

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

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COVER PICTURE: *Max and Trude Heller announcing Max's candidacy for mayor of Greenville, South Carolina, 1971. Heller's life and career are documented in the article by Andrew Harrison Baker in this issue. (Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Furman University.)*

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From the Memoirs Section Editors . . .

This is the first time *Southern Jewish History* is including a section on memoirs. Scholars from a variety of academic disciplines view memoir as a literary-historical genre. Memoir is a subcategory of autobiography with special thematic foci. Written from a later perspective in life, they differ from diaries, in which the writer is unaware of future outcomes. In general, autobiographies, written with “life in the rearview mirror,” often have broader scope than memoirs that generally employ a specific theme or set of themes. Historians generally consider memoirs primary source material whose thematic specificity is helpful and problematic. Still, they provide an invaluable genre of “living” source material when used in a critical fashion. The well-written, historically accurate memoir offers scholars and general readers significant insights into personal dimensions of the past. Nonetheless, as with autobiographies, memoirs can suffer from limitation of memory and a common desire to “spin” one’s life in a particular fashion.

Memoirs, per se, have been around since at least Julius Caesar’s *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (58–49 BCE). In Jewish literature, *The Memoirs of Glueckel of Hameln*, written between 1691 and 1719, offers a unique portrait of a Jewish businesswoman in the early modern period. In recent years, Holocaust and digital memoirs have become increasingly popular as well as plentiful in the Jewish community. The memoirs we will print offer particularly rich opportunities for students of the American Jewish experience. A few notable examples of independently published southern Jewish memoirs include “The Life of Alfred Mordecai as Related by Himself”; Clara Lowenburg Moses’s *Memoir of a Southern Jewish Woman*;

Seymour Atlas's *The Rabbi Spoke With the Southern Twang*; and *How Can I Help You? Rebecca Teles: Memoir of a Southern Jewish Belle*.¹ The holdings of many southern Jewish archives, such as the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston Addlestone Library and the Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives at the Bremen Museum in Atlanta, include scores of unpublished memoirs.

Starting with "A Rabbi's Memoir: Growing Up Jewish in the Mississippi Delta, 1943-1961," memoir will be a regular feature of *Southern Jewish History*. We hope to provide literary periscopes into the history of the southern Jewish experience by offering select memoirs reflecting the entire range of that experience. We encourage scholars to unearth yet unpublished memoirs (including recent ones written during the COVID pandemic) and plant the seeds for future southern Jewish memoirists to record their life stories. Rabbi Fred Davidow's memoir is an excellent place for *Southern Jewish History* to begin this journey.

Lance J. Sussman and Karen S. Franklin
Memoir Section Editors

MEMOIR

Contextualizing Rabbi Davidow's Memoir:
A Historical Introduction to Jewish Life in
the Mississippi Delta, 1943–1961

by

Lance J. Sussman and Paul Finkelman*

**Fred V. Davidow, Growing Up Jewish in the
Mississippi Delta, 1943–1961: A Rabbi's Memoir**

Rabbi Fred V. Davidow's multipart "Reconstructed Rebel: My Journey from Good Ole Southern Boy to Center-Left Democrat" provides the literary basis for the following, redacted selection. Davidow's manuscript began with his participation in a memoir-writing class at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, in February 2020. Retired from active pulpit life, Davidow, who has been keeping notes for the purpose of writing a memoir since late childhood, wrote from a twenty-first century perspective selectively concentrating on how he experienced race and ethnicity in his youth and young adult years. Davidow came of age at the beginning of the civil rights movement that would change the American South and the American nation. He witnessed many of these changes at the ground level while simultaneously witnessing the resistance to change within the white and Jewish communities as well as the incomplete success of the civil rights "revolution."

Davidow grew up in Greenville, Mississippi, in the heart of the Mississippi Delta. This is a region notorious for its segregation, oppressive racial violence including lynching, and its vast disparities in wealth between impoverished African Americans and often quite prosperous

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whites. But it also reflected greater diversity than most of the Deep South. Greenville boasted the largest Jewish community in the state, and the city still contains an impressive early twentieth-century synagogue. The region, including neighboring Bolivar County, also housed descendants of the “Mississippi Chinese” brought to the region after the Civil War as agricultural laborers to replace former slaves. In the mid-1920s some of these Chinese Americans unsuccessfully fought to send their children to the better-funded “white” schools rather than the poorly funded schools for Blacks. In *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927), the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the right of the state of Mississippi to make “pupil assignments as it wished.”² Thus racism and segregation flourished in the Mississippi Delta where Davidow grew up.

Thirty years before he embarked on this memoir, Davidow published “A Remembrance of Greenville, Mississippi” in the *Jewish Georgian* (1991). In 2004, University of Pennsylvania scholar David Ruderman published “Greenville Diary: A Northern Rabbi Confronts the Deep South, 1966–1970” in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* about the rabbinate of his father, Abraham Ruderman, at the Hebrew Union Congregation, Davidow’s boyhood synagogue.³

In the sections from the first half of his memoir presented here, Davidow concentrates on how he and his family negotiated their relationship with white majority culture in the South, how his father served as his initial role model of a southern Jewish man, the impact of the legacy and memory of the Civil War on his southern identity, the influence on his identity of several Black people employed by his family, the challenges of eating nonkosher food, synagogue life, Jewish youth group experiences, and the experience of going to all-white segregated public schools. His mother also played a significant role in helping the young Davidow recognize the fault lines between his southern and Jewish identities.

In the remaining unpublished sections of his memoir, Davidow reports in broader brush strokes on his college years at Tulane University in New Orleans, the South’s most sophisticated and complex city, and at Delta State University in rigidly segregated Cleveland, Mississippi, next door to his hometown of Greenville, and then his seminary years in Cincinnati at the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. He also writes about selected aspects of his later work as a congregational rabbi.

Davidow's earlier draft, titled "Reconstructed Rebel," emphasizes what he recognized as a transformation of his identity as a young adult from a southerner who accepted the region's segregation and racism to a more sophisticated liberal with a national view of race and equality. The editors provide a new title for this publication to reflect the focus on the early years of Davidow's life journey presented here.

*Rabbi Fred V. Davidow in 2013.
(Courtesy of Rabbi Fred V. Davidow.)*

Greenville

Fred V. Davidow was born on March 16, 1943, during the middle of World War II, in Greenville, Mississippi, his mother's hometown. Known for its regional brand of the blues centered on Nelson Street, Greenville is located in the Mississippi Delta, also known as the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta. In the northwest corner of Mississippi, Greenville is situated across the Mississippi River from Arkansas, 140 miles south of Memphis, Tennessee, and eighty-four miles north of Vicksburg. Mostly a poor rural area known for its rich soil and high-quality cotton, it has been referred to in a phrase reminiscent of William Faulkner as "The Most Southern Place on Earth."⁴ In 1950, Greenville's population stood at 29,936. It peaked in 1990 at 45,226 and currently is just below thirty thousand people, approximately 80 percent of whom are African American.⁵

Jews have lived in Mississippi since the mid-1770s. Natchez, approximately 160 miles downriver from Greenville, housed the first major Jewish settlement in the area. Mississippi's Jewish population peaked at about 6,400 in the late 1920s. Today fewer than 1,500 Jews reside in the state. At the time of Davidow's birth, the Delta provided a home to the highest concentration of Jews in the state, about 2,300. After World War II, the Jewish population in the state and the Delta declined steadily. Greenville's Hebrew Union Congregation, where the Davidow family belonged, formed in 1879. Constructed in 1906, the sanctuary seats 350. In 1962, the congregation claimed the largest membership in Mississippi with two hundred families. To a certain extent, Davidow grew up in the "Jerusalem of the Mississippi Delta." Mississippi was the first state in the country to have a woman serve as the religious leader of a synagogue. Following the death of her husband, Rabbi William Ackerman, in 1950, Paula Ackerman led services, preached, and officiated at life cycle ceremonies at Temple Beth Israel of Meridian, Mississippi.⁶

In 1824 William Whitaker Blanton, a wealthy lawyer and owner of the Blanton plantation, founded the forerunner of modern Greenville. Born in South Carolina, Blanton possibly chose the name because of the city with that name in his home state. The name honored General Nathaniel Greene, commander of the patriot army in the South during the last years of the American Revolution. The city prospered until the Civil War as an important Mississippi River port and commercial town in the center of one of the major cotton producing regions of the South. On the eve of the Civil War, slaves accounted for 92 percent (14,467) of the county's population, whereas only 1,212 whites resided there. The farmland in the county surpassed any other place in the state in value.⁷

During the Civil War troops on both sides occupied the town, and Union and Confederate troops, as well as pro-Confederate guerillas, pillaged much of the country. U.S. naval boats bombarded the town when attacked by Confederate artillery inside it, and Union soldiers burned some of the town. This contrasts with the wealthier city of Natchez, which immediately surrendered to the United States Army and thus suffered relatively little damage during the war.

Before the hundredth anniversary of the war, the memory of it remained strong in Greenville as Davidow grew up there. After the war, residents rebuilt the town partially on land donated by Harriet Blanton

*Hebrew Union Congregation,
Greenville, Mississippi.
(Wikimedia Commons.)*

Theobald, known as the “Mother of Greenville,” several miles from the town’s original site on what had been part of the family’s plantation. Moving some of the town to higher ground reflected the reality of Mississippi River floods that had destroyed earlier towns in the county. When Davidow was born, Washington County (and to some extent Greenville, its county seat) had not fully recovered from the devastating flood of 1927.⁸ The city was chartered in 1886. Between 1877 and 1950, twelve documented lynchings took place in the county. From 1870 to 1960 the town grew at a double and sometimes triple rate, going from 890 people in 1870 to more than forty-one thousand in 1960, when Davidow departed for college. Since then, the town has steadily declined to around thirty thousand. Similarly, the county population peaked in 1960 and has declined since.⁹

Greenville enjoyed a period of relative prosperity during the immediate post-World War II period, although a northern migration of its Black population continued from prewar days because of the region’s enduring poverty, oppressive Jim Crow culture, and endemic racial violence. White flight, in response to integration and civil rights laws, further diminished the population and altered the demographics of the area.

In addition to Davidow’s memoir, further insight into life in the Delta can be gained from C. Stuart Chapman’s *Shelby Foote: A Writer’s Life*. Foote, born in 1916, grew up in Greenville. Having a Jewish maternal grandmother, a University of North Carolina fraternity blackballed him because of this “tainted” ancestry. Like Davidow, the author of *Where I*

Was Born and Raised, David Cohn, hailed from Greenville. Also useful in understanding the region is Hillary Jordan's novel *Mudbound*, about rural life in the Delta immediately after World War II. Recast as a film by the same name, one Jewish character, an immigrant doctor, appears as an empathetic outsider.¹⁰

Fred Davidow

Against the harshness of life in rural, Jim Crow Mississippi, Davidow's memoir provides an intimate portrait of his family, beginning with the story of his ancestors' immigration to the United States. His father, David H. Davidow, was born in nearby Belzoni, Mississippi, on August 7, 1903. His mother, Thelma Leah Schwartz, was born on January 12, 1909, in Greenville. His one older brother, Stanley Davidow, died in 2015.

In the still-unpublished section of his memoir, Davidow broadly reviews his experience from college to retirement. Based on his parents' belief that attending Tulane University would provide a hedge against mixed marriage for their son, the future rabbi attended the fourteen-thousand-student New Orleans school from 1961 to 1965, majoring in Spanish and Spanish literature. While attending a Tulane-Ole Miss football game on October 20, 1962, the explicit racism of Ole Miss's "Rebel Underground" organization repulsed Davidow. This incident helped him clarify his earlier experiences in Jim Crow Mississippi.

After considering pursuit of a Ph.D. in history at Tulane, Davidow instead decided to return to his Mississippi roots to obtain a masters in education degree at Delta State University with an emphasis in American history. Delta State, in Cleveland, Mississippi, is only thirty-six miles from Greenville but demographically different. At the time an entirely white college, then and now Cleveland's population dramatically contrasts with Greenville's. Today African Americans comprise just under half of Cleveland's population, while whites, along with a small percentage of Asians and Latinx residents, comprise the remainder. By contrast, Greenville's population is more than 80 percent African American. In Greenville 37 percent of the population lives below the poverty line with a median household income of twenty-seven thousand dollars. Cleveland's poverty rate remains high at about 27 percent, but is substantially lower than Greenville's, and the median household income is dramatically higher at

sixty-one thousand dollars.¹¹ Davidow likely recognized the stark difference in the two towns.

While at Delta State, he attended a special program at Mississippi Valley State College. Founded in 1950 as the segregated Mississippi Vocational College, today it is Mississippi Valley State University. His encounter with African American students and with the reality of segregated education increased his sympathy for the civil rights movement. Following his graduation from Delta State in 1967, he taught at the Darlington School, a college preparatory high school, in Rome, Georgia. Subsequently, Davidow encountered anti-Israel protests in the wake of the 1967 Six Day War led by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that alerted him to the complexities of Black-Jewish relations during the civil rights era.

The experience of the Six Day War, combined with his family's long-term commitment to synagogue life at Greenville's Hebrew Union Congregation, led Davidow to pursue rabbinic studies from 1969 to 1973 at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. He filled his first rabbinic pulpit in Plattsburgh, a poor and declining city at the northern tip of the Empire State. Today its poverty rate is 19 percent with a median household income of fifty-two thousand dollars. The city is overwhelmingly white, at 88 percent.¹² The change for the young rabbi must have been impactful. He then had pulpits in Miami, Florida, and Atlanta, Georgia. In 1981 he was invited to give the benediction at a memorial service for the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. This was a high point in Davidow's rabbinic career and a culmination of his life's journey from "good ole southern boy to center-left Democrat." Subsequently he served as rabbi of Temple B'nai B'rith in Kingston, Pennsylvania, just north of Wilkes-Barre, before retiring to the western suburbs of Philadelphia, where he continues to serve as a certified chaplain in retirement facilities.

Davidow rarely discusses antisemitism per se in his memoir, perhaps reflecting Greenville's general acceptance of its Jewish population as white, or "almost white," in a place where race defined the social fault lines and where, when he lived there, whites controlled the social, political, and economic power in the city, county, and state. Davidow's depiction of white society's acceptance of his family illustrates the status of Jews in Mississippi (or at least their perception of their status), before

the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

However, in a well-known and published 1963 letter sent by the president of Greenville's synagogue to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), Bernard Goodman objected to the UAHC's invitation to Reverend King to speak at the biennial convention of the Reform movement. Goodman argued that King's remarks might compromise what he apparently perceived as fragile Jewish-Christian relations in Greenville, which had been built over years based on Jewish civic and economic activity in the Delta's most important city. Other Mississippi cities such as Jackson experienced steadier and more explicit antisemitism than Greenville.¹³

A year later, in 1964, two Jewish men and an African American man were brutally murdered in Philadelphia, Mississippi, just a few hours down the road from Greenville. White Mississippians, including officers of the Neshoba County Sheriff's Office and the Philadelphia, Mississippi, police department murdered Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney because they attempted to help African Americans register to vote. In contrast to this context, Davidow's memoir focuses on general issues of race and how his Jewish and southern identities intersected in shaping his experiences as a child and, later, as a young adult and congregational rabbi.

"Growing Up Jewish in the Mississippi Delta," the redacted portion of Davidow's memoir presented here, provides a forthright, first-person, analytical view of a complex time in American history in the Deep South. It illustrates how one individual navigated the changing course of history in a segregated society on the cusp of massive social, legal, and cultural change. Ultimately, Davidow felt compelled to come to terms with aspects of his youth that he found disquieting with honesty and clarity. In many respects, "Growing Up Jewish in the Mississippi Delta" provides important insights into the southern Jewish experience of an intelligent and sensitive young person coming of age in the historical maelstrom of the 1950s and early 1960s, which led him to confront and reject the prevailing culture of "the Lost Cause."

The Davidow memoir is rich in a number of themes central to the Jewish experience in the American South in the decades following World

War II. In particular, Davidow carefully probes the construction of southern Jewish identity in the postwar era, gender modeling as provided by his father, southern Judaism, and Jewish-Black relations in the South along both racial and class lines. Subsequently, Davidow rejects the racism of the South of his youth but continues to see himself as a southern Jew.

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Fred V. Davidow, *Growing Up Jewish in the Mississippi Delta, 1943–1961: A Rabbi's Memoir*

NOTE ON THE TEXT

The following appears as written by Fred Davidow, redacted by the editors, Lance J. Sussman and Karen S. Franklin, for chronological clarity and with minor stylistic correction. The editors provided the citations, subheadings, and bracketed information within the text.

My Ancestors Arrive in the Mississippi Delta, 1875–1889

The Mississippi Delta was an unlikely place for Jews from eastern Europe to come. The Delta was virtually uninhabitable before the Civil War. Swamps, canebrakes, and dense hardwood forests covered the land. After the war timber companies cleared the area of its hardwood forests and swamps were drained. Then railroad companies laid tracks to connect Delta planters to cotton markets. The Delta, a vast, flat alluvial plain with some of the most fertile soil in the world, became prime cotton-growing country in the late nineteenth century. It was dominated economically by white Anglo-Saxon Protestant planters who profited from the exploitation of hundreds of thousands of black laborers. Nonetheless, Jews pushed out of eastern Europe by poverty, persecution, and pogroms, found economic opportunity in the Delta.

Peddling and storekeeping were the first occupations. Land owning, prohibited to Jews in eastern Europe, and cotton planting were not unusual among Jews in the Delta. Other businesses in which Delta Jews engaged were banking, insurance, grocery wholesaling, and dealing in scrap metals. Before Prohibition, some Jews were in the liquor business. Jews were also represented in the professions of law and medicine. The

largest single occupational group was that of the clothing merchants. Jews found many niches in the Delta's economy.

Five congregations were formed from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s—four Reform and one Orthodox. The membership of the congregations was composed not only of families who lived in the town where the synagogue was built but also of families from smaller towns in the surrounding area. Of the millions of Jews who left eastern Europe for America, [only] a trickle flowed into the Mississippi Delta.

The prospect of prosperity brought the ancestral lines of my family to the Delta between 1875 and 1897. The first to arrive was Morris Cohn, my father's maternal grandfather. Born on June 19, 1849, in Thorn, West Prussia [today Torun, Poland], he married Zelotta Fuleder of Kikol [in Poland]. Their daughter Frieda was born September 7, 1870. By 1875 Morris was in the Delta. He found his way to Burtonia Landing and brought his family down from New York City, where they had sojourned. A fire in 1888 destroyed the settlement of Burtonia, whose population moved farther up the Yazoo River and rebuilt on the present site of Belzoni. When Morris died on December 3, 1910, he was reputed to be one of the richest men in Mississippi, amassing his wealth in land, planting, banking, insurance, and merchandising.

Solomon Davidow was born in Shaki [today Šakiai, Suwalki, Lithuania] on November 4, 1859. He left his native shtetl in 1872 and went to Cork, Ireland, where he lived with relatives for eight years. In 1880 he came to America and went to Pulaski, Tennessee, where a maternal uncle by the name of Israel Hanneberg lived. A year later he moved to Yazoo City, where his younger brother Marcus had settled.¹⁴ He moved to Belzoni around 1890, met Frieda Cohn, and married her on July 30, 1891. My father, Dave Hirsch Davidow, was born in Belzoni on August 7, 1903. Frieda died at the age forty-three in 1914, and ever afterward Solomon was a heartbroken man. He continued to operate his store in Belzoni until his death on December 12, 1927. His business, however, did not prosper, and he died a poor man.

Victor Abe (V. A.) Stein, my mother's maternal grandfather, was born Abba Avigdor Segal in Sheduva [today Seduva, Kaunas, Lithuania] in 1860. He married Sarah Byall there, and their first child, Fannie (née Feige, [born] on March 9, 1881), became my grandmother. Two more children were born in Kovno [Kaunas] in 1883 and 1885. Abba Avigdor, who

*Solomon and Frieda Davidow,
July 30, 1891, Belzoni, Mississippi.
(Courtesy of Rabbi Fred V. Davidow.)*

changed his surname to Stein in the shtetl, perhaps to avoid conscription into the Russian army, immigrated to America some time after the birth of his third child. After entering America through the port of Baltimore, he transposed and altered his given names to Victor Abe. He took a job harvesting oysters in Chesapeake Bay and after several years had earned enough money to return to his shtetl to retrieve his wife and three children. He brought his family to America.

Because there were relatives already living in Cincinnati, he made his way there, peddling goods along the journey in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Four more children were born in Cincinnati. Victor Abe peddled goods in western Kentucky with Cincinnati as his base. In 1897 he and a partner followed some advice to take goods to the Mississippi Delta. They landed in Vicksburg off a riverboat and started making their way north through the Delta. Their intention was to reach Memphis, after selling all their merchandise, and then to return to Cincinnati. They stopped in Rolling Fork and operated a store for a year. Since V. A.'s partner wanted to return to Cincinnati, the two dissolved their business relationship. V. A. moved on his own to Erwin and rented a store selling caskets, groceries, dry goods, and whiskey for a nickel a shot. The landlord

saw that he was making money and took back the building. Undaunted, V. A. took his earnings and made a down payment on Little Hope Plantation in Chatham. His daughter Fannie, then in her mid-teens, left Cincinnati and went down to Chatham to help her father run his business. Sarah joined them later, after their infant son Lawrence recovered from a bout of pneumonia. Lawrence was as smart as he was hardy. He eventually took over the operation of the plantation from his father and became a wealthy man.

Harry Schwartz, my maternal grandfather, was born in the town of Ananyev [today Ananyviv, Ukraine], north of Odessa, on March 1, 1881. On April 27, 1881, fifty-seven days after my grandfather Harry was born, a pogrom in Ananyev destroyed 175 Jewish homes and fourteen shops. The poor Jews living on the outskirts of the town suffered most. Pogroms broke out in other places in the aftermath of the assassination of Czar

*Fannie Stein and Harry Schwartz,
married January 14, 1902.
(Courtesy of Rabbi Fred V.
Davidow.)*

Alexander II on March 13, 1881. Jews were blamed for a plot that was actually carried out by Russian gentiles who were members of a left-wing terrorist organization.¹⁵ The Schwartz family left Ananyev in 1889 and came to America. The Schwartz family settled in Indianapolis, Indiana. David Schwartz, Harry's father, went into the produce business. I have scant information about my grandfather's early years.

One story was told to explain why Harry ate bacon and ham, while his wife Fannie kept kosher all of her life. It was said that when Harry peddled goods from a wagon in the Indiana countryside, there were times when he could not make it back to Indianapolis by nightfall. A farmer would offer him food and lodging for the night, and Harry would eat anything the farmer's wife put on the table. Perhaps a refusal to eat pork when served would have seemed ungracious. Anyway, Harry acquired a taste for bacon and ham and ate it during the rest of his life, but only outside of his home with Fannie.

Harry married Fannie Stein on January 14, 1902. The story of how they met is lost. Their first home was in Longwood, Mississippi, where Harry owned a general store. Longwood was a tiny gathering of stores and houses alongside the route that became Highway 1, the River Road. All five of their children were born there. My mother, Thelma Leah, was born on January 12, 1909. In the fall of 1914, Harry went to Greenville to start a business. Fannie and the children followed in January 1915. At one time or another, Harry ran a drygoods store and a meat market, but his businesses did not thrive. In April 1918, they moved to the house at 115 West Walker. This was the house in which Harry and Fannie lived until they died, Harry on March 18, 1963, and Fannie on February 24, 1981. This house was the center of life for my maternal extended family and the house in which I celebrated the Passover Seder, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Thanksgiving, and many other occasions.

From Sheduva in Kovno, Russian Empire, Shaki in Suwalki, Russian Empire, Thorn in Prussia, and Ananyev in Kherson, Russian Empire, came four great-grandparents and four grandparents to the Mississippi Delta. After some migrations they found new homes, settled their families, attained varying degrees of financial success, and never left. Morris and Zelotta Cohn, Solomon and Frieda Davidow, Victor Abe and Sarah Stein, and Harry and Fannie Schwartz are all buried in the soil of the Delta in the Greenville Jewish Cemetery.

Fred Davidow family tree.

My Southern Dad: Dave H. Davidow

My father, Dave H. Davidow, born in Belzoni, Mississippi, in 1903, had an odd amalgamated identity of a being a Jew and a southerner. As I reflect on his values and actions over the entire course of his lifetime, Daddy's Jewish identity was much stronger than his southern. When he was thirteen years old, he started attending Gulf Coast Military Academy in Gulfport, Mississippi. He had barely begun his first year when he requested permission to be absent from classes and extracurricular activities on Yom Kippur. He spent the entire day alone and fasting in his dormitory room. It must have been Dave's firm conviction and self-assertiveness that he chose to stand out as a Jew in such a gentile milieu. There was an ironic conclusion to this incident of traditional observance. Whenever Daddy recalled this experience, he did not omit from the story that at the end of the day a friend brought him a sandwich from the mess hall to break his fast. A hungry Dave ate it with gusto, even though it was a ham sandwich. He had no qualms about eating it. Though his parents kept a kosher household, they did permit their six children to eat *trefa* outside of their home but prohibited them from bringing it inside.

In the 1920s Daddy lived in Ruleville, Mississippi, where his three older sisters had settled. Ruleville was a very small town in the Delta with a population of 1,378 in the 1930 census. He was a tall, lean and very handsome fellow and dated young women in the town, albeit they were Christian. One spring day Daddy was invited to lunch at the home of a

Dave H. Davidow, 1939, and Thelma Leah Schwartz Davidow, 1930s.

(Courtesy of Rabbi Fred V. Davidow.)

girlfriend. He sat down to eat, and when he saw that lunch was a sandwich with leavened bread, he remembered it was Passover. He got up from the table and left. No doubt he killed any budding romance with his hostess.

In 1938 Mama and Daddy moved from Ruleville to Greenville, my mother's hometown. They became members of Hebrew Union Congregation, where Mama had been confirmed and where my parents had been married in 1935. In the years of my boyhood and youth, 1951–1960 (and in the years before and after), Daddy went to Friday night services without fail. He kept *siddurim* and Bibles, books on Judaism and Jewish history in his bedside table and he read them. He made a complete fast on Yom Kippur and stayed in the sanctuary from the beginning of the morning service until *tekiah gedolah* was sounded at the end of the longest day in Judaism. Not one morsel of *chametz* ever touched his lips during Pesach.

Daddy joined the Greenville Lions Club in 1939 and was an active member. In the 1950s the club put on an annual comedy show as a fundraiser. Daddy, who loved being in front of an audience, always got the role of emcee in the show. One year it was suggested by a member that the performance be held on a Friday night. My father stood up from his seat and objected. "On Friday nights my place is the seat on my pew at Hebrew Union Temple. If you want this show to be on Friday night, that's okay with me but I won't be there. Count me out. I'll be attending Sabbath evening services at my synagogue." A Christian member made a motion to have the show on some night other than Friday. The motion was seconded. A vote was called. The show was to take place on a Thursday night. Daddy kept his role as the emcee.

This step showed Daddy's southern side. The role of emcee that he played was Mr. Interlocutor in a blackface minstrel show. The interlocutor was the straight man master of ceremonies [who] spoke in aristocratic English and used a [refined, cultivated] vocabulary. The humor came from the exchanges [and] from the misunderstandings on the part of the endmen when talking to the interlocutor. Daddy, dressed in a tuxedo, wore blackface, and the four endmen, also dressed in tuxedos, were seated, wearing blackface and speaking in black dialect. Four endmen in blackface played the parts of simple-minded, unsophisticated blacks. I attended only one of these shows and can still picture my father standing on the stage with the endmen to his left. I do not recall any details in the dialogue

between my father and the endmen [but] whatever was in the script surely conveyed, “degrading racial stereotypes.”

What’s In a Name?

My father worked as a salesman for IDS [Investors Diversified Services]. The major financial products of IDS were savings contracts and mutual funds. Daddy had hundreds of clients, and to keep his name, company, and address and phone number fresh in their minds, he would send out promotional 5”w x 2”h desk calendars. By the middle of December, the calendars arrived in boxes and the envelopes had to be addressed, stuffed, and mailed out in the week before January 1. Addressing, stuffing, and stamping the envelopes became a family undertaking. We could do the work only at night when Daddy was at home, because only he could answer any questions about a name or a street address with certainty.

I would take a list and start addressing the envelopes. Going down the list, I would come across one after the other “Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So” or “Dr. and Mrs. So-and-So.” Every now and then I would come to names without “Mr. and Mrs.” “Daddy,” I would call out, “should I write out ‘Mr. and Mrs.’ for Henry and Rosalie Collins (fictional names)?” “No,” Daddy would respond, “it’s not necessary. They’re colored.” Sometime in the mid-1950s Mama persuaded Daddy to add “Mr. and Mrs.” to the addresses for Negro clients. Her argument was simply based on economics: why risk offending anyone who was a client. No harm was done by using titles customarily reserved for whites and the benefit was promoting the goodwill of black clients. The change in adding “Mr. and Mrs.” to the envelopes for black customers became the routine for as long as Daddy continued sending out the calendars.

It is no surprise that forms of address in face-to-face interactions differed for whites and blacks. Blacks had to address white adults with Mr., Mrs., or Miss, followed by the personal or family name, but whites addressed black adults by their first names only, as if to regard them as having never grown up. Black men who were successful in business could be called by their last names without saying Mr. before the name. This was an acceptable but odd way of showing them respect. Two such black men in Greenville were Brown and Phelps. Brown owned and operated Brown’s Pastry Shop on Nelson Street, which was considered the epicenter of African American business and entertainment in the Delta. In the

1940s and 1950s black blues musicians and nightclubs made Nelson Street the equivalent of Beale Street in mid-twentieth century Memphis. Brown had black and white customers. His French bread was a popular favorite in my extended family. My brother Stanley and I could devour a loaf by ourselves in a minute, cutting off slabs 2-3" thick at a time.

When we came home from college on vacation, we eagerly anticipated eating our sandwiches with Brown's French bread and Mama's cole slaw as a homecoming treat. Brown's wife made wedding cakes. Their business prospered. The elders in my family called Brown's wife by her given name, but Brown was simply called Brown. He was too successful a businessman to be first-named. I don't remember exactly the year but it was a special thrill for me in the 1960s when I first addressed Brown's wife as Mrs. Brown. My friend Benjy Nelken, who founded the Greenville History Museum, informed me that their first names were German and Louise. It has taken over fifty years for me to find out.

Another successful black businessman, with white as well as black customers, was Phelps. He owned and operated a neighborhood grocery called Humpty Dumpty, which was not far from Coleman High School, the all-Negro secondary school. Phelps was a pit master par excellence. Throughout the South there were many black pit masters who were highly respected for their skill in barbecuing and smoking meats. Hence *the* pit master of Greenville was not called by his first name. Phelps had built by the side of his grocery store an annex, where he tended his barbecue pit.

We did not observe *kashrut* in our home, even though both of my parents had grown up with mothers who kept a kosher household. Through the years Phelps would barbecue spareribs for us. When my father remarried in the summer of 1980, Phelps smoked the turkey we relished at the dinner after the ceremony. I also learned from Benjy that Phelps's first name was Mack. Phelps's wife did not work at his grocery store. Her name was Louise, and she worked as a nurse in the clinic of our family doctor, Jerome B. Hirsch, Jr. I was a kid and yet I called her Louise, not Mrs. Phelps. The clinic had been built by Dr. Hirsch, Sr., fourteen years before in a neighborhood where whites and blacks lived near [one] another. There were two entrances to the clinic on opposite sides on the front of the building, marked "white" and "colored." However, there was one place in the clinic that was not segregated. The Doctors Hirsch had delivered many babies, and on the bulletin board in the office of Dr. Hirsch, Jr.,

were pinned unsegregated photographs of white and black babies who were brought into the world by him and probably also by his father.

Colored Only

In the 1950s I was often in the Washington County Courthouse where Leroy Percy had once fired a thundering salvo against the KKK in 1922.¹⁶ My mother's older sister worked there as a secretary in the County Roads Department. My aunt let me borrow her car and when I went to pick up the keys and returned to pick her up after work, I saw many signs in the halls for water fountains and bathrooms, each marked either "white" or "colored." One argument put forth for the segregated water fountains and bathrooms was that blacks were not as clean as whites and they had body odor. That argument didn't "wash" with me. Food preparation required hygienic conditions, and if Negroes in our homes, in a bakery, at the barbecue pit could be entrusted to prepare foods for whites, then they were clean enough for me. The marble spice made by Lula B. Watson, the French bread baked by German Brown, and the spareribs barbecued by Mack Phelps were never contaminated.

As for the matter of body odor it was just another example of racism. The jobs black laborers performed were back-breaking and sweat-producing, and they were paid cheap wages. I once said to Mama, "If Efrem had left in his pocket only fifteen cents after working a day's labor under the sun in the yard of some white folks, would he buy a box of Nabisco saltines or a bar of Lifebuoy soap?" Lifebuoy made the term "B.O.," short for body odor, famous. Body odor was a function of economic status. Blacks in menial positions did have body odor but so did whites who had lower-class jobs. The latter, however, were never deemed to be innately smelly. It is easy to find faults when one is prejudiced.

Jackie Robinson, 1947

On April 15, 1947, Major League Baseball underwent a sea change. On that day Jackie Robinson debuted on Ebbets Field playing for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Robinson was subjected to derision and physical abuse. On April 22, 1947, the Dodgers played the Philadelphia Phillies. The manager and the players of the Phillies called Robinson a "nigger" from their dugout and yelled that he should "go back to the cotton fields." Branch Rickey, a part owner of the Dodgers who had signed up Robinson,

later recalled that the manager of the Phillies “did more than anybody to unite the Dodgers. When he poured out that string of unconscionable abuse, he solidified and united thirty men.” One of the most racist teams was the St. Louis Cardinals. In the 1934 World Series the Cardinals played against the Detroit Tigers, whose superstar was Hank Greenberg. Dizzy Dean, who won thirty games for the Cardinals in the 1934 season, heckled Greenberg throughout the seven-game series by hurling taunts at Greenberg like “Moses” and “kike.” The Cardinal Enos Slaughter, who was considered a leader in shouting racial slurs at Robinson, inflicted a seven-inch gash in Robinson’s leg with his shoe spikes. In 1947 Hank Greenberg played his last season for the Pittsburgh Pirates. In one game with the

Hank Greenberg in 1940, Jackie Robinson in 1950.
(*Wikimedia Commons.*)

Dodgers Greenberg collided with Robinson at first base. Greenberg, who had had to deal with antisemitic insults throughout his career, “whispered a few words into Robinson’s ear,” which Robinson later characterized as “words of encouragement.” Greenberg advised him to overcome his critics by defeating them in games.¹⁷

I wish that my father’s heart had been informed by Greenberg’s magnanimity. In the mid-1950s Daddy and I often watched the Major League Baseball game of the week, which was broadcast on television on Saturday afternoons. Dizzy Dean was the commentator. Daddy had a penchant for telling me if someone was antisemitic. He would call the person “*rishus*,” a Yiddish word with the connotation of nastiness mixed with

hate. Daddy never said anything negative about Dizzy Dean. Had he ever known how Dean had heckled Greenberg or had he chosen to forget? That is an unanswerable question, but what is certain is that Daddy hated the Brooklyn Dodgers. He favored whichever team was playing against the Dodgers. What especially angered him was anything done well for the Dodgers by a black player, especially Junior Gilliam. I don't recall his ever-cursing Jackie Robinson. He saved his fulminations for Junior Gilliam. If Junior Gilliam got on base with a hit, Daddy would yell out, "Get that black *mamzer* out! That *shukhor* has no business on first base!" Daddy frequently peppered his language with Yiddish words. A *mamzer* was a bastard and a *shukhor* was a dorky.

I always felt embarrassed when Daddy raised his voice so loudly. He didn't whisper his displeasure. Daddy and I would be watching television in the living room, and not more than twenty feet away Lula would be in the kitchen, doing some chores. How could she not have heard Daddy's rantings? Some adult members of my extended family would talk disparagingly about Negroes within earshot of them. They deluded themselves into thinking that the Negroes would not discern that they were the subjects of slurs and bigoted statements. Sometimes they would lower their voices, assuming that the Negroes would not hear or would not understand what was being said. My relatives thought that speaking a few words in Yiddish would disguise what they were saying. What a fallacy! It was not uncommon for Negroes working for Jewish families to learn Yiddish words and phrases. In 1993 Secretary of State Colin Powell met Yitzhak Shamir, the Prime Minister of Israel, in Jerusalem. Powell stunned Shamir when he said, "*Men kent reden Yiddish,*" "We can speak Yiddish." Powell had not forgotten the Yiddish he learned while working for a Jewishly owned business in the Bronx in the 1950s.

Even though I did not like hearing Daddy rage against Junior Gilliam, I did pick up his intense dislike for the Brooklyn Dodgers. In the spring of 1966 I was a graduate student in American history at Tulane University. While reading a book on post-World War II American culture, I read a chapter about the Brooklyn Dodgers hiring Jackie Robinson. Then it clicked. Daddy apparently had never forgiven the Dodgers for breaking the custom of barring blacks from the major leagues. Strangely Daddy's animus toward the Dodgers did not spill over to the New York Giants. He never fumed when Willie Mays made a spectacular catch in the outfield

or knocked a home run. Being such a staunch southerner, Daddy ironically loved the New York Yankees. The Yankees did not fall from Daddy's grace when they hired their first black player, Elston Howard, in 1955. The eight years between Jackie Robinson's breaking the MLB color barrier in 1947 and Howard's joining the Yankees in 1955 had allowed hostile feelings to subside. I wrote in my journal, "My Daddy would have rolled over in his grave if he knew I was rooting for the Dodgers."

My Southern Education, 1948

On Tuesday, September 7, 1948, I started my first day at St. Rose of Lima School. It was the Catholic kindergarten directly across the street from Hebrew Union Temple. There were no public kindergartens in Greenville at this time, only private. One was at the Presbyterian church and the other at the Catholic parochial school. Jewish families sent their children to St. Rose of Lima, and there were eight Jewish kids, myself included, in a class of thirty-six. Mama didn't just drop me off. She went inside to speak to the nun who was the teacher of my class. Mama told the nun that I was Jewish and that she did not want me to recite any prayer in the name of Jesus. She asked that I be excused from reciting prayers along with the others in the class. Mama asked for permission for me to recite the *Shema*, and the nun assented to Mama's request. The Jews in Greenville had very cordial relations with the Catholics, and the nun's ready consent for me to say the watchword of the Jewish faith showed the level of respect between the Jews in Greenville and the Catholic community. This is my earliest Jewish memory. In retrospect, I can see that Mama's assertiveness was the first instance in a pattern in how she went about forming my Jewish identity.

Stevenson and Sparkman, 1952

As a nine-year-old boy in 1952, I did not understand well the political differences on race relations in the presidential campaign between Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. In my research I have learned that Eisenhower was going to continue vigorously the integration of the U.S. Armed Forces and to use federal authority to bring an end to segregation in Washington, D.C. Stevenson selected Senator John Sparkman of Alabama as his running mate. Because Sparkman was an avowed segregationist, Stevenson thought that he could preclude the splitting of the

Democratic Party that had occurred in the 1948 presidential election. In 1948 the "Dixiecrats" were incensed with President Truman's order to integrate the military. The "Dixiecrats," who chose the Confederate battle flag as their party's flag, were dead set on protecting southern states' rights to maintain racial segregation. My parents had opposing views; one was going to vote for Eisenhower and the other for Stevenson. From their conversations I must have picked up that Eisenhower was an integrationist and Stevenson was a segregationist.

Penchant for American History, 1952

I can trace my keen interest in American history to the time when I was a fourth-grader in 1952–1953. I started reading the books on American history published in the Landmark Series by Random House. One reviewer wrote, "The Landmark series is the best collection of children's histories ever written." As a jacket blurb on an old edition stated, the reasons [for the series' popularity] are obvious: good writers and important and appealing subjects from America's past. When I finished reading one volume, Mama would take me to a department store in downtown Greenville that had a small book section and I would pick another. My interest ranged broadly across all the eras and personages of American history. I accumulated about two dozen books in the series. In the eighth grade (1956–1957) I achieved the highest average in American history, and at the awards ceremony at the end of the school year I received a small cash reward from my American history teacher, Wilhelmina Cockerham.

Lula B. Watson, 1952

One night in the fall of 1952 we were taking our black maid, Lula B. Watson, home. My mother's older sister was driving. Mama was riding shotgun. In the back seat I was on the right behind Mama. My brother Stanley was sitting in the middle. Lula was on the left behind my aunt. My aunt and my mother must have been talking about the upcoming election and I blurted out: "If Eisenhower wins the election, does that mean we will have to go school with the niggers?" A deadly silence descended. As soon as the words had passed my lips, a sinking feeling overcame me and reminded me that Lula was no more than an arm's length from me. How low I felt! Lula broke the silence: "We don't want to go to school with you either!" She came back to work the next day and was there for another

twelve years. No one ever uttered one word about that incident after that night.

The measure of years Lula's ancestors had lived in the United States made her more American than I. The removal of Native Americans from Mississippi in 1830 as a result of the Indian Removal Act opened up territory for the cultivation of cotton, and planters imported thousands of black slaves from the Upper South.¹⁸ Lula was likely a descendant of one of the slave families in Port Gibson, where she was born in 1909. She moved to my hometown Greenville in 1950. She came with her husband Ike and three children, two girls and a boy. Ike had a good job with a lumber company that harvested virgin timber and manufactured wooden products. Her family had been in America for many generations before my immigrant forebears left eastern Europe and reached the Mississippi Delta in the late nineteenth century. Yet my white skin entitled me to privileges that were denied to her and her family. Living in Mississippi conditioned a white person such as myself to say and do shameful things to and about blacks.

Lula once said to me, "When you become an adult, I will have to call you 'Mr. Fred.'" I replied to her, "Lula, I will always be Fred to you." I could not bear the thought that this woman would ever have to use a servile form of addressing me. She had come to work for us in 1950, when I was seven years old, and had watched me grow up. She sat by my bed and read to me when I was sick. She saw me naked. She washed, ironed, folded and put away my clothes in my chest of drawers and in the closet. She dripped cold water from a washcloth on my face to wake me up.

When I was in the ninth grade, I started smoking cigarettes without my parents' knowledge. I liked Lucky Strikes and would smoke one in my bedroom when I came home from school, if my parents were not there. At that time of day Lula had usually set up an ironing board in the kitchen. She had an unobstructed view of the front door, and the back door was about twenty feet behind her. If she saw Mama or Daddy coming in the front door or heard either of them opening the back door, she would warn me with a coded verbal signal. I would have time to hurry to the bathroom and flush the cigarette down the toilet. The smell of the cigarette smoke would not make my parents suspicious, because Lula smoked too. I gave her some of my cigarettes for her loyal vigilance. It was morally offensive to me that the color of my skin could confer upon me a superior status

with a title that one who was so familiar with me was compelled to use for the sake of Jim Crow sanctions.

Lula became an excellent cook under Mama's tutelage and she came to taking over the preparation of almost all of our evening dinners. Mama, a master in making cookies, pastries, pies, and cakes, also taught Lula the art of making desserts. When a marble spice cake, my favorite, arrived for me at the student post office at Tulane University, more likely than not it had been made by Lula. What always struck me as an inconsistency in the rules of racial etiquette is that Negroes were clean enough to prepare meals for whites but they were not clean enough to eat their meals with whites at the same table at the same time.

In 1964, a year before I completed undergraduate school at Tulane, Lula stopped working for my parents. Understandably she wanted to earn more at a commercial business than she could as our domestic. From then on I saw her only from time to time, when she would come to help out for holiday meals at the home of my maternal grandmother. How she would address me was solved when I became a rabbi in 1973. She called me "Rabbi Fred." That was OK with me, because Rabbi is an earned title and not one associated with an outdated form of racial discrimination.¹⁹

Efrem Cathlic

In the 1950s the only blacks whom I knew personally were the women who worked as domestics in our home and in the homes of my extended family and the man who mowed the grass, weeded the flower beds, and clipped the hedges in our yard. This man showed up at our back door in 1953, looking for work. He became our yardman for about fifteen years. Even though I was accustomed to hearing and understanding Black English, it was difficult for me to understand Efrem. In one conversation I asked him questions about his background. Did he have a family? He was a solitary soul. Where did he live? He had no address. What was his last name? He said it was "Cathlic." In the small-town segregated South in the 1950s Efrem Cathlic was totally dependent on the good will and paternalism of whites.

With his hollow cheeks Efrem always looked underfed. His hands and thick fingers were roughened by the dirty work he did. He walked with a slight stoop. Some of his teeth were missing and the ones that remained were yellowed. Efrem always wore a baseball cap pushed up to

the top of his forehead and discolored with sweat stains. His shoes were scuffed, the leather cracked. The tongues of the shoes would flap because there were no shoelaces. His wide feet would stretch out the cast-off shoes that did not fit him. His pants were tattered and there were holes at the knees long before they became fashionable.

Because Efrem was so thin, his pants would hang below his waist and the top of his soiled underwear would show. Lula, who was embarrassed by Efrem's appearance, would scold him for being so disheveled, but because of his deprived circumstances it was pointless to berate him. Sometimes I would notice Efrem at sunset, walking by the window of the kitchen on the way to the shed at the back of our yard where he stored his tools. One particular evening as he was passing by the window, I saw that he was wearing a pair of chinos that had once been mine. His shirt and shoes had come from some other house. His mixture of clothing was a sign that he relied on a succession of castoffs from the families whose yards he tended.

One night Efrem knocked at our back door. "Boss Lady," he began. It was the servile form of address to assure whites that he "knew his place." Mama would have preferred that Efrem would say "Mrs. Davidow," but he was stuck in an unwritten code of race relations. "Boss Lady, I wuz werkin' all day t'day in Miz Annie Lee's yard but she don't pay me. She sez, sez she, cum back t'morrer. Now I ain't got no munny. Kin you gimme sump'n t'eat?" Mama fed Efrem that night and many other nights, whether or not he had been denied his wages. Perhaps Efrem learned that he could turn his plea into a regular ploy to get fed. Regardless of that, Mama would feed him whenever he came around at suppertime and she would pay him his wages right after he completed his work in our yard. Efrem lived from hand-to-mouth, and as a Jewish family that stayed in the synagogue the entire day of Yom Kippur we were keenly aware of a verse in the afternoon Torah reading in the Reform prayer book, "Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor nor rob him: the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning" (Leviticus 19:13).

Once Lula told Mama that she was surprised that Mama would give Efrem such good food. I suppose Lula would have expected a white person to give to a black [person] food of inferior quality. Mama replied that she would never give Efrem any food that she herself would not eat. A

plate would be prepared for him from food that Mama would have placed on the table in our dining room. In October 1995, I rediscovered a journal I had written in the 1960s. I found an entry dated May 30, 1966. In it I recounted the story of Efrem and wrote about that night, noting: "Mama couldn't stand to give Efrem food that wasn't fit for a person in ordinary circumstances to eat." Now I knew why I chose top-quality canned foods for Operation Isaiah.²⁰ The apple had not fallen far from the tree.

In our house in Greenville there was a long, thin passageway from the kitchen to the back door. We called it the back hall. On one side of the hall, about six feet from the back door, there was a door that opened to a space we called the furnace room. When the house was built sometime in the 1920s, the furnace was fired with coal. In the early '50s the furnace was converted to natural gas. Two steps led down from the back hall to the floor of the furnace room. In the winter the furnace room was always warm. Efrem was not allowed to come into the kitchen. He would sit on the top step and that was where he would be served his supper. He would get coffee, sweetened to excess, in a 16-oz. Mason jar. His supper was placed on an aluminum pie plate or on an old china plate we no longer used. The knife, fork and spoon he used were designated just for him.

In Dixie Land olden days were not forgotten. Lula was, so to speak, like the house servant. She cooked our meals and used the same plates, utensils and vessels as we did in the dining room. Efrem was like the field hand who was not allowed to enter the house proper. Whatever was put on his plate was covered with Vermont Maid Syrup or Grandma's Molasses. Even when Lula prepared his food, she drenched it with those sweet fluids. She said that was what made any food appetizing for him. It was no wonder that the teeth still in his mouth were yellowed and decayed.

Bye Bye to the Ku Klux Klan, 1953

"You gotta 'nother think coming if you think you're going to take that cowboy hat to the Jamboree," Daddy [once] said with firmness and with a tone in his voice that would brook no opposition. Mama was standing at his side, nodding her head in agreement, horrified by three black letters on the hat. My older brother Stanley was preparing for his trip to the 1953 Boy Scout National Jamboree in Santa Ana, California. Stanley and his Boy Scout buddies were going to portray themselves as uber-southerners. They had taken facsimiles of Confederate currency, scorched

them with flames from matches and crumpled them to make them appear as if they were a century old. Fourteen-year-old boys from the Mississippi Delta, who believed the myth that one Rebel could whip ten Yankees, thought they could outsmart gullible northern boys and con them into exchanging real greenbacks for counterfeit Confederate bills.

To my parents what was much worse than this hare-brained scheme was what Stanley had written on the cowboy hat: three black letters two-inches high, KKK. Stanley did not know the awful significance of those three letters. He only knew that some group known as the KKK was strongly associated with the South and he meant it only for instant recognition as a southerner. But hate-filled, violence-prone white men, garbed in white sheets and white hoods, were anathema to my parents. Daddy told Stanley, "Either completely erase those letters or get yourself another hat!" Stanley was able to obliterate those letters, leaving no trace of them.

During the civil rights era bombings of black churches and synagogues, the murder of blacks and Jews, and police attacks using fire hoses and ferocious German shepherds against peaceful demonstrators were events that prompted Mama on a number of occasions to recall a time

Vicksburg Herald, *March 2, 1922.*

(Newspapers.com.)

when our town defeated the Ku Klux Klan, which was never again to gain a foothold in Greenville. Mama was fifteen years old in 1924, when a historic election was held in Washington County, of which Greenville is the county seat. The Klan was formed during Reconstruction and used violence primarily against African Americans to keep them from voting and to overthrow Republican state governments. However, it had never been permitted to enter Washington County. After 1920 the Klan experienced a recrudescence in the South. Leroy Percy, the preeminent political leader in Greenville, was a staunch opponent of the Ku Klux Klan. In 1922 he humiliated a man named Joseph Camp in an oratorical showdown in the Washington County Courthouse. Following the contest, in which Camp attacked blacks, Jews and especially Catholics, a resolution was passed condemning the Klan. Camp escaped the courtroom out of a side door, appealing for protection from a deputy sheriff, who was an Irish Catholic.²¹

The victory over the Klan created a lifelong memory for Mama. The flare-ups of racist violence in Mississippi during the days of the civil rights movement were horrendous: the brutal slaying of Emmett Till in 1955, the assassination of Medgar Evers in 1963, the killing of Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman in 1964 by the KKK.²² Mama would wistfully remember that the people of Greenville had taken a stand against the KKK and won. Whenever she mentioned the 1924 election, I do not ever recall her saying anything about the uninhibited party at the Percy home and the arrival of her maternal grandparents, who joined in the drinking, frolicking and dancing.

In 1981 I was reading *Lanterns on the Levee*, a memoir by William Alexander Percy, the son of Leroy Percy.²³ Chapter 18 is entitled "The Ku Klux Klan Comes and Goes." I was taken by surprise and utterly delighted by a paragraph near the very end of the chapter, where Will Percy describes how V. A. and Sarah so enjoyed being at the party. I would have very much liked sharing that discovery with my mother but she had died in 1979.

Two Steps Forward, One Step Backward, 1954

Progress in my family on race relations could be likened to the idiom of "two steps forward, one step backward." One step forward was my parents' decision to address envelopes to Daddy's black customers using

"Mr. and Mrs." Another step forward in my family came on May 18, 1954, the day [after] the United States Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote the single opinion, overturning the 1896 Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* that held that "separate but equal" educational facilities were constitutional. As a result of *Plessy v. Ferguson* racial segregation in public schools became the law in all southern states and in some non-southern states.

Most white southerners considered Monday, May 17, 1954, "a day of catastrophe." On Tuesday the eighteenth, my brother Stanley, who was in the ninth grade at E. E. Bass Junior High School, initiated a petition that began, "We the undersigned will never go to school with Negroes." On Wednesday the nineteenth, Stanley stood up in class and retracted his petition. He told the class, "My father said, 'You're trying to do to Negroes the same thing the Nazis did to the Jews.'" I do not know what thoughts my father was thinking when he told Stanley to recant his position. Was Daddy remembering that his paternal aunt and her three adult children perished in the Holocaust, likely murdered by *Einsatzgruppen* in Shaki [Šakiai], Lithuania, in 1941? Perhaps a prayer in the Reform Union Prayer Book was imprinted on his heart, "As Thou hast redeemed Israel and saved him from arms stronger than his own, so mayest Thou redeem all who are oppressed and persecuted. Praised art Thou, O Lord, Redeemer of Israel." Whatever prompted Daddy to tell Stanley to back down was another progressive step.

Emmett Till 1955

I adopted Daddy's fervent feelings about being a southerner. When he declared, "We whipped their ears back at Shiloh," I heard his pride in the valor of Confederate soldiers for repelling Yankees at Shiloh. My investment of emotion in being a southerner was strong. I had a deep interest in the southern side of the Civil War. With an exception or two, I followed the rules of race relations prescribed by Jim Crow. I heard and made derogatory statements about Negroes. Yet I felt no hatred toward blacks, though it may seem disingenuous for me to make that claim.

In actuality, the violent acts perpetrated against blacks engendered my sympathy for their plight, hostility toward those who committed the

Emmett Till with his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, c.1950.
 (Library of Congress.)

atrocities, and contempt for the public figures who encouraged and condoned extreme racism. The antisemitism of the KKK and other white supremacist groups was also, of course, a crucial factor in favoring blacks, whom they attacked physically and verbally. On August 31, 1955, sixty miles from Greenville, the body of Emmett Till was discovered and retrieved from the Tallahatchie River. Fourteen-year-old Till had been abducted from his uncle's home in Money, Mississippi, tortured, murdered and thrown into the river on August 28 by two white men who alleged that Till crossed the "color line" by flirting with the wife of one of them. The news about the lynching of Till sparked an outrage among decent people in Mississippi. My parents would have agreed with a writer in a letter to the editor in a Mississippi newspaper: "Now is the time for every citizen who loves the state of Mississippi to 'Stand up and be counted' before hoodlum white trash brings us to destruction." Yes, that is exactly what we thought of the murderers of Emmett Till and their ilk: "hoodlum white trash." Because Till's case received widespread attention, "Mississippi became in the eyes of the nation the epitome of racism and the citadel of white supremacy."²⁴

The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision created shock waves in the South. From Virginia to Texas Southern [University], politicians sought

ways to block desegregation. Integration at Little Rock Central High School was to begin on September 4, 1957. Arkansas governor Orval Faubus tried to prevent the enrollment of nine black students at the high school by ordering the Arkansas National Guard to block the black students from entering the school. On September 23, President Dwight Eisenhower issued an executive order federalizing the Arkansas National Guard and ordered it to support the desegregation of Central High School. This executive order took the Guard out of Faubus's control.²⁵

On September 24, President Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne Division of the United States Army to Little Rock. By the end of September, the nine were admitted to the school under the protection of the 101st Airborne Division and the Arkansas National Guard. Because Daddy was wont to express his opinions on politicians and current events with vehemence, I think I would recall any outburst he might have made about his opposition to desegregation, his approval of the actions of Governor Faubus, or his disagreement with what President Eisenhower had done.

All in all, there was little discussion about desegregation at home, although sometimes I would broach the subject of race relations with Mama. Once I asked Mama if she would eat at the same table with Harry Belafonte. She responded, "He probably wouldn't sit down with us." Though *Brown v. Board of Education* was like a tsunami slamming into the South and threatening to wash away 335 years of keeping blacks in their place, there were hardly any ripples of dissent in our home.

The Gray Ghost: *Mosby's Rangers*, 1957

On October 10, 1957, Daddy and I fell in love with a new TV series, *The Gray Ghost*. It was based on the exploits of Major John Singleton Mosby, commander of the 43rd Battalion of the Virginia Cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia. The 43rd Battalion was actually a band of partisan rangers who carried out raids against units of the Union Army with cunning and stealth under the leadership of Mosby, nicknamed [the] "Gray Ghost." The South never lost its cause while Mosby and his rangers rode through the Virginia countryside, licking the Yankees at every turn. The opening scene of every episode showed the 43rd Battalion with Mosby in the lead, galloping on a road toward the viewer, Confederate flags flapping in the wind. The theme music played while we watched this band of brothers forging ahead to whip the Yankees again.²⁶

Daddy and I watched all thirty-nine half-hour episodes. We were transported to a time and place where the victories of a Confederate cavalry unit did not seem related to the fate of the Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on the afternoon of July 3, 1863. Though inspired by true stories, *The Gray Ghost* was like a great fantasy, and we could believe that the South was winning the war through this TV show, which never disappointed us. We could relive the glories of the Confederacy before July 3, 1863, through the triumphs of Mosby and his rangers. When I was a senior in high school, I bought a reprint of Mosby's memoirs and relished reading it.²⁷ I dreamed that I would be reincarnated as a horse soldier in the 43rd Battalion.

The last episode aired on July 3, 1958. I thought it was cancelled because it was reigniting sectionalism at the same time when the civil rights movement was gaining momentum. The show reminded southerners of their armed resistance to the federal government whose aim was to preserve the Union and to end the enslavement of African Americans. The *Gray Ghost* showed Johnny Reb outsmarting and outfighting Billy Yank. It could "aid and abet" southern resistance to desegregation. The ideas I have expressed here turned out to be a complete misperception of mine. It was cancelled because the production costs were too expensive to continue the series. Still, no doubt, some white southerners were probably encouraged to uphold states' rights to keep African Americans "in their place."

In the spring of 1961 the four-year-long celebration of the Civil War centennial started. Columbia Records came out with an album, *The Confederacy (Based on Music of the South During the Years 1861-1865)*. I listened to the record countless times, especially the theme song of *The Gray Ghost*. Reverend Edmund Jennings Lee, IV, a distant cousin of General Robert E. Lee, voiced Lee's Farewell Address to the Army of Northern Virginia. I memorized the speech and recited it a number of times. At the end of side two of the record the voice of Douglas Southall Freeman was recorded giving his rendition of the Rebel Yell, starting with a low pitch and rising to a crescendo. It did not sound as if it would cause Union soldiers to quake in their boots. Nevertheless, because Freeman was an eminent historian known for his four-volume biography of Robert E. Lee, I regarded Freeman's Rebel Yell as authentic.²⁸ Recently I have listened to a recording of Confederate veterans at a reunion in the 1930s. Their yells sounded like

a howl or a screech, done three times. Charging en masse and yelling all at once, they could have indeed caused the boys in blue to tremble.

In the late summer of 1961 friends of mine and I gathered for a dinner and dance at a nightclub. I brought along a bottle of Rebel Yell Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey and after I had drank a few shots of the bourbon, I demonstrated my version of the Rebel Yell. In a few weeks we would all go on our separate ways to different colleges. Little did I know then what changes I would undergo in my thinking in the few years ahead.

E. E. Bass Junior High School, 1957

In the spring of 1957 I was in the eighth grade at E. E. Bass Junior High School. My most memorable teacher that year was Mrs. Wilhelmina Cockerham, whose grandfather had been in the Confederate army. Mrs. Cockerham taught American history. She had a standing tradition of taking her classes to Vicksburg in the spring. During the Civil War Vicksburg was a stronghold on the Mississippi River, connecting the east and west sides of the Confederacy. It fell to General Ulysses S. Grant on July 4, 1863. When President Lincoln received the news from Grant, he declared, "Thank God, the Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea." Mrs. Cockerham loved taking her classes to Vicksburg to bring history alive with a visit to antebellum buildings and the Vicksburg National Military Park and Cemetery, which is a major tourism attraction.

I loved American history and I was Mrs. Cockerham's best student. I had a keen interest in the Civil War and I was looking forward to the field trip to Vicksburg. Indeed, I was in Vicksburg on the very same weekend when my class went and visited the historical sites of the city. However, I was not with my class. My mother had another idea for what I would be doing in Vicksburg.

Lexington, Virginia 1957

The turn to my ardent focus on Civil War history and Confederate military heroes in particular was the outcome of a visit to Lexington, Virginia, on July 8, 1957. The itinerary of my Boy Scout troop on its way to the national jamboree in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, included a tour of the campus of Washington and Lee University. Robert E. Lee served as president of Washington College from October 2, 1865, until his death on

October 12, 1870. The College was almost immediately renamed Washington and Lee University. My troop entered Lee Chapel and saw the marble recumbent statue of Lee in his uniform. The statue, which is the centerpiece of the chapel, is placed where the altar would be in a church. This placement indicates the veneration in which the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia has been held in the South. Lee's body itself was buried beneath the chapel.

*Recumbent statue of Robert E. Lee by Edward Valentine, c. 1872,
Washington & Lee University, Lexington, Virginia.
Photograph by Carol M. Highsmith.
(Library of Congress.)*

For me being in that chapel lit a fire in my heart; for the four years of high school about to commence in the fall of 1957, I cherished the dream of going to undergraduate college at Washington and Lee University. Another thrill of visiting Lexington was seeing Virginia Military Institute, where Stonewall Jackson taught before the outbreak of the Civil War. Like Lee, Jackson was buried in Lexington. On the night of May 2, 1863, Jackson was struck in his left arm by two bullets from friendly fire. The amputation of his left arm was not the cause of death. Because he was bedridden for eight days, complications from pneumonia brought on his death on May

10. As Jackson lay dying, Lee sent a message to a chaplain attending to Jackson, "say to [Jackson]: he has lost his left arm but I my right." I did not think it was unseemly for me as a Jewish boy to hold Lee and Jackson in high esteem, because I knew at the time that a Jewish man, Judah P. Benjamin, who held three cabinet positions in the Confederate government, had been a trusted advisor to Jefferson Davis. Moreover, Daddy, who was always pointing out to me famous Jews, living or dead, could have likely told me about Judah P. Benjamin.²⁹

Southern Federation of Temple Youth, 1957

When Mama, who had no interest whatsoever in the Civil War, much less in the Confederacy, found out that the Southern Federation of Temple Youth (SOFTY) had selected Vicksburg as the city for its 1957 spring conclave, she set in motion a plan for me to go to the conclave with the Greenville Temple Youth Group. She had decided that it was more important for me (and for her) that I be with Jewish teens from towns and cities scattered across Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee who would be brought together in one place for Jewish activities. First Mama spoke with Mrs. Cockerham and asked that I be excused from the eighth-grade field trip for a religious activity. Mrs. Cockerham understood Mama's rationale and gave her ready consent. Next Mama spoke to her good friend Elizabeth Friedman, who was the advisor for the Greenville TYG. There was a SOFTY rule that fifteen was the minimum age to join a TYG and to go to a conclave. Though I had just turned fourteen on March 16, Elizabeth needed very little arm-twisting to bend the rule for me. Elizabeth agreed with Mama that with my mature appearance and personality, I could pass for a fifteen-year-old.

On Saturday afternoon I was sitting on the slope of a hill overlooking downtown Vicksburg. I can still see myself with newly found Jewish friends, looking down upon the line of my eighth-grade classmates entering some historic building. The distance from my spot on the hill above to the line of my classmates below lingers in my memory as a sign that in the coming years I would feel a lessening attachment to the Christian students with whom I went to school in Greenville. Mama did not lack boldness in making sure that I had the Jewish experiences she wanted me to have. It was her way of giving me roots.

Mississippi Boys State 1960

In the summer of 1960 I was selected along with several other members of my class to attend Mississippi Boys State, an educational program developed by the American Legion. About three hundred rising seniors from high schools all across Mississippi convened for one week on the campus of Hinds Community College in Raymond, Mississippi. The purpose of Boys State was for the students to participate in activities in which they would learn how local, county, and state governments operated. On Thursday afternoon we boarded buses for a trip to Jackson, the state capital about a thirty-minute drive away. The highlight of the tour of the State Capitol was that we would be treated to an address by the Governor of the State of Mississippi. We sat at the desks of the legislators in the Mississippi House of Representatives. We rose—I reluctantly—when Governor Ross Barnett entered the chamber. When he started speaking, I leaned back in the comfortable leather chair of a state legislator and took a very pleasant thirty to forty-five-minute snooze while Barnett was bombinating. I felt no qualms for sleeping through his speech. I just knew that Mama and Daddy were giving me their tacit blessing for tuning out such a *mamzer* of the first water like Barnett.³⁰

Greenville High School

Apparently my interest in the Civil War was known to many at Greenville High School. Even Frank Warnock, the new principal whose first year in the position coincided with my senior year, heard about my fascination with Mosby and lent me his copy of *The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby*. Later in my senior year I acquired my own copy of the book. I began a subscription to *American Heritage: The Magazine of History* with the December 1957 issue and kept a continuous subscription to it until the mid-1970s. My favorite articles in the magazine were about the Civil War and southern culture.

I took the course in American history at Greenville High School in my junior year (1959–1960). For the course I compiled a very thick album on the Civil War and wrote a paper on Major General J. E. B. Stuart, who became the commander of the cavalry corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. Stuart was the officer who authorized Mosby to form and lead the 43rd Battalion. In the spring of 1960 I received the sterling silver medal

*Fred Davidow in his senior year
at Greeneville High School, 1961.
(Courtesy of Rabbi Fred V. Davidow.)*

“For Excellence in History,” sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution. In October 1960 I bought the deluxe two-volume edition of *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War* with the narrative by Bruce Catton. Sixty years later, as I am writing now in 2020, the set is still a treasured part of my library.³¹

However much I was enthralled by Lee, Jackson, Stuart, and Mosby, I never entertained the thought that the Confederacy should have won its independence. When I was in high school, I tacked two postcards of Abraham Lincoln onto the bulletin board in the bedroom of my home in Greenville. One is the image of a photograph of Lincoln leaning forward in a chair, his left elbow resting on the arm of the chair, his head slightly cast down toward his raised left hand. He is in a pensive posture, no doubt thinking about saving the Union and finding the general who could subdue the rebellion.

When I was a senior in high school (1960–1961), I memorized the Gettysburg Address, which my English teacher, Nell Thomas, praised as a superb example of powerful writing. Mrs. Thomas, who had a long and distinguished career at Greenville High School, especially liked how Lincoln used triads in his speeches. The best-known triad in the Gettysburg address is “of the people, by the people, for the people.”

What is just as important as the literary quality of the writing is Lincoln's message that our "nation conceived in Liberty [is] dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal . . . [and] that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Here were Lincoln's aims in the war: preserve the Union and "proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Leviticus 25:10). This verse from Leviticus is cast in bronze on the Liberty Bell.

Joe Weinberg, 1961

One Jewish man who "leavened" Greenville was Joe Weinberg (1876–1969). He started as a merchant, became the president of the Greenville Bank and Trust Co., and was a leading philanthropist in the city. Weinberg was a friend of Leroy Percy, William's father, who led the fight to keep the Ku Klux Klan out of Greenville. In 1945 Weinberg was among those who gave financial help to Hodding Carter, the renowned Greenville newspaperman, in Carter's plan to gain full ownership of the *Delta Democrat-Times*. This newspaper was Carter's platform for challenging the status quo in Mississippi.

Joe Weinberg, like Carter, sought to develop good relations with the African American community in Greenville. There were two public high schools in Greenville before desegregation: the all-white Greenville High School and the all-black Coleman High School. One of the academic awards given to seniors at both schools was the "Joe Weinberg Mathematics Award." In the spring of 1961 a Christian classmate and I each received a Weinberg cup, for she and I tied for the highest academic average for four years of achievement in algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. A day or two after the awards ceremony at Greenville High School, I received a phone call from a secretary in the principal's office at GHS. She explained to me a problem. Coleman High School had not yet received its Weinberg cup and the awards ceremony at Coleman would not come off right if the black recipient would not receive the cup at the ceremony. "Would you mind giving up your cup for the ceremony at Coleman, and when the third cup is delivered, you will get that one?" I have always thought that I was asked to do this favor because I was Jewish and would agree without any reservation. And so I did.

NOTES

¹ James A. Padgett, ed., "The Life of Alfred Mordecai as Related by Himself," *North Carolina Historical Review* 22 (January 1945): 58-108; Wendy Machlovitz, ed., *Clara Lowenburg Moses: Memoir of a Southern Jewish Woman* (Jackson, MS, 2000); Seymour Atlas, *The Rabbi With the Southern Twang: True Stories From a Life of Leadership Within the Orthodox Jewish Congregations of the South* (Bloomington, IN, 2007); Elana Ginz, *How Can I Help You? Rebecca Teles: Memoir of a Southern Jewish Belle* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2017).

² *Gong Lum v. Rice*, 275 U.S. 78 (1927).

³ Fred Davidow, "A Remembrance of Greenville, Mississippi," *Jewish Georgian* (January 1991); David Ruderman, "Greenville Diary: A Northern Rabbi Confronts the Deep South, 1966-1970," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 94 (Autumn 2004): 643-65.

⁴ James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York, 1992). James C. Cobb, ed., *The Mississippi Delta and the World: The Memoirs of David L. Cohn* (Baton Rouge, 1985) provides the story of another Jew born in Greenville who went on to become an author and speechwriter for prominent liberal Democratic politicians. See also Howard Ball's memoir, *Taking the Fight South: Chronicle of a Jew's Battle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Notre Dame, IN, 2021) that details his experience as a college professor in Starkville, Mississippi.

⁵ "Number of Inhabitants: Mississippi," accessed July 10, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-1/vol-01-27.pdf>. Historians of small-town Jewish American life will find a memoir focused on Greenville, Mississippi, to be of interest. For a broader study see Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven, 2005). For local studies see Ewa Morawska, *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890-1940* (Princeton, 1996) and Lance Jonathan Sussman, *The Emergence of a Jewish Community in Richmond, Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1981), supplemented by his podcast on *The Jewish Community of Richmond, Indiana* (Indianapolis, 2021), produced by the Indiana Jewish Historical Society, <https://podcasts.apple.com/ro/podcast/the-jewish-community-of-richmond-indiana-revisited/id1566739781?i=1000540624681>.

⁶ Stuart Rockoff, "Jews in Mississippi," *Mississippi History Now*, accessed July 10, 2022, <http://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/issue/jews-in-mississippi>; Ellen M. Umansky, "Paula Ackerman: Pioneer in the Pulpit," *Southern Jewish History* 14 (2011): 77-117.

⁷ Louise Eskrigge Crump, "History of Greenville," accessed July 8, 2022, <https://www.greenvillems.org/history-of-greenville>.

⁸ For background on the 1927 flood, see John M. Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (New York, 2007).

⁹ "Number of Inhabitants: Mississippi," accessed July 10, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-1/vol-01-27.pdf>; Crump, "History of Greenville."

¹⁰ See C. Stuart Chapman, *Shelby Foote: A Writer's Life* (Jackson, MS, 2006); David L. Cohn, *Where I Was Born and Raised* (New York, 1948); and Hillary Jordan, *Mudbound* (Chapel Hill, 2008). The movie version of *Mudbound* appeared in 2017, directed by Dee Rees.

¹¹ "Population and Housing Unit Estimates," United States Census Bureau. May 24, 2020.

¹² Quick Facts: Plattsburgh city, New York," accessed July 11, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/plattsburghcitynewyork/PST045221>.

¹³ Bernard Goodman, Hebrew Union Congregation to Board of Trustees, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, November 7, 1963, Jewish Women's Archives, accessed July 10, 2022, <https://jwa.org/media/letter-from-hebrew-union-congregation-to-union-of-american-hebrew-congregations-november-7-196>. This letter was part of a famous confrontation between numerous congregations and the UAHC. Jack Nelson, *Terror in the Night: The Klan's Campaign Against the Jews* (New York, 1993); Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2003); Allan P. Krause, *To Stand Aside or Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and Civil Rights*, ed. Mark K. Bauman with Stephen Krause (Tuscaloosa, 2016).

¹⁴ This story typifies the chain migration pattern of immigration to the United States.

¹⁵ For background see John Doyle Klier, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881–1882* (Cambridge, UK, 2011).

¹⁶ Lewis Baker, *The Percys of Mississippi: Politics and Literature in the New South* (Baton Rouge, 1983); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The House of Percy: Honor, Melancholy, and Imagination in a Southern Family* (New York, 1994).

¹⁷ Arnold Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson: A Biography* (New York, 1998); Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York, 2008); John Rosengren, *Hank Greenberg: The Hero of Heroes* (Berkeley, CA, 2014); Vince Staten, *Ol' Diz: A Biography of Dizzy Dean* (New York, 1992).

¹⁸ Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830. Mississippi's Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek followed later the same year, but removal took place between 1831 and 1833. Arthur H. DeRosier, Jr., "The Indian Removal Act of 1830," *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, accessed January 25, 2022, <https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/indian-removal-act-of-1830>.

¹⁹ For an extremely insightful novel on the relationships between Black maids and Jewish families see Roy Hoffman, *Almost Family* (New York, 1983).

²⁰ Operation Isaiah is a national movement to collect usually canned food for the hungry during the High Holidays run by individual synagogues. Its name is derived from the scripture from the Prophet Isaiah, "to share your food with the hungry."

²¹ Baker, *Percys of Mississippi*; Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi: A History* (Jefferson, NC, 2010).

²² The literature on all of these murders is extensive. See, for example, Chris Crowe, *Getting Away With Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* (New York, 2003); Devery S. Anderson, *Emmett Till: The Murder that Shocked the World and Propelled the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson, MS, 2017); Adam Nossiter, *Of Long Memory: Mississippi and the Murder of Medger Evers* (Boston, 1993); Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *We Are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi* (New York, 1988); and Howard Ball, *Murder in Mississippi: United States v. Price and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Lawrence, KS, 2004).

²³ William Alexander Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter's Son* (New York, 1941).

²⁴ Hugh Stephen Whitaker, "A Case Study in Southern Justice: The Murder and Trial of Emmett Till," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8 (Summer 2005): 219.

²⁵ See Michael J. Klarman, *Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, 2007); Roy Reed, *Faubus: The Life and Times of an American Prodigal* (Fayetteville, AR, 1997); Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York, 2004 [1976]).

²⁶ Frank McDonald directed the television series. Jeffrey D. Wert, *Mosby's Rangers* (New York, 1991); Jeffrey Mitchell, *The Grey Ghost of the Confederacy: The Life and Legacy of John Mosby* (n.p., 2017).

²⁷ John Singleton Mosby, *The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby*, ed. Charles Wells Russell (Whitefish, MT, 1968 [1917]).

²⁸ Douglas Southall Freeman, *R.E. Lee: A Biography* (New York, 1949).

²⁹ For veneration of Benjamin as part of Lost Cause ideology, see David Weinfeld, "Two Commemorations: Richmond Jews and the Lost Cause During the Civil Rights Era," *Southern Jewish History* 23 (2020): 77–124. For a more balanced take on Benjamin, see Paul Finkelman, "An Israelite with Egyptian Principles," *Jewish Review of Books*, 12 (Winter 2022): 22–23.

³⁰ For Barnett's role in attempting to prevent the desegregation of the University of Mississippi, see William Doyle, *An American Insurrection: The Battle of Oxford, 1962* (New York, 2002).

³¹ Bruce Catton, *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War* (Washington DC, 1960).