs in 1791, and the final resting place of Revolutionary War veteran Jacob I. Cohen. This cemetery was inactive, having been replaced in 1816 by the larger Hebrew Cemetery, but the city finally marked it as a historic site, and New York rabbi David de Sola Pool spoke at the ceremony.¹⁹

Unlike these events, the main production of the Richmond Tercentenary committee placed the Civil War front and center. The most grandiose element of the Richmond's Tercentenary commemoration took place on October 14, 1954, at the large local theatre known as the Mosque. The Mosque, today called the Altria Theater, was owned by the city and was a segregated venue. Members of the Richmond Jewish community put on a play called "Under Freedom." To conclude the commemoration, on Saturday, November 27, a special Shabbat service was held. These two events reflect the schizophrenic nature of the local Tercentenary celebration.

*Postcard of the Mosque
Theater in Richmond, c. 1930.
(Digital Commonwealth,
Boston Public Library.)*

"Under Freedom" was produced by the Jewish Tercentenary Committee, sponsored by the Jewish Community Council and the local chapter of the Jewish War Veterans, and directed by the Richmond Department of Recreation and Parks, thus demonstrating municipal involvement and interaction between the city and Jewish organizations. Rose Kaufman Banks, a prominent member of Richmond's theater community and employee of the city's Department of Recreation and Parks, directed the play. Businessman Allan Creeger, born in Boston and raised on Long Island, wrote the script's historical narrative. Creeger received his BA from Columbia and MBA from Harvard before entering the military in 1943, where he was stationed at Camp Lee, Virginia. He moved to Richmond after the war. His wife, Richmond native Louise (Rosenthal) Creeger, conducted the historical research for the script.

Alongside Creeger's narration, Edith Lindeman Calisch, daughter-in-law of long-time Beth Ahabah rabbi Edward Nathan Calisch, wrote the dialogue. Rabbi Calisch was the de facto Jewish spiritual leader of Richmond from 1891 until his retirement in 1945 and death the following year. Edith Calisch was born in Pittsburgh, raised in Ohio, and graduated from Barnard College. She served as film and theater critic of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, in addition to writing several Jewish books, including bible stories for children, a play titled *The Jews Who Stood by Washington*, and a biography of her father-in-law. She was also a songwriter, penning lyrics for Richmond composer Carl Stutz.²⁰

Thus two transplanted northerners wrote the play, which they called a "pageant," about Richmond Jewry. Creeger's narration commenced with saccharine paeans to freedom. The prologue began not with Richmond but with Emma Lazarus, a New Yorker born in 1849, whose poetry adorns the Statue of Liberty. The famous poet conversed with her father and her friend Ralph Waldo Emerson and then tied her famous words about "huddled masses" to the European settlers in North America in the 1600s. The next four scenes showed the history of the Jews of Richmond through the colonial era, the American Revolution, and the antebellum period, with references to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Chief Justice John Marshall.²¹

Edith Lindeman Calisch, c. 1920.

(Photo contributed by Justin D.

Haren, Findagrave.com.)

After intermission, the chorus sang “Bonnie Blue Flag,” a popular Confederate song during the Civil War. The narrator began:

The war between the states was a tragic pause in the material and spiritual growth of America. Conceived in freedom and dedicated to liberty, the country by and large, for many years after the Revolution countenanced the bondage of one color of men to another. Most Revolutionary leaders, in the South as well as in the North, condemned slavery and many of those who owned slaves provided for their freedom in their wills.

But gradually the opponents of slavery changed from those merely opposed to its existence and hoping for its eventual abolition to those actively demanding its immediate and wholesale extirpation. Their violent and vitriolic attacks on the institution of slavery and its supporters in the South resulted in increasingly harsh and bitter feelings on both sides.²²

These passages criticized slavery, albeit in the language of moderates rather than abolitionists. This criticism continued as the narrator noted New York Rabbi Morris Raphall’s defense of biblical slavery and contrasted him with Reform rabbis Bernhard Felsenthal of Chicago and David Einhorn of Baltimore, adamant abolitionists. The script’s authors knew slavery was evil and that it caused the Civil War, yet they and the other pageant participants celebrated the Confederate war effort and Jewish participation in it. They honored the more than thirty Jewish men and boys who served in Richmond’s Light Infantry Blues during the Civil War. The narrator did not mention that Beth Shalome’s antebellum rabbi, George Jacobs, and Beth Ahabah’s Maximillian J. Michelbacher (who styled himself Reverend) owned slaves. He did mention that Michelbacher often traveled with Confederate troops to worship with them.²³

Scene 5 took place in 1862 on the battlefield and featured Reverend Michelbacher reciting a prayer to various soldiers—including Robert E. Lee—that implicitly defended slavery. The prayer, which Michelbacher wrote in 1861, spoke of the northern violation of the “rights, liberties, and freedom of this, our Confederacy,” and that the Union sought “to deprive us of the glorious inheritance which was left to us by the immortal fathers of this once great republic.” It called on God to defend the “natural rights” of the Confederates.²⁴

*Rev. Maximilian J. Michelbacher, c. 1850.
(Photo contributed by George Seitz,
Findagrave.com.)*

But the prayer did not explicitly defend slavery, as Michelbacher's sermon on March 27, 1863, following Confederate president Jefferson Davis's declaration of a day of national prayer for the Confederacy, did. In that sermon, Michelbacher denounced the Union's attempt to "enslave us." He referred directly to the enslavement of African Americans: "The man-servants and the maid-servants Thou hast given unto us, that we may be merciful to them in righteousness and bear rule over them, the enemy are attempting to seduce, that they too may turn against us, whom Thou hast appointed over them as instructors in Thy wise dispensation!" He blamed Union forces for inciting their "man-servants and maid-servants to insurrection," arming them and deceiving them from the path of duty, that they may waylay their masters."²⁵ Michelbacher's version of the peculiar institution depicted a benevolent, divinely ordained relationship between master and slave, a Lost Cause before it was lost.

The organizers of the 1954 Tercentenary pageant chose the tamer 1861 version of Michelbacher's "Prayer for the Confederacy." The 1861 prayer was the better-known document, so it's unlikely the latter 1863 sermon was under consideration and similarly unlikely the pageant organizers would have chosen a text celebrating slavery so overtly. The Jewish Lost Cause downplayed the importance of slavery, and Richmond Jews comfortably celebrated the Lost Cause and their Confederate hero, Reverend Michelbacher. In the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*, they ignored their Tercentenary commemoration's resonance with the Jim Crow present.

Including the "Prayer for the Confederacy" was Richmond Jewry's way of celebrating local history. It represented a genuinely Richmond contribution to the American and southern Jewish narrative. Although valuable historically, from today's vantage point the prayer for the Confederacy cannot be seen as something to celebrate. In 1954, it was. Nearly a century after the Civil War, the inclusion of Michelbacher's prayer emphasized the extent of the Richmond Jewish community's participation in the Confederate cause, but more importantly, their integration into Virginia society. In the South the idea of state's rights and state loyalty prevailed. The two northern Jewish writers of this play paid homage to that idea, but they failed to appreciate how that states' rights ideal buttressed white supremacy.

By 1954, the demography of the Richmond Jewish community had changed from half a century earlier, like other Jewish communities throughout the South. The old Jewish families who traced their roots to the antebellum period were now a "limited minority," although possessing outsized influence.²⁶ Richmond was embarking on what David and Adele Bernstein called a "slow revolution."²⁷ Writing in 1949 in *Commentary Magazine*, the Bernsteins offered a profile of the nearly eight thousand Jews living in Virginia's capital, a city of two hundred and fifty thousand people. Unsurprisingly, they emphasized the legacy of the Civil War:

For nearly two centuries [Jewish] history has woven itself into the Richmond story; their roots are deep, and all the myths and shibboleths of this stronghold of Southern romanticism are theirs. There were Jewish slaveholders, and Jewish warriors in the Confederate cause, and Jews who suffered during the Reconstruction years. These were the old Jewish

families, and it was quite natural that they should have dominated the Jewish community—as old families dominated the entire community—until the new Southern revolution began.²⁸

“The weight of the past hangs heavy over Richmond,” the Bernsteins wrote. They invoked the notion of historical memory, an idea that resonates with Jews, who each year tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt and imagine themselves as slaves liberated and ready to receive God’s commandments at Sinai. In Richmond, the strongest memory was “of the desperately romantic days of the Confederacy, when Richmond was the political headquarters of the violent struggle that pitted states’ rights, plantations, and slavery against the irresistible industrial revolution.” Simultaneously, among those who helped usher in “the new Southern revolution” were new Jewish arrivals from Europe and the North. Only “one Jewish family in ten” could trace their roots in Richmond to the antebellum period.²⁹

By 1954, Richmond’s Jewish community counted many descendants of eastern European Jews who arrived long after the Civil War like Saul Viener’s family: transplants from the North, blended Jewish families of old and new Richmonders, and refugees from Nazi Germany and Holocaust survivors. For all Richmonders, old and new, embracing the Lost Cause allowed for acceptance into Richmond’s white community.

The final scene of the Tercentenary play acknowledged the newer immigrants to Richmond. Set in 1900, it depicted a Jewish family celebrating their uncle Ben’s naturalization as a United States citizen. The story aligned with a broader narrative of Jews coming to the United States. The Tercentenary was an American celebration, not just a Richmond one. The script endorsed assimilation, as Ben announced that he and other new immigrants had to learn how to become Americans quickly, so they could “forget the old, unhappy things we used to know,” a reference to pogroms, but also in 1954, to the more recent Holocaust.³⁰

Then Ben pivoted back to the South, singing “Carry Me Back to Ole Virginny” while his family joined in. This was the official song of Virginia, a title held from 1940 to 1997, but it was not without baggage. Edwin Pearce Christy, a white Philadelphian and leader of Christy’s Minstrels, who performed in blackface, had copyrighted the original version in 1847. The song contained references to “coon” and “possum,” pejorative terms

for African Americans. In 1878, James A. Bland, a free-born African American from Flushing, New York, changed most of the lyrics and altered the melody entirely. Although Bland had graduated from Howard University, his version contained the same Uncle Remus dialect. Its use of the terms “darkie” and “massa” did not make it much better than the original in terms of sentimentalizing the old South with a benign view of slavery. This is likely the version that was used in “Under Freedom.” To depict a Jewish immigrant singing it exemplified the use of the Lost Cause to integrate into southern society. “Carry Me Back to Ole Virginny” seamlessly faded into “America the Beautiful,” emphasizing the Americanness of Virginia and honoring the totality of the Virginia experience. The finale reprised Emma Lazarus’s poem, “The New Colossus.” This was an American story, and the Jews in Virginia were part of that story.

After the pageant came the Tercentenary Shabbat in November 1954 held at Beth Ahabah, home to the city’s wealthy Jewish elite. Temple Beth-El, a Conservative synagogue founded during the 1930s and soon to become the city’s largest congregation; Beth Israel, a Modern Orthodox congregation now called Knesset Beth Israel (KBI); and Beth Torah, an Orthodox congregation (no longer in existence) also participated. Rabbi Ariel Goldburg of Beth Ahabah, born in St. Louis and raised in Illinois; Rabbi Jacob Milgrom of Beth-El, a Brooklyn native; and Cantor Morris Okun, also of Beth-El and a New Yorker, led the evening service.

After reciting traditional prayers, Milgrom led a responsive reading of an English prayer written by the Tercentenary committee in New York. The respondents called on God to help them “ponder the lessons our three centuries in this land have taught” and highlighted values of “liberty” and “justice and equality.” The prayer referred to major figures in American Jewish history. These included “Asser Levy and Jacob bar Simson, Haym Salomon and Mordecai Noah, Rebecca Gratz, Henrietta Szold, Touro and Schiff and Brandeis.” These were men and women, philanthropists and soldiers, Zionists and non-Zionists, lawyers and educators, Sephardic and Ashkenazic. Only two were connected to the South: Judah Touro, a Rhode Islander who lived in New York and Boston before settling in New Orleans, and Louis Brandeis, born and raised in Kentucky, although more closely associated with Harvard University and the U.S. Supreme Court. Southern content was nonexistent. This was a thoroughly American ceremony, not one focused on the South, Virginia, or Richmond.³¹

After the Tercentenary prayer and a moment of silent reflection, Rabbi Goldberg led a prayer for the United States. Cantor Okun followed with the kiddush, after which came the *birkat ha-mazon* and the national anthem. Finally, Saul Viener introduced the guest speaker, Dr. Salo Baron. The distinguished Columbia University professor of Jewish history spoke about Soviet Jewry, and his address was covered in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. The service concluded with a final blessing from Rabbi Milgrom.

The Richmond Tercentenary celebrations mostly followed the pattern of the national celebrations, emphasizing American events and figures from the North, unrelated to slavery, the Civil War, the Confederacy, Reconstruction, or Jim Crow. Nonetheless, Richmonders with shallow roots in Virginia made a large effort to incorporate the Virginia story, including Jewish involvement in the Civil War. These Jews believed that to integrate into their community, they had to show themselves to be American, Virginian, and southern, with a special connection to Richmond. That meant embracing key elements of the Lost Cause.

*Context for the Commemorations: Brown v. Board of Education
and Massive Resistance*

The commemorations were moments of pride for the Richmond Jewish community. Both attracted positive attention from the wider non-Jewish public. Both also responded to their particular contexts. In May 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, ruling that segregation in schools was unconstitutional and opening the door for desegregation in many other realms of American life. Many white people in the South did not take kindly to the decision, and Virginians were no exception. Barely a month after the court decision, Virginia Senator Harry F. Byrd began his opposition to *Brown* and by August had joined with other Democrats to create the Gray Commission, ostensibly to study but really to overturn the court's ruling. Two years later, Byrd called for "massive resistance" to desegregation, and he and other politicians signed the "Southern Manifesto" against racial integration and in favor of states' rights.

Massive resistance proved a nightmare for African Americans in Virginia. Schools closed rather than integrate. In 1959, courts ruled the school closings in violation of *Brown* and thereby unconstitutional. This legally

mandated integration, but the process began slowly, as opponents of integration used other means to continue resistance including state-provided grants to white students for new private schools, as well as white flight to the suburbs.

The U.S. Supreme Court finally ended the state subsidizing of private schools in 1964, but many white Virginians still fought tooth and nail against desegregation, requiring the highest court again to speed up the process in 1968. By 1970, the city of Richmond began a limited busing program, which two years later extended to the suburbs. This busing extension met massive resistance and was overturned in local courts. Further white flight, which included many Jews, has left the Richmond school system overwhelmingly African American to this day.³²

Senator Harry F. Byrd, c. 1930.
(*Wikimedia Commons.*)

The Richmond Jewish community's experience was different from the Jewish experience elsewhere in Virginia. While Richmond Jews were quieter about Jim Crow and louder about their embrace of the Lost Cause, elsewhere in Virginia Jews offered greater opposition to segregation. In the late 1950s, two Reform rabbis, the Houston-born Emmet Frank in Alexandria and the Philadelphia native Malcolm Stern in Norfolk, strongly and publicly opposed massive resistance, putting themselves at risk.³³

The cases of Frank and Stern suggest that their Virginia Jewish communities were more supportive of desegregation than those in Richmond. No Richmond rabbi or prominent Jewish citizen stood up against Jim

Crow the way Frank and Stern did. As the Richmond Jewish community's Tercentenary and Civil War Centennial commemorations demonstrate, the Richmond Jewish community was particularly invested in celebrating the Lost Cause as a means to enmesh itself into white southern society.

Nonetheless, southern Jewish embrace of the Lost Cause did not necessarily mean support for segregation. Jews were more likely than non-Jews to oppose segregation, but they did so quietly, as moderates and not as radicals. The Jews of Richmond seem to have decoupled the Lost Cause from the struggle over black civil rights, a decoupling still common to many Americans today. Celebrating the Confederacy, for most Jewish Richmonders, was a means to fit in. Perhaps they did not appreciate how enmeshed the Confederate past was in the Jim Crow present. Or perhaps they enjoyed economic stability and did not want to rock the boat.

The Tightrope Theory and White Rage

Two theories help us understand the southern Jewish reaction to desegregation. The first, the tightrope theory, has been advanced by scholars such as Leonard Dinnerstein, Seth Forman, Mark Bauman, and Clive Webb. This theory suggests that Jews in the South were engaging in a balancing act, as if they were walking on a tightrope, when it came to black civil rights. Southern Jews privately supported integration but tended not to express that sympathy publicly to avoid an antisemitic backlash from the white Christian majority. Southern Jewish silence on civil rights was the result of fear. Those who wanted to intervene in support of black civil rights had to balance ethical principles with the precarious Jewish place in the broader white community and the real danger of antisemitic violence, including synagogue bombings and other such attacks, across the South. As Dinnerstein notes, while northern Jews celebrated *Brown*, "Southern Jews met it with fear and trepidation." Or to quote Seth Forman, "Southern Jews remained cautious on the issue of desegregation," often appealing to national Jewish organizations to "soft-pedal the issue" and disassociate Jews from civil rights and pro-integration activism.³⁴

Bauman builds upon this argument, accepting that most southern Jews were silent on civil rights, but demonstrating that certain rabbis resisted the status quo. Webb expands upon Bauman's work, showing that some southern Jews publicly opposed segregation whereas a few openly

and passionately endorsed white supremacy—though none of the latter in Virginia. As Webb writes, “although most southern Jews were inherently sympathetic toward the black struggle for racial equality, their actions were constrained by political circumstance. . . . [T]hose who dared to protest against racial prejudice risked serious personal injury. As a result, many southern Jews had explicitly rejected the notion that they had any particular responsibility to support the civil rights movement.”³⁵

The tightrope thesis appeared in newspapers of the time. In an October 1958 article in the *Southern Israelite*, “Virginia Jews Discuss Coordination with National Organizations,” tensions between southern and northern Jews surrounding segregation were laid bare. Hundreds of Jewish children in Norfolk were affected when Virginia governor Lindsay Almond closed schools to combat integration. Jews throughout the state were on edge. The unsigned article did not identify the national Jewish organizations mentioned, but representatives of one group met with Jewish communal leaders from ten Virginia cities “to discuss the impact of the school integration crisis on the Jewish population in the state.” Regional offices of these organizations had the final say in the messaging from Virginia, superseding the authority of the national office. They agreed that the national organizations could publicly protest segregation, “provided statements are made outside the South.”³⁶

Virginia Jews faced a dilemma. They were “acting to ensure their own safety” by lying low on segregation and moderating their voices. One Virginia Jewish leader insisted on the “perilous position of Jews in Virginia and the need for prudence.”³⁷ A Virginia-based segregationist group known as the Defenders of State Sovereignty had identified local Jewish donors to the NAACP and harassed them for their assistance to African Americans.

Two days after that article appeared, the Reform temple in Atlanta was bombed. The tightrope argument intensified. Rabbi and historian Bertram W. Korn, the leading expert on Jews in the Civil War, wrote “most Southern Jews are nervous: they do not want to be caught in the crossfire between segregationists and integrationists, between Negroes and whites.” The many Jews working in retail would face “absolute boycott” if they were associated with integrationists. “The lot of the Southern Jew has never been an easy one. . . . [T]hese Jews have always felt like their

behavior had to be exemplary, that they had to prove themselves again and again.”³⁸ Here was the tightrope thesis expressed perfectly in 1958.

Korn understood that most southern Jews, rabbis included, did not want to rock the boat. While some “worked patiently, behind the scenes,” to help African Americans, many others “wholeheartedly adopted the attitude of their neighbors towards the Negro problem.”³⁹ Many southern Jews held the same white supremacist prejudices as southern white non-Jews and understood themselves to be in the white camp. Korn opposed segregation but seemed to prefer the quiet approach.

Yet in that same issue of the *Southern Israelite*, another article both affirmed and added nuance to this tightrope argument. In the wake of the Atlanta bombing, with southern Jews on high alert, Lindsay Almond insisted that those fostering antisemitism in southern states “are not friends of the South” and are harming the cause of states’ rights.⁴⁰ Coming down hard on antisemitism, the Virginia governor sought to decouple antisemitism and support for segregation, implying that one could easily oppose the former and endorse the latter.

Almond was outraged that the group behind the Atlanta synagogue bombing called itself the "Confederate Underground." To Almond, the use of the name "Confederate Underground" by antisemites was "a desecration of the Confederacy and could only emanate from a polluted mind." He added that "no philosophy of the true South could support" antisemitism or synagogue bombings, and that nothing in the history of the Confederacy, in which Jewish southerners participated, "could ever lend encouragement to acts or even thoughts" like those of the synagogue attackers.⁴¹

Almond believed that southern Jews could celebrate their Confederate past and was horrified that the Confederacy was being conflated with antisemitism. The Confederacy was thought to be a safe space for Jews. If southern Jews felt, as Korn suggested, that they had to "prove themselves again and again," what better way than through Confederate commemoration? Rather than fly quietly under the radar, Jews avoided rocking the boat by loudly proclaiming their southernness and Confederate heritage. The Lost Cause provided a balancing pole for their tightrope walking between integrationists and segregationists, a loud celebration of the Jewish Confederate past that facilitated relative silence on African American rights.

Understanding the Lost Cause as a balancing pole that assisted southern Jews across the tightrope is especially relevant when placed alongside a general theory about white southern reaction to integration, although this theory does not deal explicitly with Jews. Carol Anderson argues that American history since the Civil War has been defined by "white rage" against any efforts among African Americans to achieve equal rights. Whites fought angrily and viciously against Reconstruction, the Great Migration, desegregation, the civil rights movement, and the election of Barack Obama. Virginia's massive resistance to *Brown v. Board of Education* was a prime example of white rage. According to Anderson:

[W]hite rage is not about visible violence, but rather works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracy. It wreaks havoc subtly, almost imperceptibly. . . . It's not the Klan. White rage doesn't have to wear sheets, burn crosses, or take to the streets. Working the halls of power, it can achieve ends far more effectively, far more destructively.⁴²

Most southern Jews did not respond to the *Brown* decision with white rage, and Jews were not the prime movers behind the efforts to oppose integration. Yet the tightrope argument does not quite capture the Jewish response either: Southern Jews did not, for the most part, take public stances for or against segregation, but they were not exactly silent. In performing the Lost Cause narrative through public commemorations like the Tercentenary and the Civil War Centennial, southern Jews loudly declared themselves southern and implicitly declared themselves white. They could do this without taking a strong stance for or against *Brown*. This suggested a specific strategy, not of silence, but of active, public effort at fitting in.

Many Jews identified as southern, even Jews not originally from the South. Jews in Richmond took the opportunity to celebrate and participate in a regional identity – southern – in addition to their state and city identities. One means of taking advantage of this opportunity was commemorating the Lost Cause. But by identifying as southern, Jews were partaking in an identity defined by whiteness that specifically excluded African Americans.

Richmond Jewry during the Civil Rights Era

Richmond Jews, living outside the Deep South, with a history of good relations with Christian neighbors, and benefitting from a nationwide decline in antisemitism after World War II, did not want to see their secure position jeopardized. This dynamic became apparent to Murray Friedman, a liberal from New York, who went to work in Richmond for the Virginia chapter of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in July 1954. After his time in Richmond ended some five years later, he observed, “though Virginia Jews accept the idea of desegregation in principle, in practice their viewpoint is not far different from that of the general white population.” Jewish merchants regularly interacted with African American customers and witnessed “first hand the poverty, disease, and lower cultural standards that are the lot of the poor Negro.” Although he recognizes “the responsibility of the white man” in relegating black people to a reduced social status, “he does not want the sins of the past visited on his own children.” This led Friedman to conclude that since the *Brown* decision, most Virginia Jews, like other southern Jews and even liberal white Protestants, had “retreated into positions of silence.”⁴³

The silence was partly out of fear. Although antisemitism nationwide was declining, northern Jews had become associated with civil rights activism, and southern Jews paid the price. Virginia Jews practiced silence with the increase of right-wing antisemitism throughout the South including in the Old Dominion. While Virginia Jews did not suffer synagogue bombings, antisemitic pamphlets circulated through the commonwealth, blaming communist Jews for spearheading school integration with African Americans.

In the face of this bigotry, Friedman recalled Richmond Jewish business elites demanding that the Virginia ADL "confine its role to combating anti-Semitism and to positive programming in the field of interfaith understanding." In 1958, prominent journalist and segregationist James J. Kilpatrick wrote an editorial in the *Richmond News Leader* warning Jews against supporting integration. Although many considered the article antisemitic, Richmond Jewish business leaders Sam Binswanger, Harry Schwarzschild, and Irving May "sought to assure Kilpatrick that they were not integrationists."⁴⁴ These men advocated avoidance of the civil rights movement. They sought to appease the racists, not combat them. Perhaps they were racists themselves.

Ascertaining how Richmond Jews felt about segregation is difficult. Rabbi Myron Berman, who came to Richmond's Temple Beth-El in 1965, described a "a bedrock of feeling within the Jewish community of Richmond opposing busing and integration." At the same time, he identified "a cadre of southern Jews supporting civil rights either through individual efforts or through the Anti-Defamation League." In a memoir, he observed that some local Jews had assisted the sit-in at Thalhimers, and others supported the NAACP and Urban League. He asserted, without citation, that "Richmond's Jewish merchants maintained a friendly relationship with the Black community, extending credit to them when others had refused."⁴⁵

In his history of Richmond Jewry published in 1979, Berman wrote about how tensions over *Brown* "affected the complacency of Richmond Jewry." He summarized: "Although Jews had a natural tendency to be more liberal on the racial issue because of their own minority status, fear of an outbreak of antisemitism in Richmond, as in other areas, coupled with the historic identification between the establishment Jew and Gentile, influenced the reactions of many a Richmond Jew. Evidently, the majority

of the city's Jewish population was not involved with or affected by the turmoil in the blacks' struggle within the community."⁴⁶ For the Richmond Jewish community, silence remained the order of the day when it came to the civil rights movement, but not when it came to celebrating the Confederacy and the Lost Cause.

The Tercentenary, the Centennial, and the Lost Cause Beyond Richmond

The Richmond Tercentenary celebration was not the only one to invoke the Lost Cause. In September 1954, the Atlanta Jewish community kicked off its Tercentenary program with the presentation of "a portrait of Judah P. Benjamin, Secretary of War for the Confederacy," to Mayor William Hartsfield. The portrait was placed in Atlanta's Cyclorama Collection, which contained pictures of "Confederacy notables" and "Confederate Heroes and Statesmen." Harry Madison, national commander of the Jewish War Veterans (JWV), presented the painting of "the beloved Confederate hero" on behalf of Georgia's section of the JWV.⁴⁷

Atlanta mayor William Hartsfield receives a portrait of Judah P. Benjamin from Harry Madison of the Jewish War Veterans, September 1954. (Atlanta Constitution, September 13, 1954).

As the Atlanta-based *Southern Israelite* reported, "Benjamin's part in behalf of the Confederacy was spectacular. As Secretary of War, his record was brilliant" but hampered by Confederate supply shortages. "Legend has it" that Benjamin once personally took the blame for a Confederate defeat rather than let news of the supply shortage leak. Although he "resigned as Secretary of War," Confederate president Jefferson Davis "demonstrated his confidence in Benjamin" by appointing him Secretary of State.⁴⁸

In August, when the portrait presentation was announced, the *Southern Israelite* featured a lengthy article on Benjamin's career. Noting that he was "the acknowledged 'brains of the Confederacy,'" the newspaper called him "a man of courage, determination, intelligence, vigor, and valor, who unfortunately chose to fight for a cause that was lost from the start."⁴⁹ This invocation of the Lost Cause is especially notable because Benjamin was born in the Caribbean, raised in Charleston, educated at Yale, represented Louisiana (where he practiced law in New Orleans and owned a sugarcane plantation) in the U.S. Senate, and served the Confederacy in Richmond. His connection to Georgia was limited. Similarly, in 1955 at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Columbia, South Carolina, Benjamin was the subject of a talk by attorney Dave Baker, part of a Tercentenary panel on "American Jews who have excelled in the field of law."⁵⁰

To Jews across the South, Benjamin, traitor to the Union, was a hero of American Jewish history, to be celebrated through the Tercentenary. He served as a staple of Jewish Lost Cause commemoration before the Tercentenary and continued to be one afterwards. As Adam Mendelsohn writes on the Civil War Centennial, "in Alabama the state B'nai B'rith invoked Judah P. Benjamin to fight its cause." The organization's 1962 convention featured a session dedicated to the "commemoration of the Jewish contribution to the War between the States." Hudson Strode, a biographer of Jefferson Davis, spoke on "Jefferson Davis and his Jewish Confederates," of whom Benjamin featured prominently. The convention began with a themed dinner and dance called "Judah P. Benjamin Nite." The event became known as the "Covenant Confederacy Annual Convention." The Alabama B'nai B'rith chapter even offered to sponsor the building of a monument at the state capitol, "in honor of the 'merits of Judah P. Benjamin, as a son of the Jewish people.'"⁵¹

Benjamin had no significant connection to Alabama either. He provided a means for southern Jews to prove their southernness regardless of what former Confederate state they resided in. In Richmond, however, Jews had an even stronger connection to the Confederacy, as their city was the wartime capital where Benjamin lived and worked. That Civil War and Confederate legacy dominated Richmond's celebration of the 1954 American Jewish Tercentenary and set the stage for even more elaborate commemorations at the Civil War Centennial several years later.

*Virginia Civil War Centennial Center, Richmond, 1954.
(Courtesy of the Valentine, Richmond.)*

The Jewish Civil War Centennial in Richmond

In December 1960, Robert W. Waitt, Jr., the executive secretary of the Richmond Civil War Centennial Committee (RCWCC), wrote to Richmond mayor Claude Woodward that "Mr. [Saul] Viener will make a scholarly addition to our committee."⁵² Although Viener was not a professional scholar, his reputation as a layhistorian and respected citizen of Richmond had grown significantly since his arrival in the city in the late 1940s. He could hardly have seen himself as an outsider in assuming this role, nor did other Jews involved in the nationwide commemoration see him as such.

Between 1961 and 1965, a national effort took place to commemorate the centennial of the American Civil War. The effort was first led by conservative northerners like Major General Ulysses Grant III, grandson of the Union general and former president, as well as southerners dedicated to the Lost Cause. Numerous American Jews expressed outrage in 1959 when Grant distributed a pamphlet for the Loyal Legion of the United States, a group of descendants of Union army officers. The pamphlet contained an antisemitic article, "Abraham Lincoln and the Rothschilds," which blamed "Jew financiers" for the Civil War. In an editorial, Grant

praised the article, calling it “illuminating.” First published in 1940 by Father Charles Coughlin, the article had appeared “in Nazi publications.” The ADL publicly criticized him, and the *Southern Israelite* called for his resignation.⁵³ Grant apologized, but the episode was reminiscent of his grandfather’s 1862 order to ban “Jews as a class” from newly occupied Union territory.⁵⁴ This got the Centennial off to a rocky start, particularly for those Jews involved.

As Robert J. Cook documents in his 2007 book, *Troubled Commemoration*, the 1960s Civil War Centennial was a combination of Cold War unity propaganda and Lost Cause nostalgia, largely excluding African Americans and relegating slavery to the margins of the conflict. Eventually, the commemoration was eclipsed by the civil rights movement and altered its tone accordingly. Although unacceptable by today’s standards, it moved in a progressive direction, including more African Americans and bringing slavery closer to the center of the narrative. In Richmond, Jews like Saul Viener played key roles in making the commemoration more inclusive yet nevertheless maintained their commitment to the Lost Cause.

The Centennial flopped throughout most of the country, but not in Virginia. As Cook notes, “Virginia was in the vanguard of preparing” for the Centennial, which made sense for boosting tourism as it contained “the lion’s share of major Civil War sites.” Virginia established a Centennial commission before any other southern state, and the legislature designated a whopping 1.75 million dollars for the commemoration, including building a new visitor’s center in Richmond. Whereas “most Americans lost interest” in Civil War commemoration after the initial buildup in 1961, Virginians led the way, along with commissions from Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, “to sponsor a range of Centennial events between 1962 and 1965.”⁵⁵

Although many Virginians were excited about the Centennial, at least one prominent Jewish Richmonder was not. Edith Lindeman Calisch, journalist and Pittsburgh native who had coauthored the script for the Tercentenary pageant, wrote an article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* in January 1961 about the Centennial. She began her piece, “[W]hile Richmond still fights the Civil War—Centennial Commemoration Division, that is . . .”⁵⁶ RCWCC Secretary Waitt took offense at this remark and wrote Calisch for clarification.

In response, Calisch made her disdain for the Centennial clear. She felt "the whole idea of a Civil War Centennial is ill-advised and, considering the tenor of the times, just about the worst thing that could be emphasized throughout the country." She grew "weary of the emphasis on dignity and the dedication . . . to past glories." She believed "the Civil War could be best commemorated [by] showing the world that Richmond has achieved considerable greatness in the past hundred years, rather than rehashing an era of disaster and defeat."⁵⁷ Although she elided the century of Jim Crow, her response reflected the nature of Richmond's Jewish community by 1961, with more twentieth-century arrivals who were less invested in the Civil War and the Lost Cause, and hinted at the inappropriateness of the Centennial taking place alongside the civil rights movement.

What role did Jews play in the Centennial commemoration? Initially, Jewish involvement was based mostly in the North. Northern Jews prepared a traveling exhibit on the Civil War that opened in New York in 1961 before heading to Washington, D.C., the following year. The exhibit came to Richmond in May 1962. Several hundred Jewish and non-Jewish notables attended the opening. This was not the identical exhibit that had appeared in Washington. RCWCC secretary Robert Waitt noted that in Richmond he "wanted to put particular emphasis on people like Dr. Simon Baruch, Judah Benjamin, and David Yulee," and so used some different display items in the exhibit. He also noted that part of the exhibit would be on display "in the window of Thalhimers department store, including the Lincoln panel."⁵⁸

The display in Thalhimers was especially important given the store's history. Founded as a dry goods store in Richmond by German Jewish immigrant William Thalhimier in 1842, Thalhimers became a successful regional department store chain. Like many stores across the Jim Crow South, Thalhimers had a segregated lunch counter. On February 1, 1960, a group of black students sat-in and protested at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Three weeks later, inspired by the Woolworth's sit-in, students from the historically black institution, Virginia Union University, conducted a sit-in and picketed at Thalhimers flagship store in downtown Richmond. Thirty-four of them, known as the Richmond 34, were arrested. Responding to pressure, William B. Thalhimier, Jr., integrated his stores in 1961. That a year later the store's

TOP: *Thalhimers department store, Richmond, 1914. (Wikimedia Commons.)*

BOTTOM: *Members of the Richmond 34 protesting inside Thalhimers,
February 22, 1960. (Courtesy of the Valentine, Richmond.)*

management agreed to display an image of Abraham Lincoln in their window proved symbolic of the way the winds were blowing across the country and in Richmond. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy invited Thalhimer to consult on his civil rights bill.⁵⁹

Despite Thalhimer's shift, the Richmond Jewish community had not given up on the Lost Cause. The highlight of Jewish participation in Richmond's Civil War Centennial came on October 20, 1963, amid a pivotal era in the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King, Jr., had delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech that August. Massive resistance to segregation in Virginia had begun to unravel. George Lincoln Rockwell, leader of the American Nazi movement, had spoken on the steps of Richmond's city hall on the Fourth of July 1963. The dual Cold War messages of unifying against the Soviets while downplaying American racial problems remained. Some Jews in Richmond, still hoping for security in whiteness, must have felt uneasy that autumn, fearing the antisemitic violence that plagued other southern states.

Yet prominent Richmond Jews certainly did not appear uneasy. They were welcomed into the Civil War Centennial by the broader white community. The flagship ceremony for Richmond Jewry was spearheaded by a non-Jew, J. Ambler Johnston, Richmond architect and Civil War historian, who served as the chairman of the RCWCC. In conjunction with Viener, Johnston arranged a memorial service for Private Henry Gintzberger, a German-born Jewish peddler who had fought and died for the Confederacy.

Hitherto lost to history, Gintzberger had befriended Johnston's father, also a Confederate veteran. Gintzberger was killed at Cold Harbor in 1864 and buried in Richmond's Hebrew Cemetery, in the Confederate Soldiers Section. His grave was mislabeled Henry *Gersberg*. In the 1950s, the individual gravestones were replaced by a single granite marker with a bronze plaque listing the Jewish Confederates buried there, including the so-called *Gersberg*. The 1963 event, open to the public and well-attended, marked the addition of a small plaque with Gintzberger's name below the original, righting the historical record.

After Viener, the master of ceremonies, called the crowd to attention, Beth Ahabah's Rabbi Ariel Goldberg opened the ceremony with a prayer. Viener then explained that the purpose of this ceremony, like that of the Civil War Centennial, "was to establish a better understanding of the

*Monument placed by the Hebrew Ladies Memorial Association of Richmond
in honor of Jewish soldiers who died for the Confederacy. The small
plate beneath it corrects the spelling of Henry Gintzberger's name.
(Photo contributed by Greg Lavalley, Findagrave.com.)*

forces which resulted in the tragedy a century ago.”⁶⁰ In 1963, the Lost Cause narrative was still dominant, especially in the South. But as Robert Cook notes, the Lost Cause was not hegemonic, and the notion that slavery was an absolute evil and the central reason for the conflict had begun to gain greater prominence.⁶¹ As a non-professional historian, Viener may not have been privy to the ins and outs of these debates, but his comments suggested the desire for more objective analysis of the past.

Following Viener’s introductory remarks, Bernard H. Strause, a representative of Hebrew Cemetery, spoke about the burial ground. Viener then introduced his “good friend” J. Ambler Johnston, describing his efforts to uncover the identity of Henry Gintzberger as a “labor of love.”

After Johnston spoke about Gintzberger, Viener introduced the mayor, Eleanor Sheppard, “a very attractive and gracious lady,” whom he praised for her “sensitivity” toward those who cared about Richmond history.⁶²

Perhaps due to Mayor Sheppard’s presence, the local Richmond press covered the event. Sheppard wrote to Viener later, thanking him for the invitation to speak:

The Centennial Committee tops itself each time; although no event can be said to be like another in interest and appeal. The one on Sunday had such human value. I shall never forget the story, so simply told, so heart-breaking, yet finally reaching happy fulfillment with the unveiling. The day was golden glory, and if there had been a poet in the assemblage he or she is now immortalizing Pvt. G. [Gintzberger]. Thank you for inviting me to share such an experience.⁶³

Her friendly tone with Viener and respect for the Jewish community suggests that Richmond Jews felt comfortable in the former capital of the Confederacy.

After the mayor spoke, Viener offered concluding remarks on behalf of the Centennial Committee:

Our role is not to glorify war but to renew the past for the benefit — we hope — of the present and the future. Our role has been to rescue those records and documents which perhaps otherwise would have been relegated to oblivion. Our role has further been to tell the story of how the average man or woman — the you or I — of 100 years ago was affected by the War. And thus, we gave pause in the procession of years to memorialize a lone Jewish youth who met his death on a field of battle near this City, far from home and family, . . . and through this ceremony remember all who fell. Many were the parents who gave their sons to the Confederate cause. Among them was Meyer Angle who had six sons in the army — and one of these young men was the first Richmonder to die for the Stars and Bars. Their brother-in-law was Maximilian Michelbacher, the rabbi and teacher of Congregation Beth Ahabah, then in its twentieth year. It was the Reverend Michelbacher who became the unofficial Jewish chaplain for the Confederate forces in and around Richmond. His prayer for the Confederate soldiers still lives on. It is our good fortune this afternoon to have his great-great-granddaughter, Kate Bendheim, with us to unveil the marker to Henry Gintzberger.⁶⁴

Viener’s rhetoric included the language of the social historian, showing concern for “the average man or woman.” He did what the Passover story does: invited modern-day Jews to imagine themselves in a historical era.

However, instead of placing themselves during the exodus from Egypt, at the base of Mount Sinai, or entering the Promised Land, he asked his audience to imagine themselves as Jews fighting for the Confederacy, or as the parents of those who fought. With the statement that Michelbacher's "prayer for the Confederate soldiers still lives on," Viener placed himself and other southern Jews in the Confederate narrative and asserted Richmond Jewry's sense of feeling at home.

After Viener's remarks and Bendheim's unveiling of the marker with the additional plaque, Rabbi Goldberg led a concluding prayer. Born in St. Louis and raised in Quincy, Illinois, Goldberg received his ordination at Hebrew Union College, earned a B.A. from the University of Cincinnati, and did graduate work at the University of Chicago, Harvard, and Oxford. His first rabbinical appointment was in Charleston, West Virginia, in 1926. He came to Beth Ahabah in 1945, replacing the venerable Rabbi Edward Calisch, and remained at the pulpit until his retirement in 1971. Goldberg, like his predecessor, was active in interfaith efforts. In his first year, he started an ecumenical Thanksgiving service for Beth Ahabah's neighborhood that included local Protestant and Catholic churches. Before retiring, he proclaimed, "Jews and Christians in Richmond are on a friendlier basis than in any other city in the country."⁶⁵ Well-respected in Richmond, he did not display any discomfort in presiding over a Confederate soldier's memorial.

The RCWCC had invited Jewish notables from outside of Richmond, including historian rabbis and Pennsylvanians Bertram W. Korn and Jacob Rader Marcus. Neither made it to Richmond for the ceremony, but Korn asked for copies of the speeches, and Marcus sent secretary Waitt his kind regrets, noting that Gintzberger's memorial "is a wonderful mark of tribute to those who died defending their conception of American life." The implication is that Marcus did not share the southern "conception of American life" based on slave labor but was able to respect those who did. This mutual respect among white northerners and southerners, Jews and gentiles, was a hallmark of the Lost Cause, which served as a tool for reconciliation between North and South.⁶⁶

Waitt contributed the introduction for the special issue of the *Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* in 1963 that covered the ceremony at Hebrew Cemetery and contained an article by J. Amber Johnston about

Gintzberger. Waitt's page-length essay was mostly about the war in general, though he noted that American Jews could "draw inspiring sustenance for the leadership, on both sides, that was Jewish." He celebrated "the 7,000 Jews who donned the Gray" including "the Seligmans" and "the Benjamins" and the "countless other contributions made by your people in this challenging test of democracy."⁶⁷

Clearly embracing a Lost Cause narrative, Waitt, although not Jewish, advanced a particularly Jewish strain of the Lost Cause in claiming that seven thousand Jews fought for the Confederacy. Modern Civil War historian Robert Rosen estimates that about two thousand Jews served as

Confederate soldiers. This number was known to the public by 1963: in a December 1959 article in the *Southern Israelite*, Robert Shostek, an organizer of the JCWCC, referred to "some 2000" Jews who served with the Confederacy.⁶⁸ Waitt's error may not have been intentional, but it reflected a desire to communicate the magnitude of Jewish participation in the Confederate war effort, and thus a sense that Jews belonged in the South. This would not be the last time Richmonders exaggerated Jewish participation in the Confederate army.

The Final Pageant

The final act of Jewish participation in the Richmond Civil War Centennial came in June 1965. By this late date, the civil rights movement had already seen great successes with the passage of the Civil Rights Act in July 1964 and President Lyndon B. Johnson winning a landslide reelection on a civil rights platform that fall. Earlier in 1965, the march from Selma to Montgomery, including Martin Luther King, Jr., and Abraham Joshua Heschel among many others, acted as a catalyst to put the Voting Rights Act on its way to passage. June 1965 was also a late date by the standards of the Civil War Centennial. In some states the commemoration had fizzled, and others had concluded their festivities in conjunction with the anniversary of Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, which had occurred on April 9, 1865.

In Virginia, the Centennial soldiered on. For four days from June 16 to 19, 1965, the Centennial Committee put on a pageant, which they called a "cavalcade." Originally intended for The Mosque, it was performed at the new outdoor theatre, Dogwood Dell, in Byrd Park. "Richmond Under Two Flags" told the story of the Confederate capital during the Civil War. Viener served as the general chair of the production. Rose Kaufman Banks, a prominent member of the Richmond theater community who worked for the city's Department of Recreation and Parks, and Stanley Markel, a successful businessman and amateur playwright, collaborated on the script. Banks directed "Richmond Under Two Flags," as she had directed "Under Freedom" for the Tercentenary Committee a decade prior. Both Banks and Markel were prominent members of the Richmond Jewish community.⁶⁹

"Richmond Under Two Flags" was mostly Lost Cause nostalgia, including a reconciliation scene with Lincoln at the end. The script barely

mentioned slavery and mostly ignored African Americans. Some of the organizers, however, did attempt to include members of Richmond's black population. As early as April 1963, in a meeting at J. Ambler Johnston's house to discuss the play, Banks suggested, "How about Negro servants at this time. Some were still serving in the good homes of the city, often without pay. Could be used in party scene. How about making this a Christmas party, using an old-fashioned tree?"⁷⁰

The fact that Banks, a Jewish woman, suggested a Christmas party is not surprising. She was married to a non-Jew, Leslie Banks, an accomplished set designer in Richmond. Although she used an appalling euphemism for slavery, "often without pay," her suggestion of African American participation in "Richmond Under Two Flags," even before the March on Washington, placed her among the more progressive people organizing the play. When fellow committee member Betty Bacon noted "there were six companies of negro troops from Richmond in the Confederate army—very well disciplined and drilled," however, it became clear than any depiction of African Americans in "Richmond Under Two Flags" would feed into Lost Cause propaganda, if it were to be included at all.⁷¹

The dynamics of the Centennial Committee shifted when Waitt was convicted of statutory rape of a fourteen-year-old girl in 1964 and subsequently was dismissed from the committee.⁷² Betty Bacon, his assistant, assumed his position, and Saul Viener took on a more prominent role as well. Part of this role involved outreach to the black community for the concluding pageant. B. A. Cephas, a politically moderate African American who had been elected to city council the previous year, suggested that Viener meet with Harry Williams, principal of Maggie Walker High School, then a segregated African American school in Richmond.

Viener, along with Rose Kaufman Banks, met twice with Williams to discuss black representation in the pageant. They wanted African American students to be involved, and the second meeting included Ira Styles, English teacher at Maggie Walker, and Joseph Rodman Ransome, principal of Randolph Junior High and knowledgeable in African American history. They agreed that Styles, along with Harry Savage, chair of the music department at Armstrong High School and director of the Monroe Chorus, would "work with the casting committee on Negro participation."⁷³

In a letter to Williams, Banks called this committee "informative and helpful" and affirmed the decisions made at these meetings. "We understand in inviting Negro participation in the RCWCC's production of 'Richmond Under Two Flags,' we will use no Negro dialect, no 'Mammy' or field hand type of costumes, no comedy at the expense of the Negro race and no mention of slavery." While the casting report called for 139 performers, including "37 negro," Banks's letter to Williams asked for thirty black participants, "twenty men and ten women." African Americans would appear in six of fourteen scenes, including the scene with Lincoln's arrival in Richmond and the finale.⁷⁴

Whether African American performers in fact appeared in the play is another matter. As Brandon Butterworth notes, we only know the committee hoped they would participate, not whether they actually did.⁷⁵ Three days after writing to Williams, Banks sent a letter to Viener with disappointing news. Ira Kyles had called her, reporting that he and Harry Savage "could get no one for production" because the two African American high schools, Armstrong and Maggie Walker, were holding their graduation parties on dates that conflicted with the scheduled performances of "Richmond Under Two Flags." Banks told Kyles that they "did not necessarily need high school students" and could use "adults from the community at large." Kyles said he would discuss this with Savage and get back to her, but she had not yet heard from him.⁷⁶

This is the last instance where the matter is mentioned in the archives. The final program for "Richmond Under Two Flags" lists Ira Kyles and Harry Savage as members of the casting committee, as well as Harry Williams and Joseph [Rodman] Ransome as having served on the research committee.⁷⁷ It is unknown whether any advice Williams or Ransome might have given Banks made its way into the final script. The program did not list any African American characters with named or speaking roles. The nonspeaking cast included several categories, Young Ladies of Richmond, Women of Richmond, Young Men of Richmond, Children of Richmond, and Builders of Fortifications, although whether any of these performers were black cannot be determined.

That Viener and Banks, both Jews, reached out to the black community was likely no coincidence. Viener had a connection with the African American councilman Cephas, who suggested they talk to Harry Williams. Perhaps Viener and Banks were more sympathetic toward African

American involvement than non-Jewish members of the RCWCC and already had closer relations with the black community. Four decades later, Viener recalled: "There was a member of city council who was a prominent black citizen, and I went to him and told him what was going on. I felt there ought to be some sort of representation. He thought about it [and] said, 'Maybe we can get some young people involved from the high school.' It was a little effort to integrate."⁷⁸ Did they succeed? Available evidence provides no clear answer, but Viener's and Banks's efforts at outreach reflected greater sympathy for African Americans than most non-Jewish Richmonders felt at the time.

A similar sentiment came from *Thalhimers*, which sponsored the production, inscribing this message on the program: "*Thalhimers* salutes Richmond on the James for upholding the ideals of freedom and democracy since 100 years ago when this nation became an indivisible union united under one flag."⁷⁹ The message, reflecting William Thalhimers's increasingly progressive views, suggested that only after the Confederacy was defeated did Richmond begin to uphold ideals of freedom and democracy. The message ignored a century of segregation, lynching, and Jim Crow, but nonetheless reflected the changing times in June 1965.

In addition to Thalhimers' sponsorship, numerous Jews performed in the show, and the playwrights put Jews in the script. Two scenes involved Reverend Michelbacher, one of which was adapted from the 1954 Tercentenary and included the "Prayer for the Confederacy." The fictional Michelbacher claimed "there are more than 10,000 Jewish boys serving in the Confederate army." As mentioned earlier, by 1965 scholars knew that only about two thousand Jewish soldiers had served.⁸⁰ Markel and Banks either did not know or deliberately exaggerated the truth.

This exaggeration is important. In a pageant directed toward the general public, Jewish scriptwriters and organizers massively overemphasized Jewish participation in the Confederate cause. Michelbacher, a

OPPOSITE: Cover and *Thalhimers* sponsorship message in the program for "*Richmond Under Two Flags*," 1965. (NimrodStudios.blogspot.com.)

Richmonder, is portrayed as a hero, bravely supporting his troops. He says to his wife, "you were born in Virginia, but this is my *adopted* country. I am proud of it, and proud of the religious, God-fearing men who lead it. I must do everything I can."⁸¹ The portrayals of Michelbacher as immigrant, as newcomer to Virginia, resonated with many Jewish Richmonders in 1954 and 1963, and, if not with them, with their parents.

This rhetoric affirmed: We Richmond Jews are southerners. We belong here. This history is our history. For Richmond Jews, pride in southern history was a path to more complete integration and acceptance. Jews in New York or Boston did not need to employ the Civil War to integrate, but for Richmond Jews the Lost Cause was a ticket of entry to full acceptance, before the civil rights movement allowed for that narrative to be challenged.

In Richmond today, as in most of the South, Jews have largely abandoned the Lost Cause. Like Jews across the United States, Jews in the South are more likely than gentiles to be urban and suburban, to have advanced degrees, and to have connections in the North. They are more likely to vote Democratic, now the party less associated with the Lost Cause. Most younger Jews in the South have left the Lost Cause behind. But these same Jews benefit from white privilege that was solidified by generations past through an embrace of the Lost Cause narrative.

One significant way Richmond Jews embraced the Lost Cause and reinforced the framework of whiteness was through performance of and attendance at the 1954 American Jewish Tercentenary and the Civil War Centennial from 1961 to 1965. Public performance of southern identity facilitated Jewish integration and acceptance. By loudly and proudly claiming that identity through Confederate commemoration, Richmond Jews could remain mostly silent on racial issues, although by 1965, occasionally nudging the community in a more progressive direction without jeopardizing their standing as white southerners.

NOTES

¹ Saul Viener to X (mass letter), December 28, 1956, section 2, folder 25, Saul Viener Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond (hereafter Viener Papers).

² For example, see Arthur A. Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington, IN, 1999), 195–204; Judith Friedman Rosen, “In Search Of . . . Earlier American-Jewish Anniversary Celebrations: 1905 and 1954,” *American Jewish History*, 92 (December 2004): 481–97; Beth S. Wenger, *History Lessons: The Creation of American Jewish Heritage* (Princeton, 2010), 215–19.

³ For an example of an eastern European Jewish immigrant who became obsessed with the Civil War, see Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York, 1998), 3–4.

⁴ Myron Berman, *Richmond’s Jewry, 1796–1976: Shabbat in Shockoe* (Charlottesville, VA, 1979), 246. Also cited in part in Kathy Edwards, Esme Howard, and Toni Prawl, *Monument Avenue: History and Architecture* (Washington, DC, 1992), 94.

⁵ See Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s* (Tuscaloosa, 1997) and P. Allen Krause, *To Stand Aside or To Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Mark K. Bauman with Stephen Krause (Tuscaloosa, 2016). *Quiet Voices* includes “A Personal Memoir” by Myron Berman (pp. 311–22), who led Richmond’s Conservative Temple Beth-El after the commemorations from 1965 to 1993, and “The Year They Closed the Schools: The Norfolk Story” by Malcolm Stern (pp. 287–310), a Norfolk rabbi active in behalf of civil rights. *To Stand Aside* does not deal with Richmond but offers valuable insight on the activity of southern rabbis during the civil rights movement.

⁶ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920* (Athens, GA, 1980, rev. ed. 2009), ix–x.

⁷ Caroline E. Janney, “The Lost Cause,” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, Virginia Humanities Council, accessed December 20, 2019, https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/lost_cause_the. See also, Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville, 2020), 4. The most important academic exponent of the Lost Cause narrative was William Archibald Dunning, a New Jersey native and professor at Columbia University. The “Dunning School” epitomized the Lost Cause sensibility. Richmond had its own academic progenitor of the Lost Cause. Douglas Southall Freeman, a Virginian born in 1886 and educated at Richmond College and Johns Hopkins University, wrote a four-volume biography glorifying Robert E. Lee that won the Pulitzer Prize in 1935.

⁸ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 292, 299. See, especially, chapter 8, “The Lost Cause and Causes Not Lost,” 255–99.

⁹ Unknown author, “Draft of Call for Tercentenary Celebration,” June 30, 1953, box 1, folder 1, American Jewish Tercentenary Celebration Collection, Center for Jewish History, New York.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ For more discussion of the radical interpretation of the American Jewish Tercentenary, see Rosen, “In Search of,” 491–93; Wenger, *History Lessons*, 218–19; and Karla Goldman, “Along with All Other Americans’: Celebrating the 1954 American Jewish Tercentenary,” unpublished paper, 2020 (provided to me by the author).

¹⁴ Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2001), 14–15; Berman, *Richmond's Jewry*, 206; Herbert T. Ezekiel, "A Question Answered," *Jewish South*, September 15, 1893. For examples of Jewish embrace of the Lost Cause in Mobile, Alabama, see Arthur Remillard, *Southern Civil Religions: Imagining the Good Society in the Post-Reconstruction Era* (Athens, GA, 2011), 111, 122–24.

¹⁵ Lewis Isaac Held, Jr., *Held Family History*, vol. 2 (Richmond, 1993), 1–2.

¹⁶ Berman, *Richmond's Jewry*, 294–95.

¹⁷ Saul Viener, "Significance to the Jews of Richmond of the 300th Anniversary of the Jewish Settlement in the United States," October 11, 1953, section 2, folder 19, Viener Papers.

¹⁸ Quotes from documents promoting the exhibit, section 2, folder 19, Viener Papers.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ "Edith Lindeman Calisch, Critic and Lyricist, Dies," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 24, 1984.

²¹ Allan Creeger and Edith Lindeman Calisch, "Under Freedom," 1954, Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives, Richmond (hereafter BAMA). Thanks to Bonnie Eisenman for locating the script.

²² Creeger and Lindeman Calisch, "Under Freedom," 12.

²³ In 1841, Ashkenazic members of Beth Shalome broke away to form Beth Ahabah, which in 1875 embraced the Reform movement. In 1898, Beth Ahabah absorbed the remaining remnant of Beth Shalome.

²⁴ Maximilian J. Michelbacher, "Prayer for the Confederacy," 1861, quoted in Creeger and Lindeman Calisch, "Under Freedom," 13.

²⁵ Maximilian J. Michelbacher, "A Sermon Delivered on the Day of Prayer Recommended by the President of the C. S. of A., the 27th of March, 1863, at the German Hebrew Synagogue 'Bayth Ahabah,'" 15, Documenting the American South, accessed May 12, 2020, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/michelbacher/michelba.html>.

²⁶ Alfred O. Hero, Jr., "Southern Jews," in *Jews in the South*, ed. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson (Baton Rouge, LA, 1973), 219.

²⁷ David Bernstein and Adele Bernstein, "Slow Revolution in Richmond, VA: A New Pattern in the Making," *Commentary* (December 1949), rptd. in Dinnerstein and Palsson, eds., *Jews in the South*, 252.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 253.

³⁰ Creeger and Lindeman Calisch, "Under Freedom," 16.

³¹ Information of Tercentenary Sabbath service, section 2, folder 19, Viener Papers.

³² For an extensive treatment of massive resistance in Virginia, see Matthew D. Lassiter and Andrew B. Lewis, eds., *The Moderates' Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia* (Charlottesville, 1998). For a more concise treatment, see Virginia Museum of History & Culture, Civil Rights Movement in Virginia, in particular the subsections "Massive Resistance," "Ongoing Resistance to Desegregation," "The Closing of Prince Edward County's Schools," "The Green Decision of 1968," and "School Busing," accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia>. For a thorough study of massive resistance across the

United States, see John Kyle Day, *The Southern Manifesto: Massive Resistance and the Fight to Preserve Segregation* (Jackson, MS, 2014).

³³ Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 182–83, 191; Malcolm Stern, “The Year They Closed the Schools: The Norfolk Story,” in Bauman and Kalin, eds., *Quiet Voices*, 286–310; Malcolm Stern to Lindsey Almond, January 27, 1959, quoted in Bauman and Kalin, eds., *Quiet Voices*, 310. See also Melvin I. Urofsky, *Commonwealth and Community: The Jewish Experience in Virginia* (Richmond, 1997), 173.

³⁴ Leonard Dinnerstein, “Southern Jewry and the Desegregation Crisis, 1954–1970,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 62 (March 1973): 231; Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism* (New York, 1998), 35–36.

³⁵ Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, xii, and ch. 6, “Jewish Segregationists,” 114–46. The three Jewish segregationists Webb examines were from South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia. See also Bauman and Kalin, eds., *Quiet Voices*.

³⁶ JTA, “Virginia Jews Discuss Coordination with National Organizations,” *Southern Israelite*, October 10, 1958.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Bertram W. Korn, “Rabbis in the South,” *Southern Israelite*, November 7, 1958, originally published in the *Jewish Exponent* (Philadelphia).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ JTA, “Governor Almond Says Virginia Will not Tolerate any Anti-Jewish Violence,” *Southern Israelite*, November 7, 1958.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York, 2016), 3.

⁴³ Murray Friedman, “Virginia Jewry in the School Crisis: Anti-Semitism and Desegregation,” *Commentary* (January 1959), reprinted in Dinnerstein and Pallson, eds., *Jews in the South*, 343, 349.

⁴⁴ Murray Friedman, “One Episode in Southern Jewry’s Response to Desegregation: An Historical Memoir,” *American Jewish Archives* 33 (1981): 176, 177, reprinted in Maurianne Adams and John Bracey, eds., *Strangers and Neighbors: Relations Between Blacks & Jews in the United States* (Amherst, MA, 1999).

⁴⁵ Myron Berman, “A Personal Memoir: Myron Berman in Richmond,” in Bauman and Kalin, eds., *Quiet Voices*, 315; Berman, *Richmond’s Jewry*, 317. In the personal memoir, Berman footnotes his historical monograph, but without page reference. The monograph contains no reference at all for his statements on black-Jewish relations in Richmond.

⁴⁶ Berman, *Richmond’s Jewry*, 317.

⁴⁷ “Ga. J. W. V. Present Benjamin Portrait as Part of Tercentenary Rally,” *Southern Israelite*, September 10, 1954. See also “Atlanta Jewry to Launch Tercentenary with Rally on September 12,” *Southern Israelite*, September 3, 1954. The quotation “Confederate Heroes and Statesmen” is from Adolph Rosenberg, “Atlanta [Tercentenary] Opener Honors War [Record] of American Jewry,” *Southern Israelite*, September 17, 1954. Some words in the headline are hidden in the electronic image, so I extrapolated them.

⁴⁸ “Ga. J. W. V. Present Benjamin Portrait.”

⁴⁹ "Jewish War Veterans Open Atlanta Tercentenary with Gift of Benjamin's Portrait to the City's Cyclorama," *Southern Israelite*, August 27, 1954.

⁵⁰ Saul Lavisky, "Columbia Column: Passover Hospitality," *Southern Israelite*, April 15, 1955.

⁵¹ Adam Mendelsohn, "'A Struggle Which Ended so Beneficently': A Century of Jewish Historical Writing about the American Civil War," *American Jewish History* 92 (December 2004): 454.

⁵² Robert W. Waitt, Jr., to Claude Woodward, December 16, 1960, box 12, folder 9, Richmond Civil War Centennial Committee Records, State Records Center – Archives Annex, Library of Virginia, Richmond (hereafter RCWCCR).

⁵³ JTA, "U.S. Civil War Centennial Body Spreads Anti-Jewish Literature," *Southern Israelite*, July 10, 1959. An editorial in the same issue, "Rake the Trash Off the Top," called for Grant's resignation. The *Southern Israelite* featured several more articles on the controversy in 1959 and later published a summary of the scandal from the ADL Bulletin written by Herman Edelsberg, "The Strange Campaigns of General Grant III," *Southern Israelite*, June 9, 1961.

⁵⁴ See Jonathan D. Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* (New York, 2012).

⁵⁵ Robert J. Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961–1965* (Baton Rouge, 2007), 64, 193, 201. Some discussion of the Civil War Centennial occurs in David W. Blight, *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era* (Cambridge, MA, 2011). Neither Blight nor Cook focuses on Richmond, on Virginia, or on Jewish involvement in the centennial.

⁵⁶ Edith Lindeman Calisch, "Civil War Events Are Commemorated," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 20, 1961.

⁵⁷ Edith Lindeman Calisch to Robert Waitt, January 27, 1961, box 7, folder L, RCWCCR. Two letters from Waitt to Calisch, dated January 23 and February 7, 1961, are in the same folder.

⁵⁸ Robert B. Waitt, Jr., to Justin G. Turner, May 15, 1962, box 11, folder 5, RCWCCR.

⁵⁹ See Karin Kapsidelis, "1960 Sit-in Put Richmond on the Road to Change," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 14, 2010; Elizabeth Thalhimer Smartt, *Finding Thalhimers: One Woman's Obsessive Quest for the True Story of her Family and Their Beloved Department Store* (Richmond, 2010), 157–66. The Richmond 34 were convicted and fined twenty dollars each, but the Supreme Court overturned their convictions in 1963.

⁶⁰ Saul Viener, remarks at Henry Gintzberger memorial ceremony, October 20, 1963, type-script with annotation, box 18, folder 16, RCWCCR.

⁶¹ See Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, ch. 5 "African Americans and the Civil War Centennial," 155–92.

⁶² Viener, remarks at Henry Gintzberger memorial ceremony.

⁶³ Eleanor Sheppard to Saul Viener, October 22, 1963, section 2, folder 27, Viener Papers.

⁶⁴ Viener, remarks at Henry Gintzberger memorial ceremony.

⁶⁵ "Dr. Goldburg Retires," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 6, 1971.

⁶⁶ Jacob Rader Marcus to Bob Waitt, October 15, 1963, box 8, folder 1, RCWCCR.

⁶⁷ Robert W. Waitt, Jr., "The American Civil War," *Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* (November 1963): 5.

⁶⁸ Stanley Markel and Rose Kaufman Banks, "Richmond Under Two Flags: A Dramatic Presentation of the Stirring War Years in the Confederate Capital," June 16–18, 1965, 22, BAMA; Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC, 2000), 162; Robert Shostek, "Heroes in Blue and Gray," *Southern Israelite*, December 25, 1959. Thanks to Beth Ahabah archivist Bonnie Eisenman for locating the script. Rosen thinks it "possible" there were as many as three thousand Jewish soldiers in the Confederate forces, but two thousand "is a good estimate."

⁶⁹ Markel and Banks, "Richmond Under Two Flags." Banks conducted the research for the script, basing it largely on the work of C. Hobson Goddin, a member of the Centennial Committee. Markel crafted the narrative of the script and the dialogue.

⁷⁰ Rose Kaufman Banks, quoted in RCWCC Meeting Minutes, April 1, 1963, record by executive secretary Robert Waitt, box 1, folder 2, RCWCCR.

⁷¹ Banks and Betty Bacon, quoted in *Ibid.*

⁷² See numerous stories in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* about Robert Waitt's rape trial, 1964–1966.

⁷³ Emma Gray Trigg, "Report of Casting Committee," undated (probably May 1965), box 22, folder "Script—Banks," RCWCCR.

⁷⁴ Rose Kaufman Banks to Harry Williams, May 10, 1965, Saul Viener Papers, BAMA. The "Report on Casting" mentions "no negro dialect, no comedy at expense of the Negro, and no costuming in the 'Mammy' or field-hand style," but does not state "no mention of slavery."

⁷⁵ Brandon Butterworth, "Interpreting the War Anew: An Appraisal of Richmond's Civil War Centennial Commemoration," (master's thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2012), 58–59.

⁷⁶ Rose Kaufman Banks to Saul Viener, May 13, 1965, box 2, folder 1, RCWCCR.

⁷⁷ Program for "Richmond Under Two Flags," undated (probably June 1965), box 22, folder 13, Script Banks, RCWCCR.

⁷⁸ Eric L. Goldstein, "Making History: An Interview with Saul Viener," *Southern Jewish History* 10 (2007): 77. This interview was conducted in 2006, a few months before Viener died.

⁷⁹ Program for "Richmond Under Two Flags."

⁸⁰ Markel and Banks, "Richmond Under Two Flags," 22.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

Moshe Cahana, Ethical Zionism, and the Application of Jewish Nationalism to Civil Rights Struggles in the American South

by

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By the time he left Congregation Brith Shalom at the end of the 1970s, Conservative rabbi Moshe Cahana had crafted a stellar reputation as a civil rights leader in Houston, Texas. From his arrival in the city in 1959 to his semiretirement in 1979, Cahana centered his rabbinical career around ensuring racial equality in Houston and across the South. While not always well received by his congregants, Cahana believed that Jews had a unique role to play in African American civil rights struggles and should use their history as colonial subjects to inspire continued activism.

Although one of many Jewish civil rights activists in the 1960s, Cahana's background sets him apart. As a Jew from Palestine, he conceived of his activism differently from his American Jewish contemporaries. Cahana grew up in a war-torn Safed, Palestine, suffering under the yoke of British imperialism. Responding to colonial pressures, Jewish and Arab nationalism in Palestine grew violent and ultimately claimed the lives of several members of Cahana's immediate family. In response, Cahana joined the Revisionist Zionist paramilitary organization Etzel and spent the 1940s engaging in anti-British violence, including taking a lead role in the 1946 bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem.¹

Upon his arrival in the United States, Moshe Cahana drew connections between British imperialism in Palestine and the treatment of African Americans in the South. Responding to the social inequality, political disenfranchisement, and continued racial violence prevailing in southern states, Cahana argued that Zionist Jews who pushed for Israeli

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statehood had a duty to act on behalf of beleaguered African Americans. Around this idea, Cahana crafted a political philosophy that blended the teachings of the *Musar* movement in Jewish ethics, which treated Talmudic law as a pliable set of principles rather than immutable regulations, with anti-British Revisionist Zionism, which stressed political enfranchisement and an end to colonial oppression. What resulted was his theory of ethical Zionism, which treated Zionism as a pliable framework, or set of ethical standards, applicable to both Jews and non-Jews seeking political freedom and equality. This grounding framed his political activism throughout his rabbinical career in the United States.

Moshe Cahana's activism represents an often-overlooked facet to Jewish civil rights activism: the impact of anti-imperialism and anticolonialism. The intersection among race, nationalism, and colonialism for black activists in American civil rights struggles has long been discussed in historical literature. Early scholars on the issue, such as Gerald Horne, John Dower, and Reginald Kearney, examined the ways in which black activists viewed American wars overseas, arguing that black activists often either rejected American imperial efforts or sympathized with enemy combatants, believing them to be people of color fighting against white imperialism.² These works primarily addressed the ways in which black activists viewed American foreign policy, particularly when dealing with countries deemed nonwhite, such as Japan, Vietnam, and the decolonizing world, through the lens of their own subjugation at the hands of the American racial hierarchy. Conversely, scholars such as Mary Dudziak and Thomas Borstelmann explore how anxieties over foreign policy decisions during the Cold War informed how Americans approached complex questions around race and civil rights.³ Like earlier scholars, these new works focused on how African American activists engaged with top-down foreign policy decisions. Most recently, however, scholars have increasingly explored the ways in which civil rights activists engaged with decolonial struggles around the world that often did not factor into official U.S. foreign policy.⁴ While these studies often addressed decolonization struggles in the Middle East, with Keith Feldman's book *A Shadow Over Palestine* directly addressing postcolonial struggles in Israel and Palestine, they do so solely through the examination of Arab struggles for autonomy. Jewish ambition for statehood is either ignored or treated as an extension of European colonialism.

Rabbi Moshe Cahana, c. 1972.
(Unknown photographer, digital enhancement by Janice Rubin.
Courtesy of Janice Rubin.)

As a native of Mandate Palestine and someone who grew up under the yoke of British imperialism in the Middle East, Moshe Cahana's experiences highlight the ways in which non-European Jews viewed their relationship to traditional colonialism. For Cahana, Zionism and the eventual creation of a Jewish state was the fulfillment of decades of anticolonial nationalism in the Jewish community of Palestine.⁵ Moshe Cahana's civil rights activism demonstrates the ways in which many Jewish activists harbored a national identity divorced from traditional whiteness that instead often conflicted with western imperialism and colonialism. Jewish activists often navigated their identity as colonial subjects, both in relation to antisemitic violence and European imperial control over the region, to respond to American political issues. Moshe Cahana responded to the second-class citizenship forced on African Americans with the same anticolonial outrage that inspired his Zionism as a British subject in Mandate Palestine. Like many American Jews in the 1960s, Moshe Cahana's colonial identity caused him to embrace political movements focused on racial minorities outside the Jewish community, equating their struggles for representation and autonomy with his own.⁶ As such, Cahana's deep involvement in African American civil rights struggles in the American South adds complexity to our understanding of the movement and the Jewish activists who participated in it.

Moshe Cahana's activism also challenges the way scholars address the relationship between black and Jewish activists in the 1960s. Previous authors conflated attachment to Zionism with a Jewish trend toward political conservatism. Scholars on Jewish racial activism such as Murray Friedman, Jonathan Kaufman, and Michael Staub credit the breakdown of interethnic political coalitions, in part, to the fervent embrace of Zionism by American Jews in the wake of Israel's 1967 and 1973 wars.⁷ American political scholars have gone a step further in arguing that the embrace of Zionism led to a rightward shift in American Jewish politics.⁸ Recently, however, this view of American Zionism has shifted. In his 2006 book, *American Jewish Political Culture and the Liberal Persuasion*, Henry Feingold argues that Zionism's relationship with American liberalism was more complicated than previous scholars suggested. Instead of a rightward shift in American Jewry, Feingold shows that American Jews have consistently negotiated the contestations between Zionism and liberalism to achieve a balance between the two in their identity.⁹ In *City on a Hilltop*, Sara

Hirschhorn pushes the connection a step further, arguing that settler Zionism was a political outgrowth of American liberalism in the 1960s, as settlers used the language and ideals of the New Left to justify increased settlement in the West Bank and Sinai.¹⁰

Moshe Cahana's activism adds to this historiography by repositioning Zionism's role in American Jewish alignments in civil rights politics. Cahana placed Zionism at the center of his political ideology, seeing it as a branch of American political liberalism. Instead of Zionism serving as the catalyst for political severance between black and Jewish Americans, Cahana's activism in the American South demonstrates that, for many Jewish activists, Zionism emboldened their civil rights liberalism.

Ethical Zionism

Moshe Cahana's political ideology stems from his interpretation of Revisionist Zionism. Born in the wake of perceived failings of traditional Zionism in the 1930s, Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky crafted Revisionist Zionism as a means for pressuring the British to grant Jewish statehood. At the core of Revisionism was Jabotinsky's belief that British and Zionist goals for Palestine were antithetical. He argued that Great Britain would never allow for a fully independent Jewish state in Palestine and crafted Revisionist Zionism to counter imperialist influence over the development of a Jewish state. As a result, Jabotinsky believed that Jews in Palestine needed to privilege their goals over those of Arab nationalism and British foreign policy and seek immediate independence from the British Empire.

Postcard of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, 1930.

(Wikimedia Commons.)

Despite Revisionism traditionally being seen as a rigidly right-wing ideology, many of its adherents believed it otherwise. When crafting Revisionism, Jabotinsky spoke in broad anti-imperial language in an effort to try to attract the largest number of adherents possible so his movement could rival traditional forms of Zionism prominent in the British Mandate. Consequently, Revisionist Zionism in the twentieth century was far from a monolithic movement. Numerous activists within right-wing Zionist organizations, such as Maxim Ghilan, Boaz Evron, and Natan Yellin-Mor, were radical in their fight against British occupation but became the backbone of Israeli leftism after independence. These men, like Cahana, embraced Revisionism through the lens of its revolutionary and anti-British core and believed it congruous with traditional left-wing ideologies. Thus Revisionist Zionism must be addressed as a diverse and nuanced political movement rather than a strict, monolithic ideology.¹¹

Revisionism's growth in Palestine inspired a young Moshe Cahana into Zionist politics, as he grew increasingly impatient with delayed British promises of sovereignty. Cahana believed Revisionism, and the militancy that often accompanied it, to be a necessity to counter continued British imperialism in Palestine. As an avid reader of anticolonial literature throughout his early life, in particular anti-British nationalists like Mohandas Gandhi, he believed Revisionism to be in dialogue with concurrent nationalist movements around the world. By the time he reached adulthood in 1940, Cahana joined the paramilitary organization Etzel, working up the hierarchy to become its district commander in Jerusalem—where he played a key role in the planning and implementation of the King David Hotel bombing in 1946—and commander of the northern district during the Acre Prison Break and Altalena affair. Both roles found Cahana pursued by British authorities throughout the 1940s.¹²

At the core of Cahana's activism was his belief that an anticolonial Zionism was not merely a Jewish political ideology, an idea that stemmed from his early education in the *Musar* movement within Jewish ethics.¹³ This movement arose among Orthodox Lithuanian Jews as a reaction to the social changes brought about by the Enlightenment and the corresponding *Haskalah*.¹⁴ *Musar* responded to growing antisemitism, the assimilation of many Jews into Christianity, and the impoverished living conditions in the Pale of Settlement that caused severe tension and disappointment. By the 1700s, Jewish institutions in Lithuania began to

*Damage to King David Hotel in
Jerusalem, 1946.*
(Library of Congress.)

*Irgun (Etzel) forces training in
Tel Aviv, 1947.*
(Wikimedia Commons.)

dissolve, and religious Jews feared that their way of life was slipping away from them; observance of traditional Jewish law and custom was on the decline. To remedy this decline, *Musar* emphasized moral teachings based on the ethics taught in traditional rabbinic works. Instead of focusing solely on the rigidity of Jewish law, *Musar* approached the law as ethical guidelines that could be molded to modern Jewish life, both religious and secular.¹⁵

Moshe Cahana believed that the central *Musar* principle of abandoning halachic rigidity in favor of pliability could be applied to political ethics as easily as it was to religious law. Despite Zionism's original intent being the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine and the resurgence of a cultural Jewish identity in the face of increasing assimilation, Cahana believed that the ideology could expand its focus in the wake of the creation of Israel as a Jewish nation in 1948. If Zionism solely had the goal of state building, it became obsolete in 1948. Instead, Cahana argued for a Zionism that "recognizes Jewish peoplehood and the centrality of *Eretz Yisra'el* in

[Jewish] life” and served as an outward inspiration “for the Jewish people and for all nations” in equal measure.¹⁶ Thus Cahana saw Zionism as a core ethical framework that should apply to all peoples, Jewish and non-Jewish alike.

The resulting ethical Zionism offered a way for Cahana to adapt anticolonial and revolutionary Revisionist Zionism into other nationalist and civil rights struggles around the world. Since ethical Zionism was a political framework rather than a strict ideology, Cahana was able to fold his revolutionary interpretation of Zionism into political movements around the globe. For Cahana, a framework of ethical Zionism urged Jews to act against discrimination, disenfranchisement, and oppression across the world, whether in “Birmingham or Bombay, Jackson or Jerusalem, Oxford, Miss. or Odessa.”¹⁷ Cahana believed that the values of anticolonialism, political autonomy, and cultural freedom, which he saw as the core of his Revisionist Zionist beliefs, could serve as an example for broad-spectrum political activism and spiritual refinement. In this interpretation, Zionism became a universalist political framework that not only pushed for Israeli statehood but demanded decolonization in India, Palestine, Vietnam, and across Africa and Asia.¹⁸

*Synagogue in Hebron damaged
by Arab rioters, 1929.
(Library of Congress.)*

Cahana's Zionism, particularly his attachment to anti-British Revisionism, arose from his experiences growing up in Palestine. Under the British Mandate, Cahana witnessed the struggles that befell Jews because of their statelessness and lack of political control. Growing up in Safed in the 1920s and 1930s, Cahana witnessed the immense interethnic violence in northern Palestine that arose in response to British imperialism in the region, and it colored his childhood and formative years. He experienced the violence of the 1929 Palestine riots firsthand when Arabs set fire to his family home, causing him and several of his young cousins to run through the street seeking any form of safe haven. Cahana further suffered personal loss during the Arab Revolt of 1936 when eight members of his family, including his mother, grandmother, and sister, died at the hands of a band of protesters.¹⁹ Cahana tied this violence to a natural outcropping of British imperialism and blamed the harsh realities of foreign occupation and disproportionate responses to ongoing violence for the resulting thousands of deaths of Jews and Arabs in Palestine between 1919 and 1947. Without adequate political power, Jews and Arabs in Palestine were forced to fight one another for what little political favor they thought they could curry from the British.²⁰

Cahana saw similar oppression in the American South. He argued that "every sovereign nation [had] the right to live by the political structure of its choice and under its system of law." However, in the South, African Americans neither possessed political autonomy nor could they live under a system of law that in any way benefited them. Instead, he believed, southern governments treated black citizens as colonial subjects, denying them any influence in the government they lived under or any political recourse. The risk of this, he argued, was that "the [southern] struggle could become fiery and bloody," just as the struggle in Palestine had been earlier. African Americans would grow more desperate the longer they were denied political rights. When this desperation coupled with a feeling of personal empowerment, violence was an inevitability if oppressive systems were not abolished.²¹ Ultimately, this was because "long-lasting vulnerability [invited] devastating aggression." For Cahana, violence always accompanied discrimination and bigotry, while "[social] brotherhood inevitably followed justice, reason, [and] good will."²² Thus the only way to solve the issues in the South was to strive for racial justice and equality.

By the time Cahana began his civil rights activism in the early 1960s, the roots of black militancy were present across the South. In 1957, Robert F. Williams applied for a charter with the National Rifle Association (NRA) in hopes of arming the black citizens of Monroe, North Carolina, who faced numerous violent attacks from the large Ku Klux Klan (KKK) population in the city. Williams named Monroe's new NRA chapter the Black Armed Guard, and it consisted of fifty to sixty black men who were determined to defend the local black community by violent means if necessary. This came to a head in summer 1957 when the Black Armed Guard helped fortify and defend the house of Dr. Albert Perry. When numerous Klansmen appeared, the two sides exchanged fire before the Klan members ultimately fled.

In his book *Negroes with Guns*, Williams advocated responding to violence with violence: "It has always been an accepted right of Americans, as the history of our Western states proves, that where the law is unable, or unwilling, to enforce order, the citizens can, and must, act in self-defense against lawless violence." He further wrote, "racists consider themselves superior beings and are not willing to exchange their superior lives for our inferior ones. They are most vicious and violent when they can practice violence with impunity."²³

Williams's brand of violent activism worried Cahana. Scarred by the violence he endured in Mandate Palestine, Cahana was determined not to see the same violence occur in the United States. Since Cahana believed that such anticolonial violence was an inevitable outgrowth of continued oppression, he argued that Americans had a duty to ensure that black southerners never reached the same point of no return that Jews and Arabs had reached under British occupation. To this end, Cahana believed that activists should embrace an approach of nonviolence in African American civil rights struggles for as long as they could. Cahana held that resorting to violence would only harm the movement and undermine what civil rights activists sought to achieve.

Cahana decried the violence that accompanied white southerners' oppression of African Americans. White Americans used racial violence and lynching as a means of social control and intimidation. This violence existed outside of the due process of law by self-appointed commissions, mobs, and vigilantes in retaliation for what they viewed to be legal and

social slights committed by African Americans.²⁴ Disgusted with this violent oppression, Cahana spoke out against the killing of black civil rights activists across the South. He urged that “[his] prime concern [was] not about who pulled the trigger.” Instead, Cahana focused on “the poisoned climate that could produce a murderer.” The murders of civil rights activists in the South did not arise in a vacuum. Instead, Cahana argued, these murders were emblematic of a larger culture of hostility and torture. He believed that southern society as a whole was responsible for these heinous acts. Even “the church and the synagogue [could] not wash their hands and say they did not shed this blood,” because they were complicit through continued silence. By not actively working to prevent the violence and change the culture around racial prejudice, southerners, even those who opposed such discrimination, condemned black activists to continued violence.²⁵

The next goal of Cahana’s ethical Zionism was to ensure the political equality and autonomy of African Americans, particularly how blacks related to the American government and how the government related to them. Peace and safety, he argued, could only be advanced by economic and political justice. This, he maintained, was the goal of Revisionist Zionism. While under British control, neither Jews nor Arabs in Palestine had political power or civil rights. Cahana argued that without autonomy or rights the ethnic conflict between the two disempowered groups would continue. It was only through the capitulation of political control on the part of the British that peace would come, for, with political control, ultimately both sides could be in an adequate position of power to deal with each other and come to a peaceful resolution of their conflict.²⁶

Although he did not argue for African Americans in the South to possess autonomous territory, as he had for Jews in Palestine, Cahana believed that Revisionism’s demand for political power was translatable to southern society. He argued that the “highest level of democracy [was] based on a scrupulous respect for the rights, the welfare, the dignity of others, along with trust in every individual’s ability to make right decisions.”²⁷ Thus it was the federal and state governments’ duty to ensure equal political rights for African Americans. This meant an end to voting restrictions, the creation of open primaries, and the type of voting protections ultimately present in the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The final aspect of ethical Zionism was the assurance of cultural and familial stability for African Americans living under the yoke of southern oppression. Cahana believed that building up Israel and rejuvenating Jewish culture were the paramount mitzvot of the modern era. These could be achieved by encouraging Jews to strive to live in Israel and help to develop the country economically, culturally, morally, and spiritually. Cahana's philosophy stemmed from his reading of Ahad Ha'am and cultural Zionism. Ahad Ha'am was an early Russian Zionist who opposed traditional political Zionism. He believed that political Zionism failed to account for the *hitpardut*, or debilitating fragmentation, of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. Merely gathering Jewish communities in Palestine would not fix this fragmentation. Rather, the key to countering the fragmentation was creating a "cultural domicile" within Palestine. This cultural center, built around a shared language and history, would serve as a unifier for all Jewish communities migrating to Palestine.²⁸

Cultural Zionism was crucial to Cahana's Zionist thinking. Although he believed in political Revisionism and advocated for the creation and strengthening of a distinctly Jewish state in Palestine, he believed that political freedom was only half of the final goal. Israel could not survive as an independent nation without the continued rejuvenation of the Jewish spirit through spiritual and ethical refinement. The main pursuit of Jewry, he argued, should be the "moral, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional growth" that could ensure an "amicable, noble, and pure" Israel for future generations.²⁹ Cahana's emphasis on cultural rejuvenation echoed the teachings of many American Jews, particularly as it allowed for attachment to Zionism while maintaining attachments to and remaining in the United States. However, while many American cultural Zionists were often pacifist proponents of a binational state, such as Reform leader Judah Magnes, Cahana believed cultural and political Zionism were congruous with one another.

In this way, Israel could serve as an example for the whole of world civilization. He argued that "ethnic and cultural subgroups should be encouraged to preserve and foster their distinctive voices and colors, and to present their distinctiveness to the cultural rainbow of society." Cahana believed that black life in the South must be allowed to flourish, something that was not happening under segregation. The way to achieve this, Cahana believed, was to build up black cultural institutions and end

segregation in all areas of southern society. To this end, Cahana frequently hosted community events with black churches, organized student life events with Texas Southern University, the local historically black college in Houston, and worked with black civic organizations when planning civil rights demonstrations in Houston. This participation, he believed, would strengthen black institutions and embolden political activism.³⁰

Moshe Cahana's Arrival in Houston

Following the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Moshe Cahana declined an offer from Menachem Begin to serve in the Knesset as a member of the new Herut party and chose instead to aid the immigration of Jewish refugees to Israel in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It was through this work that he met his wife, Alice Lok, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor emigrating from a displaced persons' camp in Sweden where Cahana worked to foster dignity among the survivors of the Shoah. By the mid-1950s, Cahana chose to revive his religious studies and work toward a rabbinical career. While he was raised in the Sanz Hasidic dynasty, he remained unable to reconcile his political leanings with the anti-Zionism of Hasidic Judaism. After meeting Wolfe Kelman, executive vice president of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly (RA), Cahana moved to the United States and received ordination as a rabbi in 1957. He had previously received a degree in social work from the Sorbonne. When a position opened at Houston's Congregation Brith Shalom, which was seeking their first rabbi, Kelman recommended Cahana to fill the vacancy, believing that his commitment to anticolonial ethics and civil rights were perfectly suited to service in deeply segregated Houston.³¹

As an increasingly diverse migration city, Houston occupied a unique position within wider Jim Crow politics. The mass influx in the first half of the twentieth century of both African Americans from rural East Texas and Mexican Americans from the Rio Grande Valley gave the city a multiracial character absent in other areas in the American South. Despite this ethnic diversity, a binary color line dominated Jim Crow politics, leaving Latinos, Jews, and Creoles in racially amorphous positions. As migrant populations, these communities often found themselves segregated into similar neighborhoods. For example, when Mexican migration to Houston began in large numbers during the 1920s, most immigrants settled in Houston's Second Ward, where, according to one

Alice Lok Cahana in 2006.
(Courtesy of Janice Rubin, © 2006.)

Houston historian, half of the residents were Jewish and a third were black.³² The concentration of blacks, Jews, and Latinos in these neighborhoods was so high that *Colonel Mayfield's Weekly*, a pro-Klan newspaper in Houston, repeatedly labeled the neighborhoods the source of all of Houston's social ills.³³ Mayfield argued that the cultural relationships cultivated by black, Latino, and Jewish migrants to the city in the decades following World War I inspired pushes for racial equality and threatened the integrity of the color line in Houston. This perception led to white backlash against Jewish merchants and boycotts of Jewish-owned stores, increasing the importance of black and Latino customers.³⁴

Following World War II, the abolition of restrictive covenants and economic growth allowed Houston's Jewish community to assimilate into middle- and upper-class white neighborhoods. With this new upward mobility, Houston's Jews increasingly reaped the benefits of whiteness under Houston's binary racial system. This whiteness, however, was tenuous, and local Jews remained increasingly weary of losing their newfound status. As a result, many Jews in the city actively abstained from involvement in the racial politics of the 1950s.

Cahana's arrival in Houston in 1959 marked a change in how many Jews in the city, particularly Conservative Jews, approached civil rights activism. Although some Reform Jews in Houston championed integrationist politics, notably the prominent Reform rabbi Robert I. Kahn, the dominant voice in Conservative Jewish civil rights politics was William Malev, the rabbi at Temple Beth Yeshurun, one of the largest Conservative synagogues in the South. In an article he wrote for *Conservative Judaism* in 1958, "The Jew of the South in the Conflict on Segregation," Malev argued for Jewish noninvolvement in local civil rights efforts. Although Malev

Rabbi William Malev in 1948.
(*Congregation Beth Yeshurun Records,*
MS 711, courtesy of the Houston Jewish
History Archive/Woodson Research
Center, Rice University, Houston.)

believed that integration "morally and religiously [was] the only way of solving the problem [of racial inequality]," he felt that the issue of civil rights activism should not follow a uniform pattern, as the "conflict on the issue of segregation [was] different in each community." Above all, Malev objected to large northern organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League acting on behalf of American Jews in issues related to racial equality in the country. These organizations, he argued, could not understand the intricacies of each community in the South and, thus, could not fully appreciate the social and economic position each Jewish community occupied in their respective cities. As a result, the national pronouncements

against segregation made by these organizations often had little regard for the effect they had on southern Jewish communities.³⁵

Malev's view arose from the belief that prominent civil rights activism would "invite resentment and anti-Semitism, if not violence, towards the Jewish community." He understood that Jews in the South achieved a favorable social position by being accepted as white and considered a faith with the same religious lineage as the dominant Christian community. By seeing Judaism as one of the "three great faiths," Malev argued, southerners would view the Jewish community as an offshoot of the dominant white society. It was in this social position, Malev believed, that southern Jews could exert the most political influence, citing his experience in which he was one of three white clergymen who were asked to speak on the issue of desegregation before the Houston school board. Despite Jews constituting less than 2 percent of the population of Houston, he argued that he was able to exert influence as one-third of the religious population. National Jewish civil rights efforts, however, highlighted the ethnic character of the Jewish community, causing white southerners increasingly to identify Jews as an ethnic minority that belonged on the other side of the color line, putting them at increased risk of discrimination and negating their political influence.³⁶

As soon as Moshe Cahana arrived in Houston, he began bucking against this dominant narrative. Cahana joined the Houston Rabbinical Council, where he eventually became an officer and leading voice within the organization. From his role in the council, Cahana impacted the trajectory of rabbinic activism in the city and used his influence to help convince Jewish-owned businesses to integrate quietly. This was done to avoid the violence and bloodshed that visited much of the South during the 1960s. In 1961 Cahana also helped found the Houston Biracial Committee on Race and Religion. This committee brought together various white, black, and Latino religious leaders in the hopes of ending segregation and solving the divisive racial issues that were rampant across the city.³⁷ Cahana spent many years speaking at various churches, attending demonstrations around Houston, and fighting segregation in his everyday life, even going so far as sitting in sections designated for black Houstonians when he went to cinemas or theaters. For Cahana, "living what you believe" was the underpinning principle of a moral and ethical life.³⁸

Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Albany Movement

Moshe Cahana's first foray into civil rights activism outside of Houston came in Albany, Georgia. By 1960, Albany was a moderately sized and deeply segregated city in the heart of rural southwestern Georgia. With a population of about fifty-five thousand, Albany was split along a binary color line, with blacks comprising roughly 40 percent of the population. Unlike the surrounding region, Albany was home to a diverse group of black professionals, including military personnel, college professors, doctors, nurses, and entrepreneurs, due to the city's hosting of Turner Air Force Base and Albany State College, one of Georgia's three historically black state colleges.³⁹

Albany had a long history of antiblack violence. The sheriff of neighboring Baker County, Claude Screws, made news when, aided by a police officer and a special deputy, he arrested and lynched Robert Hall, handcuffing and beating him to death in front of the county courthouse. Like many contemporary lynchings, Screws and his accomplices faced no local charges or punishment. The three men were convicted in federal court of denying Hall his Fourteenth Amendment civil rights, but the U.S. Supreme Court eventually overturned these convictions. Screws's successor, Warren Johnson, continued the practice of extrajudicial violence, savagely beating a handcuffed prisoner, Charlie Ware, before shooting him four times, although Ware survived the attack.⁴⁰

In this environment of racial violence, activists from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sought to unify multiple civil rights organizations to combat segregation and the poor treatment of African Americans in Albany and the surrounding counties. After the Interstate Commerce Commission's ban on racial segregation at interstate bus terminals went into effect on November 1, 1961, activists saw an opportunity to test these new integration policies. Nine students from Albany State College staged the initial sit-in at a segregated Albany bus terminal. Although none of them were arrested for violating segregation ordinances, their actions inspired the involvement of other local civil rights leaders. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., arrived in the city on December 15 and was soon arrested on charges of parading without a permit and obstructing a sidewalk. Following the arrest, Reverend Ralph Abernathy called for a nationwide pilgrimage of civil rights supporters to

Albany in response. At the same time, local leader Marion Page issued a public statement that the Albany Movement was an effort “by and for local Negroes.”⁴¹

Just two years into his tenure at Brith Shalom, Moshe Cahana heard of the continuous violence Albany’s black population faced at the hands of local authorities, as well as King’s arrest, and was compelled to act. The extrajudicial violence in Albany worried Cahana, who had been the victim of extrajudicial violence at the hands of British authorities in the 1940s, including imprisonment and torture.⁴² Thus, upon learning of the violence against blacks in Georgia, Cahana decided to take time away from Houston to participate in Albany’s protests.

Cahana was one of only a handful of outside religious leaders, many of whom were rabbis, who traveled to Albany to visit King in prison and offered their assistance in the protests. Given sparse attendance in Albany of outside religious leaders, Cahana’s presence struck a chord with Dr. King and sparked a friendship between the two that endured until King’s assassination in 1968. Over the course of their friendship, Cahana attended numerous protests and marches led by King, helped facilitate King’s trips to Houston, and invited King to speak before Congregation Brith Shalom on multiple occasions.⁴³

The two men had much in common, and King provided constant inspiration for Cahana. Cahana believed King to be “a remarkable man [and] a pure soul.” For the black freedom movement to succeed, he argued that a man of King’s caliber and temperament was essential. For Cahana, the “powers of justice take a long time to mobilize and speak as one voice,” and critical to achieving this necessary unity, he felt the movement needed a strong, moral, and just leader. King, for Cahana, embodied all these qualities and was someone who could easily galvanize the people around him into action.⁴⁴

What drew Cahana and King together strongest was their mutual commitment to nonviolent protest and their belief that religion should play an active role in civil rights activism. The two shared admiration for Mohandas Gandhi, a nonviolent activist and the public face of the Indian campaign against continued British imperialism in South Asia. Born to a merchant family and trained in law, Gandhi began organizing peasants, farmers, and industrial laborers to protest excessive land taxes and discrimination in 1915. By the early 1920s, Gandhi

assumed a leadership role in the Indian National Congress and led nationwide campaigns against discrimination and for achieving swaraj, or self-rule.⁴⁵

King drew comparisons to Gandhi early in his activist career. Following the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 and 1956, supporters likened the movement to Gandhi's Salt March, noting the commitment pervasive in both to passive resistance in the face of discrimination. However, King's commitment to nonviolence was never a guarantee. The minister admitted that he came to nonviolence in response to the racial violence he experienced as a child. He routinely passed spots where African Americans had been lynched, watched the KKK ride through his neighborhood at night, and witnessed police beating innocent black citizens. He admitted that on multiple occasions this consistent threat of violence almost hardened his heart against white southerners. However, while in college King read Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" (or "Civil Disobedience") and was deeply moved by the idea of refusing to cooperate with a societal system that he believed was evil.⁴⁶ As he continued his studies at seminary, King learned of Gandhi's activism from Mordecai Johnson, then president of Howard University, who had just returned from a trip to India. As he studied more, King was moved by Gandhi's Salt March to the Sea, numerous fasts, and the concept of satyagraha, which Gandhi employed.⁴⁷ King's discovery of Gandhi's philosophy inspired him to base his movement around the principles of nonviolence and an ethic he conveyed as a "'turn the other cheek' philosophy."⁴⁸

Cahana's journey to nonviolence echoed that of King. The struggle for Jewish autonomy in Palestine cost the lives of his family members and friends. It also pushed Cahana's commitment to his religious ideals. He began reading Gandhian literature in earnest after he lost his home during the Meora'ot Tarpat in 1929, an Arab pogrom against the Jews. In the wake of subsequent lockdowns, curfews, and increased British military presence in Palestine, Gandhi's blueprints for an independent India gave a young Cahana hope for eventual Jewish independence. Consequently, Gandhi became Cahana's first childhood hero, and Cahana even obtained a pair of glasses for himself that resembled Gandhi's. As Cahana endured the British occupation of Palestine, Gandhian anticolonialism slowly replaced Hasidic Orthodoxy as the central guiding principle in his life. As an Etzel militant, Cahana embraced violent resistance to British rule,

believing the Indian model of nonviolence to be unavailable to Palestinian Jews.⁴⁹

When he arrived in the United States, Cahana embraced Gandhi's ideas of nonviolence. Although a colonized population in the American political system, Cahana believed that African Americans had not yet reached a point where nonviolence was impossible. As a result, he championed satyagraha and risking personal safety to embrace nonviolence. This decision drew him and King together and served as the basis of their friendship throughout the 1960s.⁵⁰

Ultimately, the civil rights struggles in Albany proved a failure. A year of intense activism yielded few tangible results. The movement ultimately began to deteriorate by late 1962. King later argued that the failure of the movement stemmed from the vagueness of the protests and that the movement made a mistake in opting to protest against segregation generally rather than against a single and distinct facet of it. A tighter concentration, such as focusing on integrating buses or lunch counters, would have allowed for more tangible results, even if they were merely symbolic, and bolster activist morale throughout the movement.⁵¹ Cahana's trip to Albany also caused an uproar among a Conservative population in Houston that had been supporters of Malev's policy of non-involvement.⁵²

Trip to Birmingham

Moshe Cahana built on his friendship with King and remained active on the national civil rights stage throughout the 1960s. Two years after his trip to Albany, Cahana joined King in protests as an emissary of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly. Since he joined the RA in 1958, Cahana was a stalwart at annual meetings, led committees, and spoke as a prominent philosophical voice in the organization. He advocated for civil rights, Zionism, feminism, and strong ethical education.

In May 1963, Cahana attended the annual RA conference in Greenfield Park, New York, with his wife, Alice. Alice advocated before the group for the creation of an American center dedicated to researching righteous gentiles during the Holocaust.⁵³ She spoke passionately of the appreciation she had for those who risked everything to save European Jews. She also recalled the debt she owed to thirteen Italian men for helping her escape the death camps. They saved her and her family's lives and,

she argued, restored her hope for and faith in humanity and the basic goodness of man.⁵⁴ Alice Cahana's speech sparked a resounding debate over the importance and impact of righteous Europeans and the best way to honor their legacy.

After lengthy discussion, the conference broke for lunch, during which Cahana dined with fellow rabbis Everett Gendler and Andre Ungar, both of whom were prominent civil rights activists he met in Albany the year before.⁵⁵ As they ate, the three turned their attention to a television broadcasting the news, in which the horror facing African Americans in Alabama was the lead story. Birmingham, Alabama, was in the throes of the increasingly violent Birmingham campaign, and all three men were mortified and outraged by the Birmingham Police Department's violent treatment of peaceful black protesters.

The Birmingham campaign was a desegregation movement organized in early 1963 by King's organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), to bring attention to the integration efforts of African Americans in the city. In 1963, Birmingham was one of the most segregated cities in the United States. Some 40 percent of the city's population of 350,000 was black, but it had no black police officers, firefighters, salesclerks, bank tellers, bus drivers, or store cashiers. Jobs available to African Americans were limited to manual labor in the local steel mills, work in household service, and lawn care and maintenance. Racial segregation permeated all aspects of public life, and only 10 percent of the city's black population was registered to vote in 1960.⁵⁶

Learning from their failures in Albany, King and the SCLC focused primarily on desegregating downtown stores and public parks and pushed for fair hiring practices in city employment and the creation of a biracial committee that would ensure the desegregation of Birmingham's public schools. Like previous efforts, the Birmingham campaign relied on nonviolent protest methods and a march to the Jefferson County administration building as part of a voter registration drive. Many protesters were arrested throughout the campaign, which was a key strategy for King. The goal was to fill jails with protesters and strain police resources, forcing the city government to negotiate as protests grew long. Ralph Abernathy, a leader in the SCLC and confidant to King, spoke at a mass meeting of Birmingham's black citizens arguing that "the eyes of the world are on Birmingham tonight. [Attorney General] Bobby Kennedy is

looking here at Birmingham, the United States Congress is looking at Birmingham, the Department of Justice is looking at Birmingham. . . . I am ready to go to jail, are you?" Abernathy and King were among fifty protesters arrested on April 12, 1963.⁵⁷

As jails filled with protesters, Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety, Bull Connor, who oversaw the city's police and fire departments, changed police tactics to keep demonstrators from congregating downtown. Arriving at police barricades, they met high-pressure spray from fire hoses and attacking police dogs. While police increasingly resorted to brutality, television cameras broadcast the scene to the nation.⁵⁸

Seeing these events unfold offered an opportunity for Cahana. He went to the conference expecting that at some point he would leave for Alabama. Cahana said of the situation, "When I came to the convention, I came packed, and I made all necessary arrangements in the congregation for probably this Friday night I will be in jail in Alabama."⁵⁹ As King's friend, Cahana was fully aware of the gravity of the situation in Birmingham and attended the RA in the hopes of gathering a larger group to join him in the protest. This was not the first time Cahana prepared to be jailed for forms of protest. He had spent much of his time in British Palestine as a militant wanted by British authorities. In Cahana's estimation, protest and revolt could flout laws and ordinances so long as these were vehicles for legitimate and ethical change. In Birmingham, he believed that black activists were seeking fair political change and thus had the moral authority to do whatever was needed within ethical boundaries to achieve their goals.⁶⁰

In the wake of this news coverage, Gendler and Cahana reached out to King and the SCLC to see if their presence would be helpful. King and his strategists believed the protests to be at a crucial stage in their development and that a delegation of non-African Americans from the North could mark a tipping point in their publicity battle with the city government. Thus King not only welcomed the idea of a group joining in the Birmingham protests, he encouraged it. Following their conversation with King, Gendler and Cahana brought their plan to assembly president Theodore Friedman. Friedman set forth a motion not only to support a group of rabbis traveling to Birmingham but to endorse them and send them as an official delegation representing the RA.⁶¹

In Cahana's endorsement of the Birmingham resolution, he hearkened back to his wife's speech from that morning: "This morning we condemned the non-Jewish people who were silent when our brothers in Germany were chased by dogs. We will also be condemned for doing nothing."⁶² Cahana believed that Jews had a responsibility to act on behalf of oppressed African Americans in the South, just as the thirteen Italian gentlemen had acted to save Alice Cahana's family only twenty years earlier.

Cahana also drew on ethical Zionism in his push for a delegation to Birmingham, invoking the Talmudic ideal of *kol Yisrael areivim zeh lazeh*, or all of Israel is responsible for one another. Although an Aramaic phrase from the Talmud, the expression gained new life in the twentieth century as Zionist leaders invoked it as a central tenet in how the Diaspora was to relate to Jews in Israel. They argued that Jews in the Diaspora had a Talmudic responsibility to support and assist in the creation and sustainment of a Jewish state. Cahana, in his speech before the RA, argued that this mandate extended beyond a responsibility for other Jews. He argued that Jews should instead see the ethic as *kol b'nai adam areivim zeh lazeh*, or a responsibility to protect all peoples, just as it was their responsibility to protect the Jews. Thus if Jews would take to the streets to march and protest in support of Israel, they should likewise be willing to march and protest in support of African Americans in Birmingham.⁶³

This resolution built on the conference's yearly declaration of support for civil rights efforts. Beginning in 1960, the RA recommitted itself to supporting "the peaceful mass demonstrations by Negro and White youth in the South, and the picketing in other regions of the country." It also called on all members, both North and South, to support and engage in civil rights efforts in their hometowns. They further urged members "to recognize the value of racially mixed neighborhoods, and to accept those of racial minorities who move into their localities on the same basis as other neighbors [and] strongly counsel against panic selling of homes and flight from sections where racial heterogeneity develops." These positions focused on what individual congregations should do to solve racial inequality. Before 1963, the RA refrained from large group actions or protests that would represent the organization as a whole.⁶⁴

Despite objections from several southern Conservative rabbis including Houston's William Malev, the Birmingham Resolution passed

resoundingly, and the assembly endorsed the nineteen rabbis who decided to travel to Alabama, even taking up a collection of fifteen hundred dollars to pay for the rabbis' travel.⁶⁵ The volunteering rabbis primarily came from the Northeast, with only Cahana and Arie Becker, rabbi at Memphis's Beth Sholom Synagogue, representing southern congregations. The group made last-minute flight plans and arrived in Birmingham at 3:30 A.M. the next morning, where they were immediately met by representatives of SCLC and the local Jewish community. While King's delegation arrived at the airport to welcome the rabbis to Birmingham, the local Jewish leaders arrived in hopes of convincing the rabbis to return to the RA.⁶⁶

The traveling rabbis opted against contacting the local Jewish community before they began their trip. After a large debate at the conference, members of the RA felt that the local Jewish community would not only discourage them from making the trip but could also potentially be imperiled by white supremacist backlash as a result of the visiting rabbis' actions. This debate was magnified by the fact that the Birmingham Conservative community did not have representation at the assembly. Abraham Mesch, the rabbi at Birmingham's only Conservative synagogue, Temple Beth El, died in November 1962, and by May 1963 the congregation had yet to fill his position, leaving Birmingham unable to send a delegate to the assembly.⁶⁷

The rabbis' arrival in Birmingham angered members of the local Jewish community who believed that their mere presence would be needlessly incendiary. The Jewish community in Birmingham during the 1960s was small, accounting for one half of one percent of the total city population. Although Jews were prominent in civic, cultural, and business activities, they were often kept from leadership positions. Consequently, issues related to segregation were largely out of their control, and most of the Jewish community's leaders believed that Jews should stay out of the desegregation debate as it was a "Christian problem" between black and white Alabamians that did not affect local Jews.⁶⁸

Further, many local Jews worried that civil rights activism would cause the Jewish community harm by allowing segregationists to draw connections between Jews and the racial violence in the city. This was manifested a few months prior to the rabbis' trip when the KKK conducted a large mass meeting on the outskirts of Birmingham to step up a

Montgomery (AL)
Advertiser, May 9, 1963.
(*Newspapers.com.*)

campaign to distribute anti-Jewish and antiblack hate literature by the National States Rights Party, including fifty thousand copies of the racist and antisemitic newspaper the *Thunderbolt*. The threats against the community became so strong during the early 1960s that the Jewish Community Center and many of the local synagogues were placed under twenty-four-hour police surveillance.⁶⁹

The local community learned of the rabbis' travel plans at 10 P.M. on May 7, when *New York Times* reporter Irving Spiegel reached out to Alex Rittenbaum, president of Birmingham's Jewish Community Council, for comment on the group's travel plans. Following this, Rittenbaum contacted each congregation's leaders, convincing a group to join him to meet the arriving rabbis at the airport. However, when they arrived at the airport, the rabbis refused to meet with them, adhering to their desire not to involve the local community in their protest. A delegation of two of the rabbis eventually met with local Jewish officials who urged the group to leave for fear of upsetting the balance of a truce between black leaders and

city officials that had been agreed on the prior day. Following the rabbis' refusal to turn back, the local Jewish leaders urged them at least to refrain from any dramatic participation in the integration marches, or if they would not refrain, then participate without any markers that would make them identifiable as Jews. The visiting rabbis also rejected this request.⁷⁰

In his recollection of their trip, Andre Ungar noted that their refusal stemmed from their presence to assist the black community rather than local Jews and that was to remain their focus. The rabbis also felt that the purpose of their actions was specifically to be provocative. Their goal was, in part, to upend the comfort of the local Jewish community, which still shared the "evanescent advantages of an antebellum society," and to keep them from merely acting out of reaction to racial injustice but rather to be proactive in the fight for racial equality. These actions angered local Jews who felt that the group was needlessly imperiling them. The anger of Birmingham Jews, in turn, frustrated the rabbis, who felt that local Jews' reaction was a betrayal of their Jewish values and history. The two groups shouted tense words at one another across the conference table they met around. As Ungar recalled, Birmingham's Jews demanded of the rabbis, "Boychiks, we know you are right, but still, how could you do this to us, your brothers?" The rabbis followed with charges of "Jews, dear scared little Yidden, how can you side with racism, with Hitler's heritage?" Eventually, both sides parted, having come no closer to agreement with one another.⁷¹

The rabbis arrived in Birmingham intent on "employing a unique and highly imaginative way" to assist the civil rights protesters.⁷² To this end, the group insisted on staying at the A. G. Gaston Motel, which was zoned as a segregated hotel for African Americans. Staying there was an immediate violation of city ordinances, but the rabbis chose this hotel because of its importance as a base of operations for the SCLC. This brought an abundance of reporters to the hotel, many of whom were stationed there for an extended stay and highlighted the gravity of the image of a large group of Jewish men staying at an African American hotel. Because the hotel lacked the necessary number of rooms to house everyone in their group, the rabbis shared rooms, brought in temporary beds, and found a way to ensure that everyone in their party could stay at the hotel. If they could not, members in their group would have been forced to stay at a

*Martin Luther King, Jr., gathering with marchers in the parking lot
of the Gaston Motel in Birmingham, 1963.
(Courtesy of the Birmingham Public
Library Archives.)*

white, segregated hotel, which the rabbis understood would undercut what they hoped to achieve by their trip to Birmingham.⁷³

A political truce between black activists and city officials greeted the rabbis when they arrived, causing King to temporarily call off public demonstrations. Although little visible action took place, tension remained throughout the city as black activists remained ready to resume protests at any stage at which their usefulness would be felt. Despite not taking part in protests, the rabbis' presence in the city brought added attention to Birmingham, and their deliberate visibility put added pressure on the city to negotiate with black leaders.⁷⁴

With protests on hiatus, the visiting rabbis were able to meet with local civil rights leaders and learn about the struggle and what their congregations could do to assist. The first morning, the rabbis said the *Shema*

and held morning worship with their SCLC escorts, and Andre Ungar noted that the prayers had increased relevancy. "'*Barkhu!*,'" he said, "enjoined not mere verbal profession but a challenge that concretely and perilously surrounded us there. '*Sim shalom*' spelled out Viet Nam . . . but above all Birmingham, Alabama." Ungar noted that many in the Birmingham delegation echoed Cahana and viewed their activism as part of wider postcolonial struggles. They were fighting for civil rights, but also for positive political change that could inspire wider political change, which was a central tenet of Cahana's ethical Zionism.⁷⁵

Contrary to the wishes of local Jewish community leaders, the visiting rabbis attended each event wearing outward symbols of Jewish identity. During meetings and rallies at local churches, the entire contingent donned *kippot* and often wore *tallit*. This clearly identified them as Jews and colored all of their activism as part and parcel of their Jewish identity. It also clearly marked these men as separate from the white power structures that subjugated blacks in the American South. The rabbis thus positioned themselves as part of a nonwhite and often marginalized group, allowing for greater solidarity with black activists.⁷⁶

With this wider view of Jewish activism, Israel loomed large in the minds of the rabbis who traveled to Birmingham. Richard Rubenstein argued that the rabbis' presence "[handed] down a kind of 'apostolic' succession" to the black community. Their presence said that "the flesh and blood children of Israel were behind them in their struggle, that [they] had gone from slavery to [political autonomy], and [they] knew [African American Alabamians] would as well." During their time in Birmingham, black church leaders echoed Cahana and spoke of Israel as a great triumph for the Jewish people and the progress of democracy. During a church rally for teenage activists the rabbis attended, the preacher urged the young people to read Leon Uris's book *Exodus* as an inspiration for continued activism and as evidence of the successes possible.⁷⁷ Published five years earlier, *Exodus* focuses on the struggles of Jewish refugees escaping to Palestine and their experiences fighting for a burgeoning Jewish state. These elements of their trip allowed Moshe Cahana an outlet for both his civil rights and Zionist missions. He was able to speak to black activists about his experiences in Israel as well as share the ways in which these experiences ultimately informed his decision to join the civil rights struggle. In such situations, Cahana passed along his framework of ethical

Zionism to other activists and impressed upon them the interrelatedness of both struggles.

Throughout their trip to Birmingham, the rabbis were met with ovations from Birmingham's black community. During their first day in the city, the group attended numerous rallies as guests of honor. Ungar noted that when they entered one church, the crowd sang "We Shall Overcome" but changed the chorus to "With our rabbis, we shall overcome." At each rally, the rabbis held near-celebrity status, and people clamored to meet them and shake their hands. They spoke before crowds, met with parishioners throughout the day, and led black activists in singing Jewish songs including "*Hine Ma Tov*" and "*Hevenu Shalom Aleichem*." Members of Birmingham's black community regaled them with choruses of clapping and shouts of "'Amen' and 'Halleluya' and 'Yes, man!'"⁷⁸

In the end, Cahana and his colleagues were unable to partake in protests due to the political truce reached between activists and city officials that halted large-scale demonstrations. Instead, their trip focused on garnering publicity for the movement, particularly in the North, and meeting with civil rights leaders to see what ideas and tactics they could bring back to their home states.

Following the rabbis' departure from Birmingham at the end of the week, Temple Beth El, Birmingham's Conservative congregation, sent an official letter of protest to the RA. In the letter, Arnold Royal, the synagogue president, chastised the RA and stated that it was "regrettable that the Rabbinical Assembly convention did not see fit during its deliberations to seek the advice and counsel of Birmingham Jewry and particularly the leaders of Temple Beth El, the only Conservative Temple in Birmingham." He protested the rabbis' refusal to meet with community leaders and said they felt insulted by the demeanor with which the rabbis greeted them. Royal argued that despite the goodwill the rabbis garnered among the black community, Alabama's Jews and the larger white community harbored an "ill will and hostility" that would take a long time to dissipate.⁷⁹

As the rabbis returned home, many were treated as heroes. Some communities literally rose to their feet at the entrance of their rabbi, and several congregations passed formal votes of support or congratulations. During and after the Birmingham trip, most of the rabbis' local newspapers carried articles about them and subsequently interviews with them.

The rabbis returned with a new sense of urgency and strength that added to local efforts to broaden civil rights. Many of their congregants understood that if it was a rabbi's task to travel south to ensure civil rights protections, then they had an equal task to fight for integrated housing and job opportunities in northern cities and suburbs as well.⁸⁰

Civil Rights Activism in Houston

Between his trips across the South to participate in movements led by Martin Luther King, Jr., Cahana led civil rights efforts in Houston. Perhaps his largest local accomplishment was the Houston Conference on Race and Religion. Cahana devised this organization upon returning from the National Conference on Religion and Race held in Chicago in January 1963. The national event brought together representatives from more than seventy of the major American Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant organizations to discuss the racial divide in the United States. Nearly one-third of the eight hundred participants were Jewish and represented twenty separate Jewish American religious, civic, fraternal, and defense organizations. The four-day conference, organized by a coalition of the National Council of the Churches, the Synagogue Council of America, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference, convened to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Some of the most prominent civil rights leaders in the country, including King, presented speeches.⁸¹

Austin American,
June 26, 1963.
(Newspapers.com.)

Following his trips to Chicago in January and Birmingham in May, Cahana met with several local white, black, and Latino religious leaders in Houston to discuss ways they could plan a large civil rights demonstration in the city. Cahana believed that given Houston's quiet acquiescence to integration in the early 1960s, the best way for religious leaders to demonstrate in favor of civil rights was a large-scale conference bringing together speakers to address issues of race relations and integration.⁸²

The Houston conference held in June 1963 followed the same format as the national conference, albeit on a smaller scale. Planned and organized by Cahana and Stanley Hauser, an Episcopal minister and president of the Association of Ministers of Greater Houston, the one-day conference brought together ministers and lay leaders from around the city to discuss the continued problem of racial discrimination in Houston. One of four major speakers, Cahana delivered a presentation titled "Confession and Repentance," in which he discussed his recent trip to Birmingham and the necessity of civil rights activism on the part of religious leaders. Cahana probed the role of religion in attacking racial discrimination in the South: "We speak in the Name of God. God entrusted in our hands his precious flock. God called us to shepherd, to rule his children. Let us say what God and our conscience tell us to say. Let us be involved with this freedom fight as God wants us to be involved. Let us be involved without fear, without swift excuse and without dangerous caution."⁸³ For Cahana, it was not possible to be observantly Jewish and support continued segregation. In his mind, as a religious leader it was his moral responsibility to do everything he could to reform southern society through integration. This was central to his ethos as a spiritual leader and something he strove for throughout his time as a rabbi in Houston, even in the face of adversity and pushback from congregants and Houstonians.

Almost as soon as he began his activism in Houston, Cahana met resistance from white segregationists. He received threatening phone calls, had racial and antisemitic slurs hurled at him, and on numerous occasions was mailed photographs of Hitler attached to threatening letters. One morning at about 3:00 A.M., the Cahanas awoke to a cross burning on their front lawn. Soon thereafter, a man claiming to be the Houston Grand Dragon of the KKK called and threatened the family's safety in response to the rabbi's activism. When he returned from Birmingham, Cahana received a slew of hate mail and derisive comments, including "[N-]lover,

wait we'll get you," "Why don't you go back to Palestine," and "Why not teach the Bible to your members instead?"⁸⁴

With each threat, Cahana remained strong in his core methodology of nonviolence. One man called the rabbi and asked him to "please help [him] pronounce the Doom Written on the Wall," *Mne Tkel Upharsin*, which translates to "God has numbered thy kingdom and brought it to an end. Thou hast been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to others."⁸⁵ The passage, from the legend of Belshazzar's Feast, served as a warning of the impending striking down of an increasingly arrogant King Belshazzar. Thus by citing these words, the caller threatened Cahana with violent retribution should he continue his "arrogance" and activism. Cahana, emulating Gandhi's satyagraha, allowed the man to finish his message and sat on the phone with him for several minutes helping him learn the proper Hebrew pronunciation. When the Houston Grand Dragon called the Cahanas, Moshe's wife Alice answered the phone and challenged the man, "What kind of man calls a family at three in the morning? Does your wife know that she's married a coward?" In response the man stammered out an apology, not expecting to be challenged in such a manner.⁸⁶

At the height of his activism during the 1960s, not even Brith Shalom was a place of refuge for Cahana. Upon his return to the pulpit following his trip to Albany, Cahana faced criticism from many members of his congregation and direct conflict with the congregation's president. The conflict between the two men became so severe that the president attempted to have Cahana fired on multiple occasions between 1962 and 1966.⁸⁷ This tension between Cahana and congregational leadership continued throughout Cahana's time as a prominent activist. Though many members of his congregation eventually softened to and even embraced Cahana's political activism, several congregation board members remained opposed, fearing the backlash that could befall the Jewish community. Many members of Brith Shalom also questioned the effectiveness of Cahana's activism, believing that despite his noble aspirations, he would not be able to effect change through his chosen forms of protest. One member asked Cahana in 1963, "there are one thousand people already jailed and dogs were loosed upon them; so, one more person will be there and will be bitten by a dog. What good will it be?"⁸⁸

The struggles between Cahana and congregational leadership finally came to a head in 1965 after Cahana returned from the marches in Selma, Alabama. The congregation's leadership became so resolute in their opposition to his continued activism that Cahana chose to resign instead of continuing to butt heads with them. Cahana spent much of the summer of 1965 away from the pulpit before returning after many members of Brith Shalom voiced their support for his activism and what he hoped to achieve by marching with King.⁸⁹

Returning to Alabama

Two years after his trip to Birmingham, Moshe Cahana again traveled to Alabama to partake in civil rights protests. While at a luncheon for local Houston religious leaders in March 1965, Cahana followed local television coverage of the Selma protests and the images of bloodied and injured marchers trying to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Cahana became indignant, as the actions of Selma's police resembled those of British troops in Palestine. Cahana immediately decided to travel to Selma to offer his assistance to the protesters. He reached out to his good friend and fellow clergyman John Stevens to accompany him on the trip. At a luncheon held by the Episcopalian diocese of Houston, Stevens additionally recruited fellow Episcopalian ministers Herbert Beadle and Jack Bosman to join him and Cahana in Alabama. The four clergy left the next day and arrived in Selma early Tuesday morning.⁹⁰

The Selma marches originated shortly after the successes of the Birmingham campaign when the African American activist organization Dallas County Voters League sought to overcome widespread voter suppression and push for large African American voter turnout in local elections.⁹¹ James Bevel and the SCLC planned a voter registration march to the state capital in Montgomery to take place on Sunday, March 7, 1965. During the morning of March 7, nearly six hundred protesters, led by John Lewis and Bob Mants of SNCC and the SCLC's Hosea Williams and Albert Turner, gathered on U.S. Highway 80 and marched southeast out of Selma. When protesters crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they faced a wall of state troopers and deputized locals waiting for them armed with nightsticks and tear gas. The contingent's commanding officer, John Cloud, urged demonstrators to disband and return home, and deputies began shoving protesters, knocking many to the ground and beating

Moshe Cahana marching with fellow clergymen in Selma, Alabama, March 1965.

Left to right: John Stevens, Jack Bosman, Moshe Cahana, and Herbert Beadle.

(Richard Pipes / © Houston Chronicle. Used with permission.)

them. Other deputies shot tear gas into the crowd, while some charged through the crowd on horseback, trampling protesters. By the end of the melee, seventeen protesters were hospitalized and fifty more were treated for lesser injuries.⁹² This demonstration became known as “Bloody Sunday.”

Following these unfolding events, King and the SCLC planned a second march for two days later. King specifically called on clergy to participate, believing that the presence of religious officials would add more weight to what the demonstrators hoped to achieve. Several hundred more protesters—for a total of approximately 2,500 marchers including Cahana and his Houston contingent—showed up to march alongside Selma’s activists.⁹³

This march turned out to be merely symbolic, with leaders forgoing a full march to Montgomery and instead only crossing Selma’s Edmund Pettus Bridge. Only SCLC leaders knew this plan in advance, leaving many marchers confused and annoyed. Cahana was among those upset by the change in plans, noting that it was disappointing to have driven all night just to march to the arch of the bridge and turn back. His mood changed, however, when one movement leader told him that their presence was greatly appreciated, as the inclusion of white ministers helped ensure that police would not harm the protesters, something they would not have been guaranteed otherwise. Throughout the rest of the day, the four men took part in other protests and rallies around Selma. Cahana met with several movement leaders and spent much of the evening walking the streets of Selma and meeting with both black activists and white Alabamians. While many white Alabamians treated Cahana with hostility and anger, he noted that others offered quiet support for what they were doing, hoping only to find a peaceful end to the injustices faced by black residents.⁹⁴

Conclusion

By the late 1960s, much of the initial vitriol that had accompanied Cahana’s activism subsided. As he continued civil rights pushes in 1966 and beyond, Cahana routinely experienced a groundswell of support from his congregation. Over the next few years, temple leadership changed hands, and, by the end of the decade, the congregation president was one of Cahana’s biggest supporters. Cahana continued political activism

throughout the following decades, marching in favor of farmworkers' rights in South Texas in the mid- to late 1960s, championing American disengagement from Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and working in support of Jews migrating out of the Soviet Union, Syria, and Ethiopia during the 1970s and 1980s. The changes in leadership allowed Cahana wider latitude to implement his ethical teachings into Hebrew school and adult education curricula. By the time he retired, congregants at Brith Shalom lionized his career and saw their congregation as the "activist temple" in Houston.

In 2000, Moshe Cahana turned his philosophy of ethical Zionism into his book *Ethics for the 21st Century*. Although not widely distributed, Cahana's book served as a core work in Brith Shalom's adult education curriculum. Cahana served as rabbi emeritus at Brith Shalom, delivering regular lectures and teaching various adult education courses during this tenure. He died in May 2004, survived by two children who adopted Cahana's ethical Zionism for their own congregations in Portland and Montreal and ensuring that his ideology survives well into the twenty-first century.

Throughout all of his activism, Rabbi Moshe Cahana kept his identity as an Israeli-American Jew at the forefront. His crafting of the concept of ethical Zionism was crucial to maintaining this. In ethical Zionism, Cahana was able to shift political Zionism beyond the boundaries of Israeli politics and its focus on a Jewish state. Cahana adapted it into a political ethic applicable to various movements around the globe.

Ethical Zionism offered Cahana a framework by which he could translate his colonial identity, forged under the British Mandate, to American frameworks that similarly disenfranchised a large portion of its population. African Americans' lack of political power, social inequality across the American South, and institutional violence against black Americans resembled the worst of British colonialism in Palestine and allowed Cahana to draw firm connections between the two struggles. This compelled him to civil rights activism throughout the 1960s, bringing him to Albany, Birmingham, and Selma along the way. By implementing ethical Zionism in all of his activism, civil rights activism became a natural extension of his identity as a Jew, Israeli, and former colonial subject.

NOTES

¹ The paramilitary organization Irgun Zvai Leumi b'Eretz Yisrael is typically referred to by its acronym Etzel in Hebrew but is alternatively referred to as the Irgun in English. This paper uses Etzel, as it is the term Moshe Cahana used, highlighting his identity as an Israeli first and American second.

² See Gerald Horne, *Black & Red: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944–1963* (Albany, NY, 1986); John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986); Reginald Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Sedition?* (Albany, NY, 1998).

³ See Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA, 2001). See also, Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill, 1996); Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922–1963* (Durham, NC, 2002); Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944–1955* (New York, 2003).

⁴ See Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956–1974* (New York, 2013); Keith P. Feldman, *A Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis, MN, 2015).

⁵ Many Palestinian Jews at the time viewed the Ottomans as an imperialist force in the Middle East on par with the English and French.

⁶ For more on Jewish colonial identity in the United States see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley, CA, 2002). For more on Jewish colonial identity as a whole, see Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel, eds., *Colonialism and the Jews* (Bloomington, IN, 2017).

⁷ Murray Friedman, *What Went Wrong? The Creation & Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance* (New York, 1995); Jonathan Kaufman, *Broken Alliance: The Turbulent Times Between Blacks and Jews in America* (New York, 1988); Michael E. Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York, 2002). See also, Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, 2006).

⁸ A prime example of this trend is Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

⁹ Henry L. Feingold, *American Jewish Political Culture and the Liberal Persuasion* (Syracuse, NY, 2013).

¹⁰ Sara Yael Hirschhorn, *City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement* (Cambridge, MA, 2017).

¹¹ For more on Jabotinsky's broad framing of Revisionism, see Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).

¹² Moshe Cahana National Service Card, Etzel Service Card Applications, Letters Kaf, K4h-11, Archive of Revisionist Zionism, Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, Tel Aviv, Israel.

¹³ Sometimes this is also spelled *Mussar*.

¹⁴ The *Haskalah* pursued two complementary aims: to preserve the Jews as a separate, unique collective and to work for a cultural and moral renewal, most notably a revival of Hebrew for secular use.

¹⁵ Dov Katz, *The Musar Movement: Its History, Leading Personalities and Doctrines* (Tel Aviv, Israel, 1975); Hillel Goldberg, *The Fire Within: The Living Heritage of the Musar Movement* (Brooklyn, 1987); Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Torah of Truth* (Philadelphia, 1993); Ira Stone, *A Responsible Life: The Spiritual Path of Mussar* (New York, 2006); Geoffrey D. Claussen, *Sharing the Burden: Rabbi Simhah Zissel Ziv and the Path of Musar* (Albany, NY, 2013); Chaim Zaichyk, *Sparks of Mussar: A Treasury of the Words and Deeds of the Mussar Greats* (Jerusalem, Israel, 2014).

¹⁶ Moshe Cahana, *Ethics for the 21st Century* (Houston, 2001), 7.

¹⁷ Moshe Cahana, "Civil Rights and Human Rights are the Same," *Jewish Herald Voice* (Houston, TX), April 25, 1963.

¹⁸ Although he distrusted Yasser Arafat and Palestinian leadership, Cahana ultimately believed that Israelis and Palestinians could work together and achieve a compromise that would ensure political independence for both. Thus Palestinian independence was not anti-theoretical to Cahana's vision of Revisionist Zionism.

¹⁹ Moshe Cahana, interview conducted by Michael Cahana, 2000. VHS, titled *Saba Moshe: Memories*, in possession of author.

²⁰ Cahana, *Ethics*, 46.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

²² Cahana, "Civil Rights and Human Rights."

²³ Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (New York, 1962), 4.

²⁴ For more on racial violence in the American South, see Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill, 2011); David F. Krugler, 1919, *The Year of Racial Violence: How African Americans Fought Back* (New York, 2014); Ersula J. Ore, *Lynching: Violence, Rhetoric, and American Identity* (Oxford, MS, 2019).

²⁵ Moshe Cahana, "Confession and Repentance," Metropolitan Houston Conference on Religion and Race Papers, 1963, SC-2850, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH (hereafter cited as Metropolitan Houston Conference Papers).

²⁶ Cahana's hopes for peace ultimately proved erroneous despite relinquishing of political control to Jews and Arabs in 1947. Cahana, *Saba Moshe: Memories*.

²⁷ Cahana, *Ethics*, 50.

²⁸ Steven J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (New York, 1993).

²⁹ Cahana, *Ethics*, 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6, 49.

³¹ Michael Cahana, interview with author, November 10, 2015; Rabbi Moshe Hillel Cahana obituary, *Houston Chronicle*, May 30, 2004, accessed June 3, 2020, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/houstonchronicle/obituary.aspx?pid=2278180>.

³² Tyina L. Steptoe, *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City* (Berkeley, CA, 2015), 103–104.

³³ *Ibid.*, 105–108.

³⁴ For more on Houston under Jim Crow, see Michael R. Botson, Jr., *Labor, Civil Rights, and the Hughes Tool Company* (College Station, TX, 2005); Bernadette Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900–1941* (College Station, TX, 2013); Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

³⁵ William Malev, “The Jew of the South in the Conflict on Segregation,” *Conservative Judaism* 13 (Fall 1958): 35–46.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 36–37.

³⁷ Despite including representatives from three ethnic groups, the committee was called the “Biracial Committee” because Latinos in Texas were often seen as white. See George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York, 1995); Edward E. Telles and Vilma Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race* (New York, 2009); Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley, CA, 2014); Julie A. Dowling, *Mexican Americans and the Question of Race* (Austin, 2015); Lori A. Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement* (New Haven, 2018).

³⁸ Michael Cahana, “Alice Lok Cahana,” obituary, *Jewish Herald-Voice*, December 14, 2017, accessed June 6, 2020, <http://jhvonline.com/alice-lok-cahana-p23616-124.htm>.

³⁹ Maurice C. Daniels, *Saving the Soul of Georgia: Donald L. Hollowell and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2013), 132.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 132–36.

⁴¹ David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York, 1999), 184–85. For more on the Albany Movement, see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA, 1995); Michael Chalfen, “‘The Way Out May Lead In’: The Albany Movement Beyond Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Fall 1995): 560–98.

⁴² Cahana, *Saba Moshe*.

⁴³ Moshe Cahana, interview conducted by Michael Cahana, 2000. VHS, titled *Saba Moshe: MLK and Gandhi*, in possession of author.

⁴⁴ “Our Side of the Tracks,” *Bellaire & Southwestern Texan*, March 31, 1965.

⁴⁵ *Swaraj* generally means self-governance or self-rule. The term has been used synonymously with *home-rule* by Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati and by Gandhi, but the word typically references Gandhi’s concept for Indian independence from British imperialism. Simone Panter-Brick, *Gandhi and Nationalism: The Path to Indian Independence* (London, 2012).

⁴⁶ “Resistance to Civil Government” was an essay written by Henry David Thoreau in 1849 in which he argues that individuals should not permit governments to overrule their consciences and that they have a duty to avoid allowing such acquiescence to enable the government to make them the agents of injustice.

⁴⁷ *Satyagraha*, literally “truth-force,” was a policy of passive political resistance, especially that advocated by Mohandas Gandhi against British rule in India.

⁴⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., "My Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," *Fellowship* (September 1958): 473–78. For more on King's journey to nonviolence, see Michael J. Nojeim, *Gandhi and King: The Power of Nonviolent Resistance* (Westport, CT, 2004) and Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Confluence of Thought: Mahatma Gandhi And Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, 2013).

⁴⁹ Moshe Cahana, *Saba Moshe: MLK and Gandhi*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Clayborne Carson, ed., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, 2001), 151–69.

⁵² Michael Cahana, interview with author, November 10, 2015.

⁵³ Righteous Among the Nations is a designation by Yad Vashem to honor non-Jews who helped save persecuted European Jews during the Holocaust.

⁵⁴ "The 'Birmingham Resolution,'" *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America* 27 (Greenfield Park, NY, 1963), 117.

⁵⁵ Everett Gendler was rabbi at the Jewish Center of Princeton, New Jersey, and a close confidant to Martin Luther King, Jr. Andre Ungar, rabbi at Temple Emanuel of the Pascack Valley in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey, came to the United States after being exiled from South Africa for fighting apartheid. Those who knew him disagree about whether Cahana was arrested in Albany along with the other rabbis, with Ungar believing that he was but Cahana's sons believing he arrived after their arrest. For more on Ungar, see Adam Mendelsohn, "Two Far South: Rabbinical Responses to Apartheid and Segregation in South Africa and the American South," *Southern Jewish History* 6 (2003): 63–132.

⁵⁶ David J. Garrow, *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956–1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights* (Philadelphia, 1989), 166.

⁵⁷ Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York, 2000), 90.

⁵⁸ "Fire Hoses and Police Dogs Quell Birmingham Segregation Protest," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1963.

⁵⁹ "Birmingham Resolution," 118.

⁶⁰ Cahana, *Saba Moshe: Memories*.

⁶¹ Irving Spiegel, "20 Rabbis Head for Birmingham," *New York Times*, May 8, 1963; Andre Ungar, "To Birmingham and Back," *Conservative Judaism* 18 (Fall 1963): 1.

⁶² "Birmingham Resolution," 116.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ "Resolution on Civil Rights" *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America* 24 (Grossinger, NY, 1960).

⁶⁵ The eighteen rabbis who travelled with Cahana were Arie Becker, Memphis, TN; Jacob H. Bloom, Fairfield, CT; Kenneth Bromberg, Pittsburgh, PA; Moshe Davidowitz, Greenwich, CT; Morris Fishman, Margate, NJ; Isaac Freeman, Newburgh, NY; Seymour Friedman, Spring Valley, NY; Everett Gendler, Princeton, NJ; Stanley Kessler, West Hartford, CT; Richard L. Rubinstein, Pittsburgh, PA; Moses B. Sachs, St. Louis Park, MN; Sidney D. Shanken, Cranford, NJ; Alexander Shapiro, Philadelphia, PA; Paul Teicher, Trenton, NJ; Andre Ungar, Westwood, NJ; Eugene Weiner, Hamilton, ON; Richard Winograd, Chicago, IL; and Harry Zwelling, New Britain, CT.

⁶⁶ In all recountings of their trip to Birmingham, the visiting rabbis agreed to discuss their actions as a group and leave out specific names, so as not to highlight the contributions of one rabbi over another. This remained something they desired during author interviews of surviving rabbis. Consequently, specifics on who did what remain sparse. This unfortunately causes Cahana to shrink in favor of a collective narrative.

⁶⁷ Mark H. Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie: The Birmingham Experience* (Tuscaloosa, 1974), 173.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 165. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" was aimed partially at Reform Rabbi Milton Grafman and targeted local Jewish department stores. See S. Jonathan Bass, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail"* (Baton Rouge, 2001).

⁶⁹ Elovitz, *Century of Jewish Life*, 170.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁷¹ Ungar, "To Birmingham and Back," 10–11.

⁷² Elovitz, *Century of Jewish Life*, 170.

⁷³ Ungar, "To Birmingham and Back," 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁶ Richard Rubenstein, "The Rabbis Visit Birmingham," *The Reconstructionist* (May 31, 1963).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Ungar, "To Birmingham and Back," 8.

⁷⁹ Elovitz, *Century of Jewish Life*, 172–74.

⁸⁰ Ungar, "To Birmingham and Back," 15.

⁸¹ "National Conference on Religion and Race Opens Today in Chicago," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, January 14, 1963.

⁸² Report on Houston Conference on Race and Religion, Metropolitan Houston Conference Papers.

⁸³ Cahana, "Confession and Repentance."

⁸⁴ "Our Side of the Tracks."

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Cahana, "Alice Lok Cahana."

⁸⁷ Michael Cahana, interview with author, November 10, 2015.

⁸⁸ "Birmingham Resolution," 116.

⁸⁹ "Rabbi Cahana to Remain at Brith Shalom," *Bellaire & Southwestern Texan*, August 11, 1965.

⁹⁰ "Our Side of the Tracks."

⁹¹ Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 372.

⁹² "Testimony of John Lewis from a hearing resulting from the March 7, 1965, march from Selma to Montgomery in support of voting rights." Records of District Courts of the United States, National Archives – Southeast Region, Morrow, Georgia.

⁹³ Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 400–405.

⁹⁴ "Our Side of the Tracks."

PRIMARY SOURCES

Resources for Southern Jewish Research: A Family History Perspective

by

Karen S. Franklin and Anton Hieke*

Genealogy research can provide evidence of links across the country, patterns of mobility and interaction, and business ties and development. It helps demonstrate that people assume multiple identities and maintain Jewish institutions and connections from location to location even while acculturating. For these and other reasons, it provides excellent primary tools appropriate for historians' uses.

Recently, the study of families in this context has expanded beyond the regional and biographical to be considered in American and global settings.¹ In exploring Jewish experiences, answering the historian's guiding questions of who, what, when, how, where, and especially why, frequently benefits from this type of research. Families typically emigrated from Europe to America and within America in family chain migrations. Family connections locally, nationally, and even internationally also greatly facilitated the development of Jewish economic niches and economic advancement. This approach allows the historian to better understand motives and *modi operandi* of individuals and communities.

The so-called southern experience is rarely self-contained within its regional setting. This article uses a case study of the Iseman family to illustrate how the lives of Jews in the South are embedded in transregional or transnational contexts, and that, in order to fully interpret Jewish history in the South—or in any location—one must look through the lens of

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family histories and connections in the United States and their countries of origin.

European Origins

Karen S. Franklin documented the Iseman family of South Carolina on behalf of descendants of that family. The Isemans, their interconnections, and the culture they brought with them began in the small town they came from, Stebbach, in the late eighteenth century. Anton Hieke explored the history of the Jews in Stebbach and the Grand Duchy of Baden.

Thirteen Jewish families resided in Stebbach when it was ceded to Baden in 1806. Three years later, needing to adopt family names, four of them opted for Eisenmann, also later known as Eisemann.² Family names were required throughout Europe from the late eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century. The reasons were threefold. First, the adoption was necessary to meet the Christian societal norm of first and family names that had developed in the late Middle Ages. Second, it provided clear identification for the state in matters of taxes and for the development of civil registries. Third, it allowed, as Prussian officials phrased it, to “lift the separation between Jews and Christians so that everybody who does not have the right to ask in a religious aspect is left in the dark whether or not somebody is a Jew.”³ It thus provided one prerequisite for equality within society.

The number of *Eise(n)manns* from Stebbach in their various German and English spellings, including Iseman, might be confusing. A tree of the family provides clarity, but not all descendants are known. Changes to the name in the United States again demonstrate the difficulties in establishing family relations. Sigmund Americanized his name to Eiseman. The Eisenmanns of South Carolina became Isemans. Others kept the full spelling of Eisenmann. They share the same background, coming from a wider family in a small, rural German community facing dissolution over modernization.

The community they left behind was one of numerous Jewish hamlets in the southern part of German-speaking central Europe. Stebbach had historically belonged to the Palatinate. Then, beginning with the French Revolution of 1789 and solidified at the Congress of Vienna following Napoleon’s downfall in 1815, stronger neighbors absorbed tiny German states. The new Grand Duchy of Baden thus accidentally became the new

home of many Jewish communities such as the former Palatinate Stebbach.⁴

Stebbach's Jewish community therefore historically connects to Palatinate tradition. Jewish presence in tiny territories formerly belonging to individual families (*Adelsdörfer* in German, *noble villages*) was based on the rulers' destitution rather than societal liberalism. A tax on Jewish residents, *Schutzgeld*, provided a steady income from those "protected Jews." The poverty this tax engendered presented an additional motive for emigration.⁵

Most Jewish residents in Stebbach were merchants dealing in cattle, grain, wine, dry goods (including rags), and oils. Others were innkeepers or butchers such as Isaak Eisenmann/Isaac Iseman.⁶ As was often common with immigrants, the Isemans continued as merchants in America. They brought skill sets with them that benefited their adaptation.

Jews in Stebbach, as subjects of the Grand Duke of Baden, were gradually emancipated. Beginning in 1808, they became citizens on the state level and on par with Christians, but were second-class citizens on the communal level since they were not granted the right to vote. They could purchase real estate but did not enjoy freedom of residence. As Jews, they had the right to settle in their community of birth only if wishing to reside in Baden. Complete emancipation came in 1862, but these restrictions before that date further fostered emigration.⁷

Stebbach's Jewish community boasted a synagogue but never exceeded more than 125 individuals, although this number represented about 14 percent of the entire population. Constantly declining in the latter half of the nineteenth century, by 1915 the Jewish community was dissolved. Whereas internal migration to other communities in Baden and the German states somewhat accounted for dissolutions of Jewish small-town communities, emigration abroad of families like the Isemans served as the major factor.

In the database for emigrants from southwest Germany, Iseman Iseman (born Isaak Eisenmann) appears as one of six Eisenmanns from Stebbach to emigrate to America. None of Isaak's brothers are listed.⁸ His destination (which is rarely included in other emigration permits) suggests a chain migration in that he followed his three brothers, Isaac, Marx, and Manuel, to South Carolina. Community records from Germany commonly show this type of emigration pattern beginning about 1840. In

Stebbach, it resulted in a significantly dwindling Jewish community. Whereas 124 Jews lived there in 1841, the number dropped to 69 in 1864.

The entire community of Stebbach, Jews and Christians alike, was on the move in the nineteenth century with varying destinations. In the early years of the century, the Black Sea coast was a draw. In July 1833 alone, emigration permits for Russian Poland were granted to fifty individuals from the town (whether Jews were among them is unknown). Thus immigration to the United States was in addition to the flow of people from small towns into cities and across Europe. The nineteenth century witnessed substantial instability through numerous wars, changes in boundaries, and economic transformation that served as push factors for internal and external migration.

America as a destination gained momentum beginning in the 1830s. Community histories show that 250 villagers (of a community of about seven hundred) left Baden for America between 1830 and 1900. The emigration database for southwest Germany shows at least twenty Jews leaving Stebbach in that period, although not all applied for a permit. They represent a fifth of some one hundred emigrants who had officially applied.⁹ As emigration reached a critical mass, further emigrants were pulled in their wake. In Stebbach, as in other small German communities, villagers constantly witnessed the departure of their neighbors and relatives, triggering further migration and allowing for the formation of networks that continued in their new homes.

The percentage of Jews who left was far higher than Christians. Jews comprised almost half of the emigrants but a much smaller proportion of residents. Jewish emigration was not solely the result of political inequality, since large number of Christians also emigrated. But the turmoil, economic hardship, and unfulfilled promises of equality connected to the failed German revolution of 1848 played a role in increased emigration. Baden was the site of anti-Jewish riots during the revolution only a few years prior to the Iseman family's departure.¹⁰ In the aftermath of 1848, as a Badener noted in his diary in 1851, "[the Prussians] were [in Baden] for more than fifteen months which has indebted the state to such an extent it is indescribable. All citizens and communities are ruined. . . . Many have left for America."¹¹ Fortunately for Isaak Iseman, who could indeed rely on "some of my siblings who already reside [in South Carolina]" the decision to leave was made easier.¹²

The Auswanderung aus Südwestdeutschland (Emigration from Southwest-Germany) online database, showing the English-language version.
(<https://www.auswanderer-bw.de>).

On May 22, 1850, Isaak Eisenmann appeared before the magistrate of Stebbach, Baden, to declare his intent to leave his home for America. He applied for a passport for himself (twenty-eight years old), his wife Lena (twenty-four), and their three children, Mayer, Bertha, and Lizette (ages six months to three and a half years). Isaak was the fifth child of Mayer Marx Eisenmann and Lippet Israel, a “protected Jew” and subject of the Grand Duke of Baden.¹³ A butcher, he had recently faced financial trouble and sought remedy by venturing to a new life in America (*Süd Karolina*, as the Grand Ducal files noted a week later), where his siblings already resided. Himself destitute, the travel expenses were covered by his wife’s savings of five hundred florins.¹⁴ The family finally left Baden in July 1850.¹⁵ In 1855 Isaak, who by that time was known by the name Iseman Iseman (to distinguish between him and his older brother Isaac), buried his wife and son Mayer in Columbia, South Carolina.¹⁶

Thus the family went from financial hardship and despair to hope and then sadness, a somewhat more complex picture of the immigrant experience than one typically encounters. We often think in terms of

individual young men venturing forth and then raising and sending money back to Europe for the next family member in line. Here the woman's savings supported the move of the entire immediate family. Her money provided her agency and the wherewithal to help the family and transform its future. The money Isaac's wife, Lena, had accumulated was either inherited from her deceased parents or possibly given to her by her husband for household expenses. Sources pertaining to the Isemans' emigration note that Isaac's property was auctioned off (*Gant* in nineteenth-century German) as a result of his bankruptcy. His wife assumed additional responsibilities that needed to be addressed before emigration. She might also have assumed the remaining property in order to ensure emigration costs.¹⁷

On October 10, 1882, the magistrate of Stebbach reported that "Sigmund Eisemann [another Stebbach Eisemann] from this place, born January 3, 1866, has applied for his emigration passports in order to emigrate to America. . . . [W]e also have the honor to report that the applicant does not have any relatives he is legally bound to reveal and who would be left behind in destitution."¹⁸ The wording of this document is revealing concerning the attitude of the local government. It suggests that local officials were concerned about family members who might remain and become charity cases and that such circumstances might preclude the granting of an emigration passport. Again, the new community's gain could be translated into the former community's loss. Only seven Jewish families remained in Stebbach after Sigmund emigrated. He was likely a cousin to the South Carolina Isemans, but South Carolina as a destination was not inevitable. He settled in Arkansas and lived there until his death in 1954.¹⁹

The Isemans and Eisenmanns may not present an apparent connection, but all known Eisenmanns (with these name derivatives) who came from Stebbach are known or assumed to be related.²⁰ The Iseman siblings left for the United States by 1850, but they were part of a broader migration away from rural German areas. Between Isaak and Sigmund Eise(n)mann's emigration, the economy changed even further, quickening the decline of Jewish small-town life in the German states. The emergence of the railway especially altered economic conditions. Communities were more efficiently linked, allowing transportation of goods and people. Wholesale businesses could provide goods to retailers instantly. If

*Sigmund Eisemann's emigration
passport statement, issued in
Stebbach, October 10, 1882.
(Courtesy of the Jewish
Heritage Collection,
College of Charleston.)*

communities were not integrated into the transportation system, they fell behind. The railway reached Stebbach only in 1877.²¹ Stebbach had shrunk already by about a fifth between 1852 and 1871.

The Problem of Name Variations and Identification

As we trace families, one of the challenges is the overlapping of names and individuals carrying several names, often because several children in the same generation were named for the same ancestor. In the case of the Isemans, such confusion has confounded historians, including the authors of this article. Two Isaac Isemans were brothers, so one changed his first name to Iseman. Among the six siblings who moved to South Carolina, five named sons Myer (or Meir, etc.), and five named daughters Lizzie or Lizette.²² These children were named for their grandparents, Mayer Marx and Lippert Iseman.

People also went by several names—the name they were born with, nicknames, Hebrew names (sometimes with nicknames of the Hebrew), Yiddish names, and Americanized names. Also, census enumerators misspelled and mangled names, and indexers misread some of them. Often genealogists list individuals by several monikers, thus referring to a family tree can help identify the correct individuals. Iseman examples include Fannie/Fanny/Fradel/Freundel/Frendel/Frances, Isaak/Isaac/Iseman, Myer/Myre St. Wald, Leopold/Lep/Lepo, and Nesannah/Rosina/Rosena/Rose.

The Americanization or secularization of the family can be traced through names. This is also true of adaptation to the South such as the use of Bubba (for Moses Herman Levi, born in 1901) and Buck (used in two generations for William/Willie Isemans born in 1881 and 1929).²³ Daniel Deronda Strauss's name was likely based on the George Eliot novel. Two Elmo Lehmans, a father and son, were born in 1884 and 1910.²⁴ Changes in the name pattern may reflect not only secularization but also conversion. Marvin Iseman, born in 1928, became a Methodist minister.²⁵ Because

Manuel [Emanuel] and Sara[h] Iseman (image added after photo was taken) and their children, taken at the time of Sara's funeral in 1900. Back row, left to right: Ben, Rose, Dee [Israel DeWitt], Mike, Estelle, Myer, Isadore. Front row, left to right: Jay, Sara, Emanuel, Mollie, Sam, Hannah. (Courtesy of Neal Gosman.)

the Ashkenazic custom of naming for a deceased individual was widespread, on the occasions where sons bear the same name as their father (or daughters, their mother) it may suggest a departure from tradition, although this pattern was not completely uncommon among German Jews.²⁶ The geographical dispersion of Isemans throughout the United States complicates the search for connections, especially because they adopted variant spellings of the name including Eiseman, Eisemann and Eisenmann.

Family Connections

Histories of four brothers—Manuel, Iseman, Isaac, and Marx Mayer—who settled in Darlington, Charleston, and Marion, South Carolina in the mid-nineteenth century, are readily available. But did sisters also emigrate? By locating researchers whose interest was in the Isemans' town of origin, Franklin discovered a family tree that documented two Iseman sisters who also came to South Carolina: Helene (Hendel) and Fannie (Frendel). Helene married Gumpel Reichert (later Richard or Richards) in 1856.²⁷ Fannie's husband, Joseph Frank, was one of the earliest Jewish settlers in Darlington. Tracing the women and family connections enhances our exploration of the interface between genealogy and social and economic history.

Fannie's daughter Carolina married her sister Helene's son Gerson Richard. Marriages between cousins were common at the time. But the discovery of a connection between the Iseman brothers and the Richard and Frank families also helps us understand a tragedy that occurred in Marion in 1870.

Newspapers throughout South Carolina covered the tragic story of a fire that took Iseman Iseman's life and destroyed a number of buildings on the courthouse square. On March 4, the *Charleston Daily News* reported that Iseman "lost his life in his humane exertions to rescue a lady from the flames."²⁸ The next day, the newspaper provided additional details:

The other half of the building . . . was inhabited by G. Richard, who also kept a store on the first floor. Mr. Richard and his wife . . . succeeded with difficulty in getting out of the burning house. . . . Mr. Iseman, an old merchant of our town [he was forty-nine], hearing that Mrs. Richard was still in the house, ran through the smoke, followed by a colored man, to rescue her.²⁹

Iseman did not know that Mrs. Richard was already safe, and he was unable to escape before “an explosion of powder shook the building.”³⁰ The article describes how the other occupant of the house warned his brother, wife, and child. However, it does not identify any relationship between Iseman Iseman and Mrs. Richard.

Charleston (SC) Daily News,
March 4, 1870.

The weekly *Marion Star and Southern Real Estate Advertiser* published more information: “Iseman Iseman perished while trying to save his niece (Caroline Richard).³¹ We know from our family research that she was doubly related: her husband was a nephew of Iseman Iseman through his sister Helene, and Caroline was a niece through Iseman’s sister Fren-del/Fannie Frank.

The newspapers dwell on the tremendous tragedy of the fire: the financial devastation to many citizens of Marion and in particular the death of Iseman Iseman. The family tree offers further insights into the circumstances. Iseman Iseman had nine children, four of whom were from a first

marriage to Lena Hausmann, who died at the age of twenty-nine. At the time of her death in 1855, these four children were under the age of six. More than thirty nieces and nephews survived Iseman Iseman, with possibly more from his two wives.

The articles about the fire raise another question: Who was the black man who ran into the building with Iseman Iseman and later jumped out of a window to safety? He was not mentioned by name in any coverage of the incident. Was he an employee of the Isemans or Richards? A passerby? Sadly, despite his heroism we may never know his true identity. Yet, that he was willing to risk his life suggests a positive relationship between members of this Jewish family and an African American—a hint at the family's possible political and economic stance during this conflict-ridden era of Reconstruction.

The marriage connections continue. Two Iseman sisters married the same man, Abram Weinberg (the second after the first had died). Lisette Eisenman married a cousin, David Kahn, a son of Fannie Eisenmann.³² Thus by expanding the family tree beyond the male line, the researcher exposes a complex web: one generation of a single family that fostered its sense of community and its desire to retain Jewish identity through marriage. The information also illustrates the pattern of intertwined families from one European community settling together in a particular location in the United States, a typical phenomenon.

In America

The world the Isemans left behind in Baden was waning as economic progress, freedom of residence, and thus urbanization brought an end to traditional Jewish small-town German life. In the American South, however, conditions were favorable for merchants in small towns. This enabled economic success for immigrants, such as the Isemans, skilled in trade. Manuel and Iseman owned over one thousand acres of land. Both were also merchants, dealing in dry goods and furs.³³ Manuel was described as "one of the most prudent men in the district [and is] regarded as a reliable Israelite."³⁴ Marx Mayer Iseman, the youngest sibling, moved to Charleston where he was a baker. Isaac Iseman, who lived in various cities in South Carolina, was also a merchant in dry goods. Not everything went well for them, however. A *Marion Star* columnist wrote about Manuel's misfortunes in an 1884 article titled "Failure of an Honorable Merchant": "For the first time in a long and honorable business life, he has to face a combination of adverse circumstances."³⁵ Emigration provided no guarantee of long-term success.

During Reconstruction, members of the Iseman family took advantage of opportunities in the burgeoning cotton trade, as did many other Jewish merchants.³⁶ Court records point to additional clues about family and social history. In 1866, Horace M. Barry of North Carolina sued Manuel Iseman, Iseman Iseman, and Gerson Richards, all of South Carolina. Court records identify the two Isemans and Richards as "pretty extensively engaged in trade" and "possessed of considerable property, real and personal." The contract was for the Isemans and Richards to sell two hundred bales of cotton to Barry for thirty-three cents per pound. They did not sell him the cotton, and Barry sued. After this suit was won by the Isemans in the State Court in Charleston, Barry then brought suit before the United States District Court, and the case was heard in Columbia and returned to Charleston, where Barry succeeded in obtaining a verdict in his favor.³⁷

From October 25, 1865, until the end of the month, Barry placed a notice in the *Wilmington Herald* cautioning against "entering into any bargain, contract or agreement with M. Iseman, I. Iseman or G. Richards of Marion, S. C. for the purchase or sale of their several lots of cotton,

amounting in all to two hundred and sixteen bales. The said cotton having been sold by them the 9th of October 1865 to H. M. Barry, and a contract of the sale having been secured and regularly signed by the above parties."³⁸

From the family tree, we notice that the brothers were sued along with their nephew Richards, the son of their sister Helene. Although we do not know why the Isemans and Richards reneged on the deal, we do note these three Jewish cotton dealers were at least initially willing to conduct business with a non-Jewish northerner during Reconstruction. Horace M. Barry, along with his brother Robert, were commission merchants and steamship agents living in Wilmington, North Carolina. From New York, Horace Barry traveled south to trade immediately following the Civil War. The *Wilmington Daily Journal* on October 27, 1867, published a profile of Barry that was carried in other southern newspapers:

H. M. Barry is the only Northern Commission merchant now conducting operations on the wharf. Mr. Barry is one of those few Northern men of capital and energy who are applying the same to their proper uses in Southern markets and endeavoring to build up Southern enterprises. He is now conducting a large commission business, and deals heavily in Naval stores and produce, buying and selling entirely on commissions. Just after the occupation of this place by the Federal forces, Mr. Barry came here and assumed the agency for the Leary line of steamers.³⁹

In 1868 Manuel Iseman was elected to the position of warden in Marion.⁴⁰ This position, coupled with the dealings of Manuel Iseman, Iseman Iseman, and Gerson Richards with the Barrys, even if these ended in court, suggest the possibility that at least parts of the family supported Reconstruction.

Not all of the Isemans in South Carolina were small-town merchants. The life of Myre St. Wald Iseman took a much more colorful twist as he, like many children of German Jewish immigrants of his generation, became a professional.⁴¹ Born Myer Iseman in 1854 in Marion, Myre was the second of twelve children of Manuel Iseman and Sarah Jacobs. Myre is remembered as a pharmacist in Georgetown, South Carolina, in part because of photographs of his iconic storefront at 807 Front Street and because of the colorful prescription book from his business in the Iseman Family Collection.⁴²

*Myre St. Wald Iseman prescription book, c. 1889.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston.)*

*Iseman Drug Co., 807 Front Street, Georgetown, South Carolina, c. 1900.
(Courtesy of Georgetown County Library, Georgetown, SC.)*

Iseman studied at the University of Louisville School of Medicine, where he earned a degree in 1880. Returning to Darlington, he operated a drug store and served as an official meteorological observer for the state before the U.S. Weather Bureau was created in 1890.⁴³ By 1887 he had moved to Georgetown, where he ran a wholesale and retail drug store that also sold stationery, perfume, fancy goods, and toilet articles. Subsequently he practiced medicine in Atlanta, Washington, and Los Angeles.⁴⁴ Thus his career illustrates how some Jewish professionals remained highly mobile and switched from occupation to occupation.⁴⁵

Iseman's experiences in medical school in Louisville, where he was one of few Jewish students, no doubt influenced his attitudes towards race and society. In 1912, he published a book titled *Race Suicide*. The term *race suicide* refers to an idea within the eugenics movement during the late nineteenth into the early twentieth century that Anglo-Saxon birth rates were dropping below those of immigrant and minority groups they considered inferior. Those who subscribed to the theory, including sociologist Edward A. Ross, feared that the white "race" would thus die out and be replaced by the more fertile immigrant "races." Blame was cast primarily on immigrants (for having too many children) and on white women (for not having enough). Many politicians and doctors of the period subscribed to this philosophy. President Theodore Roosevelt gave a speech to the National Congress of Mothers in 1905 in which he asserted that a woman who is childless by choice contributes to race suicide. Roosevelt attacked college-educated women as well as birth control in the name of race betterment. Roosevelt was somewhat sympathetic to issues of women's rights, but held the "duty" to reproduce the "American race" as the overpowering consideration. He commented in a 1902 letter, "If the women do not recognize that the greatest thing for any woman is to be a good wife and mother, why, that nation has cause to be alarmed about its future."⁴⁶ The concept of race suicide reversed Darwinian survival of the fit to argue against what followers considered the survival of the unfit. It served as a major rationale for immigration restriction laws aimed partly against eastern European Jews.

Iseman's book *Race Suicide* offers a more nuanced approach to the topic and is much more sympathetic to the plight of women. Although the theory of eugenics was widely held at the time, its adherents displayed a range of views. Unlike many others, Iseman looked to societal reasons

*Myre St. Wald Iseman, Race Suicide,
1912. (Worthpoint.com.)*

for the decrease in the “Anglo-Teuton” population. Rather than blaming the women who were failing to have enough—or even any—children, he asserted that women deserved political rights and protection under the law: “While it is unquestionably woman’s mission to bring children into the world, it is debatable whether under all circumstances it is her duty to do so. Obligation to self is just as necessary in woman as in man.”⁴⁷ To quote a review in the *Buffalo Times*:

In this thorough study, Dr. Iseman has gone much further than the consideration of race suicide as that term is ordinarily used. He shows that this form of the evil is only one of many whereby its distinctive ends are accomplished. He tells of the evils of child labor, the physical and the mental dwarfing of the mill and the factory upon immature womanhood, and the effects of slum life in our cities. Furthermore Dr. Iseman deals with the subject as it most gravely affects the future for the great American republic. With the vigor of a strong, clear, broad mind, in a style pleasing as well as singularly forceful, Dr. Iseman presents in this masterly treatise a subject that is of utmost importance.⁴⁸

Iseman had turned race suicide on its head by transforming its focus to the social justice causes dear to the Classical Reform agenda of his generation. Myre St. Wald Iseman died in 1919 in Los Angeles, and his ashes are interred at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, a nondenominational cemetery. The Washington Centennial Lodge of Masons acknowledged his passing as a member.⁴⁹

More Family Connections

When research began on the Isemans, Franklin never expected to tackle so many larger issues relating to southern Jewish history, nor did she anticipate the broad scope of the family and their activities throughout the United States. The research uncovered an example relevant to women's history in the early 1880s. A twenty-one-year-old woman, Pauline Unger, left her family in New York to move to Savannah. We could not understand this move by looking at larger historical circumstances until examination of the family relationships enlightened us. Pauline's sister Rosalie had married a Munich-born Savannah man. Pauline most probably went south to help Rosalie care for her four sons under the age of five, one of whom, Percie, born in 1880, died in infancy.

Pauline Unger probably met Jacob Iseman while she was living in Savannah. In 1880 he was living in Marion. They married in about 1888. The Savannah business directory for 1889 shows Jacob Iseman in business with G. Eckstein, his brother-in-law.⁵⁰ Jacob and Pauline named their first son Percy, after the Percie who had died.

Like many Jewish families who arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, the lives of the Isemans took diverse trajectories in the twentieth century—in where they chose to reside, their cultural identification, and their occupations. Some members enjoyed a public presence such as Percy Reginald Iseman, a second-generation southern Jew born in Savannah who graduated from Columbia School of Mining in 1911.⁵¹ His work as a mining engineer took him shortly thereafter to Antofagasta, Chile, and he later became a director of Seeman Brothers, a wholesale grocery business owned by his wife's family.⁵² By the next generation, their son Joseph Seeman Iseman distinguished himself as an attorney and educator. He was affiliated for more than six decades with the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, serving in many capacities, including as managing partner. He was also well known for his role in the formation of the Children's Television Workshop, which originated *Sesame Street*. Among the clients he represented were Arthur Miller, Robert Motherwell (his brother-in-law), Vladimir Nabokov, and Theodore H. White.⁵³

The Isemans married into other well-known Jewish families including the Stixes, Sternbergers, Sycles, and Schafers. From South Carolina

Joseph Seeman Iseman. (Courtesy of Ellen M. Iseman.)

they moved throughout the country within a generation or two, many settling in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Little Rock, and Richmond. Distant Iseman cousins had moved to South Dakota by the 1860s.

Conclusion

This case study has drawn on readily available online and published sources for family historians including family trees on genealogical databases such as Ancestry.com, census records, the work of other genealogists, and public sources such as newspaper clippings and even communal histories in Europe. In doing so, the article illustrates how these types of sources help answer traditional historical questions in areas of immigration, economic, family, intellectual, political, social, race, and women's history. Concentrating on a single family, this essay also reflects the benefits of history from the bottom up.

NOTES

The authors are grateful for the work and support of Esther Brumberg, researcher and editor, who contributed extensively to this article.

¹ See, for example, Tobias Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (Chicago, 2012); Ava F. Kahn and Adam D. Mendelsohn, eds., *Transnational Traditions: New Perspectives on American Jewish History* (Detroit, 2014); Hasia Diner, *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migrations to the New World and the Peddlers Who Forged the Way* (New Haven, 2015); and Adam D. Mendelsohn, *The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (New York, 2015).

² "Das Dorf Stebbach als Lehen" [The village of Stebbach as a Fief], accessed May 12, 2019, http://stebbach-ortsgeschichte.de/index_4.htm; "Stebbach (Gemeinde [Community of] Gemmingen, Landkreis [County] Heilbronn)," Alemannia Judaica, accessed May 13, 2020, http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/stebbach_synagoge.htm. The four families were probably related to each other at the time they took their surnames. Anton Hieke translated the titles of all German sources in this article for clarity.

³ See "Edikt betreffend die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse der Juden in dem Preußischen Staate [Edict Concerning the Civil Conditions of Jews in Prussia], March 11, 1812," *Gesetz-Sammlung für die königlichen Preussischen Staaten [Statute Book of the Royal Prussian States]* 5 (1812): 17–22; Michael Wagner-Kern, *Staat und Namensänderung: die öffentlich-rechtliche Namensänderung in Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert [State and Name Changes: The Name Change in Germany in the 19th and 20th Centuries as Regulated by Law]* (Tübingen, 2002), 38–50. Lists of name adoptions provide a census of Jewish residents in individual communities for the period.

⁴ Baden's 65 German square miles in 1798 grew to 272 in 1815. Bavaria went from 1,061 to 1,500 square miles; Hesse-Darmstadt from 102 to 193; Hesse-Kassel from 156 to 210; and Württemberg from 155 to 355 square miles. Numerous Jewish immigrants moved from these areas to the United States. See Karl-Heinrich Lang, *Tabellen über Flächen-Inhalt, Menschen-Zahl, Einkünfte, und Bevorstehenden Verlust der Deutschen Reichs-Lande [Tables on Area, Number of People, Income, and Impending Loss of German Imperial Territories]* (Basel, 1798), 6, 11, 20, 30; Johann Georg Heinrich Hassel, *Lehrbuch der Statistik der Europäischen Staaten für höhere Lehranstalten, zugleich Handbuch zur Selbstbelehrung [Textbook of Statistics of the European States for Higher Education and Handbook for Self-Study]* (Weimar, 1822), 153, 200, 211, 217, 225.

⁵ Wilhelm Kreutz, "Die pfälzischen Juden der napoleonischen Ära: Bevölkerungsentwicklung, regionale Ausbreitung und Sozialstruktur [The Palatinate's Jews in the Era of Napoleon: Development of Population, Regional Distribution, and Social Structure]," in *Pfälzisches Judentum Gestern und Heute: Beiträge zur Regionalgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts [The Palatinate's Jewry and Judaism Then and Now: Contributions to the Regional History of the 19th and 20th Centuries]*, ed. Alfred Hans Kuby (Neustadt, 1992), 37–39.

⁶ "Die jüdische Gemeinde [The Jewish Community]," accessed May 13, 2020, http://stebbach-ortsgeschichte.de/index_10.htm. A growing number of non-Jewish historians have taken an interest in the former Jewish residents in their small towns in Germany

and eastern Europe and documented them. They trace the fate of Holocaust victims, survivors and refugees, their ancestors, and their descendants. Many initiatives in Germany were developed after 1988, the fiftieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht*. One can locate local researchers by asking other genealogists who share an interest in the town or archivists from the region, or by locating these publications. One can also seek information on Obermayer German Jewish History Award recipients. Awardees are individuals and organizations in Germany that have raised awareness of a once-vibrant Jewish history and culture in their communities through educational programs, exhibitions, restoration of synagogues and cemeteries, installation of Holocaust memorials, genealogical research, development of websites, publications, *Stolpersteine*, public programs, and other activities. There are almost one hundred awardees from twenty years of the program. Recently this type of effort has grown because of research in preparation for placement of *Stolpersteine* that identify Holocaust victims with cobblestone-sized memorials in the pavement in front of their last-known residences. Some of these projects also document the emigration history of the Jews of the towns, including those who left well before the Holocaust. These stories are often published on websites of local history initiatives or the official websites of communities. See, for instance, the “stumbling stone” for Marie Caroline Eisenmann (1886–1940) of Cannstatt, née Jäger, who was hospitalized in a mental institution in Winnweiler (some eighty miles away from Stebbach) and eventually euthanized by the Nazis in 1940. Prior to World War I, she had spent two years in America before returning to Germany. “Marie Caroline Eisenmann: ‘verlegt’ nach Grafeneck [Marie Caroline Eisenmann ‘Transferred’ to Grafeneck],” Cannstatter Stolperstein-Initiative, accessed June 29, 2019, <https://www.stolpersteine-cannstatt.de/biografien/marie-caroline-eisenmann-verlegt-nach-grafeneck>.

⁷ See Wolfram Angerbauer and Hans Georg Frank, *Jüdische Gemeinden in Kreis und Stadt Heilbronn: Geschichte, Schicksale, Dokumente* [Jewish Communities in the County and City of Heilbronn: History, Fate, Documents] 1 (Landkreis Heilbronn, 1986), 10.

⁸ The other Eisenmanns were Adolf and the widow of Wolf Eisenmann with her three children, David, Siegmund, and another David. See *Auswanderung aus Südwestdeutschland* [Emigration from South West Germany], accessed June 6, 2019, www.auswanderer-bw.de. German databases such as this can provide crucial information for emigrants from German communities in the area – how many people were traveling, where they were from, religion such as “*isr*,” etc. Yet these are far from complete, as less than half of all emigrants applied for passports and emigration permits.

⁹ *Auswanderung aus Südwestdeutschland*, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.auswanderer-bw.de/index.php?sprache=de&suche=1>. An English-language version of the site, *Emigration from Southwest-Germany*, is accessible through the same URL.

¹⁰ Uri R. Kaufmann, *Kleine Geschichte der Juden in Baden* [Brief History of the Jews of Baden] (Karlsruhe, 2007), 69.

¹¹ „Diary of Johann Jakob Spielmann, 1800–65,” in August Feßler, ed. “Tagebuch meines Urgroßvaters [Diary of My Great-Grandfather],” *Heimatgruß* [Notes from Home] aus Lichtenau, Ulm, Scherzheim, Muckenschopf, Grauelsbaum (Lichtenau, 1986), 20–26.

¹² Report of Grand-Ducal Chief Magistrate Messmer, May 29, 1850, Iseman Family Collection, box 1, folder 1a, Jewish Heritage Collection, Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC (hereafter cited as Iseman Family Collection). Joseph Iseman, a

great-grandson of Manuel, deposited these papers, the result of decades of research. He was the father of Ellen and Fred Iseman, who commissioned Karen S. Franklin to study their family.

¹³ Protected Jews, *Schutzjuden* in German, was a pre-emancipation concept of Jews in Germany being under a petty monarch's protection and owing the monarch compensation in return. Initially protected by the popes, Jews became direct subjects of the Holy Roman Emperor beginning with Frederick II in the thirteenth century. The popes' and emperors' eventually futile actions represented a genuine attempt to protect Jews after the tragic pogroms during the Crusades, causing, for instance, the destruction of the so-called *ShUM* (שומ) communities (ש - Speyer, ך - Worms, and ם - Mayence). In the decisive Golden Bull of 1356 (to some degree the German version of the English Magna Carta), the protection of Jews and the accompanying protection fee (*Schutzgeld*) shifted from the emperor to the petty monarchs. They thus determined the residence or nonresidence of Jews in their territories. Protected Jews became bondsmen generating steady income. The concept was discontinued with emancipation in Germany in the late nineteenth century. See Sabine Ullmann, "Judenschutz," *Historisches Lexikon Bayerns* [Historical Dictionary of Bavaria], accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.historisches-lexikon-bayerns.de/Lexikon/Judenschutz>.

¹⁴ Report of Grand-Ducal Chief Magistrate Messmer, May 22 and May 29, 1850; marriage certificate (Getraute Nro. 1) of Isaak Eisenmann and Lea Hausmann, April 7, 1846, box 1, folder 1a, Iseman Family Collection.

¹⁵ Claim of Fleischer and Ullmann against Lea Eisenmann, July 10, 1850, Iseman Family Collection.

¹⁶ The JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR) lists six Isemans buried in Columbia, SC. JOWBR, Ancestry, accessed May 25, 2020, <https://www.ancestry-library.com/search/collections/1411/>. Ancestry requires a subscription, but many public libraries offer access to it and other genealogical materials. See also Barnett Elzas, *The Jewish Cemeteries at Columbia, S.C.* (Charleston, SC, 1910), 6.

¹⁷ See Claim of Fleischer and Ullmann against Lea Eisenmann, July 10, 1850, Iseman Family Collection.

¹⁸ The Iseman Family Collection in Charleston includes copies of Isaac Iseman's emigration applications in German with an English translation. They also hold the emigration application of Sigmund Eisemann, one of the other emigrants from Stebbach noted in the database for southwest Germany. *Bericht des Gemeinderaths in Stebbach vom 10. Oktober 1882* [Report of the Community Council of Stebbach of October 10, 1882]. A translation of this document is not available, and it is but one example of sources in Germany and the United States that are difficult to access due to language barriers as well as the form of script. *Deutsche Kurrente*, the old German script used for this document, was a uniquely German style in use until the Nazi period. It was then no longer taught because of its impracticability for governing conquered, foreign-language nations. The bulk of handwritten German sources up to that point are in this style or a derivative of it. Yet, affordable script recognition software largely exists on the trial level only (such as *Transkribus*, transkribus.eu) because of its striking dissimilarities to other Latin-based scripts. Because scripts may be illegible even to modern native readers of German, central German archives may provide affordable transliteration services. Most genealogists facing that problem on a regular basis, however, have their "go-to" older

Germans still versed in *Deutsche Kurrente*. When seeking support in reading sources at hand, individuals knowledgeable in that style may be contacted through organizations and clubs such as *Freunde der Deutschen Kurrentschrift* [Friends of German Script], *deutsche-kurrentschrift.de*. The same basically holds true for German print (*Fraktur*, or a derivative of it) although to a lesser degree. Recognition software for traditional German print and for optical character recognition (OCR) is more readily available. Their success rate for German print, however, is still below that for Antiqua-based print.

¹⁹ “Sigmund Eiseman,” Oakland and Fraternal Historic Cemetery Park, Little Rock, *findagrave.com*, accessed May 2, 2019, *findagrave.com/memorial/64683140/sigmund-eiseman*. Findagrave.com, a nonsubscription website based on voluntary contributions, provides easy access to cemetery records, which in turn often permits conclusions concerning webs of relations within given regions. The tombstone may not only provide information regarding lifespan, but also place of origin and family relations, as typically only families and close relatives shared a plot. Cemeteries, in turn, allow conclusions as to the religious affiliation with Judaism, i.e., if the individual was affiliated with a synagogue of a certain branch, depending on the affiliation of the cemetery. For small-town communities, cemeteries also often served even more remote places, thus they help in identifying otherwise overlooked Jewish communities as well as ties between center and periphery Jewry. Databases such as *findagrave.com* rely heavily on volunteer work, thus information has to be taken with a grain of salt if a photograph of the tombstone is not added.

²⁰ “Iseman” is the American spelling of the German pronunciation of Eis[en]mann.

²¹ *Stebbach – Altgemeinde-Teilort* [Stebbach—Old Community~District], accessed May 12, 2019, https://www.leo-bw.de/web/guest/detail-gis/-/Detail/details/ORT/labw_ortslexikon/1951/Stebbach+%5BAltgemeinde-Teilort%5D; “Infrastruktur und Versorgung,” *Stebbach Ortsgeschichte*, accessed May 28, 2020, http://stebbach-ortsgeschichte.de/index_11.htm.

²² In only one case a grandchild was named Lizette. For the most part the eldest children received the names Myer and Lizette.

²³ Although Buck’s actual name was William Franklin Iseman, his tombstone reflects his nickname, Willie Buck Iseman. *Findagrave.com*, accessed June 10, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/91865834/willie-buck-iseman>. Certificate of death for William Franklin Iseman, South Carolina Death Records, 1821–1968, Ancestry, accessed June 10, 2019, https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=8741&h=1644127&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Mzl1&_phstart=successSource.

²⁴ Their grandmother/great-grandmother was Amelia Iseman.

²⁵ Obituary of Martha D. Iseman, South Carolina Obituary and Death Notices Collection, accessed May 25, 2020, http://www.genealogybuff.com/sc/state/webbbs_config.pl/noframes/read/1171.

²⁶ As an example, Karen S. Franklin was named Karen Jeanne Spiegel for her mother, Jeanne Spiegel. Five generations of Henry Morgenthau are named for Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

²⁷ Alex Calzareth, e-mail to Karen S. Franklin, February 28, 2018.

²⁸ *Charleston (SC) Daily News*, March 4, 1870.

²⁹ *Charleston Daily News*, March 5, 1870.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Marion (SC) Star and Southern Real Estate Advertiser*, March 2, 1870.

³² Using European records indexed on Ancestry.com or JewishGen.com facilitates tracing European records to the United States, and vice versa. From this, we find that Fanni Kahn was married to Marx Kahn in Stebbach. Her father was Maier Eisemann. Baden, Germany, Lutheran Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1783–1875, Ancestry, accessed June 4, 2019, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/61242>.

³³ “Darlington, South Carolina,” Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed June 10, 2019, www.isjl.org/south-carolina-darlington-encyclopedia.html. The reference to furs is from a letter to Joseph Iseman from a distant cousin, as archived in Joseph Iseman Family Papers.

³⁴ See Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (Berlin and Boston, 2013), 159.

³⁵ “Failure of an Honorable Merchant,” *Marion (SC) Star*, January 23, 1884.

³⁶ For a discussion of Jews in the cotton business, see Michael R. Cohen, *Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era* (New York, 2017).

³⁷ J. S. G. Richardson, *Reports of Cases at Law, Argued and Determined in the Court of Appeals and Court of Errors of South Carolina. Volume XIV. From November 1866, to May 1867; Inclusive* (Philadelphia, 1867), 129–42. The authors are indebted to attorney Beth Jacob for assistance in analyzing this case. Beth Jacob, e-mail to Karen S. Franklin, April 25, 2013.

³⁸ *Wilmington (NC) Herald*, October 28, 1865.

³⁹ “H. M. Barry,” *Wilmington Daily Journal*, October 27, 1867.

⁴⁰ *Columbia (SC) Daily Phoenix*, November 12, 1868.

⁴¹ Eric Goldstein, interview conducted by Karen S. Franklin, June 10, 2019.

⁴² Georgetown County Public Library, “The Iseman Drug Company in Georgetown, History Of SC Slide Collection,” accessed June 10, 2019, <https://www.knowitall.org/photo/ise-man-drug-company-georgetown-history-sc-slide-collection>. The prescription book, covering the years 1887 through 1889, includes handwritten prescriptions that are glued to the pages of the volume. Each prescription includes the prescription number, patient’s name, date, dosage, and formulation of the prescription. Myre St. Wald Iseman wrote most of the prescriptions. Iseman Family Collection.

⁴³ M. S. Iseman is noted as being the meteorological observer in Darlington in the early 1880s. *Second Annual Report of the State Board of Health of South Carolina* (Charleston, 1881), 25.

⁴⁴ Iseman Family Collection.

⁴⁵ For the similar story of David Mayer, a contemporary who started as a pharmacist and moved into different occupations, see Mark K. Bauman, “Factionalism and Ethnic Politics in Atlanta: German Jews from the Civil War through the Progressive Era,” *A New Vision of Southern Jewish History: Studies in Institution Building, Leadership, Interaction, and Mobility* (Tuscaloosa, 2019), 107–20.

⁴⁶ Adam Hochman, “Race Suicide,” Eugenics Archive, accessed June 6, 2019, <http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/535eedb87095aa0000000250>; “Theodore Roosevelt’s

1902 letter on 'race suicide' to Marie Van Horst," October 18, 1902, *progressingamerica*, accessed July 1, 2019, <https://progressingamerica.blogspot.com/2013/06/theodore-roosevelts-1902-letter-on-race.html>.

⁴⁷ M. S. Iseman, *Race Suicide* (New York, 1912), 213.

⁴⁸ *Buffalo (NY) Times*, September 8, 1912.

⁴⁹ *Washington (DC) Herald*, October 12, 1919.

⁵⁰ A. E. Sholes, ed., *Sholes' Directory of the City of Savannah for 1889* (Savannah, 1889), 249.

⁵¹ *Catalogue of Officers and Graduates of Columbia University from the Foundation of King's College in 1754* (New York, 1912), 591, accessed July 2, 2019, <https://archive.org/details/catalogueofoffic00colu/page/590>.

⁵² "Percy R. Iseman," *New York Sun*, June 15, 1942.

⁵³ "Joseph S. Iseman, 89, Lawyer and Educator, Dies," *New York Times*, May 1, 2006.

Book Reviews

A New Vision of Southern Jewish History: Studies in Institution Building, Leadership, Interaction, and Mobility. By Mark K. Bauman. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019. 587 pages.

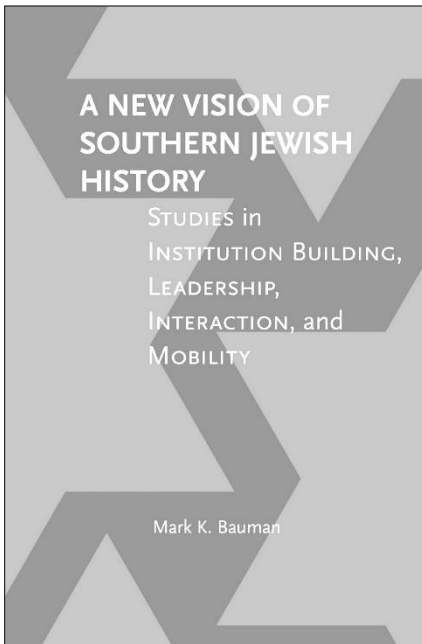
In October 1976, a cadre of academics, independent scholars, and lay people assembled in Richmond, Virginia, to participate in a conference that the Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS) hosted. Its predecessor had begun publishing a scholarly journal in 1958, but only three issues appeared – the last in 1963. The Richmond conference was intended to revive interest in the study of Jewish life in the American South, and the conclave succeeded. The need was evident. According to Melvin I. Urofsky, one of the organizers of the conference, “nearly every speaker prefaced his or her remarks with comments on the large amount of work that remain[ed] to be done and the vast areas of Southern-Jewish life about which we know virtually nothing.” Soon a host of researchers began churning out new historical studies, and the SJHS was no longer dormant.

Since then, works focusing broadly on the history of southern Jewry have burgeoned. Researchers have published hundreds of books, monographs, and articles examining and reexamining the religious, organizational, economic, cultural, social, and familial life of Jews living below the Mason-Dixon Line. Of the many capable scholars who have participated in this efflorescence of research over the past four decades, Mark K. Bauman merits special recognition. In addition to his own scholarly oeuvre, Bauman has played a singularly important role in

promoting this field of study by actively encouraging his colleagues, both junior and senior, to join him in researching the history of Jewish life in the South. Bauman was also the driving force behind the rebirth of the SJHS's journal, *Southern Jewish History*, which he has edited and stewarded for more than two decades.

Bauman's newest volume, *A New Vision of Southern Jewish History*, collects eighteen of his most incisive essays and constitutes the capstone of his prolific career. This volume is in every sense a magnum opus. Its substantial and readable essays have been helpfully organized into five broad sections: Community and Institution Building, Lay Leadership, Rabbinical Leadership, International Leadership, and Historiography and Synthesis. The author begins each of these sections with an exordium describing how the section's articles arose and how they conjoin to shed light on the theme of the section. Although they have appeared previously in various journals, the essays have been amended and brought up to date.

A New Vision examines a broad selection of topics: women's history, politics, sociology, ethnic tensions, institution building, leadership styles, religious life, and much more. Extensive use of new primary source material has enabled Bauman to reconstruct many facets of Jewish life in the South and has often led him to challenge many of the generalizations that had solidified into accepted "truths." For example, the chapter titled "Southern Jewish Women and Their Social Service Organizations" demonstrates how many women across the region worked on behalf of progressive causes, just as their coreligionists had done in the North and Midwest. This historical reconstruction challenges the prevailing impression that southern Jews would avoid confronting the norms of the conservative ethos of the region. For instance, attorney Sophie P. Friedman became one of the leading proponents of suffrage in Memphis and, subsequently, a prominent figure in that city's League of Women Voters. Bauman also documents the role of southern Jewish women who worked on behalf of "Jewish educational alliances, free kindergartens, social settlements, and mission schools just like their counterparts in the North during the 1890s and the early twentieth century" (88). This chapter advances convincing evidence that historians should avoid stereotyping southern Jewish women as they negotiated between "regional unity and distinctiveness" (100).



Bauman's chapter on Reform Judaism in the American South constitutes yet another example of how extensive use of primary source documents and innovative theoretical approaches can enrich our understanding of Reform Jewish history in America. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Reform became the dominant expression of southern Jewish religious life. Historians have usually focused on the postbellum growth of Reform. Yet in Bauman's important chapter, "Demographics, Anti-Rabbanism, and Freedom of Choice: The Origins and Principles of Reform at Baltimore's Har Sinai

Verein," he concentrates on Jewish reformation in the antebellum South. He points out that, as early as 1824, the leaders of the Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston denounced the imposing authority of Talmudic-oriented rabbis. As Charleston reformer Isaac Harby famously opined, the Jews of Charleston no longer wanted to practice their Judaism as "slaves of bigotry and priestcraft." Bauman then offers new insight by noticing that, in 1842, the Reformist founders of Har Sinai congregation took their antirabbinic attitudes even one step further. The Baltimore reformers not only rejected the traditional authority of the Talmudists but also refused to adhere to the biddings of their own rabbinic leaders! Bauman contends that it was during the antebellum years that social conditions in Charleston and Baltimore provoked Jews to question and challenge *all* rabbinical authority, both historic and contemporary. Accordingly, the beginnings of the general repudiation of halachic authority in Reform Judaism may be traced back to the nation's first organized manifestation of Jewish reform in the South.

Finally, after decades of studying southern Jewry, Bauman has concluded that much of the historiography on Jewish life in the American South has failed to adequately acknowledge the fact that southern cul-

ture is fundamentally analogous to American culture. He argues this case most forcefully in "The Southerner as American: Jewish Style" — an essay that, he contends, may be "the most controversial piece ever published in the field" (249). In this essay, Bauman challenges many of the standard themes that have been used to support the notion of the distinctiveness of the region. He disputes these generalizations and demonstrates that many of its so-called "distinguishing characteristics" transcend the boundaries of the South. "I do not argue against distinctions across regional lines," Bauman insists, "but, instead, [I] suggest that the distinctions have been exaggerated and that local environments are equally important in understanding how people and institutions adapt" (250).

Bauman's extensive research, so evident in this fine volume, has led him to three broad contentions. First, the history of Jewish life in the South has been largely mischaracterized as inveterately parochial. Secondly, "the study of southern Jewish history can offer new insights into national Jewish history" (7). Finally, the South has never been a monolithic section of the country as many historians frequently imply. The Jews who lived in Baltimore, Atlanta, and New Orleans faced a different South than did their coreligionists in towns like Cumberland, Maryland, or Albany, Georgia, or Monroe, Louisiana. Bauman has insisted that "local conditions become as important as the regional environment, and the story of diversity adds nuance to the prevailing paradigm" (251). Scholars and researchers will undoubtedly challenge some of the author's theories. No one, however, can dispute the value and the power of what Bauman has accomplished. He deserves enduring respect for his unflinching dedication to the field and for compellingly illustrating what Marni Davis has called "the limits of southern Jewish 'exceptionalism' as a framing device." Anyone interested in the history of Jewish life in the South will be enriched and enlightened by reading this book.

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Extracted: Unmasking Rampant Antisemitism in America's Higher Education. By S. Perry Brickman. New York: Morgan James Publishing, 2019. 340 pages.

On October 10, 2012, James Wagner stood at the Cox Auditorium on the Emory University campus in Atlanta to make a striking announcement: "On behalf of Emory University, serving as its present president, I hereby express in the deepest, strongest terms, Emory's regret for the antisemitic practices of the dental school. . . . We at Emory also regret that it has taken this long for those events to be properly acknowledged. I am sorry; we are sorry." Among the victims of this policy had been S. Perry Brickman, an oral surgeon who concluded that "with that [announcement], the burden of pain so many of us still bore was immeasurably eased."

Extracted is much more than its title implies. It is a history lesson, a biography, and a mystery novel all rolled into one and culminating with Wagner's apology. We are taken back and forth through the history of academic antisemitism in the United States. Brickman traces how universities and professional schools implemented limitations on Jewish enrollment and how the American Dental Association's (ADA) Council on Dental Education (CODE) aided this effort. These factors came together at Emory University in a unique and cruel way, so that virtually every Jewish dental student between 1948 and 1961 was targeted.

Riding the wave of nativist feelings in the 1920s and the passage of legislation to limit immigration, Ivy League schools led the way in limiting their enrollment to "desirable" (native-born, white, Protestant) applicants. In 1943, Dr. Harlan Horner, an ADA executive, presented a report to the organization that evaluated every dental school, outlined their deficiencies, and then recommended ways to remedy their problems. At the time of the report, 36 percent of the nation's dental students were Jewish. CODE adopted the proposal that quotas be imposed in American dental schools to ensure what it considered equitable racial and geographic distribution.

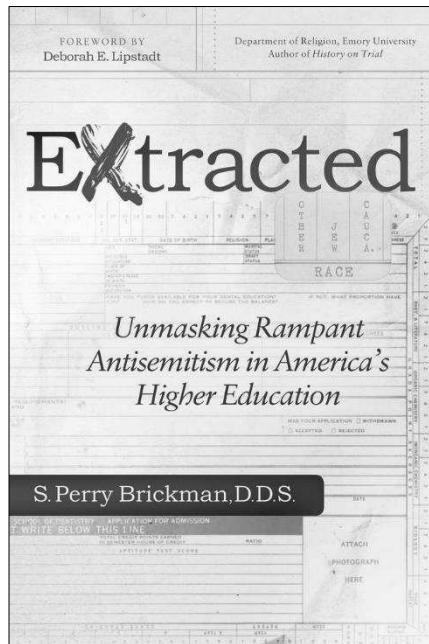
Those quotas altered the life of Perry Brickman. Growing up in Chattanooga, he typified a generation of southern Jews who were raised in the 1940s and 1950s in communities with small Jewish populations. This reviewer was typical too. Other than exclusion from certain social

clubs and golf courses, we experienced little overt antisemitism in our daily lives. In 1949 Brickman enrolled at Emory University, joined a Jewish fraternity, and met his future wife, Shirley Berkowitz. In 1951, after two years as an undergraduate, the dental school at Emory accepted him into its program. It is not surprising that he would expect his years at Emory's dental school to be equally rewarding. His three Jewish classmates shared these expectations, but would suffer the same fate.

On May 22, 1952, Brickman received a letter that dismissed him from Emory's dental school. Without warning, the promise of a career in dentistry was seemingly over. The devastation of that day, magnified by the words of his mother, is impossible to grasp. His book describes the journey from the worst of times to the best of times. He enrolled at the University of Chattanooga, worked in a dental laboratory, and was admitted to the University of Tennessee Dental School in 1953.

Extracted is a deeply personal story of family, friends, perseverance, love, success, and, ultimately, discovery, exploration, and closure. Hard work, a supportive family, the perfect spouse, strong faith, and good luck all were evident. It might have remained as just a good story had it not been for the events of September 10, 2006.

For fifty-four years, the reason for Perry Brickman's dismissal from dental school was a mystery—a mystery that might never have been discovered if the Brickmans had not been invited to the special exhibit, "Thirty Years of Jewish Studies at Emory." The exhibit was part of an upcoming event celebrating the thirtieth year of Emory's Jewish studies department. There an Anti-Defamation League (ADL) bar graph revealed that 65 percent of the Jewish dental students at Emory failed during the decade from 1948 to 1958,



while John Buhler served as dean. The ADL bar graph inspired Brickman to make it his mission to uncover the story behind the statistic. He realized that his dismissal was not an isolated case but was one of many that permanently changed the careers and lives of other Jews.

Brickman's retirement enabled him to pursue a second career as an investigative journalist. He asked several questions. How did I not know what had happened at the dental school at Emory? Why did I not know? Why was nothing done, even when suspicions of antisemitism were stirred? What happened to those students who came before and after me? Brickman provides answers in *Extracted* and in his video, *Emory University School of Dentistry: The Buhler Years, 1948-1961*.

The road to discovery would prove to be as difficult as any oral surgery procedure that Brickman experienced in his career, and *Extracted* could not be a more appropriate title for this book. Finding and extracting information from files, long forgotten; locating and interviewing other victims and people who knew vital information; and putting the pieces together would take the next five years of his life.

In 1961 the organized Atlanta Jewish community offered little cooperation. In fact the Jewish Federation and the Community Relations Council (CRC) even resisted the ADL's efforts. The prevailing attitude was to accept the resignation of Dean Buhler in 1961 and move on. "Here the matter rests," the ADL's Benjamin R. Epstein and Arnold Foster wrote the following year in *"Some of My Best Friends . . ."*: "All concerned—students, faculty, administration, community—are convinced that the long period of foul air at Emory University Dental School caused by religious discrimination has been finally cleared—for good." This would, however, not be the end of the investigation.

Extracted also has a hero in Arthur Levin, the southeast regional director of the Anti-Defamation League. Levin was determined to make Emory admit and deal with its record of anti-Jewish bias, and he offered irrefutable evidence of Buhler's treatment of Jewish dental students. The CRC, however, wanted to reduce the pressure on the university. Faced with denials from Emory's president, Atlanta's Jewish leaders were willing to let bygones be bygones. Levin left Atlanta in 1962, and his role in this story was not revealed until 2010, when Brickman interviewed him at the age of ninety-three.

For readers of this journal, the revelations of *Extracted* will be invaluable; however, for those of us who attended the school, it has a deeper meaning. I entered Emory Dental School in 1963, just two years after the departure of Dean Buhler. Emory was a different place, even though several of the instructors identified in this book as Buhler's co-conspirators remained on the faculty. My Jewish classmates and I heard stories of the Buhler years. As far as I can remember, we were not treated differently from our non-Jewish classmates.

This reviewer has known Perry Brickman for more than half a century, beginning with my days as a dental student at Emory. He was already an established oral surgeon, and the Brickmans were always welcoming to the members of Alpha Omega, the Jewish dental fraternity. The names and places in *Extracted* are not just a history lesson. Many of my Alpha Omega brothers had begun their dental education during the Buhler years. *Extracted* is Brickman's first book and may be his only one. He has brought closure to the individuals who were forced to alter their lives because they were born Jewish. Those of us who followed him at Emory can never be more grateful and proud of our colleague and friend. *Yasher Koach!*

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Touched with Fire: Morris B. Abram and the Battle Against Racial and Religious Discrimination. By David E. Lowe. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. 287 pages.

Morris B. Abram first achieved fame as the civil rights attorney who successfully argued *Gray v. Sanders*, the "one man, one vote" case that the Supreme Court decided in 1963. The majority decision rejected as unconstitutional the state of Georgia's discriminatory county unit voting system for statewide primary elections, which had effectively expunged the urban and black vote. This eight-to-one ruling marked the culmination of a seventeen-year legal battle that pitted Abram against the formidable rural political machine of the Talmadge family. Overcoming a previous aversion to drawing political maps, the high court thus

repudiated the warning of retired justice Felix Frankfurter (the third Jew to serve on the Court) against entering the “political thicket.” In making elections more democratic, *Gray v. Sanders* served as a testament to Abram’s tenacity.

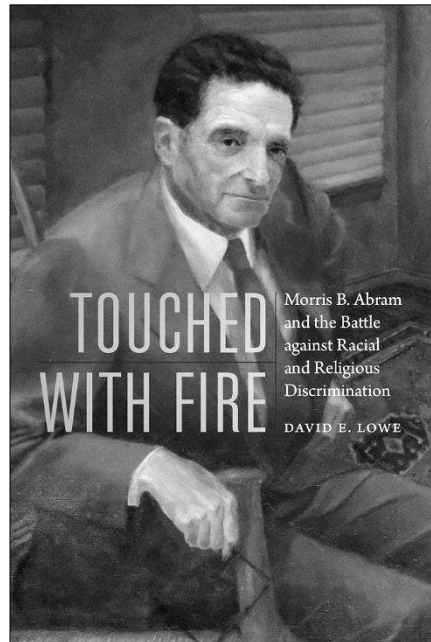
In this new biography, David E. Lowe is at his best in describing this significant chapter of legal history and also in recounting Abram’s later stint as a self-styled human rights crusader during the final decades of his life, when he helped found the pro-Israel NGO UN Watch in Geneva. He previously served there as United States ambassador to the UN. The author had at his disposal an extensive collection of Abram’s speeches, correspondence, subject files, interview transcripts, press clippings, and audio-visual materials comprising over 110 boxes housed at Emory University. Abram would doubtless have appreciated Lowe’s unadorned but buoyant prose, which floats easily off the page. So too does the reader, who also reaps the benefit of the author’s access to dozens of individuals who interacted with Abram during the various chapters of his career, from Vernon Jordan and John Lewis to George Schultz and Linda Chavez, besides members of the Abram family. Lowe ably navigates the reader through the major chapters of Abram’s career: his years practicing law in Atlanta and New York, his governmental work in five American presidential administrations (Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, Reagan, and H. W. Bush), his presidency of Brandeis University, his leadership role in the Jewish community as national president of the American Jewish Committee and chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, and his Israel advocacy as founding director of UN Watch.

It is unfortunate that the author was unable to interview Abram’s first wife, Jane Maguire Abram, who died in 2009. She was at Morris’s side for thirty years and was the mother of his five children. Yet we only get glimpses of their marriage and the impact that this woman had on his formation and career. What we learn begs for greater elaboration. Despite excelling academically and socially at the University of Georgia, Morris was apparently still a bit of a country bumpkin. Jane played Henry Higgins to Morris’s Eliza Doolittle. Ironically, his blue-blooded Methodist-born wife (who converted to Judaism sometime after the wedding) also appears to have helped Morris come to terms with his Jewish identity, particularly its ethnonational component. In the summer

of 1946, while Morris was serving on the prosecutorial staff in Nuremberg, directly confronting the horror of the Nazi genocide, Jane emphatically told him that “either you’re a Jew with no heart or a Zionist.”

But *Touched with Fire* reveals that Morris came to resent Jane’s domineering personality; she reminded him too much of his mother. The book’s early pages paint a picture of Abram’s parents’ strained marriage—the emasculation of the ineffectual eastern European Sam at the hands of the genteel Alsatian-descended Irene. Lowe does not doubt that Abram loved his father but internalized his mother’s haughtiness, her belief that she and her progeny were too good for their home town of Fitzgerald, Georgia, including its small community of eastern European Jewish immigrants. In wooing and wedding Jane, Morris may well have been emulating his own father by marrying a Methodist incarnation of his mother.

But Lowe declines to put Abram on the couch. Nor does *Touched with Fire* draw sufficiently upon its subject’s copious writings and the transcripts of the lengthy and revealing interviews that historian Eli Evans conducted with Abram to provide needed depth to this character study. Lowe mostly invites the reader to see Abram through the eyes of his friends, family, and colleagues. Too often, the adulation seems virtually boundless. The Abram in this biography resembles the vainglorious memoirist who wrote *The Day is Short* (1982), which *New York Times* reviewer David Margolick observed reads more like “advocacy than autobiography.” Margolick cracked that “in *The Day is Short*, the humility is even shorter.” The approach that Lowe takes thus denies the reader a fuller appreciation of Abram’s complexity—not least how his self-perception as an



underdog might have factored into his civil rights and human rights work.

Too favorable an authorial stance especially interferes with the need to explain Abram's political transformation. Rather than interrogating Abram's flummoxed response to the radicalization of the civil rights movement, Lowe mostly settles for reportage and occasional morsels of facile analysis from his subject's associates. (A perceptive reflection by David Harris, the longtime American Jewish Committee CEO, is a happy exception.) Lowe appropriates Irving Kristol's by now all-too-familiar quip that liberals like Abram were simply "mugged by reality" and accepts at face value Abram's claim that it was the world that had changed, while he held steadfastly to his principles. *Touched with Fire* thus declines to piece together the puzzle of how a champion of racial equality, a southern liberal who initially hailed Lyndon Johnson's 1965 executive order mandating "the full realization of equal employment opportunity through a positive, continuing program in each executive department and agency," later changed his mind, unmoved by evidence that the white backlash against desegregation rendered colorblind constitutionalism an inadequate means to achieve a racially egalitarian society.

Lowe registers Abram's dismay at the anti-Zionist rhetoric that emerged from the black nationalists and the New Left in the wake of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Yet the author might have more aggressively explored a connection between Abram's emerging Zionist consciousness and his souring on the civil rights movement, including ameliorative racial preference programs in employment and higher education. But Lowe seldom turns to the secondary historical literature when situating his subject's actions. A fuller treatment of the disintegration of the black-Jewish alliance in the mid-to-late 1960s would have provided needed context for radical black leaders' sense of American Jews as ethnically undifferentiated from other white Americans, as well as such militants' growing sympathy for the Palestinians as victims of white colonialist oppression.

Such contextualization also would have helped to explain Abram's exaggerated sense of the threat posed by the black students occupying Brandeis University's Ford Hall administrative building in January 1969, during his brief and traumatic stint as that university's president. Those students, like their counterparts at other universities, were rejecting the

Cold War liberal consensus that Abram epitomized. But where he saw wild-eyed radicals hell-bent on violence, his aides as well as student body president Eric Yoffie (a future leader of the Reform movement) saw socially isolated and desperate young people. Many of them were woe-fully unprepared for the academic rigor of an elite university and were nervous about their upcoming final exams. Many were tired of enduring casual racial indignities, both intentional and unintentional. All of them felt patronized and misled by Abram's predecessor as president and were radicalized by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and by takeovers at other campuses like San Francisco State University.

Curiously, Lowe overlooks Abram's fascinating relationship with one of the black student leaders, Roy DeBerry, which is well documented not only in Abram's papers and his autobiography but also in J. Anthony Lukas's *Don't Shoot—We Are Your Children* (1973), a volume omitted from Lowe's bibliography. Unlike most blacks on the Brandeis campus, who hailed from urban communities in the North, DeBerry was a Mississippi native. "He and I understood each other as well as anybody on that campus understood each other," Abram confided to Eli Evans. "There was between us a common experience—the South." There is much to unpack about Abram's attitudes toward race and his southern Jewish identity in those reflections and in the Abram-DeBerry relationship as a whole. But Lowe declines to go there, choosing not to see the extent to which Abram's political evolution was intertwined with his bruised psyche. This is all the more surprising because Abram practically invites such probing. "It was Brandeis that would resonate within me when the Bakke case arose a decade later at the University of California," he wrote in his autobiography, referring to the 1978 landmark affirmative action Supreme Court case. Abram was far more comfortable doling out scholarships to aspiring young black students attending historically black colleges and universities as chairman of the United Negro College Fund than he was tussling with ungrateful northern black radicals who were unimpressed with his civil rights bona fides.

And while the author devotes a few pages to Abram's bout with acute myelocytic leukemia, he writes virtually nothing about Abram's role in the emerging patients' rights movement, a topic dwelt on in *The Day is Short*. Abram's proactive involvement in his medical care was almost unheard of in the 1970s. Here was a case where Abram's stub-

bornness, determination, egotism, and sense of entitlement might have made the difference between life and death, endowing him with the chutzpah to cajole, argue with and even threaten his care team when it appeared that bureaucratic issues and scientific research protocols would preclude the most aggressive and cutting-edge treatment. Even if medical historian Barron Lerner is correct that the chemotherapy regimen rather than the experimental treatments likely accounts for Abram's remission and survival, his example, which received prominent coverage in the *New York Times*, inspired other patients to demand a voice in their treatment.

An iconic champion of civil rights who became a vehement opponent of affirmative action, an ally of Reverend King who became a Republican who worked for Ronald Reagan, a small-town southerner who died in cosmopolitan Geneva, Morris Berthold Abram was a bundle of paradoxes. They make him at once fascinating, inspiring, exasperating, and infuriating. While *Touched with Fire* does not quite succeed in presenting an unvarnished and sufficiently deep portrait of Abram the man, David Lowe offers a highly readable and far-ranging exploration of his notable career.

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Between Dixie and Zion: Southern Baptists and Palestine before Israel. By Walker Robins. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2020. 235 pages.

Over the course of the last generation, American evangelicals in general and Southern Baptists in particular have been supporters of Israel—more so than members of most other religious groups. That has led to the assumption that Southern Baptists have favored the Zionist cause since their denomination was founded during the 1840s. Walker Robins, a historian at the University of Oklahoma, has researched the Baptist involvement in the Holy Land, as well as the Baptist relation to both Arabs and Jews before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. He has unearthed a more complex and varied picture than was previously held. *Between Dixie and Zion* therefore corrects standard mis-

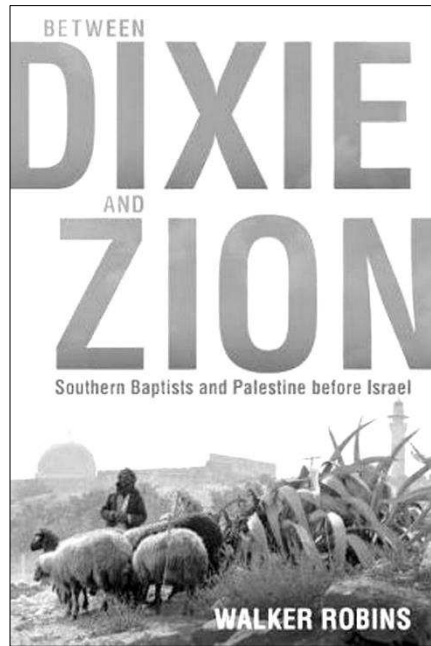
perceptions, providing a subtle and rich analysis of Southern Baptist opinions on and interaction with the land of Israel, its people, and those wishing to own and transform it.

Like other Protestant groups, Baptist interest in the Holy Land came about during the nineteenth century. Safer and quicker means of travel to the Middle East, coupled with more friendly Ottoman policies in the later decades of that century, enhanced the actual Baptist engagement with Palestine (chapters 1 and 2). A series of Southern Baptist ministers and writers visited Palestine, sharing their experiences in articles and travelogues. The images of the country they promoted fitted Western Orientalist attitudes. The Ottoman rulers, they reported, abused the inhabitants and neglected the country. In the Baptists' view neither the Muslims, who comprised the majority of the population, nor the overwhelmingly non-Protestant Christian minorities, were very competent. These inhabitants of the Holy Land, including the Jews, needed the transforming power, Baptists believed, that only Jesus could provide (Introduction, chapter 2).

By the mid-nineteenth century, other Protestant denominations, such as Anglicans, Lutherans, and Presbyterians, began evangelizing in Palestine among the local Christian and Jewish population. The goal was to establish Protestant communities and to install medical and educational facilities. Baptist missionary efforts started later. The first Baptist missionaries were Arab converts who had been born in Palestine and had immigrated to America in the late nineteenth century. They returned to Palestine as Baptist-sponsored evangelists seeking to create large and permanent Baptist missionary stations and congregations. These attempts were only partly successful (chapter 3). In the 1920s the Southern Baptist Convention began sponsoring more systematic missionary work in Palestine. The British, who gained control after the military collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1917, protected and nourished Christian communities and institutions, enabling several Protestant denominations, including the Southern Baptists, to enlarge their presence in the country. Missionaries served as the representatives of their denominations. But diversity of opinion regarding the role and viability of Zionism characterized these evangelical efforts, reflecting the absence of consensus in the Southern Baptist community back home (Chapter 4).

The most dramatic spurt of activity in the missionary network in Palestine occurred in the aftermath of World War II, when Robert Lindsey emerged as the senior evangelist of the Southern Baptists. Armed with a charismatic and energetic personality, Lindsey presided over the growth of an extensive network of missions, congregations, publications, and educational work. He was decisive in turning the Southern Baptists into one of the more visible and influential Christian groups in Israel.

Such growth was hardly a coincidence. In the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, the British government had expressed support for the Zionist aim of creating a national home for the Jews and the growth of a Hebrew-speaking community in Palestine. That explicit support affected the Baptists as well as other Christian groups, even as Zionism was turned into a more viable option in the Jewish world than in the previous centuries of dispersion. The geography of Palestine, the ideology of Zionism, and the emergence of Arab nationalism captured the headlines and became topics of international political discourse. Adoption of new theological convictions also shaped Baptist attitudes as the premillennialist Messianic faith made inroads into Baptist circles. Some Baptist leaders, such as J. Frank Norris, adopted premillennialism and came to view modern Jewry as the heirs of historic Israel and as the subjects of biblical prophecies envisioning a restored Davidic kingdom (Chapter 8). Norris was a maverick who by no means represented the denomination at large. But other Baptists also promoted a premillennialist and pro-Zionist outlook (chapter 7). For example, a Jewish convert named Jacob Gartenhaus advocated a pioneering brand of Hebrew Christianity and premillennialist pro-Zionism while serving as a missionary from the 1920s through the 1940s. To oppose the Zionist hope,



he declared, was to oppose God (73), although his position did not prevail.

Between Dixie and Zion promotes the idea that before the birth of Israel Southern Baptists either gave secondary place on their agenda to the realities of the Holy Land and the Zionist endeavor or held multiple—and at times opposing—views. No party line existed. No decisive resolutions managed to pass on the subject of the Holy Land. Robins’s claim is therefore convincing that Baptist views did not lend themselves easily to such categories as “pro-Zionist” or “pro-Arab.” Instead Southern Baptists formed their opinions within the framework of American evangelical and southern categories (chapter 9). The author nevertheless points to a few general trends that the denomination eventually displayed. Taking an Orientalist line, Baptists who formed an opinion on the Holy Land saw the Arabs as a passive or backward people and the Jews as more worthy and capable of developing the country. Likewise, while Messianic understandings of the developments in Palestine were not yet universal among Baptists, premillennialist convictions began to inform Baptist opinions (chapter 7). Such beliefs would later become decisive in crystallizing Southern Baptist attitudes towards Israel and toward the vicissitudes of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Between Dixie and Zion is impressive in the extent and depth of its research. Unearthing a large array of primary sources and refusing to follow conventional perceptions, Robins weaves a fresh and complex portrayal of Baptist images of and involvement with Palestine and its peoples. The author has also presented a gallery of fascinating personalities and pertinent publications, which give voice to Baptist opinions, activists, and institutions up to the mid-twentieth century. Students of religion in America will therefore find Robins’s book highly instructive. They will join readers who are interested in the history of Christianity and the Holy Land, as well as the development of Christian attitudes towards Jews, Zionism, Arabs, Muslims, and Eastern Christianity. Because *Between Dixie and Zion* constitutes a serious scholarly contribution to these fields, I highly recommend it.

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Jews of Florida: Centuries of Stories. By Marcia Jo Zerivitz. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2020. 412 pages.

By her reckoning, Marcia Jo Zerivitz has spent three and a half decades amassing the records of memories and oral histories, the documents and the other material objects about the scattered Jewish communities of Florida. Many of the items were displayed in the traveling public exhibit MOSAIC, which she organized, and are housed in the Jewish Museum of Florida in Miami Beach, where she was the founder and first executive director. With the publication of *Jews of Florida*, the fruits of her research and travels are now available to a much wider and more permanent audience. This large volume is sumptuously illustrated yet is available for just sixty dollars in hardback, a bargain for a book of this magnitude.

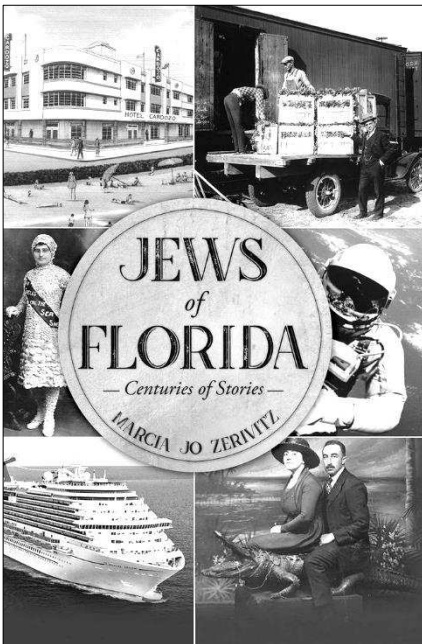
This tome stirs memories of my own. A third of a century ago, when I embarked on my first trip to South Florida as the newly minted director of the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Florida (UF), I rode along with Samuel Proctor. Sam, as he was universally known, was the doyen of American Jewish studies at UF and was also the leading scholar of Florida Jewry. For hours, he regaled me with tales of Florida from the nineteenth century onward, tutoring me about the history of Jews in the Sunshine State. Reading this book reminded me of that pleasant excursion, and I was glad that Ms. Zerivitz has paid posthumous homage to him as one of her own mentors.

Jews of Florida is a remarkable accomplishment, bringing together a wealth of material that covers Jewish life in this large, diverse state from the eighteenth through twenty first centuries. The volume is organized into eight parts, with multiple chapters under each heading. The major portion of the book, encompassing nearly two-thirds of the pages, is devoted to the individual Jews who have achieved renown in Florida. In some senses, it is like reading a biographical directory with photographs showing these historic figures, their families, homes, and businesses. Such an approach might be derided as antiquarian history, but I was fascinated by the stories of how Jews made their way to Florida from elsewhere, put down roots, and built lives of significance. The last third of the volume covers a variety of topics, including religious life, communal institutions, antisemitism, acculturation, and the meaning of Jewish

identity. Although not intended as a reference book, *Jews of Florida* will serve that function for some readers. Fortunately, a superb index helps make that possible.

The book represents a labor of love by an author who has made it her life's work to chronicle the Jewish experience in what is now the nation's third-most-populous state. No other published work captures so thoroughly the breadth of the state's Jewish community nor the scope of Jewish engagement with Florida. Driven by stories presented in a conversational tone, the book is accessible to general readers. The author is especially generous in citing those who have provided her with information for the production of this book. These include individuals who shared family stories as well as scholars who have paved the way for aspiring historians of Florida Jewry. Although quick to credit the contributions of others, Zerivitz uses her own voice in telling the stories that thread through *Jews of Florida*.

The coverage of individuals is astonishingly comprehensive. In my almost three and half decades living in this state, I have met numerous accomplished Jewish Floridians, and the author seems to have a photo and capsule account of most of them. She knows where they came from,



how they got here, and where they settled. It seems fitting that two of the five people who provided her with advance praise for the volume are friends of mine (and, in one case, also a former student). At the same time, I was occasionally surprised to learn that some of the people I had known by their general reputations were members of the tribe, like the swimmer Dara Torres.

Scholars should be aware that this is not a conventional narrative history with a clear overriding theme. The author does draw conclusions, but they tend to celebrate the achievements of Jews in

Florida while recognizing instances of antisemitism that have marred the Jewish experience. I suspect most academics will use *Jews of Florida* as a reference, but others will also enjoy dipping into Zerivitz's pages to see how images and text are artfully combined to engage the reader. I most enjoyed Part 4, which deals more with objects and photos than with biographical capsules. The author nicely breaks down how Florida's Jews commemorated life cycle events and holidays, practiced their religion, and grieved their loved ones.

Anyone who writes a book will receive instructions from reviewers who tell the author how it should have been written. *Jews of Florida* may be something of an exception, because, although I have some criticisms, I do not think the volume should have been written differently. It admirably suits the author's purpose, which is to convey the history of Florida Jewry through the medium of storytelling. The main omission of this book is greater coverage of the communal institutions Jews developed over the decades—a sphere of Jewish life in which the author has been deeply involved. Those myriad institutions are mentioned when individuals who donated time and money to them are celebrated, but accounts of the institutions are not developed in adequate detail. They are present, as it were, but largely immanent, disembodied because of the author's emphasis on individual biography. The section on the Jewish contributions to Florida education is also thinner than warranted. Judging by the interviews in the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, the University of Florida played a key role in developing Jewish communal leadership. UF admitted Jewish students well before (from the 1930s through the 1960s) and in larger numbers than many public and private institutions elsewhere. Notwithstanding the genteel antisemitism that still existed on campus, the university provided an opportunity for Jewish students to network across communities, thereby building lasting relationships that helped them achieve important positions in the professions, various industries, and eventually politics.

I was also disappointed that the first paragraph in the foreword—written by long-time Jewish communal activist Mark Talisman—denigrated my academic discipline as “so-called political science” (xiii). Yet it evidently takes a political scientist to capture the error when the book claims that 78 percent of American Jews practice their religion. The Pew Center report that Zerivitz cites for evidence actually says that 78

percent of Americans who have Jewish parentage report that they *identify* as Jews, not that they necessarily practice Judaism with any rigor. Indeed, less than a quarter of self-identified Jews in the Pew survey said that observing Jewish law was central to their Jewish identity. Zerivitz's error does not fundamentally affect the quality of her book, nor is she responsible for the snarky comment in the foreword.

Despite these quibbles, I deeply admire the author for her doggedness, commitment, and care in writing and assembling a book of this caliber. A fitting testament to her career in Jewish communal service, the book will help Florida Jews better understand how they came to be a small but influential force in the development of Florida as a major state.

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Exhibit Reviews

Modern Visions, Modern Art: The Cone Sisters in North Carolina. At the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum, Blowing Rock, North Carolina, August 3 through November 30, 2019. Curated by Dianna Cameron and Carrie Streeeter, sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Modern Visions, Mountain Views: The Cones of Flat Top Manor. At the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum, Blowing Rock, North Carolina, July 20 through November 30, 2019. Curated by Jordan Calaway, sponsored by the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation.

Blowing Rock Art & History Museum (BRAHM), located in a North Carolina mountain resort town, may seem an unlikely venue for *Modern Visions*, two exhibitions on the Cone family, southern Jews distinguished as industrialists and art collectors. Like its subjects, however, *Modern Visions* is not a provincial production. The Cones' significance rests on brothers Moses and Caesar, who created one of the South's great textile empires, and their sisters Etta and Claribel, who rank among the foremost early collectors of modernist art. Usually the narratives of the Cone brothers and sisters are distinct storylines, but as BRAHM's name implies, art and history belong under one roof. Under the rubrics of *Modern Visions, Modern Art: The Cone Sisters in North Carolina* and *Modern Visions, Mountain Views: The Cones of Flat Top Manor*, BRAHM has integrated the narratives. The link, as the exhibition illustrates, is family, and the locus is the country estate of Moses Cone, now a national park on the outskirts of Blowing Rock.

The first surprise is discovering BRAHM. The professionalism of this exhibit dispels expectations of a small-town, local museum bravely run by dedicated volunteers with limited resources. The setting is a modern, well-appointed building, obviously endowed well, and the installation is first rate. For the most part, *Modern Visions* is a book-on-the-wall exhibition of text panels, graphic art, photographs, and documents enhanced by a few artifacts from the Cone mansion, some sculpture, and personal belongings. The catalog, *Modern Visions, Modern Art: The Cone Sisters in North Carolina*, edited by curators Dianna Cameron and Carrie Streeter, is an artifact in itself, a tribute to the art of bookmaking.

Modern Visions consists of three galleries, each dedicated to a specific theme. The first room, "Mountain Views," depicts family and business life at Flat Top Manor, the country home that Moses and Bertha Lindau Cone built in 1901. The second room presents Cones in each of the localities where the extended family established itself: Baltimore, Asheville, Greensboro, and Blowing Rock. The third and largest room houses "Modern Art" with representative drawings, etchings, artifacts, and paintings including original Matisse oils from Etta and Claribel's collection.

The visitor enters the exhibition through "Mountain Views," the local history component curated by Jordan Calaway of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. Centered on one wall are two large portraits of Moses and Bertha Lindau Cone commissioned in 1953 for Moses Cone Hospital in Greensboro, North Carolina. The Cones, a Baltimore family who headquartered their textile enterprise in Greensboro, were drawn to the North Carolina mountains, as were others of their class, for the healthy air and scenic setting. Moses died in 1908, and his widow Bertha resided at and managed the property until her death in 1947. Flat Top Manor, a thirteen-thousand-square-foot beaux arts estate house, was set amid 3,500 acres with sweeping views. The baronial lifestyle attests to American acculturation and upward social mobility. Cone was the son of an antebellum immigrant Bavarian who made the classic American rise from storekeeper in rural Tennessee to wholesaler in Baltimore. His industrious sons, the world's largest manufacturers of denim, reprised their father's economic ascent in boldface.

As southern Jews, the exhibit illustrates, the Cones were not provincials but cosmopolitans. A newspaper observed that their "house and grounds" show them to be "people of refined and cultured tastes." Photos

(Courtesy of Leonard W. Rogoff.)

capture Flat Top Manor in its heyday along with a few artifacts—a brass headboard, a checkbook, a leather wallet—attesting to comfort and wealth. The home included the latest conveniences: telephone, gas lighting, and hot and cold running water. The title *Modern Visions* is well chosen. Among the houseguests, in 1904 sister Etta brought her friend from Baltimore and Paris, the modernist writer Gertrude Stein. In 1907 Stein sent a letter to North Carolina, which included personal regards from Picasso illustrated with a sketched self-portrait. Rustic Moses and Bertha hung a Renoir and a Picasso in their Appalachian mountain house. At the gallery's center is a steam trunk that accompanied the family on a global tour in 1906. One large photo captures the Cones atop an elephant in India. The Cones were great consumers as well as travelers, and the exhibition includes a Chinese tray and Hindu busts from that journey that found their way into North Carolina homes.

Moses Cone did not envision his estate merely as a scenic and salubrious summer retreat but as a businessman's proposition. The country house's first floor included an office as well as a parlor. He promoted commercial agriculture in a hardscrabble, subsistence Appalachian economy, planting some thirty-two thousand apple trees. He told a newspaper reporter in 1903, "I believe in Apples." He also pioneered scientific forest management. The exhibit includes a milk bottle from a working Cone dairy. On his passport, the traveling textile magnate identified his profession as "farmer." Bringing commerce to the countryside was a southern Jewish vocation, and the mindset that brought the mills to the cotton fields saw economic opportunity in forestry and agriculture in the mountains.

A second gallery consists of modular spaces dedicated to each of the domiciles of the extended family that included thirteen siblings. Under "Baltimore" are cameo portraits from the Carrie Cone Long album, begun in 1884, which attest to wealth and social status. Etta is depicted in a formal riding outfit while Claribel, a pioneering woman physician, holds a stethoscope. "Signs of Success" includes a cigar box featuring advertising portraits of patriarch Herman with his sons. A small oil portrait, c. 1809, of ancestor Moses Kahn, a merchant in Altenstadt, Bavaria, was given to Sydney Cone by a relative during a family sojourn to Germany in 1886. That a Jew had his portrait painted in early nineteenth-century Germany suggests that upward social, cultural, and economic mobility preceded their American immigration. The art and music that suffused Cone households reflected German acculturation. An "Asheville" panel titled "Making Moves for New Opportunity" underscores the economic progression typical of German Jews as well as the ways they transplanted their social and family culture in new locales. The exhibit clarifies how family ties connected Jews no matter how distant the outposts. Carrie Cone Long, whose Asheville home was a favorite family destination, was both a civic and Jewish community leader while her husband served a Cone mill and led the local temple. Other portraits illustrate various Cones glamping in their decorously countrified mountain retreats, including an almost comic photo of the regal Claribel lounging in a log cabin. The "Greensboro" module traces the industrial enterprise that underwrote the mansions and baronial lifestyle. Yet, as the texts and photos make clear, the sisters, however much they indulged themselves in European sojourns, collecting avant-garde art, were rooted in family. Residents of

Baltimore, they frequented Asheville, Blowing Rock, and Greensboro to visit siblings. Photographs of Etta cavorting with her nieces show her as an adored aunt.

The final gallery, "Modern Art," curated by Dianna Cameron and Carrie Streeter, is subtitled "The Cone Sisters in North Carolina," although the exhibit again attests to cosmopolitanism. Spinsters Etta and Claribel were habitués of Paris and, through Gertrude Stein's family, became acquainted with a bohemian crowd that included Matisse and Picasso. Claribel spent years in Germany, first as a medical researcher and then as a Germanophile. Their collection included Matisse and Picasso paintings in the hundreds, but also Renoir, Cezanne, Gauguin, and Van Gogh. Their tastes were personal. Their Baltimore apartments were a private museum that drew critics, scholars, and artists including Matisse, who became a family friend and is represented by two oil paintings, "Painter in the Olive Grove" and "The Music Lesson: Two Women Seated on a Divan," as well as lithographs and a sculpture. In Baltimore the sisters underwrote local artists, including Ben Silbert, who did etchings of them. They bequeathed the Cone Collection to the Baltimore Museum of Art while duplicates and works on paper went to Woman's College of the University of North Carolina (now UNC-Greensboro). Both institutions lent artwork. One is startled to see from a distance classic Cezannes, Renoirs, or Van Goghs until a closer look reveals them to be lithographic copies by Jacques Villon. One gallery could by no means be comprehensive, and the exhibit represents but a sampling of the collection's depth and breadth. As in their Baltimore apartments, the artwork is presented freely rather than chronologically. The sisters were eclectic collectors, and here one sees a Rembrandt etching, Persian miniatures, works from the Vienna School of Art, as well as vitrines containing bracelets and a lap robe.

BRAHM's rhapsody to the Cones elides controversies. There is no discussion of Cone Mills' labor practices, its union busting, or corporate paternalism. Questions of race are also not addressed. Moses Cone Memorial Hospital in Greensboro, a beneficiary of the estate, did not desegregate until 1963 under a landmark court order. The family's philanthropy in the African American community is also unexplored. Julius and Laura Weill Cone supported African American education, and Laura received death threats for her civil rights advocacy. Moreover, several art critics and historians have challenged the radicalism of the Cone sisters' collecting. The

sisters, they note, preferred representational art and mostly avoided cubism. Nor is the family contextualized in the broader scheme of post-Reconstruction, southern Jewish settlement.

Southern Jewry is the theme of this journal, but not that of this exhibition, nor are academics the target audience. The exhibition does importantly redress one facet of the Cones that has been largely overlooked, if not downplayed, in the park's interpretation. *Modern Visions* does not shy away from the family's Jewish and immigrant heritage. One text panel offers an excerpt from the frequently cited ethical letter that Herman Cone carried to America in 1846, reminding him that he is entering a new place "where the Jew is not excluded." But the Cones were significant because of their contributions to art and economic histories, less so for their Judaism even though they were members of the German-Jewish "crowd" and were institutionally affiliated and married and buried by rabbis. The exhibit offers graphic understanding of the family culture beyond the Cones' well-documented roles as industrialists and art collectors. The interpretation is insightful, intelligent, and attractively presented, and any visitor will come away better informed. The exhibit provides social and cultural balance to the economic focus that is more typical of representations of southern Jewry. It elucidates how the family nexus survived the dislocations of geographic mobility.

Finally—and by no means last—is the catalog, *Modern Visions, Modern Art: The Cone Sisters in North Carolina*, edited by exhibition curators Dianna Cameron and Carrie Streeter. Designed by Nathan Moehlmann of Goosepen Studio & Press and printed by Graphius in Ghent, Belgium, the catalog is beautifully produced from its covers to its color plates. The curators contribute an informative essay on "'The Spirit of Appreciation: Seeing Two Sisters' Visions.'" Family memoirs by two Cone descendants, art historian Nancy Hirschland Ramage and musicologist Edward T. Cone, capture the family in its full humanity and, given the writers' academic credentials, provide context and perspective. Streeter collaborated with Appalachian State University historian Neva Specht in tracing the provenance of the Cone photographs from the Carrie Cone Long album and with Jordan Calaway of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation in providing cultural histories of the Cones' North Carolina residences.

Modern Visions illustrates what a local museum at its best can contribute to larger understandings. The exhibition roots its subjects in their

place and time, but, textually and graphically, it also locates the Cones not just as neighbors but as citizens of the world. Not only did Jews acculturate to the South, as *Modern Visions* demonstrates, they transformed it as well.

Leonard Rogoff, Jewish Heritage North Carolina

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Website Review

Mapping Jewish Charleston: From the Colonial Era to the Present Day, Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries, <https://mappingjewishcharleston.cofc.edu>. Reviewed March 2020.

Using digital mapping to explain the contours and transformation of social geographies over time has been a primary research focus of several digital humanities projects over the past decade. The Mapping Jewish Charleston: From the Colonial Era to the Present Day project lays the foundations for an ambitious repository of Jewish historical narratives, social geographies, and the cultural landscape of Charleston.

The project, which provides user access to several archival texts, georeferenced maps, and images, was developed by Sarah Fick, Alyssa Neely, Harlan Greene, Dale Rosengarten, and Shari Rabin. The purpose of the project, according to the welcome documentation, is to educate the general public by providing basic facts about the geography of the Jewish presence in Charleston between the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries. The project is primarily derived from the archival record; its core is a collection of biographies of middle- and upper-class Jewish Charles Towners and Charlestonians who were pillars of the community in three distinct eras over three hundred years. Although this research could have been used to develop a traditional monograph or journal article, the digital maps provide users access to a detailed spatial understanding of Jewish Charleston and enable a wider audience to have instant access to this research. The maps, research, and data the site provides are certainly useful to casual knowledge-seekers and researchers. However, it is important to

*(From Mapping Jewish Charleston.
<https://mappingjewishcharleston.cofc.edu.>)*

evaluate the end user experience, its contribution to the digital humanities, and its contribution to the general historiography of Charleston. Because the digital project is a work in progress, this evaluation will also provide a wish list for future updates.

Some scholars have been apprehensive toward the digital humanities and its methodologies due to the perception that such projects lack a clear connection to meaningful humanities research questions. Others argue that digital humanities projects tend to “illustrate what we already know rather than give us new ways to think.” As such, Patrik Svensson recommends that digital humanities projects should not only consider the insights and questions which undergird the project, but they should also demonstrate depth, quality arguments, and novel ideas. Moreover, we should also consider the infrastructural work, the tools and methodology which are in part responsible for shaping our research questions. Thomas Coomans argues that like any other historical work, we should pay special attention to how data from different sources are combined to tell a story. While standard textual histories can provide this material, data visualization and digital maps are more effective media that can communicate

cultural landscapes in all of their complexity. Moreover, Coomans explains that the challenge of digital mapping is to use these digital tools to illustrate the palimpsest-like nature of the urban and rural landscape, while also showing the often complex relationship between space, time, and its transformative effects on geography. Using several maps and data visualizations of the same geographic region can illustrate the uneven changes in social geographies over time. Of course, none of this is as important as the user experience, which should be engaging and easily accessible. How then does the current version of Mapping Jewish Charleston measure against these guidelines?

The Mapping Jewish Charleston website is divided into three sections: the colonial Charles Town era of 1788, the antebellum Charleston of 1833, and early twentieth-century Charleston. While the dates located in the upper-right corner of the homepage seem to be of historical import to the Jewish population of Charleston, they actually refer to the dates of the three historical map overlays. These overlays have been georeferenced, or adapted to correspond to a modern GPS Cartesian plane like Google Maps. The maps are used to display geographic points of interest. Clicking on any of the dates takes the user to a detailed textual overview of the

(From Mapping Jewish Charleston.
<https://mappingjewishcharleston.cofc.edu.>)

sociocultural history of Jewish Charleston in the associated era, with links to specific geographic locations at the end of the article. Clicking on any of the links takes the user to a georeferenced historical map with pinpoints that correspond to different historical entries located on the left side of the map. When a user clicks on either a pinpoint or a historical entry, the map refocuses on the selected pinpoint, opens a lengthy explanation, and in some cases displays images germane to the location. In effect, the map functions as an organizational space for several encyclopedic article entries.

Because of this construction, users are guided through the main narrative via the stories of specific middle- and upper-class characters. The maps do not provide information regarding the hundreds of Jewish families who interacted with the featured characters. For example, the 1910 map focuses on the King Street shopping district and its environs. Although the section provides a wealth of information about the shops, owners, and built environment on the storied street, it provides little detail on the patrons who may have frequented them. Moreover, there is little discussion about how these owners interacted with the community. Highlighting the biographies of the middle and upper class without also providing details on the working class and others who were not as prominent in the archival record perpetuates their silence. Although the focus on the chosen historical actors is critical to understanding the pillars of the community, adding more details regarding the patrons and working class who may have shopped or walked through the district can provide insight into the complex social interactions between the classes that shaped the community. This would increase users' historical understanding of Charleston's Jewish cultural landscape.

Although the articles provide historical context for the associated map, some of the cultural details provided are either missing from the map or decoupled from the map entry. For example, in the early twentieth century section, the author explains that a generational gap existed within the Jewish community in that downtown "older 'Deutscher'" Jews felt superior to their old world cousins "and made efforts to acculturate them, to teach them English, hygiene, etiquette, and skills they needed to become citizens." In the 1788 and 1833 articles, the congregational rift between Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews is discussed. In both cases, using data visualization to show these social divides within the Jewish community in

a geographic context could strengthen the user's overall spatial understanding of how a social divide might have become a geographic one. Similarly, connections between individuals could also be visualized. This will allow users to see the relationship between geographic space and the subcommunities that make up the larger Jewish community on the map. In so doing, users can see how congregations and other social circles shifted geographically. A similar approach could be used to illustrate how the Great Fire of 1838 impacted the community on the 1833 map. Using this novel approach would give users a new insight into the construction and transformation of the Jewish community over time. Despite this oversight, the pop-up windows provide extensive biographical information, albeit with limited connections to other pinpoints. Improving these capabilities could increase the project's depth and display of novel ideas while simultaneously showing the gradual transformation of Jewish Charleston.

Here users may encounter some site functionality issues. The site is programmed to render properly on a standard desktop computer. This limits the use of the site for research and classroom teaching purposes; self-guided walking tours using a mobile device is not an option. However, rendering on mobile devices could be allowed by adding a few lines of code.

A pop-up window containing the historical explanation of the pinpoint opens when the user clicks outside of the user's view of the map. This reduces the user's view of the spatial orientation of the mapped Jewish community and thereby diminishes the effectiveness of the map. Many of the map point explanations are interconnected with links to other map points that the user can navigate in a limited fashion similar to a wiki. If a user chooses to click through these links, the map will refocus on the new point of interest and open the new explanatory window. However, if the user wishes to return to the original site of inquiry, the site requires them to remember which point of interest was the original and click on it. The 1833 map entry for Judith Suares, an immigrant from the Caribbean who owned her own business after she was given permission by her husband, Jacob, highlights this issue. According to the entry, Judith lived at the King Street address with her four children during the 1830s. Only one of her children, Mary Ann Suares Levy, links to another section on the map. Because both pinpoints are contained within a cluster of several numbered pinpoints, it becomes difficult for a user to navigate back to the Judith

Suares entry from the Mary Ann Suares Levy entry using the site's navigation tools. Moreover, since the points are numbered rather than titled, understanding the geographic relationship between these points can present a challenge for some users. Both of these issues could be remedied by including a site name in addition to a site number at each pinpoint, or by opening an embedded window to the right side of the page with the explanation. Despite these functionality concerns, the content is engaging and delivers several biographies of Jewish merchants, clergy, and artists as well as brief histories of religious sites.

Considering that Mapping Jewish Charleston is still in its infancy, the research is extensive and useful for the classroom and general public. However, unlike the traditional monograph, the beauty of digital mapping projects is the ability to update and expand on the project's original argument. As such, I would like to see further development of robust data visualizations to show the transformation of Charleston's social geography. This will help users visualize the relationships between the social and spatial contours of the Jewish community. Mapping Jewish Charleston is a strong foundation that will benefit from future scholarship, research modules, and technical upgrades. Despite some initial shortcomings, the overall project is an excellent starting point for users to explore and familiarize themselves with the history of Jewish Charleston.

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Film Review

Shared Legacies: The African American–Jewish Civil Rights Alliance.

Directed and produced by Shari Rogers. Spill the Honey Productions, 2020.
96 minutes.

NOTE: This review is based on the version of Shared Legacies that screened at the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival on February 10, 2020. In light of recent events, the film’s director and producer plan to revise it to reflect today’s ongoing social unrest.

Despite a torrent of rain slashing Atlanta’s streets, droves of people from across the sprawling metropolis attended the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival’s (AJFF) opening night gala and the worldwide premier of this year’s lead film, *Shared Legacies: The African American–Jewish Civil Rights Alliance*, at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre on February, 10, 2020.

Over the past two decades, AJFF has become the largest Jewish film festival in the world, with tens of thousands of annual attendees, and a packed house helped celebrate its twentieth anniversary. Immediately before the film’s debut, Peter Yarrow set the mood in leading a rendition of “Blowing in the Wind” with a joint choir from The Temple and Ebenezer Baptist Church. At the center of the festivities was the Atlanta regional office of the American Jewish Committee, the driving force behind both the creation of the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival and the Atlanta Black-Jewish Coalition. The backdrop only heightened the evening’s exuberant celebration of the unique relationship American

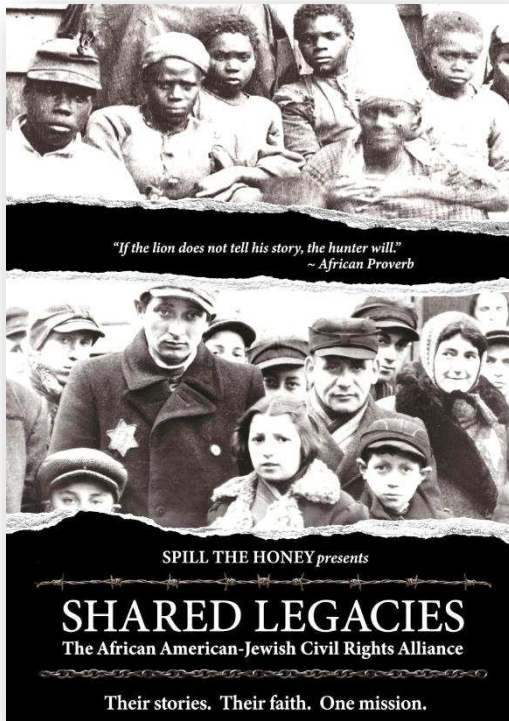
blacks and Jews share, especially in the cradle of the civil rights movement.

Dr. Shari Rogers, director and producer of *Shared Legacies*, collected a veritable who's who of civil rights and social justice veterans, path-breaking rabbis and ministers, as well as the lieutenants and foot soldiers who shaped modern American history, both in the film and panel discussion on stage after the screening. The film deftly captures interviewees in uniquely familiar settings—the living room sofa, the dining room table, the pew bench in houses of worship—and weaves Talmudic-like conversations recounting singular moments and events in the struggle to achieve full citizenship.

Throughout the feature-length documentary, Rogers curates past and present interviews as well as archival footage of the civil rights movement, the Holocaust, and other places and eras to construct a metanarrative about the intimacy these two communities formed amid shared suffering. Within this framework, Rogers achieves something remarkable. She transforms historical giants who captured the nation's and world's imaginations—Martin Luther King, Jr., of course, as well as Andrew Young, Julian Bond, Rabbis Abraham Joshua Heschel and Joachim Prinz, and many others—into complex yet life-sized figures illuminated by small acts of humanity.

From the very first scene of the film, Rogers demonstrates the intergenerational closeness of black-Jewish relations through an anecdote shared by Lonnie Branch. He recounts that as the only black student at his New Jersey high school, he was paired with the only Jewish person from his class, Carol, for ballroom dancing class. After losing touch many years later, he received a message from a woman named Esther, who recounted an identical experience during World War II. Confused and thinking he may have misremembered her name, he soon realized Esther was speaking about Branch's father, who vividly remembered this interaction.

In another poignant moment, Heschel's daughter, Susannah, a noted scholar, sits in a home that served as an organizing base in Selma prior to the five-day march to Montgomery. Paired with Clarence Jones, a civil rights lawyer and one of King's most important advisors, the screen pans through the altogether modest house, revealing walls cluttered with photographs, a homely fireplace, and countless other



ephemera from the period. Susannah Heschel describes how in the lead up to the third and final march attempt, it was like a civil rights sleepover. Rabbis, priests, and ministers gathered for this forward push toward securing voting rights. Before embarking on their fraught march, they prayed alongside one another like so many of God’s children.

And then come the Atlanta-focused narratives, where the inter-community coalitions and collaborations beautifully display magnanimity of spirit and courage of character despite the era’s turbulence and upheaval. The film masterfully touches on King’s awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, his acceptance speech in December of that year, and the main Atlanta players who organized the city’s first integrated banquet that honored both King’s and Atlanta’s achievement. Or when Atlanta-born-and-bred Sherry Frank describes how her uncle

owned a clothing store downtown called Zimmerman's. As opposed to the prevailing custom, her uncle's policy allowed his African American patrons to try on clothes and use store credit. When her "Uncle Joe" passed away, Frank realized how much these small but genuine humanizing efforts meant to the individual patrons chafing against Jim Crow second-class citizenship when Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr.,—"Daddy King"—preached at his funeral, held at Congregation Shearith Israel.

For all Rogers's commendable efforts toward documenting black-Jewish intersectionality, the shared suffering, and the epic struggle for freedom and full citizenship that the film alludes to, it largely avoids how the camaraderie of such deeply connected communities unraveled in the past half-century. To better understand the beginnings of this fragmentation, one needs only analyze Atlanta following the civil rights movement and King's assassination in 1968. After World War II, national highways were expanded. White veterans attended college and qualified for federally backed mortgages through the GI Bill of Rights. Atlanta's city limits expanded, and suburbs started sprouting in every direction. Whites, including many Jews, who once lived in the city proper, started fleeing in ever-increasing numbers. The trickle became a flood after Atlanta's decision to voluntarily desegregate schools in the early 1960s. New synagogues and communal institutions sprang up to serve the far-flung community. The Black Power movement, restrictive quotas rather than affirmative action, and Andrew Young's meeting with Yasser Arafat in 1979 exacerbated the friction between the two minority groups.

At the same time, Jews and blacks were now competitors in the realm of the city's power politics. The rise of Maynard Jackson, Atlanta's first African American mayor, coincided with the reelection bid of its first Jewish mayor, Sam Massell. In a bitterly fought 1973 election, Massell's campaign published an advertisement on the front page of the *Atlanta Constitution* declaring that "Atlanta's Too Young to Die," a dire prediction that a black mayor would lead to the city's economic demise. Now, Jews had the resources needed to pivot towards the suburban American Dream while resting on their civil rights laurels. Scarred from Leo Frank's lynching and seemingly vindicated through their prior support of civil rights, Atlanta's Jews had done their duty. In place of familiarity derived from physical proximity, distance grew.

At one point in the film, Susannah Heschel quotes a Yiddish proverb with the moral: If you don't know what *pains* me, how can you *love* me? And this is the central question left unaddressed in Rogers's film. How much can the Jewish community really understand the black community's suffering when such a large number have walled themselves off from the city itself? How can our communities know one another when Jews largely benefit from America's meritocracy while the black community continues to suffer from income inequality, mass incarceration, and voter disenfranchisement—in Georgia and across America?

Although the documentary fails to reach that level of analysis, it does highlight the formation of the Atlanta Black-Jewish Coalition in 1982. Created by the Atlanta regional office of the American Jewish Committee, the coalition campaigned to renew the Voting Rights Act (VRA). These efforts succeeded in the VRA's renewal and also reinvigorated the bond between the two communities from up high, which was evident among participants in the panel discussion following the screening.

The film's thesis invokes viewers to serve as our brother's keeper and to bear witness to this country's atrocities so that we may redeem the past and present and one day, perhaps, ourselves. At that point, we won't just be preserving and celebrating past achievements. We will inscribe the next chapter of our shared legacies.

Aaron Levi, Gate City Tours

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Glossary

Ashkenazi (*plural: Ashkenazim*) ~ a Jew associated with central and eastern Europe; **Ashkenazic** ~ having to do with Ashkenazim and their practices

Barkhu ~ prayer recited at the beginning of a synagogue service as a call to worship

Birkat ha-mazon ~ grace after meals

Boychik ~ Yiddish for a young boy; commonly an endearment but may also be patronizing, as English “buddy”

Chutzpah ~ gall, effrontery, brazen nerve, presumptuous arrogance

Diaspora ~ originating in the sixth century BCE with the Babylonian exile, refers to Jewish communities and their residents living outside Palestine or modern Israel; more generally, people settling far from their original homeland; **diasporic**

Eretz Yisra’el ~ Land of Israel, the Holy Land, historical Palestine

Halacha (*also halaka*) ~ Jewish law; **Halachic** (*or Halakic*) ~ pertaining to Jewish law

Hasidism ~ a Jewish mystical movement founded in Poland in the mid-eighteenth century; **Hasidic** ~ of or relating to Hasidism; **Sanz Hasidism** ~ a Hasidic dynasty that originated in Galicia in the late nineteenth century

Haskalah ~ Jewish Enlightenment

“Hevenu Shalom Aleichem” ~ literally, *We bring peace to you*; a popular Jewish folk song

“Hine Ma Tov” ~ literally, *Look how good and pleasing*; a hymn traditionally sung at Shabbat celebrations whose lyrics come from Psalm 133, “How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Kiddush ~ literally, *sanctification*; the blessing recited over wine; **Kiddush cup** ~ a special goblet used for saying the blessing

Kippah (*plural: kippot*) ~ yarmulke, skull cap

Kristallnacht ~ literally *night of broken glass*, November 9–10, 1938; Nazi-sponsored pogrom throughout Germany and Austria bringing widespread murder, arrests, and destruction of property, including synagogues, escalating the violence against Jews

mitzvah (*plural: mitzvot*) ~ commandment; good works or deeds

Musar (or **Mussar**) ~ Jewish educational and cultural movement originating in nineteenth-century eastern Europe emphasizing the fervent practice of personal ethical behavior

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

Pogrom ~ organized violent attack, a massacre, against Jews

Sephardic ~ having to do with **Sephardim**, Jews and Judaism originating in the Mediterranean region, especially Spain and Portugal

Shabbat (*also shabbes*) ~ Jewish Sabbath; Friday night to Saturday night

Shema (*also Sh'ma*) ~ Jewish confession of faith in the oneness of God, frequently recited during religious services

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

Sim shalom ~ literally, *grant peace*; a prayer for peace included in some Ashkenazic worship services

Tallit (*variants: tallis, tallith; plural: tallitot, tallesim*) ~ prayer shawl

Talmud ~ collection of postbiblical writings justifying and explaining Jewish law and texts; compilation of *Mishna* (code of Jewish religious and legal norms) and *Gemara* (discussions and explanations of *Mishna*)

Tzedekah (*variant: tzedaka*) ~ righteous giving; charity

Yasher koach ~ “strength to you”; traditional exclamation of congratulations for someone who has performed a mitzvah

Yid (*plural: Yidn or Yidden*) ~ a Jew, often considered derogatory

Note on Authors

Yaakov Ariel is a graduate of the Hebrew University and the University of Chicago and a professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Ariel's research focuses on Christian-Jewish relations; Christian attitudes towards the Holy Land, Zionism, and Israel; and the history of missions and Jewish conversions to Christianity. Among other topics, he has explored Jewish conversions to Christianity during the Holocaust, Jewish and Christian New Religious Movements, and the effect of modernity and postmodernity on Jewish and Christian groups. He has published dozens of articles and a number of books on these topics. His book, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews*, won the Outler Prize of the American Society of Church History.

Karen S. Franklin received her B.A. from Wellesley College as a Wellesley Scholar with Honors and an M.A. from the department of religion at Temple University. She is director of family research at the Leo Baeck Institute and was awarded the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award. Franklin writes and speaks internationally on genealogy and museum topics. She is the immediate past chair of the Memorial Museums Committee of the International Council of Museums.

Anton Hieke received his M.A. and Ph.D. at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany, where he also taught American Jewish history. He is the author of, among others, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (2013); "Rabbi Maurice Mayer: German Revolutionary, Charleston Reformer, and Anti-Abolitionist," *SJH* (2014); and (with Cynthia Gensheimer) "Heimat and Home: Mobility Among Jews in Quincy, Illinois," *American Jewish History* (2018).

Curt Jackson is pursuing his Ph.D. in twentieth century U.S. and urban history at Georgia State University. His planned dissertation explores the relationships between the cultural production of Pittsburgh's nightlife subcultures, the corporate appropriation of subculture, and gentrification

in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. While working on his masters degree, Jackson was a Student Innovation Fellow, where he assisted in the development of several digital map research projects for ATLMaps, including the 1960s Atlanta Sit-Ins walking tour, the *Great Speckled Bird* social map, and the Democratic Socialists of America National Convention walking tour of Atlanta. Currently, he mentors undergraduates at Georgia State University with various history digital mapping projects. This year, he was selected to coordinate the urban history conference for the Association of Historians at Georgia State University. He is also a coauthor and research assistant for the forthcoming 1960s Atlanta Sit-Ins *Reacting to the Past* role-playing history game.

Jonathan B. Krasner is the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Associate Professor of Jewish Education Research at Brandeis University. He coauthored *Hebrew Infusion: Language and Community at American Jewish Summer Camps* (June 2020). His book *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education* (2011) was the recipient of a National Jewish Book Award. He is currently working on a history of the Jewish day school movement in North America.

Aaron Levi holds dual master's degrees in education and Judaic studies from New York University, where he was a Jim Joseph Fellow. He is the founder and CEO of Gate City Tours, which explores the history and evolution of Atlanta and its Jewish community – on foot. He has also written recently for the *Atlanta Jewish Times* and eJewishPhilanthropy.com. Aaron's research interests include modern Jewish history, Zionism, and Jewish politics.

Timothy R. Riggio Quevillon completed his Ph.D. in history from the University of Houston in 2020. His article in this volume of *SJH* stems from his dissertation titled "From Palestine to Howard Beach and Houston: Meir Kahane, Moshe Cahana, and the Anti-Colonialism of American Civil Rights Struggles." A second chapter, "The Emergence of Zionist Identity in a Sanzer Family in Early-20th Century Safed," will appear in *G'vanim: The Journal of the Academy of Jewish Religion* (2020). His current research interests center on the role of Jewish nationalism and violence and nonviolence in anticolonial protest.

Leonard Rogoff is a former president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and recipient of its Samuel Proctor scholarly career achievement award. He is currently historian of Jewish Heritage North Carolina. His books include *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (2010) and *Gertrude Weil: Jewish Progressive in the New South* (2017).

Diane C. Vecchio is Professor Emerita of history, Furman University. She is the author of *Merchants, Midwives, and Laboring Women: Italian Migrants in Urban America* (2006). Her recently published articles include "Max Moses Heller: Patron Saint of Greenville's Renaissance," in *Doing Business in America. A Jewish History*, edited by Hasia R. Diner (2019), and "The Scourge of the South: Pellagra and Poverty in Spartanburg's Mill Villages," in *Recovering the Piedmont Past: Bridging the Centuries in the South Carolina Upcountry, 1877-1941*," edited by Timothy P. Grady & Andrew H. Myers (2013).

Kenneth D. Wald is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of political science and Samuel R. "Bud" Shorstein Professor Emeritus of American Jewish Culture and Society at the University of Florida. He is also a former director of the UF Center for Jewish Studies. His most recent book, *Foundations of American Jewish Liberalism*, won the 2019 National Jewish Book Award in American Jewish studies.

David Weinfeld is a visiting Assistant Professor of religious studies at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, where he also holds the Harry Lyons Chair in Judaic Studies. He earned his doctorate in Hebrew and Judaic studies and history at New York University. His first book, *An American Friendship: Horace Kallen, Alain Locke, and the Development of Cultural Pluralism*, is forthcoming. He has published articles in the *Journal of American History* and the *American Jewish Archives Journal* and is working on an article on Isaac Leeser's time in Richmond and the slave question, as well as a larger project on southern Jews and the Lost Cause.

Carl L. Zielonka, retired from the practice of dentistry in Tampa in 2017 after fifty years. A graduate of Duke University and the Emory University School of Dentistry, he has pursued a second career as historian and archivist at Congregation Schaarai Zedek and as a docent at the Tampa Bay History Center.

Gary Phillip Zola is the Edward M. Ackerman Family Distinguished Professor of the American Jewish Experience and Reform Jewish History at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, as well as the Executive Director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. Zola serves as editor of the Marcus Center's award-winning semiannual publication, *American Jewish Archives Journal*.

Errata for Volume 22 (2019)

On page 155, Howard Zinn is misidentified as a “leader” of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Zinn, who was born in 1922, was a vocal supporter of SDS, but he was not a student at the time or a member of the organization.

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Program for Confederate Memorial Ceremony—Hebrew Cemetery

PEARLSTINE/LIPOV CENTER FOR SOUTHERN JEWISH CULTURE

Fellowship Program Temporarily on Hold

2020 has upended our best laid plans. Just before the College of Charleston campus closed in March in response to the coronavirus pandemic, we accepted five wonderful candidates as Charleston Research Fellows for the coming year. Until we can safely schedule their campus visits, we are not able to accept additional applications, so we are putting the fellowship program temporarily on hold.

In the interim, we want to direct your attention to new resources our researchers have created. If you go to the Research Fellows page of the Center's website, you will find reports our Fellows have published at links under their names: <https://jewish-south.cofc.edu/research-fellowships/fellows>.

We also encourage you to visit our Jewish South Summer Institute website to access the superb research projects our 2019 summer scholars produced: <https://jewish-southsummer.cofc.edu/research-projects>.

We are eager to welcome our 2020 fellows as soon as we can!



*Beth Israel, Beaufort, South Carolina, 2019.
Photo: Dale Rosengarten*



Shana Tova!
Happy New Year

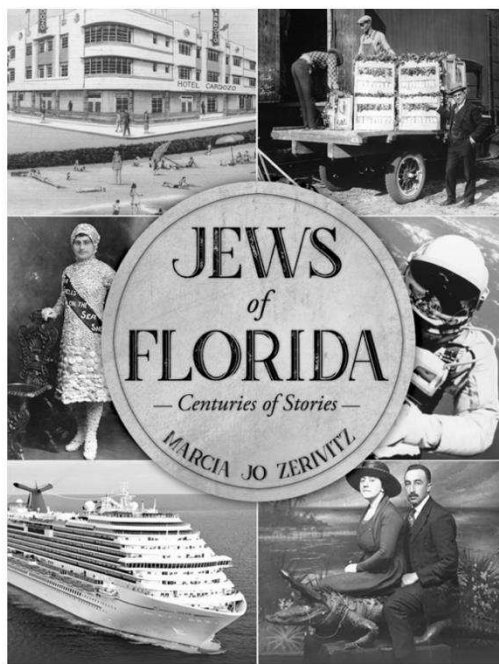
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Photograph of Rabbi Emanuel Feldman with shofar at Congregation Beth Jacob, Atlanta, GA. Circa 1985. This photograph is part of the largest repository of Jewish history in the region, the Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives for Southern Jewish History at The Breman Museum. Search photographs, records, oral histories and more at TheBreman.org.



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