

**SOUTHERN  
JEWISH  
HISTORY**

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**Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society**

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Dana M. Greene, *Book Review Editor*

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## *From the Editor . . .*

Several of the articles in this issue began as presentations at Southern Jewish Historical Society conferences, a key mechanism through which the society nurtures original research. An earlier version of Dan Puckett's article was given at the Baltimore conference of 2006 while Allen Krause's and Leonard Rogoff's articles stemmed from the 2007 Washington, D.C., conference. The articles herein trace Jewish history in five southern states.

Puckett provides a case study of changes in Jewish social service agencies, the Reform congregation, and its rabbis in Birmingham, Alabama. These were especially impacted by Hitler's antisemitic policies culminating in the Shoah. Birmingham's Jews showed awareness of Nazi persecution at a very early stage and remained well informed and committed to protest actions, however ineffectual, including lobbying their congressional representatives. Black and white Christian responses to the European antisemitism reflected their own agendas. Puckett also illustrates gradual movement of the Reform Jews of German descent from anti- and non-Zionist positions toward support for a Jewish state. Here Jews of Birmingham clearly demonstrated a cosmopolitan definition of, and approach to, ethnic identity.

Rogoff uses his analysis of Harry Golden to complicate southern, northern, and Jewish identity. Golden and his various audiences intertwined the three when it suited their purposes. In so doing and without pressing boundaries too far, they fostered both acceptance and alienation even in the rarified atmosphere of the civil rights-era South.

In a controversial article Krause revises analyses of the relationship between rabbis and their congregations during the civil rights movement. Rabbi Burton Padoll was forced out of his pulpit at Charleston, South Carolina's historic K.K. Beth Elohim



synagogue seemingly for his advocacy of black rights. However, Krause questions whether rabbis like Padoll lost their positions solely for this reason or whether other factors acted as underlying causes.

Allen Breitler and Susan Pryor add to the journal's series of personality profiles with a sketch of John de Sequeyra, a Sephardic physician in colonial and early national Williamsburg, Virginia. The study, showing that some Jews emigrated with professional experience, complicates our understanding of Jewish economic life and integration into society.

A number of months ago Daniel Weinfeld shared a short newspaper clipping with Rachel and me. We agreed that it might provide enjoyable as well as insightful reading. Rachel subsequently asked Marcia Jo Zerivitz of the Jewish Museum of Florida for a companion document on which they collaborated. Thus is born this new section format: short primary source selections on a specific topic with limited annotation. Unfortunately Weinfeld was unable to locate additional information on those involved. Nonetheless as individual documents and taken together, these wedding notices disclose important social and economic patterns.

The two here by Daniel Weinfeld and Marcia Jo Zerivitz, respectively, use possibly the first Jewish weddings in Eufaula, Alabama, and Micanopy, Florida, to elucidate the connections forged by Jews in small towns with Jews elsewhere, and how the weddings and their coverage in the press highlight their rise and acceptance into society.

Only one book deemed of sufficient academic quality by book review editor Dana Greene appeared this year. Hopefully more will be published next year.

Elliott Ashkenazi, Eric L. Goldstein, Martin Perlmutter, Marc Lee Raphael, and Bryan Edward Stone rotate off the editorial board this year after providing exceptional service to the journal. Besides the board members, Cheryl Greenberg, Kimberly Hartnett, Scott Langston, Phyllis Leffler, and Stephen J. Whitfield offered insightful peer reviews. Proofreaders Scott Langston, Bryan E. Stone, Bernard Wax, Deborah Weiner, and Maury Wiseman found numerous errors that the authors, Rachel, and I missed. The

continuing support of the Gale Foundation, the increased funding of the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, and the underlying backing of the Southern Jewish Historical Society make the publication of this journal possible. Rachel and I will sorely miss Bernie Wax in his role as treasurer and equally look forward to working with Les Bergen in that position.

After they revise, following suggestions from peer reviewers and me, as the authors in this as in all volumes can attest, Rachel Heimovics Braun scrupulously combs the articles making additional factual and copyediting corrections. She also formats and prepares the manuscript for printing, works with the printer, solicits illustrations and advertisements, maintains financial records, keeps the editor on his toes, and otherwise facilitates this journal's publication.

Mark K. Bauman



# In the Shadow of Hitler: Birmingham's Temple Emanu-El and Nazism

by

Dan J. Puckett

**T**he Nazi persecution of the Jews that began in 1933 and ended with the mass murder of six million by 1945 profoundly influenced the Jewish community in Birmingham, Alabama. In the 1930s, the Jewish community, which had been socially divided between German Reform Jews and Conservative and Orthodox eastern European Jews, began to work together in the interest of aiding and later rescuing European Jews who suffered at the hands of the Nazis. Birmingham's United Jewish Fund, created in 1936, served as the primary organization that both German Jews and eastern European Jews used not only to aid persecuted European Jews, but also to contribute to the overall well-being of their community. Although they did not see eye-to-eye on many things, such as religious rituals and practices or the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, Nazi Germany provided a common threat that helped bridge the community divide. Their response to Nazi persecution in the 1930s forged closer ties within the Jewish community, and the revelations of the Final Solution in 1942 contributed greatly to the acceptance of Zionism within Reform Temple Emanu-El, further eroding divisions.

During this period, roughly 4,500 Jews called Birmingham home. The city had three synagogues: Emanu-El, founded by German Jews in 1882; K'nesseth Israel, the Orthodox congregation organized by eastern European immigrants in 1889; and Temple Beth-El, a Conservative congregation established in 1907 by change-minded members of K'nesseth Israel. Temple Emanu-El

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was the most prominent and wealthiest of the three. Birmingham's gentiles recognized Emanu-El's Rabbi Morris Newfield as the spokesman of the city's disparate Jewish community. Prominent members of Emanu-El achieved public positions of influence not only in the city, but also statewide. In the late nineteenth century, businessman and educator Samuel Ullman presided over the Birmingham Board of Education. In the late 1920s, attorney Leo Oberdorfer became president of the Birmingham Bar Association and, in 1933 and 1934, presided over the Alabama Bar Association. Milton Fies, the vice president of operations for DeBardeleben Coal, had been president of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, and investment banker Mervyn Sterne led numerous civic organizations including the Birmingham Community Chest.<sup>1</sup>

The eastern European Jews of Beth-El and K'neseth Israel could not claim the same prominence in civic affairs, although they comprised the largest and arguably the most vibrant element of the city's Jewish community.<sup>2</sup> Economic and social disparity had existed between the city's Reform Jews and eastern European Jews since the latter's influx in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nonetheless some of Emanu-El's members were of eastern European origin, including Rabbi Newfield who emigrated from Hungary in the late nineteenth century and married Samuel Ullman's daughter. By the 1930s, Birmingham's Jewish community began to come together. In his history of the city's Jews, Mark Elovitz argues that such movement toward unity was marked by "accommodation, blurring of disparities and a growing, though perhaps unconscious, expression of a willingness among the 4,500 Jews of Birmingham to coexist and even draw together for their mutual well-being."<sup>3</sup> The closing of America's shores to new immigrants and the gradual acculturation of the eastern Europeans, coupled with their economic gains and entrance into the middle class in the 1920s, as Elovitz notes, accounts for the change, although this cooperation did not fully bridge the social divide between the two subcommunities. The first critical turning point occurred when both consciously and deliberately worked together, primarily to aid persecuted European Jews. The United Jewish Fund served as the vehicle for this intra-community

*Rabbi Morris Newfield.*

*Newfield served as rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, from 1895 to 1940.*

*(Courtesy of Birmingham Public Library, Department of Archives.)*

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cooperation even as it also maintained services to local and national charities. The prewar and early wartime Nazi persecutions and finally the mass killings of European Jews convinced most Reform Jews of Emanu-El of the necessity of a Jewish homeland, providing the second turning point. In this sense, they began to see themselves as part of the larger Jewish community. Birmingham's Jewish experience, in all of these matters, mirrored those of Jewish communities throughout the country, offering an excellent illustration of adaptation and change wrought by external and internal forces.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Milieu*

A majority of Alabamians, especially those in the press, condemned the Nazi regime from its inception. Their condemnation stemmed primarily from the brutal, aggressive nature of Nazism, which they deemed incompatible with American democracy. The Nazi suppression of democracy and civil liberties in Germany, their oppression of political opponents, and their persecution of Jews solidified this initial impression. By 1934 an editorial in the *Birmingham Age-Herald* confirmed that this reaction to the Nazis went beyond objections to the treatment of the Jews: "what has happened, what is still happening, to the Jews of Germany is . . . abhorrent to every instinct of decency and justice. That would be sufficient to make generous and enlightened spirits active in the amelioration of such brutality. But that would not serve as the explanation of that vast public indictment which has been launched against the 'New Germany.'"<sup>5</sup> This intensely negative view of the Nazis colored both journalists' and the public's reaction to Germany until well after the end of the war.

Deborah Lipstadt has pointed out that the American press did not consider antisemitism a fundamental tenet of Nazism.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the press in Alabama saw it as part of a larger Nazi concern with Aryan supremacy and racial purity that it did consider fundamental to Nazism. This view by the press led it to characterize the outbursts of Nazi antisemitic violence as episodic anomalies rather than a governmental-sponsored program of violence directed at Jews. The Birmingham newspapers regularly

reported and commented on persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany throughout the 1930s and intensively covered the Jewish plight in Europe more so than any other news organization in the state (with the possible exception of the *Montgomery Advertiser*). Their attention can be attributed directly to the sensitivity of the editors to Jewish concerns.<sup>7</sup> Birmingham's Jews, especially those of Emanu-El, had extensive connections with both civic leaders and the press. Emanu-El's Charles Feidelson, an editor and columnist of both the *Birmingham News* and *Birmingham Age-Herald*, even helped to craft the papers' editorial policies that kept the Jewish plight in Europe and American antisemitism in the public eye.

Birmingham's Jews actively engaged in raising money for Jewish relief organizations, conducting seminars and lectures, drafting petitions, and cultivating political connections on both the state and national levels in a largely futile attempt to alter the course of events in Germany.<sup>8</sup> As previously indicated, the United Jewish Fund contributed greatly to these efforts. The fund had been in the planning stages since shortly after the Nazi regime seized power in Germany in 1933, as representatives from various local groups and charities worked to alleviate any conflict or jealousy that might arise from the allocation of funds. Once established, the United Jewish Fund not only supported numerous and varied Jewish charities—sixty-five different agencies in 1936 and 1937—but it also became the main vehicle for Birmingham Jews to aid persecuted Jews abroad through its contributions to such varied organizations as the Joint Distribution Committee, the United Palestine Appeal, the National Labor Committee for Palestine, Hadassah and Junior Hadassah, and yeshivot in Europe and Palestine. Moreover, the organization financially sponsored refugees and found jobs for them in the Birmingham area.<sup>9</sup> The fund, with the strong support of the rabbis of the three congregations as well as their most prominent congregants, helped to unite the Jewish community by appealing to its generosity and willingness to aid Jews in distress.<sup>10</sup>

Because of the prominence of Emanu-El's members in Birmingham's economy and civic society, the gentile community considered Rabbi Newfield the spokesman for the city's Jews



despite the fact that the eastern European Jews, who belonged to the less prosperous K'neseth Israel and Temple Beth-El, outnumbered the Reform Jews and played the most active roles in supporting and perpetuating Jewish life and culture in the city as well as serving as the driving force behind many of the relief efforts. Although Newfield believed that "the United Jewish Fund was the spokesman for the Jewish people" of Birmingham, the ecumenical nature of the Reform tradition caused gentiles, including those in the press, to look to Newfield and Emanu-El for the Jewish perspective, and they did not consider that the other rabbis and congregations might have different views.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the phenomenon of the Reform rabbi as a cultural broker or "ambassador to the gentiles," a role that Newfield filled so well, can be seen elsewhere, as Hollace Ava Weiner has noted among the rabbis in Texas and as Mark K. Bauman, Arnold Shankman, and George R. Wilkes noted of Atlanta's Rabbi David Marx, Newfield's friend and colleague.<sup>12</sup> Although the press dutifully reported the activities of the Jewish community, such as events at the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA), it rarely commented editorially, covered in depth, or granted any great importance to the activities at K'neseth Israel and Beth-El unless Newfield or Emanu-El also participated.

Although both central and eastern European Jews supported the relief efforts toward the persecuted Jews in Europe, they disagreed over Zionism. The eastern European Jews who immigrated to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought with them a strong adherence to Jewish tradition and the vivid memories of persecution and pogroms. As Melvin Urofsky notes, among European Jews, "messianic hopes for redemption had always existed in the midst of Jewish misery."<sup>13</sup> Birmingham's eastern European Jewish immigrants were no exception. The wealthier, established members of Emanu-El did not embrace the eastern European immigrants' devotion to the Zionist idea. Most Reform Jews supported the position of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), which, until 1937, opposed the establishment of a Jewish state. Many of the older members of Birmingham's Emanu-El rejected Zionism because

*Rabbi Morris Newfield, chaplain in World War I.*

*The photo of Newfield was taken at Camp McClellan, Anniston, Alabama.*

*(Courtesy of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives.)*

they did not consider Judaism a nationality; indeed, they saw themselves as Americans and worried that any support for Zionism would single them out “as somehow separate from home town and local traditions.”<sup>14</sup>

Yet Zionism flourished in Birmingham primarily among eastern European Jews. The Birmingham Zion Association emerged out of the Federation of American Zionists, which had been founded a year after the First Zionist Congress convened in Basle in 1897. Although the association lasted only four years (1898–1901), supporters attempted to revive it by changing its name to Tikwath Zion. In addition to Tikwath Zion, Young Judean clubs, formed between 1910 and 1912, and a Hadassah chapter, established in 1915, helped maintain enthusiasm for Zionism until the Nazi persecutions fueled the growth of the movement during the 1930s. Birmingham attorney and Zionist leader Abe Berkowitz admitted that it “was not generally a major concern on the agenda

of the Jewish community in Birmingham" from 1923 to 1932, and "the Reform group had nothing whatever to do with Zionism. . . . It is fair to say that, maybe with a mere exception, they generally viewed Zionism as synonymous with Russian or Polish Jews." As the Nazi persecutions progressed in the 1930s, however, Zionism became more attractive and acceptable to Reform Jews who had been opposed, and in some cases hostile, to the movement. From 1933 to 1936, Birmingham's Zionist organization grew to six hundred members, and, according to Berkowitz, it "was the most well attended organization in the city."<sup>15</sup>

Birmingham's Zionists consistently and severely criticized the Reform position. Mark Elovitz argues that prior to and during the Nazi era, the "unrelenting" attacks and disparagement of the Reform stance by the city's "indomitable Zionists" created "a small, though sometimes bitter, minority of local Jews" who never embraced Zionism. Prominent investment banker Mervyn Sterne, who had been elected the first president of the United Jewish Fund and who actively supported relief and rescue operations for European Jews, adamantly rejected Zionism. Sterne later said that he faced more discrimination from other Jews than from gentiles because he was the "wrong kind of Jew."<sup>16</sup> It is doubtful that Sterne suffered discrimination from other Jews since he commanded the respect of all of Birmingham's Jews and gentiles, and he closely worked with Zionists on behalf of the United Jewish Fund. More likely, he had a thin skin concerning the frequent, and often harsh, criticism of his position on Zionism. While no in-depth study surveys the Jewish experience in Alabama outside of Birmingham, it is clear that the Nazi persecutions in Europe drove many Reform Jews statewide toward a greater concern for Jews worldwide, if not outright acceptance of the creation of a Jewish state, a trend observed among Reform Jews throughout the United States.<sup>17</sup>

Both Zionists and non-Zionists in Birmingham worked to open Palestine as a haven for the persecuted Jews in Europe partly because the United States State Department had severely limited its own Jewish immigration into the United States. Great Britain during this period issued a series of white papers that restricted

the number of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, and the British Colonial Office severely limited Jewish visas in order to placate Arabs who strongly opposed Jewish immigration or a Jewish state. In October 1938, upon hearing news that Britain was considering repudiating the Mandate and closing Palestine to Jewish refugees, an emergency committee of the United Jewish Fund, led by Newfield, wired Secretary of State Cordell Hull in protest. Newfield also led a group to meet with Speaker of the House William Bankhead and his brother, U.S. Senator John Bankhead, at the Bankhead family home in Jasper, Alabama. Zionists and non-Zionists comprised the group that met with the Bankheads, which included Sterne, Oberdorfer, and William Engel, three of the most prominent members of Emanu-El, and Leo Steiner, Mosely Shugerman, and Birmingham's most ardent Zionist, "Uncle" Ike Abelson.<sup>18</sup> The delegation urged the brothers to use their considerable influence with the State Department to help Palestine remain open to refugees, and the Bankheads agreed to do so. At Newfield's urging, Christian leaders and educators in the area petitioned President Franklin D. Roosevelt to use his influence with the British government on this matter.<sup>19</sup> Despite the prominence and influence of Alabama's congressional members in Washington, their protests on behalf of the Jews had absolutely no effect on British policy, and no effect that can be ascertained on Roosevelt or the State Department. A few days after the meeting with the Bankheads, the *Age-Herald* commented favorably on the Zionist movement, although one of its editors, Charles Feidelson, opposed Zionism. Feidelson consistently and vehemently condemned Nazism and stressed the need to open Palestine for Jewish refugees. He could understand the compelling desire for a Jewish homeland, but he considered Zionism "untenable."<sup>20</sup>

Newfield, who had been president of the CCAR in 1931, also opposed Zionism, as did most Reform rabbis prior to 1937. In the face of Nazi persecution, Newfield, like many other Reform Jews, reexamined his position. According to his biographer, Mark Cowett, Newfield's opposition stemmed from his belief that "an American Jew's allegiance belonged first to the United States. As a Jewish clergyman in a city where conformity to American ideals

was expected, he perhaps believed that Jews had constantly to prove their commitment to those ideals." Indeed, Newfield hewed closely to the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 during his long tenure at Emanu-El. In regard to the Zionist cause, he referred to himself as a "non-Zionist" rather than an "anti-Zionist," one who saw Palestine as a refuge for persecuted European Jewry, not as a Jewish political state, a belief shared by Sterne and many members of Emanu-El. By 1938, Cowett argues, the Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany transformed Newfield into a Zionist.<sup>21</sup>

While some of Emanu-El's congregants underwent a conversion to Zionism, owing largely to the tragedy of *Kristallnacht*, Newfield's position on Zionism is not entirely clear. He continued to support rescue efforts for the persecuted European Jews and "was clearly distressed" about British policy in Palestine. In the 1920s and 1930s, he had "supported Jewish colonization in Palestine," and, as Cowett observes, this "indicates that his non-Zionist position was never very far from a Zionist stance."<sup>22</sup> Yet, he never joined a Zionist organization or worked directly for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and his position on the Columbus Platform of 1937 is not known. His meeting with the Bankheads and collaboration with Christian ministers does not necessarily mean, as Cowett argues, that Newfield became a Zionist. It does mean, however, that he and other non-Zionist members of the emergency committee desired to keep Palestine available as a refuge for persecuted Jews, working with and even taking instruction from the World Zionist Organization.<sup>23</sup> As Cyrus Arfa observes, even when Reform rabbis vehemently opposed a Jewish state in Palestine, they "were willing to do whatever was possible within their power to restore the biblical land as a Jewish cultural center and provide a homeland for those Jews who needed it or desired it as a haven."<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Newfield's association with Zionism failed to influence the older, staid members of Emanu-El who so revered him. Indeed, this issue seems to have driven a wedge between some of them and Milton Grafman, Newfield's successor and an active Zionist. Yet, Newfield's embrace of Zionism, if it can be considered an embrace, provided a greater

awareness for the Zionist effort among Birmingham's gentile leaders and the press.

Many of the prominent business professionals in Newfield's congregation, such as Mervyn Sterne, Leo Oberdorfer, Milton Fies, Joseph Loveman, and Rabbi Newfield's eldest son, Dr. Seymon Newfield, adhered to the Classical Reform position that saw assimilation into the larger American culture as the key to success. These individuals did not believe in drawing attention to themselves, and they were uncomfortable with Jews being in the public eye. Although this attitude cannot be attributed solely to the South or to southern Jews, the conformity of Jim Crow society reinforced it and suggested to them that anything less than one hundred percent commitment to American or southern ideals could arouse suspicion. Support for another political state, such as a Jewish state in Palestine, could easily raise the issue of dual loyalty. Zionists, they believed, were too particular about their Jewishness, and less universal in their approach to the larger gentile culture.<sup>25</sup> As Myron Silverman, Emanu-El's assistant rabbi, told the Birmingham Rotary Club in August 1939, Christianity and Judaism "stood unalterably opposed to fascism and communism," and the Nazis' persecutions were shortsighted because "the German Jew is as much a German as any German citizen . . . just as an American Jew is an American. Every contribution they make to the culture of the country in which they live is made as a native of that country, not as a Jew. They are loyal to their adopted countries."<sup>26</sup>

Although antisemitism flourished in the United States and in the South at the time, the Protestant fundamentalist culture of the South did not object to the creation of a Jewish state; indeed, in such a culture the creation of a Jewish state was a necessity. The Protestant fundamentalist culture that dominated the South often emphasized millennialism, the belief that a resurrected Israel fulfilled biblical prophecy. Southern Baptists, the largest Christian denomination in the state, greatly influenced, if not dominated, all aspects of life in Alabama during the late-nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries. During the 1920s and 1930s, nativist sentiment produced waves of prejudice across the United States, most

notably anti-Catholicism and antisemitism, rooted in questions about communism, subversion, and immigrants' loyalties. Such widespread prejudice supported the growth of racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan and the True Americans.

Alabama's Baptists as well were not above such bigotry. As historian Wayne Flynt notes, Jews, and especially Catholics, bore the brunt of Baptist prejudice in the 1920s, even more so than African Americans. In 1920, for instance, a specialist on Jewish evangelism warned the Alabama Southern Baptist Convention that "Zionism made it harder to evangelize Jews" and that England alone kept civilization alive in the Middle East. Throughout the 1920s and well into the 1930s, L. L. Gwaltney, the editor of the *Alabama Baptist*, characterized Jews as greedy financiers, purveyors of Hollywood smut, and dangerous radicals, while other Christians sometimes condemned Jews as Christ-killers.<sup>27</sup> Such antisemitic rhetoric often targeted eastern European Jews and, less so, the more acculturated Jews of Emanu-El. At the time, Jews often belonged to the same civic organizations as did Klan leaders. Glenn Feldman notes in his study of the Klan in Alabama, that some of Birmingham's gentile "business leaders remarked that 'Russian Jews of the low intelligence type' comprised the leadership cadre for Alabama's black communists."<sup>28</sup> When well-respected attorney Irving Engel, a member of Emanu-El, fled Birmingham and the South because the city had "accepted complete domination by the Klan," Klan leadership urged him to reconsider leaving because he "was not the kind of Jew they were after."<sup>29</sup> Even after the Klan's demise in the late 1920s, antisemitism endured. Because the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine fulfilled biblical prophecy, antisemitism and Zionism, at least for fundamentalist Christians, could exist comfortably and without contradiction.

A pivotal moment in the growth of the Zionist movement in Birmingham also occurred when Rabbi Solomon Goldman, president of the Zionist Organization of America, addressed a packed crowd at the YMHA in March 1940. Goldman came to Birmingham "to help swell the ranks of those inspired Jews who sincerely believe that in Palestine lies the Jewish



salvation . . . [and] to enlist new members in the Zionist movement." Not all eastern European Jews had "fully committed" to Zionism, but Goldman's appearance convinced almost all of them to embrace the cause.<sup>30</sup> The local press gave favorable coverage to the event, and the *Age-Herald* described Goldman's lecture as a powerful "voice of faith," but it noted, the "implication was plain that the preservation of identity as a people and the growth of a great racial tradition were embraced in the Zionist dream." The need to maintain identity, religion, culture, and tradition "are deeply understandable and natural human urges that command general support among tolerant, liberal peoples everywhere," the *Age-Herald* commented, but it asked "how far should there be emphasis on racial separateness in countries other than the homeland?" This question no doubt made many Reform Jews uneasy.<sup>31</sup>

Two months after Goldman's appearance in Birmingham, Rabbi Newfield died. Newfield had been ill for some time, and his effort on behalf of Palestine in 1938 took its toll. He collapsed shortly thereafter. For the two years preceding his death, he remained largely bedridden.<sup>32</sup> Although Newfield had worked hand-in-hand with the Zionist movement, few members of Emanu-El spoke in its favor. As before, the Jews of Beth-El and K'nesseth Israel played the leading roles in the Zionist movement in Birmingham, and prominent members of Emanu-El headed the United Jewish Fund; their desire to alleviate Jewish suffering abroad was not abated. As Fannie Newman Goldberg, a member of K'nesseth Israel, explained, the Reform Jews "were interested not in Zionism as we were interested in Zionism, but in saving the lives during the time of Hitler." By late 1941, Emanu-El appointed Milton Grafman, a Zionist, as its full-time rabbi, replacing Myron Silverman, assistant rabbi under Newfield and his replacement. Unlike Newfield, Grafman vocally supported Zionism and attracted a number of prominent eastern European Jews to Emanu-El from nearby Beth-El. Only after the "outflux of Jews from Temple Beth-El that went into Emanu-El and under Rabbi Grafman," Goldberg recalls, did the Jews of Emanu-El become "more interested in Zionism."<sup>33</sup>



Despite the lack of outspoken support for Zionism among Emanu-El's members prior to Grafman's arrival, the congregation enthusiastically welcomed Grafman as rabbi, and his pro-Zionist position apparently aroused no noticeable resistance or controversy. A number of congregants remained ardent anti-Zionists, but Zionism did not become a dominant issue at Emanu-El during the war. As was the case throughout the nation, the safety and well-being of the large number of its members who actively participated in the war effort was of far greater concern and significance to the congregation than Zionism.<sup>34</sup>

*Rabbi Milton Grafman*

Milton Grafman came to Birmingham as the United States entered the war. Indeed, he arrived in the city the very day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Installed as the congregation's rabbi a few days later, thirty-four year old Grafman led Emanu-El until his retirement in 1975 and remained active in the community until his death twenty years later. His dynamic personality and effusive enthusiasm provided a striking contrast to the staid Newfield, who had led the congregation since 1895. Prior to coming to Birmingham, Grafman served as rabbi of Adath Israel in Lexington, Kentucky, and worked with Hillel groups locally at the University of Kentucky and Transylvania College. He quickly connected with the youth at Emanu-El, and this connection came at a momentous time as Emanu-El's young men prepared for war. As one soldier wrote to Grafman during the war, "My father was very fond of Dr. Newfield. I thought him a lovable, understanding man, too. Yet there was something I didn't cleave to. To me you are the very best of modern Jewry."<sup>35</sup> Another Emanu-El soldier, also writing from the battlefield, confided to Grafman, "you're really the first one we've ever had that I could turn to."<sup>36</sup>

Grafman entered the rabbinate at a time when Reform Judaism underwent significant change, especially regarding Zionism. Cyrus Arfa has argued that since 1895 Reform Judaism experienced a "gradual but relentless self-transformation" towards a pro-Zionist position, accepting it in the CCAR's approval of the Columbus Platform of 1937 and finally embracing an active

*Rabbi Milton Grafman.  
Grafman came to Temple Emanu-El in 1941.  
This photo dates from the early 1950s.  
(Courtesy of Stephen Grafman.)*

Zionist stance after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.<sup>37</sup> The Columbus Platform resulted because “many of the younger rabbis were more self-assured than the older classical Reformers such as Newfield, and could more easily accept notions of cultural pluralism, or more specifically ideas of ‘dual’ loyalties, without fearing adverse Christian responses.”<sup>38</sup> Grafman almost certainly voted in favor of the Columbus Platform in 1937, and he definitely can be characterized as a self-assured young rabbi who fervently embraced the pro-Zionist position well before his appointment to Emanu-El.<sup>39</sup>

During the summer of 1938 while he was still serving in Lexington, Grafman toured thirteen European countries including Nazi Germany. His three month sojourn was under the auspices of the American Seminar, affiliated with the International YMCA. He held the title “lecturer” rather than rabbi. He also carried a State Department letter introducing him as “Mr. Milton Grafman.” He witnessed Nazi barbarity firsthand: “I’ve had a remarkable experience, but a very sad and sobering one too. I thought Berlin was horrible, and Warsaw depressing, but Vienna was the saddest experience I’ve ever had. I’m afraid that no one will believe my story when I return. All I can say now, is that you can believe anything you hear or read about Nazi treatment of Jews. Their cruelty is beyond description and nothing they would do would now come as a surprise. . . . But perhaps worse than anything, this antisemitism is spreading like a poison. You can see it everywhere you go.”<sup>40</sup> Grafman’s intimate exposure to the harsh realities of Nazi antisemitism and the enormous threat it posed to Jews everywhere, together with his acute sense of social responsibility and staunch Zionism, helps to explain his intense motivation to serve his congregation during the war and his zeal for the many relief and rescue efforts on behalf of European Jews.

Grafman’s early years in Birmingham proved to be extremely productive both for himself and for Emanu-El. Grafman remained actively engaged in the war effort on the home front and his leadership of Emanu-El resulted in dramatic membership growth. The attraction of Reform Judaism, as well as Grafman’s dynamic personality, encouraged many families to move from Temple Beth-El

to Emanu-El. At Beth-El, there had been growing unease over how many of the old traditions should be retained or discarded among the acculturating immigrant generation and especially their children.<sup>41</sup> As Elovitz observes, even with “all the bluster and fanfare aside, Temple Beth-El was, in spite of its protestations to modernity and progressivism, still ‘definitely an Orthodox house of worship’ in 1939.”<sup>42</sup> Social, as well as religious, divisions remained within the Jewish community. Reform Jews of Emanu-El had their own country club, the Hillcrest Club, while eastern European Jews followed suit by forming the Fairmont Club. Nonetheless by the 1930s and 1940s, the acculturated children of the eastern European immigrant generation had achieved economic success and a measure of social visibility, and Emanu-El’s prominence, the nature of Reform Judaism, and Grafman’s personality attracted many of these members of Beth-El. Grafman further appealed to those who felt uncomfortable with Classical Reform services by reviving some traditions that Newfield had abandoned. His fervent embrace of Zionism at a time when European Jewry faced annihilation provided an additional appeal for these people.

The dislocations caused by the war created significant challenges for Grafman and Emanu-El, not the least being the many members who departed Birmingham in the service of their country. Emanu-El responded as did other congregations across the nation. Its members joined civilian defense groups, volunteered for the Red Cross and the USO, and participated in various other programs and service organizations in the city and region. Emanu-El members also continued to lead Birmingham’s Jewish organizations, and these organizations proved to be vital components of the local and state war efforts. The United Jewish Fund continued to aid transients and contributed to the general welfare of Jews at home and abroad. Besides acting as the organization coordinating aid to Jews in Europe, the fund helped locate missing relatives, advised people how to ship needed goods overseas, and kept track of the city’s Jews who served in the armed forces. The Jewish War Veterans and the Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary, established in 1936, helped both Jewish veterans and soldiers still

in the service. The auxiliary post had over two hundred members who volunteered, visiting hospitals from Tuscaloosa to Anniston to minister to the recovering servicemen.<sup>43</sup>

In 1943 Grafman began a newsletter called the *Serviceman* to keep in contact with his parishioners in the military and boost their morale. He used the bimonthly, four-page newsletter as a "clearing house for news of Emanu-El service men" and a "medium of contact between our boys and [the] congregation."<sup>44</sup> Grafman later said, those "boys [in the service] . . . are the congregation of tomorrow. If they were in town they'd be in the Temple but I can send my services to them abroad and make any foxhole a bit of Birmingham." By doing this, Grafman became what he described as a "chaplain behind the lines, a rabbi [who] would dedicate 24 hours of every 24 to the war front at home."<sup>45</sup> The *Serviceman* became Grafman's and Emanu-El's most direct contribution to supporting the troops. His extensive experience with the Hillel groups in Kentucky certainly helped to foster a strong bond with the young men of Emanu-El, but Grafman also took seriously his responsibilities as the leader of his congregation, and he had, even at his young age, a well-developed sense of moral and civic duty. The *Serviceman* was but a manifestation of this duty.

The newsletter was wildly successful. Initially, Grafman intended it to be for those in the service, but the first few issues had such a wealth of information about the men that all of the families at Emanu-El as well as friends began requesting copies. Shortly after it first appeared, other congregations throughout the United States requested copies and sought advice on starting a similar newsletter for their members.<sup>46</sup> Almost all the letters from Emanu-El's soldiers in Grafman's files express their appreciation for, and their anticipation of, receiving the newsletter. By late 1944, the circulation of the newsletter had reached over seven hundred, with 170 of them going to the men and the one woman in the service.

Grafman wrote and published the *Serviceman* with limited secretarial assistance, and Emanu-El and the Sisterhood funded the operation.<sup>47</sup> The news about the various Emanu-El men in the service came from soldiers' letters sent either to Grafman or to

*The first issue of the "Serviceman," August 1943.  
The publication drew a wide readership among Emanu-El  
congregants serving in the military and those at home.  
(Courtesy of Birmingham Public Library, Department of Archives.)*

their families, who then shared the news with Grafman. In most issues, the content focused on the soldiers: their whereabouts, exploits, or views about the war, and often it reported about those killed or missing in action. Frequently information concerning someone's whereabouts led to a reunion of old friends, whether stationed overseas or stateside. The *Serviceman* also included news about the home front. The Birmingham newspapers allowed Grafman to use their articles in the newsletter, and popular items, such as sports columns, frequently appeared. Every issue described the weddings, births, and services that took place in Birmingham since the last issue, including how Emanu-El members contributed to the war effort, such as those training to be registered nurses, or the campaign to collect books and magazines for soldiers overseas. In addition to the *Serviceman*, the Sisterhood put together care packages for the men at Grafman's suggestion, and he made sure that they received them, especially on important days such as Hanukkah. The soldiers stationed overseas and stateside, as well as the entire congregation, appreciated the efforts of Grafman and the Sisterhood.

After Hitler's extermination program became public knowledge in 1942, the press in Birmingham publicized and condemned the mass killings through articles and editorials. Jews and gentiles, Zionists and non-Zionists, could not help but recognize the threat that Nazism posed to Jews worldwide.<sup>48</sup> At Emanu-El, the revelations of the Nazi mass murders in Europe profoundly influenced their perception not only of Jewry worldwide, but also of their own identity as Jews. Rarely had the vulnerability of the Jews to antisemitism been so starkly exposed. Many in Birmingham's Jewish community had lost contact with relatives and friends in Europe, and the Birmingham press's ample coverage of the mass murder of European Jews left little doubt as to the fate of those relatives and friends. To illustrate the stakes the war against Nazi Germany had for Jews, and how Jews should respond to the threat, Grafman wrote in the *Serviceman* about a former Emanu-El member in the service, Henry Birnbrey, who had emigrated from Germany in 1938 as part of the German Jewish Children's Aid. The Birmingham section of the National Council of Jewish Wom-

en sponsored Birnbrey who resided in Birmingham for ten months. On Sundays, Birnbrey "made the church circuit, speaking to churches about what was going in Germany." According to Grafman, he went from being a "Hitler victim to American soldier in the cause of freedom," and had "a very personal stake" in the war as his "father and mother died in Germany from the persecution suffered in Hitler's concentration camps."<sup>49</sup>

Some of Birmingham's Jews believed that they, like Birnbrey, had "a very personal stake" in the war against Nazi Germany. Many of the letters Grafman received from Emanu-El's members in the military illustrated this belief as they confronted the horrors of Nazi antisemitism first-hand. Toward the end of the war, as Harry Boblasky moved through Germany with his company, he and five other Jewish soldiers held a seder the first night of Passover in a small German village with gefilte fish that one had received in a care package from home, matzo rations, and two bottles of wine, which they had "liberated" from the Wehrmacht a few days before. The following evening, Boblasky and his comrades entered Rheydt, the birthplace of Joseph Goebbels, where they held services and another seder with other Jewish troops in the area. Although he described the seder in that location as "an ironic pleasure," Boblasky wrote that he had not seen any synagogues in his trek through France, Belgium, Holland, or Germany, "but before this war is over it is my sincere desire and wish to attend services in one of our Temples in Germany, if only the pillars are left."<sup>50</sup>

Another Emanu-El member, Malvin Mayer, also depicted how the Nazis had decimated the Jewish population in Europe. He recalled his surprise at seeing a burned out synagogue upon entering a small German town, and he later learned that over three hundred local Jews had perished. Only one "disabled, beaten seventy-six year old man" remained. Mayer and the twenty-five other Jewish soldiers in his battalion repaired the synagogue and held Friday evening services, although they could not help but notice that "all that remains . . . of its past glory is a broken tablet honoring all those who died fighting for the Kaiser." "Ironic, you say," he wrote to his family, "[it is] all too common in



*Temple Emanu-El of Birmingham.*

*The Reform congregation, founded in the nineteenth century,  
erected this synagogue in 1914, at 2100 Highland Avenue.*

*(Courtesy of Birmingham Public Library, Department of Archives.)*

this lovely but accursed land." Mayer's outfit had liberated four Polish Jews who related their horrific treatment at the hands of the Nazis. These accounts so impressed Mayer that he described them as "stories that the world should know and yet I hesitate to say them to my own family; they are so horrible."<sup>51</sup> Boblasky and Mayer, as with so many other soldiers from Emanu-El, conveyed in their letters to Grafman a deep sense of their own identity as Jews, something described in Deborah Dash Moore's *GI Jews* as "an imposing and powerful force."<sup>52</sup> Just as their sense of identity emanated from their letters, so too did their strong feelings of accomplishment and victory. Although Moore examines men from the northeast in her study of Jewish soldiers during World War II,

their experiences closely corresponded to their Emanu-El counterparts.

In addition to being a "chaplain behind the lines," Grafman played a leading role in the Zionist cause.<sup>53</sup> The Birmingham press had been attentive to Jewish issues during the 1930s, but after the war began in Europe it spent the majority of its news and editorial space on war news. Once the news of the Nazi atrocities became public in late 1942, both the press and Alabama's politicians, prodded by Zionists, paid more attention to the need for creating a permanent homeland for the Jews, although not all Jews supported the cause.<sup>54</sup> In one instance, both Grafman and Mesch of Beth-El publicly rebuked opponents of Zionism, mainly Reform rabbis and laypeople who formed the American Council for Judaism and who called the Zionist movement "inconsistent with Jewish religious and moral doctrine." Grafman and Mesch joined 733 other rabbis nationwide in declaring that "the defeat of Hitler will not of itself normalize Jewish life in Europe," and that "Europe will be so ravaged and war-torn that large masses of Jews will elect migration to Palestine as a solution to their personal problems." The press noted Grafman's stance as "significant" given his position as a Reform rabbi.<sup>55</sup>

#### *Immigration, Antisemitism, Lobbying, and Race*

Other Zionist leaders, such as attorney Abe Berkowitz of Beth-El, lobbied Birmingham's representatives in the Alabama legislature, Representative Sid Smyer and Senator James Simpson, to sponsor a resolution in May 1943 that called for the "establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine" due to the extermination of the European Jews by the Axis powers. This was the first resolution of this type passed in the United States. The joint resolution stated that the "policy of the Axis powers to exterminate the Jews of Europe through mass murder cries out for action by the United Nations representing the civilized world." Not long after, Grafman chaired the newly created Birmingham Emergency Committee for Palestine, on which a number of Emanu-El members served. This committee convinced the Jefferson County and Birmingham City commissions to pass similar resolutions

supporting a homeland for the Jews. These resolutions were a part of a national drive coordinated by the American Zionist Emergency Council to get Congress to approve such a resolution in order to pressure Britain into opening Palestine for Jewish refugees and, ultimately, for the creation of a Jewish homeland.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to political lobbying on behalf of Zionism, speakers frequently came to Birmingham to lecture on Jewish suffering in Europe. In May 1943, in a well-publicized event, national Zionist leader Ludwig Lewisohn attended a memorial for the Jewish dead in Europe at the YMHA and later spoke to a crowd at the Tutwiler Hotel. Lewisohn told the crowd that "Germany . . . is already insane," and had "physically exterminated 2,000,000 Jews and a quarter of a million Poles." Of the severe immigration restrictions that hampered Jewish rescue, he said, "if the free nations don't want us, they don't have to have us. But, give us Palestine." Although critical of the British resistance to opening Palestine, he praised Alabama for its legislation endorsing a homeland for the Jews.<sup>57</sup>

The British White Paper of 1939, which had severely limited Jewish immigration to Palestine, also stipulated that after March 1944 all Jewish immigration would be contingent upon Arab permission. Britain's military weakness in the Middle East and its desire to prevent Arabs from joining the Axis convinced British leaders of the necessity of appeasing the Arabs. Ultimately, this perceived necessity outweighed public opinion that called for the opening of Palestine to Jews. As 1944 approached, protests came from the press, the pulpits, politicians, and even from organized labor across Alabama. One of the state's most influential newspapers, the *Montgomery Advertiser*, argued that opening Palestine would save "thousands who will otherwise be massacred," and blamed "the dead hand of Chamberlain's appeasement politics [for] keeping the door of Palestine shut against the Jews of Europe." By opening the "Gates of Hope," Britain could save the Jews from "perhaps the worst Captivity in their long and tragic history."<sup>58</sup> By late 1943 the *Birmingham News* acknowledged that "two or three million European Jews have now been liquidated. The five million still alive would be facing a future bitter enough,

if no White Paper were casting a shadow on them." To shut the remaining Jews out of Palestine "is in effect to clinch a Hitler victory, whatever happens on the battlefield."<sup>59</sup> The *Age-Herald's* front-page syndicated columnist John Temple Graves also weighed in:

They say that 2,000,000 Jews have been murdered in Europe. Certainly the Jewish people in Axis-held lands have suffered as they nor any other people have ever suffered before. And all over the earth as they seek refuge they find quotas and immigration restrictions shutting them out. If the civilized world in whose name we make war is to prove its right to the name, something generous and brave must be done for the persecuted Jewish people. If the America in whose democratic and humanitarian sign we are defeating Hitler is worth its victory, something heartfelt and loud must go from here to England in protest against the cruelty and cowardice of the White Paper.<sup>60</sup>

Rabbi Stephen Wise, prominent Reform rabbi from New York and cochairman of the American Zionist Emergency Council, toured Alabama in January 1944, lecturing to civic and religious groups, where he urged Alabamians to "do all they can to prevent the enforcement of the document." In Birmingham, he spoke to the Kiwanis Club and to the YMHA.<sup>61</sup> Politicians also sent telegrams and letters to the White House calling for action. Lobbied by Berkowitz, Cooper Green, president of the Birmingham City Commission, contacted Alabama's representatives in Washington and urged them to support resolutions calling for the opening of Palestine.<sup>62</sup> Green supported the Zionist efforts, as did many Alabama politicians including Senator Lister Hill and Representatives John Sparkman and Luther Patrick. Berkowitz and Grafman heavily relied upon them as their voices in Washington.

Americans overwhelmingly supported the attempts to rescue European Jews by opening the doors of British Palestine, but when it involved opening the doors of the United States to save the same Jewish lives, support dwindled. When German troops occupied Hungary in March 1944, they began to deport Hungarian Jews with the Hungarian government's collaboration to the extermination camp at Auschwitz. Because any effort of direct

*Temple Beth-El of Birmingham.*

*A Conservative congregation established in the early 1900s,  
their synagogue, at 2179 Highland Avenue, dates from 1926.*

*(Courtesy of Birmingham Public Library, Department of Archives.)*

rescue of Hungarian Jews had little chance of success, the War Refugee Board (WRB) began a campaign designed to pressure Hungary to stop the deportations. The WRB urged prominent individuals and groups, Zionists included, to aid the campaign. Alfred E. Smith, former governor of New York and one-time Democratic presidential candidate, crafted his own statement of support for the Hungarian Jews and urged that the United States offer "all available facilities to save nearly one million Jews facing extermination in Hitler occupied Hungary and . . . [establish] refugee havens in this country and allied countries as means of encouraging marked victims to escape from Nazi-ridden countries . . . as evidence of our good faith."<sup>63</sup> Seventy-one "prominent

Christians, including nearly a score of governors and four Nobel Prize winners," signed Smith's statement. When contacted for support, Alabama Governor Chauncey Sparks "heartily" embraced the idea, but only if refugees were "subject to repatriation after the war if [the] immigration quota is exceeded."<sup>64</sup>

Many Alabamians missed Sparks's caveat of repatriation and quota limits. Birmingham attorney Joseph Mudd feared that the increased immigration would exacerbate "class antagonisms." He pointed out that Albert Einstein had earlier fled from Nazi persecution but now sponsored anti-poll tax legislation, and argued that "this is a sample of what will come from the other refugees." Mudd's antisemitism and xenophobia were readily apparent. As he further explained, "there is no such thing as 'temporary refuge.' Once they are admitted to this country there will be every reason on earth why they should remain here permanently. They will argue loudly that there is no other place to go; to oust them would be inhumane." Indeed, the irony of inhumanity was lost on Mudd. He echoed so many others who fought increased immigration: "[The] refugees can certainly escape the persecution of Hitler short of traveling thirty-five hundred miles. There must be many places of safety within a radius of a thousand or two thousand miles of Hitler dominated territory."<sup>65</sup> Mudd gave no clue as to where these places might have been.

Reactionaries like Mudd often brought tremendous pressure to bear on public officials at both the state and local levels, and such demagoguery produced, if not direct results, a *Sturm und Drang* that increased tension. For instance, at his lecture at the YMHA in Birmingham, Stephen Wise "violently denied" that he supported unlimited immigration into the United States.<sup>66</sup> Other white reactionaries, such as Augustus Brenners, a Birmingham attorney and columnist for the white-supremacist *Greensboro Watchman* and *Southern Watchman*, targeted Charles Feidelson, the liberal Jewish editor and columnist for the *Birmingham News* and *Age-Herald*, as part of a "Communitic program" that opposed things such as the poll tax. Brenners characterized Feidelson as part of a group who "cannot pronounce the word 'America' but who lustily sing their anthem about God blessing it, are 'adopted'

citizens of this country and are very anxious to become its foster parent. They never had a country of their own, but are full of expedients as to how this one should be run."<sup>67</sup> The antisemitism demonstrated by Mudd and Brenners, by no means uncommon and by no means confined to southern reactionaries, helps to explain why the United States faltered when faced with the greatest moral and humanitarian crisis in its modern history.

Mudd's antisemitic characterization of immigrant Jews, in this case refugees, as radicals or outside agitators was typical of the southern reactionary obsession over race. Although such antisemitism recalled the nativist reactions of the 1920s, the memory of the Scottsboro case in the early to mid-1930s exacerbated both racial suspicion and antisemitism in the state. The latter provided the reactionaries the nexus between African Americans and Jews due to the participation of defense attorney Samuel Lebowitz, a Jew, and the communist International Labor Defense. By the late 1930s and during World War II, southern conservatives and reactionaries worried about maintaining white supremacy in the midst of increasing liberalism and racial activism. Consequently, Brenners's denunciation of Feidelson was symptomatic of part of the environment in which the Jews of Birmingham lived.

Conservatives and reactionaries might connect Jews and African Americans, but Jews in Birmingham did not champion black equality. Some, such as Newfield and Grafman, openly chastised extremist organizations and advocated, along with Sterne, Fies, and others, that greater educational and economic opportunities be provided for African Americans. The majority of the Jewish community in Birmingham, like other Jewish communities throughout the Jim Crow South, remained ambivalent and silent regarding black civil rights.

Nonetheless the refugee German Jewish scholars at the neighboring African American Talladega College outwardly protested, albeit in a limited fashion, Jim Crow segregation. Unable to find employment at white universities, some refugee Jewish scholars from Germany found employment at black colleges and universities. The three German Jewish refugees at Talladega discovered the same discrimination and oppression that they had

fled in the 1930s, except that in Alabama, African Americans, not themselves, comprised the oppressed minority. Viewed with suspicion by the local white gentile community, and immersed physically and intellectually in the culture of the black college community, these professors offered what little protest they could by refusing to patronize segregated businesses in town.<sup>68</sup>

Limited evidence is available concerning African American views of Jews in Birmingham during this period. The black press wrote little on the subject and nothing about Zionism. When it did mention Jews, it often mentioned them in connection with the antisemitic persecutions and racial worldview of the Nazis. In 1941 an editorial in the African American *Birmingham World*, while warning of the danger to blacks from Nazi racism, pointed out the harsh conditions under which German Jews lived. "This is no brief for the Jews," the editorial stated, "many of whom are responsible [for] some part of our oppressions. But would Hitler be less harsh [on a] race which he considers even lower than the Jews?"<sup>69</sup> This dichotomous view of Jews as both a persecuted minority and part of the oppressive larger white majority existed easily for African Americans, just as antisemitism and Zionism co-existed for fundamentalist Christians.

As African Americans shared similarly ambivalent attitudes toward Jews, they also shared the antipathy and fear of Nazi racism and persecution that Jews expressed. What differed, however, was their willingness to connect Nazi racism with Jim Crow racism. Shortly after the Nazis seized power, African Americans began comparing Nazism and Jim Crow segregation, using the term "Hitlerism" to describe instances of discrimination and racial violence that they faced. Although African Americans condemned Nazi antisemitic persecution, and most certainly the mass killings publicized by 1942, they drew different conclusions, preferring to stress the dangers of racial supremacy in the United States rather than the consequences it had for the Jews. When the black *Birmingham World* described the mass killings of the Jews in a front-page article in January 1945, it used such terms as "lynched" and "segregated Jewish concentration camp," phrases that obviously resonated with its readers.<sup>70</sup> A cartoon published in the *World* a



few months later used the image of murdered, emaciated bodies of Jewish prisoners to illustrate southern white intransigence toward greater black rights. As African American editor Robert Durr noted after the war, the Nazi criminals executed at Nuremberg "were all antisemitic. They were all likewise anti-human. The two always go together."<sup>71</sup>

The concerted effort by Zionists and non-Zionists to pressure the British to rescind the White Paper and open Palestine failed, but it vividly illustrated the influence of the well-coordinated Jewish movement on local politicians and organizations. The campaign also demonstrated that, despite the lamentations of politicians and press, few endorsed opening the United States's borders. Even the *Birmingham News*, perhaps the loudest voice on this issue, argued that "most Americans" viewed saving the remaining Jews as "primarily an issue of elementary humanity and justice."<sup>72</sup> Birmingham's Zionists continued to lobby politicians and sponsor lectures after the European war ended in 1945, and many members of Temple Emanu-El supported these efforts.<sup>73</sup> Birmingham's Zionists in mid-1945, Abe Berkowitz foremost among them, helped the struggling Palestinian Jews' quest for independence by gathering all manner of aid, including a truck that "was loaded with tires and the tires' inner-tubes were stuffed with guns and pistols and shipped to New York to see that the 'cargo' would not be apprehended." The effort by these Zionists, such as Max and Tillie Kimerling, Dora Roth, James Permutt, and Alex Rittenbaum, whose "international adventure . . . put James Bond to shame," was eventually rewarded when the United Nations decided to recognize a permanent Jewish state in Palestine. In December 1947 the YMHA hosted a victory celebration to commemorate the event. Another celebration followed in May 1948 with the establishment of the state of Israel.<sup>74</sup>

### *Conclusions*

Eastern European Jews like Abe Berkowitz and Ike Ableson remained the driving force behind Zionism in Birmingham, but Milton Grafman played a large role in the movement and in how the public came to perceive this crusade. In *The Provincials*,

*Rabbi Milton Grafman.*

*Grafman served Temple Emanu-El until 1975.*

*This picture was taken at or about the time he retired.*

*(Courtesy of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives.)*

Eli Evans describes Grafman as one of “the new breed of Reform rabbis, the men who had served in World War II and replaced the generation of rabbis who had been at their temples for four or five decades . . . all came to realize that identification with Israel was the only hope for the American Jewish community.”<sup>75</sup> Despite the large differences between Grafman and Newfield in both style and substance, Newfield’s reputation and public prominence proved extremely beneficial to Grafman as he established his own ministry. Part of Newfield’s legacy at Emanu-El, similar to many Reform rabbis throughout the United States, was to shape the gentile population’s perception that he spoke for the entire Jewish community. As Newfield’s successor, Grafman had an established platform on which to speak to a wider audience.

With only a brief interregnum between Newfield’s death in 1940 and Grafman’s appointment in 1941, Temple Emanu-El enjoyed eighty years of stable leadership. Under Grafman, Emanu-El attracted more members as families migrated from Beth-El, and these eastern European families brought with them their strong adherence to Zionism. Beth-El’s rabbi, Abraham Mesch, had been a constant and continuous advocate for a Jewish state in Palestine long before Grafman’s arrival, and as these families left Beth-El, they took Mesch’s influence with them. Grafman’s outspoken support for Israel, and his inability to “function in the mold of the classical ultra-Reform rabbi,” did not please the remaining anti-Zionists in Temple Emanu-El. In 1955 a number of prominent families, led by influential industrialist Milton Fies, left Emanu-El and began their own congregation, the Congregation of Reform Judaism. By 1959 the breakaway congregation had dissolved and the families returned to Emanu-El. Despite the brief schism, by the late 1950s, few anti-Zionists remained in Birmingham’s Jewish community. As Elovitz notes, after 1948, “Zionism, in the form of devotion to Israel, became part and parcel of the activities and philosophical underpinnings of virtually every Jewish organization in Birmingham.”<sup>76</sup>

Clearly, World War II was the crucible upon which Birmingham’s Jewish community turned. Not only had the Holocaust altered the outlook and worldview of Birmingham’s Jews, but the

movement of families from Beth-El to Emanu-El under Grafman had also eroded the barriers between Jews of central and eastern European descent. The returning veterans, the “congregation of tomorrow” as Grafman referred to them, spurred further conciliation within the Jewish community, and intermarriage between the two Jewish sub-groups became more common. The war also marked the seminal moment for Grafman. His service to the congregation during wartime and his tireless work producing the *Serviceman* as “a chaplain behind the lines” set the tone for his tenure as leader of Temple Emanu-El. His strong advocacy for the relief and rescue of persecuted European Jews and for the creation of a Jewish state established his stature and authority as not just a Jewish leader, but also as a community leader.

Beyond the impact Hitler’s policies and World War II exerted on Birmingham’s Jewry, black and white Christians perceived events and reacted through prisms of their very different positions, exhibiting vastly opposed agendas and historical consciousness. Jews and issues of Jewish import received open and mixed support as well as open hostility. For their part, Birmingham Jews continued to cooperate with each other and with groups in the broader society on certain issues and disagree over others. In so many ways, this essay describes the unification of Birmingham’s Jews who overcame generational and cultural divisions, but also the emergence of new conflicts that reached beyond Birmingham and the Jewish community into southern culture at large.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Robert G. Corley, *Paying Civic Rent: The Jews of Emanu-El and the Birmingham Community* (Birmingham, 1982), 20–22; Mervyn Sterne interview conducted by Mark Elovitz, July 12, 1972, folder 781.4.2.2.7, Mark Elovitz Research Papers, Birmingham Public Library, Department of Archives (hereafter cited as BPL); Mark H. Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie: The Birmingham Experience* (University, AL, 1974), 117–121, 227, n.4; “Mervyn Hayden Sterne: Biographical Note,” Mervyn Sterne Papers, BPL; for Ullman, see Margaret England Armbruster, *Samuel Ullman and “Youth”: The Life, The Legacy* (Tuscaloosa and London, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Temple Beth-El did have prominent public figures in the congregation. The merchant and philanthropist Louis Pizitz was foremost among them.

<sup>3</sup> Elovitz, *Century*, 90, 98.

<sup>4</sup> Mark K. Bauman, “The Transformation of Jewish Social Services in Atlanta, 1928–1948,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 53 (2001): 83–111.

<sup>5</sup> *Birmingham Age-Herald*, May 21, 1934.

<sup>6</sup> Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust: 1933–1945* (New York, 1986), 40–48.

<sup>7</sup> For an examination of the Alabama press and its reaction to Nazism, see Dan J. Puckett, “Hitler, Race, and Democracy in the Heart of Dixie: Alabamian Attitudes and Responses to the Issues of Nazi and Southern Racism, 1933–1946” (Ph.D. dissertation, Mississippi State University, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> See “Socialist Leader to Lecture Here,” *Birmingham Age-Herald*, October 15, 1933 ; “Birmingham Forum Sponsors Lectures,” *Birmingham Post*, October 20, 1933; “Forum Urges Nazi Protest on Senators,” *Birmingham News*, February 7, 1934; “Hitler Danger Warning Given,” *Birmingham Post*, November 12, 1934; “Speakers Given By Forum Here,” *Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 31, 1935.

<sup>9</sup> The United Jewish Fund established a Refugee Committee to deal with European refugees and to coordinate such activity with the Resettlement Division of the National Coordinating Committee in New York. It is unclear just how many refugees the fund sponsored, but those who found their way to Birmingham were employed with various Jewish businesses in the city. At one point in late 1938, committee members suggested that, compared to other communities, Birmingham had not carried its weight in sponsoring refugees. At the Refugee Committee meeting in January 1939, the committee pledged to sponsor eighteen refugees for that year. “Meeting,” November 28, 1938; “Refugee Committee Meeting,” January 19, 1939, United Jewish Fund Papers, Birmingham Jewish Federation Archives (hereafter cited as BJF) (courtesy of Sol Kimerling).

<sup>10</sup> “Budget Committee,” November 24, 1936; “Meeting,” November 28, 1938; “Special Meeting with Dr. Kohls,” December 15, 1938; “Meeting of State Conference in Montgomery,” December 15, 1938, United Jewish Fund Papers, BPL. See also the first edition of the United Jewish Fund’s newsletter, *The United Appeal*, October 5, 1937, folder 781.3.6, BPL.

<sup>11</sup> “Special Emergency Meeting,” October 9, 1938, United Jewish Fund Papers, BJF.

<sup>12</sup> Hollace Ava Weiner, "The Mixers: The Role of Rabbis Deep in the Heart of Texas," in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark K. Bauman (Tuscaloosa, 2006), 55–101; Mark K. Bauman and Arnold Shankman, "The Rabbi as Ethnic Broker: The Case of David Marx," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 2 (1983): 71–95; George R. Wilkes, "Rabbi David Marx and the Unity Club: Organized Jewish-Christian Dialogue, Liberalism, and Religious Diversity in Early Twentieth-Century Atlanta," *Southern Jewish History* 9 (2006), 35–68. Marx preceded Newfield as rabbi at Temple Emanu-El. He arrived at Emanu-El in 1894, but left for Atlanta the following year. See also Malcolm H. Stern, "The Role of the Rabbi in the South," in *Turn to the South: Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoﬀ and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville, VA, 1979), 21–32.

<sup>13</sup> Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism: From Herzl to the Holocaust* (Garden City, NY, 1975; reprint, Lincoln and London, 1995), 1–2.

<sup>14</sup> Theodore Lowi, "Southern Jews: The Two Communities," in *Jews in the South*, ed. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson (Baton Rouge, 1973), 276.

<sup>15</sup> Elovitz, *Century*, 135, 138–139, 230, n.19.

<sup>16</sup> Elovitz, *Century*, 133; Mervyn Sterne interview. A notorious mumbler, Sterne was unclear in his interview as to what he meant by "more discrimination."

<sup>17</sup> Henry L. Feingold, *A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920–1945* (Baltimore and London, 1992), 183–184.

<sup>18</sup> William B. Bankhead to Cordell Hull, October 11, 1938, 817.1.1.1.20, Morris Newfield Papers, BPL. Shugerman also contacted U.S. Congressman Luther Patrick from Birmingham, and Sterne coordinated with Adolph Weil in Montgomery. "Special Emergency Meeting," October 9, 1938, United Jewish Fund Papers, BJJ. United States Representative John Sparkman also received encouragement to fight for an open Palestine. See Sam J. Israel to John Sparkman, October 7, 1938; John Sparkman to Sam J. Israel, October 20, 1938; Stephen S. Wise to John Sparkman, October 16, 1938; John Sparkman to Stephen S. Wise, October 20, 1938, box 18, fld."Jews," John Sparkman Papers, Hoole Special Collections, University of Alabama (hereafter cited as HSC). For more information on Ike Abelson, see Karl B. Friedman to editor, *Southern Shofar*, September 1995.

<sup>19</sup> Cordell Hull to William B. Bankhead, October 15, 1938; William B. Bankhead to Morris Newfield, October 18, 1938; Morris Newfield to Solomon Goldman, October 14, 1938; Ewart H. Wyle to Franklin Roosevelt, n.d.; International Convention of the Disciples of Christ Resolution, n.d.; A.H. Reid (Birmingham Baptist Association) to Franklin Roosevelt, n.d.; George Lang to Franklin Roosevelt, October 18, 1938, 817.1.1.1.20, Newfield Papers, BPL; *Birmingham Age-Herald*, October 26, 1938.

<sup>20</sup> Adalien Feidelson Kahn interview conducted by author, January 5, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Cowett states that Newfield's Classical Reform Judaism "satisfied his congregants, mostly enterprising businessmen and professionals, who hoped to gain access to the wider avenues of social, political, and cultural power in Birmingham and simultaneously hold onto some Jewish traditions." Mark Cowett, "Morris Newfield, Alabama, and Blacks, 1895–

1940," in *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s*, ed. Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin (Tuscaloosa and London, 1997), 42; Mark Cowett, *Birmingham's Rabbi: Morris Newfield and Alabama, 1895-1940* (University, AL, 1986), 153-154, 169.

<sup>22</sup> Cowett, *Birmingham's Rabbi*, 168-169.

<sup>23</sup> "Special Emergency Meeting," October 9, 1938, United Jewish Fund Papers, BJF.

<sup>24</sup> Cyrus Arfa, *Reforming Reform Judaism: Zionism and the Reform Rabbinate, 1885-1948* (Tel Aviv, 1985), 3-4.

<sup>25</sup> All of these individuals later served on the Executive Committee of the Birmingham chapter of the American Council for Judaism, which opposed Zionism.

<sup>26</sup> "Christians and Jews, Mobilize!" *Birmingham News*, August 3, 1939.

<sup>27</sup> Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa and London, 1998), ix, 232-233, 354-355.

<sup>28</sup> Glenn Feldman, *Politics, Society, and the Klan in Alabama, 1915-1949* (Tuscaloosa and London, 1999), 241.

<sup>29</sup> Engel admitted that he had not "suffered any inconvenience or harassment at the hands of the Klan," but chose to leave Birmingham nonetheless. Elovitz, *Century*, 86.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 140.

<sup>31</sup> *Birmingham Age-Herald*, March 8, 1940. With the exception of the *Age-Herald's* editorial, no one in the press mentioned again the idea of racial separateness.

<sup>32</sup> "Morris Newfield," *Temple Emanu-El Yearbook: 1945-1946*, 15. The information came from Rabbi Myron Silverman's eulogy of Newfield. The yearbook can be found in "Jewish Synagogues Temple Emanu-El," BPL Subject Files.

<sup>33</sup> Morris Fisher, Ida Newman Fisher, Max Goldberg, and Fannie Newman Goldberg interviews conducted by Mark Elovitz, July 10, 1972, Elovitz Research Papers, folder 781.4.1.2.6, BPL.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Grafman to author, February 27, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Irving Beiman to Milton Grafman, n.d. (1943?), folder 1758.1.9, Milton Grafman Papers, BPL.

<sup>36</sup> Buddy Marlow to Milton Grafman, n.d., folder 1758.1.77, Grafman Papers, BPL.

<sup>37</sup> Arfa, *Reforming Reform Judaism*, 1-2.

<sup>38</sup> Cowett cites Arfa's doctoral dissertation as his source. Cowett, *Birmingham's Rabbi*, 168.

<sup>39</sup> It is unclear when Grafman became a Zionist. According to his son Stephen Grafman and daughter Ruth Fromstein, the rabbi most probably embraced Zionism early in his life, well before the Nazis came to power. Stephen Grafman to author, February 22, 2008.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen W. Grafman, "Out of the Pale: A Grafman Family History," 296-297 (unpublished manuscript in possession of author).

<sup>41</sup> In contrast to Beth-El, Temple Emanu-El had no Hebrew school, held regular Friday evening services, and observed only one day of Rosh Hashanah. Only in the 1940s, for

instance, did Rabbi Abraham Mesch of Beth-El begin adding English to the service rather than conducting it entirely in Hebrew, or offering Friday evening services.

<sup>42</sup> Elovitz was a former rabbi at Temple Beth-El. He goes on to say that in 1938, Beth-El's Board "was still divided on the question of the eligibility of women as members in their own right. It was not until 1944 that Temple Beth-El formally identified itself with the United Synagogue of America and the Conservative Movement." Elovitz, *Century*, 99.

<sup>43</sup> *Temple Emanu-El Yearbook*, 21-22, 46-48.

<sup>44</sup> *Serviceman*, August 1943, 1. The newsletters are in folder 1758, Grafman Papers, BPL.

<sup>45</sup> "Devoted Rabbi Gets News to Boys Overseas," *Birmingham Post*, August 1, 1944, folder 1758.1.133, Grafman Papers, BPL.

<sup>46</sup> See the letters from the various congregations in folder 1758.1.132, Grafman Papers, BPL.

<sup>47</sup> "Devoted Rabbi Gets News to Boys Overseas," *Birmingham Post*, August 1, 1944.

<sup>48</sup> See Puckett, "Hitler, Race, and Democracy in the Heart of Dixie," chapter five, "Alabama and the Holocaust," for an examination of how the Nazi mass killings were covered, portrayed, and interpreted by the press and the public in Alabama.

<sup>49</sup> Grafman wrote in the *Serviceman* that Birnbrey fled Germany in 1939, but Birnbrey indicated that it was in 1938. Birnbrey's father died from a severe beating a month after *Kristallnacht*. His mother died soon after. "Former Refugee Stationed in England," *Serviceman*, May 1944, folder 1758.1.2, Grafman Papers, BPL; Philip K. Jason and Iris Posner, eds., *Don't Wave Goodbye: The Children's Flight from Nazi Persecution to American Freedom* (Westport, CT, and London, 2004), 154-155; Myrna Katz Frommer and Harvey Frommer, *Growing Up Jewish in America: An Oral History* (Lincoln, NE, and London, 1995), 115-116.

<sup>50</sup> *Serviceman*, March-April 1945, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Malvin Mayer to "Mother & Sis," Germany, June 11, 1945, folder 1758.1.81, Grafman Papers, BPL.

<sup>52</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2004), 141.

<sup>53</sup> Mark Elovitz notes that Grafman became "significantly interested" in Zionism between 1945 and 1948, but Grafman's interest, not to mention his role in the movement, prior to 1945 was more significant than Elovitz suggests. Elovitz, *Century*, 143.

<sup>54</sup> See Stephen S. Wise to John Sparkman, October 27, 1942; Stephen S. Wise to John Sparkman, November 1, 1942; John Sparkman to Stephen S. Wise, November 2, 1942, box 18, folder "Jews," Sparkman Papers, HSC; also John H. Mayer to Lister Hill, March 2, 1943; Lister Hill to John H. Mayer, March 23, 1943, box 161, Lister Hill Papers, HSC.

<sup>55</sup> "Birmingham Rabbis Sign Paper Rebuking Zionism Opponents," *Birmingham News*, November 16, 1942; *Birmingham Age-Herald*, November 17, 1942.

<sup>56</sup> The Joint Resolution was approved finally on June 10, 1943. Alabama, *General Laws and Joint Resolutions of the Legislature of Alabama* (Birmingham, 1943), 136, n.144; see also "Resolution is Passed Asking for Creation of Jewish Homeland," *Birmingham News*, May 5,



1943; "Jews Organize Campaign Group," *Birmingham Age-Herald*, December 21, 1943, 7; "Black Paper," *Alabama: News Magazine of the Deep South* (January 21, 1944): 15.

<sup>57</sup> "Future of Jew is Talk Subject," May 15, 1943, 12; "Rabbi Discusses Needs of Peace," *Birmingham Age-Herald*, June 5, 1943; "Nazis Can Never Come Back, Says Zionist Leader Lewisohn," *Birmingham News*, May 21, 1943; "With Aid of Christian Nations Anti-Semitism May Go, Says Rabbi," *Birmingham News*, November 1, 1943.

<sup>58</sup> *Montgomery Advertiser*, May 19, 1943.

<sup>59</sup> *Birmingham News*, December 22, 1943; November 7, 1943.

<sup>60</sup> John Temple Graves, "This Morning," *Birmingham Age-Herald*, December 29, 1943.

<sup>61</sup> *Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 12, 1944, and January 13, 1944.

<sup>62</sup> Stephen S. Wise to Cooper Green, February 4, 1944; Cooper Green to Stephen S. Wise, February 4, 1944; Form letter, February 7, 1944; Abe Berkowitz to Cooper Green, February 10, 1944; John Newsome to Cooper Green, February 14, 1944, 9.16, Cooper Green Papers, BPL; John Sparkman to Cooper Green, February 8, 1944, box 38, "House Legislation: Jews," Sparkman Papers, HSC; see also "Plan for Aid to Jews Endorsed," *Birmingham News*, January 11, 1944.

<sup>63</sup> Alfred E. Smith to Chauncey M. Sparks, May 20, 1944, box 9, Chauncey Sparks Personal Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History (hereafter cited as ADAH).

<sup>64</sup> David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York, 1984), 237; Chauncey Sparks to Alfred E. Smith, May 22, 1944, box 9, Sparks Personal Papers, ADAH; see also, "Sparks Endorses Rescue of Jews," *Birmingham Age-Herald*, May 21, 1944.

<sup>65</sup> Joseph P. Mudd to Chauncey Sparks, May 25, 1944; Chauncey Sparks to Joseph P. Mudd, May 26, 1944, box 9, Sparks Personal Papers, ADAH.

<sup>66</sup> *Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 12, 1944.

<sup>67</sup> Augustus Brenners to Gessner T. McCorvey, May 12, 1945, Box 2, James A. Simpson Papers, ADAH.

<sup>68</sup> There were five refugee scholars at Talladega College, but only three during the war. Gabrielle Simon Edgecomb, *From Swastika to Jim Crow: Refugee Scholars at Black Colleges* (Malabar, FL, 1993), 58.

<sup>69</sup> This was a guest editorial from *The Cincinnati Independent*. While the content of the editorial did not originate with the *Birmingham World*, it circulated among Birmingham's black population. The *World* rarely published editorials that strayed too far from its own perspective. "The Die Is Cast," *Birmingham World*, January 10, 1941.

<sup>70</sup> "Uncover Bones of 700,000 Victims of German Murder," *Birmingham World*, January 5, 1945.

<sup>71</sup> "Nuremberg Verdicts," *Weekly Review*, October 19, 1946. There is no record of how Birmingham's Jews responded to such rhetoric by African Americans. Black newspapers were relatively unknown to the white community and usually only journalists and interested businessmen paid any attention to the black press.

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<sup>72</sup> *Birmingham News*, March 19, 1944.

<sup>73</sup> See Abe Berkowitz to Cooper Green, May 25, 1945, 9.17, Green Papers, BPL; Robert F. Wagner and Robert A. Taft to Lister Hill, May 18, 1945; Abe Berkowitz to Lister Hill, June 9, 1945; Lister Hill to Abe Berkowitz, June 12, 1945, box 623, fld.243, Hill Papers, HSC.

<sup>74</sup> Elovitz, *Century*, 142-145.

<sup>75</sup> Eli Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York, 1973), 110.

<sup>76</sup> Elovitz, *Century*, 149, 157-158.



## Harry Golden, New Yorker: I ♥ NC

by

Leonard Rogoff

**A**t a Raleigh reception several years ago, *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker observed that whenever he returned home to North Carolina he was astonished by the number of people who wanted to know, “What do folks in New York think of North Carolina?” The answer, of course, is that they don’t think about North Carolina at all.

The fact that the question is asked says more about North Carolinians than it does about New Yorkers. As southerners, why should North Carolinians care? Supposedly in southern mythology, New York represents sin, commerce, urbanism, ill manners, fast-talk, and, of course, Jews. New York is Satan, crass and materialistic, sexually libertine. For the Populists it was the home of financial parasites who manipulated markets and herded good farm folk into factories. The war between country virtue and city vice is a theme as old as folklore. The Leo Frank case was not just about a murder, but it pitted poor Georgia Christians against rich New York Jews, Tom Watson’s *Jeffersonian* against Adolph Ochs’s *New York Times*. The mythic South is the Plantation Ideal, that sunny South of neighborly conversation and self-effacing courtesy, of mint juleps on the veranda, starlit nights on the bayou, bird hunting, biscuits and slow-cooked pork. New York, as the mythology has it, is fast-paced and wise-cracking, rye bread and pastrami. New York is neither field nor forest but all pavement where life is lived not in the great outdoors but in office, theater, and nightclub. New York represents everything the South

is supposedly not. Why should the Lazy South care about the City that Never Sleeps?

*New York Jew*

For Harry Golden of Charlotte, North Carolina, New York City was *The Greatest Jewish City in the World*. He even wrote a book with that title.<sup>1</sup> Golden reveled in being a New York Jew, a Lower East Side street kid, a shtick that he played self-consciously to the point of caricature: quick with a quip, ready to do battle as champion of the outcast and downtrodden everywhere. Born Harry Goldhirsch in eastern Galicia, he had a classic ghetto upbringing with a poor but Jewishly learned father. He attended City College without graduating, and, after trying his hand at a variety of trades including a stint as soapbox Socialist speaker, he ran a bucket shop, speculating in stock with other people's money. In 1929 his brokerage house went bust, and Goldenhirsch found himself in jail for fraud. After three-and-a-half years in the Atlanta penitentiary, he renamed himself Harry Golden and returned to New York where he sold newspaper advertising. In 1941 he relocated to Charlotte to write and sell ads for the *Labor Journal*.

In 1942 Golden printed a first issue of his own newspaper, the *Carolina Israelite*, and began regular publication two years later. His topics included Jews, Zionism, labor rights, politics of all sorts, racial justice, brotherhood, Jewish-Christian relations, and history, both ancient and modern. He wrote of Jews in every aspect, as an ancient people, as victims of pogrom and Holocaust, as small-town southerners, as paragons of civilization, as American immigrants, as fighters for Zion. Yet, his primary subject was himself. He engaged his reader in conversation and was by turns didactic, nostalgic, witty, satirical, sentimental, informative, and, not infrequently, insightful. He reduced injustice to ridicule with his various plans, most famously his Vertical Negro Plan. Observing that in a segregated society blacks and whites frequently stood in lines together but could not sit together, he suggested that schools could integrate by removing chairs. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., praised him, and his list of friends and admirers includ-

ed Carl Sandburg, Norman Thomas, Robert Kennedy, and Adlai Stevenson. The *Carolina Israelite* endured for twenty-four years, its circulation rising at its peak in the late 1950s and early 1960s to thirty thousand with a worldwide readership. His collections of essays, *Only in America* and *For 2¢ Plain*, put him on the best-seller list, and he became a national celebrity, a regular on television and in the print media.

### *Southern Alien*

This unabashed liberal, conspicuous Jew and loud-mouthed New Yorker called North Carolina home. After Golden published his last *Carolina Israelite* in 1968, editor Jonathan Daniels of the *Raleigh News and Observer* wrote appreciatively that Harry wore “a Hebrew’s skin . . . as a costume—almost a sort of comic armor.” Golden, he observed, “energetically played the role of Jewish clown to serve his cause.”<sup>2</sup> If the southern ideal of manhood was the football quarterback, the NASCAR driver, or the outdoorsman, Harry was short and potbellied, chompin’ a cigar rather than chewin’ ‘bacco. The admonition of southern Jews was to fit in, and Harry was decidedly unfit. In his columns he rhapsodized on kosher pickles and argued that a plate of brisket would cure any antisemite of his prejudice.<sup>3</sup>

By rights, then, if stereotypes hold true, Golden is living proof of Charlotte native W. J. Cash’s observation in *The Mind of the South* that the southern Jew is an “eternal Alien” in the region.<sup>4</sup> Golden admitted as much: “Calling the paper the *Israelite* meant that while I didn’t please the folks anymore, still they only said, ‘Oh, that’s just a Jew paper talkin’.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, when Harry Golden closed the *Carolina Israelite*, the *Atlanta Constitution* reprinted from the *Los Angeles Times* a feature article reviewing Golden’s nearly half-century career under the headline “Home Town Hated Golden.” The article opened, “Revered around the world but reviled at home, Harry Golden is known here as ‘that little fat Jew that pops off about the niggers and is always trying to stir up trouble.’” It noted that except for Charlotte’s newspapers, “which have frequently paid tribute to Golden, the demise of the *Israelite* was generally greeted with indifference or an attitude of good rid-

dance." A New Yorker who "cherishes Charlotte as his hometown," Golden was "deluged with hate mail and late night phone calls that begin 'You Jew bastard.'" It continued, "Charlotte ostracizes him, although he has a small circle of devoted friends – newspapermen, ministers, physicians, and other professional people." It quoted one such friend, journalist Kays Gary: "The one thing Harry wants in this town is what he can't get – respect. . . . Most of the power structure knows him only by reputation and doesn't want to know him personally. He's still mostly known as that 'little fat Jew.'"<sup>6</sup>

The disrespect that Harry engendered was not limited to antisemites. The local Jewish community held a begrudging attitude toward him. After Harry wrote a public letter in 1969 to the *Charlotte Observer* protesting the exclusion of blacks and Jews from the Charlotte City Club, Jewish community leader Morris Speizman wrote to the club president, "Harry Golden does not speak for me."<sup>7</sup> On another occasion, Speizman stated, "This man, who has acted as the voice of Jewry in the Southeast has actually been a peripheral member of our own Charlotte Jewish community."<sup>8</sup> A Charlotte rabbi bemoaned, "We wish he'd go away and leave us alone."<sup>9</sup> Harry admitted that he "annoyed the Jews. Not all the Jews, but some of them." Jews, he wrote, had asked him to "give up the paper . . . 'because the Gentiles think you speak for all of us.'"<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Daniels noted perceptively, "Harry Golden is not, never has been, and never will be the Israelite of Carolina."<sup>11</sup>

### *Southern Jew*

If hate mail, threatening phone calls, and social ostracism were Charlotte's gift to Golden, how does one account for his cooing love songs to his adopted city, state, and region? Journalists who wrote life reviews of Golden from the vantage point of his 1968 retirement suggest that he had always been a despised outsider, a local prophet without honor. Yet, as early as 1949, when Golden made his rounds to sell ads for his labor journal, he complained that he felt too much love. The mill owners who wanted to talk Bible or world affairs with him were keeping him from other potential clients: "I do not go to see [them] anymore even

*Harry Golden posing in front of his house/office.  
The historical marker, from the early 1970s, commemorates his achievements.  
(Courtesy of Special Collections, Atkins Library, UNC-Charlotte.)*



though it is a sure sale, because they keep me there a few hours.”<sup>12</sup> In 1953, prior to the Supreme Court’s desegregation decision, he observed “that the Southerner arches his back only at his critic who runs away, but actually welcomes the same critic when he becomes a part of the community. Why the Christians here loved it, every word of it and said so—from Judge John J. Parker of Charlotte to Jonathan Daniels of Raleigh, to Don Shoemaker of Asheville to Reed Sarratt of Winston-Salem. These are the men who more or less mold ‘Gentile’ reaction in the state. . . . Recently, I asked the question in my paper whether I was a Tar Heel and four daily papers and five weekly journals wrote EDITORIALS welcoming me to the f aternity [*sic*].”<sup>13</sup> In a 1956 letter to Dr. George Mitchell of the Southern Regional Council, Golden described himself as “a fellow who has but three passionate loves in this life—The Jewish people, America, and the South.”<sup>14</sup> He returned their love. When invited to write about civil rights in national journals or testify before congressional committees, Golden mostly refused, noting that he did not want to join the chorus of northern liberals badmouthing the South. He would have more credibility with southerners speaking as one of them.

Even his ideological enemies loved him. Although he repeatedly and publicly criticized Governor Luther Hodges for presiding over a segregated state, Hodges consulted Golden before attending a White House conference on the 1957 Little Rock integration crisis. The governor later appointed him the state’s Ambassador of Sunshine.<sup>15</sup> Golden ghostwrote speeches for a Republican congressman. Pro-segregation columnist James Kilpatrick, writing in the *Richmond News-Leader* in 1958, referred to Harry as a “liberal Jew, born on New York’s lower East Side, who transplanted himself to the South and made a million friends, including several hundred thousand who disagree with him strongly.”<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Whitsett, head of the local Patriots of North Carolina, a group described as “somewhat to the right of the White Citizens Council,” wrote Golden, “You and I disagree except that we like each other. At least I know I like you.”<sup>17</sup>

Although Golden was consistently an integrationist, he did not offend southern sensibilities. His humor and his Jewishness

were defensive shields. Moreover, he personalized conflict to remove its sting. Just because a senator might hold deplorable racial views did not mean he was not good for a glass of bourbon. In the 1950s, racial integration was not obsessively a headline theme for the *Carolina Israelite*. The issue after the May 17, 1954, Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in the public schools contained on its front page articles about Augustus Caesar, Alexander Hamilton, and American and German Jews. A short paragraph noted that "Negro lawyers are preparing two cases to bring into court."<sup>18</sup> Nor did he address the 1957 Little Rock school desegregation crisis directly in the *Israelite*. Instead, he philosophized on "Racism" abstractly, calling for more "COMMUNICATION," "LOGIC," and "HUMANITY."<sup>19</sup> Similarly, when Virginia's "political bosses" defied court-ordered integration threatening to close the public schools, he appealed to the state's "great people" to remember that they were the "mother of presidents" and had given birth to John Marshall. "And what a civilization is this Virginia!" Golden extolled.<sup>20</sup> Appealing to their better natures, he actually made Virginians feel good about themselves as they massively resisted integration.

The title of his journal included *Carolina* as well as *Israelite*. A 1957 headline read, "THE SOUTH IS GREAT. . . . BUT NORTH CAROLINA IS THE GREATEST." In 1958 *Saturday Evening Post* reporter John Kobler walked Charlotte's streets with Golden, observing that he was a "well-entrenched town character." In "Why They Don't Hate Harry," Kobler noted that "few townsfolk think of him as an alien, rather as a civic institution." Golden led the town's St. Patrick's Day parade singing "The Wearing of the Green."<sup>21</sup> The "power structure" may have disdained him, but a local friendship circle that included "newspapermen, ministers, physicians, and other professional people" hardly suggests marginality. When his home office burned accidentally in 1958, a newspaper reported that "editors, friends, the local police chief and others . . . have rallied behind Mr. Golden." People brought him food, lent him a car, and donated office space. Golden wrote, "It is with a full heart that I thank you, and through you, the rest of the city of Charlotte for the high-hearted spirit of generosity

which followed the fire." He especially thanked the "strangers" in Chantilly, North Charlotte, Second Ward, and Dilworth who held a prayer meeting for the restoration of his incinerated subscription list.<sup>22</sup> 1958 was momentous for Golden. It marked both the publication of *Only in America* and the public revelation of his criminal past for securities fraud. Yet, once his history as a former convict hit the national media, he found "only friendly understanding." Local journalists confessed they had known of it but sat on the news. "From the minute the secret was out," *Life* reported, "he was swamped not with abuse but phone calls, wires, letters (3,000 to date) and new offers to lecture."<sup>23</sup> He began listing his speaking engagements in the *Israelite*.

Civic and business Charlotte may not have invited Harry to join the club, but he was hardly a pariah. When in 1962 department store magnate George Ivey decided to integrate his dining salon, he asked Golden how to handle it. Early issues of the *Carolina Israelite* included among its advertisers Carolina Power and Light, First Citizens Bank, Rubbermaid, Broyhill Furniture, Neese's Sausages, and Burlington Industries. Such advertising continued to the last issue in 1968. Charlie Cannon, the textile magnate, wrote to him, "Dear Golden: Enclosed is \$3 for renewal. Half your paper stinks, but the other half gives us all lots of pleasure."<sup>24</sup> In 1969 the University of North Carolina at Charlotte proclaimed Harry Golden Day and dedicated an archive and lecture series in his honor. Golden served as secretary of the Charlotte Committee on Public Affairs and as board member of both the city and state Human Relation Councils.

#### *A New Southerner*

What's going on here? Hated New York Jew or beloved Son of the South? Which is it? Harry Golden wanted to have it both ways, defending the South to northerners who did not understand how things are done down South and admonishing southerners for their bigotry and backwardness. Perhaps Golden's complexities speak to deeper confusions about southern identity itself. Perhaps, as recent scholars argue, the South has been a more cosmopolitan place than the plantation myths and provincial

*Harry Golden with national and local dignitaries, 1959.  
Golden with Eleanor Roosevelt and, to her left, seated on sofa arm is  
Gladys Tillett, Charlotte resident and delegate to the UN Women's  
Commission. Charlotte Mayor Philip Lance Van Every is standing on right.  
(Courtesy of Special Collections, Atkins Library, UNC-Charlotte.)*

stereotypes suggest. Perhaps the northern urbanism that Golden roundly embodied was not alien at all to the mind of the South and of Charlotte particularly. When David Goldfield of UNC-Charlotte, historian of southern urbanism, describes the ethos of the New South cities as "boisterous boosterism," he could have been describing the character of Harry Golden. The city, Goldfield observes, is "the greatest symbol" of the South's integration into the nation,<sup>25</sup> and Charlotte crowned itself the "Queen City."

Harry Golden as southern New York Jew was a herald of a changing urban, cosmopolitan South. "Charlotte is all about tomorrow," Golden's friend Walter Klein likes to say. New South cities like Atlanta and Charlotte emulate New York by building

ever upward. Their skylines today contrast with an Old South city like Charleston that restricts the height of its buildings. Charleston is all about yesterday. Charlotte is not the South of Lost Causes and Confederates in the Attic, massively resisting change, but the South of what C. Vann Woodward labeled, “the bulldozer revolution.”<sup>26</sup> A year after the *Carolina Israelite* folded, the word *Sunbelt* entered the lexicon.

If the New South had an instant of birth, most accounts trace it to a famous speech delivered by journalist Henry Grady in 1886 to the New England Society in, of all places, New York City. Although Grady had begun editorializing on the New South in his native Atlanta as early as 1874, it was this talk that defined the New South creed.<sup>27</sup> Grady extolled a South whose cities were buzzing as “vast hives of industry.”<sup>28</sup> He described an economy diversifying beyond agriculture, and—even as Jim Crow was preparing to make his entrance—extolled its harmonious race relations. Grady saluted the “Georgia Yankee” who has come south to build its factories. The precedents for Harry Golden as a Carolina New Yorker, or “Yenkee Tarheel” as he called himself, reached back more than half a century. When asked why he settled in the South, he responded, “I sensed that the next big story of America would develop there, the shifting of a whole social order from agrarianism to urbanization.”<sup>29</sup> In 1957 Golden pumped it as “the greatest news story of the 20th century.”<sup>30</sup> He returned to this theme often.

It was an old story. Southern states had long established boards and sent agents north to draw immigrant labor. The *Charlotte Observer* in an 1878 article, “Northern People Coming South,” proclaimed, “North Carolina should be trimming her sails to catch her share of this South-bound tide.”<sup>31</sup> Although wary of carpet-baggers who sought political office, the southern media overflowed with New South boosterism as states competed in offering incentives to skilled labor, technicians, industrialists, and capitalists. As early as 1866, a Richmond newspaper proclaimed, “Where there are no Jews, there is no money to be made. . . . We hail their presence in the Southern States as an auspicious sign.”<sup>32</sup> And, in 1881, the *Greensboro Patriot*, declared, “To Yankee brains

and capital we shall extend a cordial welcome."<sup>33</sup> After the 1880s northern capitalists began investing more heavily in southern industries. From 1880 to 1910 the urban population of the South grew by five million.<sup>34</sup> It was the industrial South that drew Golden: he first came as a labor journalist.

Whether in country hamlet or budding New South metropolis, the name New York was emblazoned across the South. Charlotte's Belk brothers were native sons, not Jews, who started with a New York Racket Store and built a department store dynasty. In 1911 in Charlotte one could eat at the New York Restaurant, stock up on goods at the New York Household Supply, buy a policy at the local agency of New York Life Insurance, try on a suit at the New York Furnishing Company, and get the clothes tailored at the New York Misfit Parlor. Or take Hemp, North Carolina, which changed its name to Robbins in 1943 to honor the textile mill owner and philanthropist Karl Robbins, who kept the town solvent through the depression years. Robbins himself was a Russian-born, New York Jew and a benefactor of Yeshiva College and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York. A local resident wrote, "In New York Mr. Robbins lives in Central Park West. But in some respects we can also think of Karl Robbins as North Carolinian."<sup>35</sup> Former presidential-candidate John Edwards portrays his hometown of Robbins as archetypal small-town South. As agents in creating an urban, commercial, and cosmopolitan South, Jews were not leading the South in a direction that it did not want to go.

As Stephen Whitfield notes, Harry was hardly the only New Yorker to enter southern mythology. In 1957 North Carolinians revered New York not for giving it a "little fat Jew," but a tall skinny one named Lennie Rosenbluth, who, as the nation's most valuable player, led the Tar Heels basketball team to a national championship. UNC Coach Frank McGuire, a New York Irishman, commented, "He did a lot for his religion in the South."<sup>36</sup> Not to be outdone, Duke imported all-American Art Heyman. A climax of the Duke-Carolina basketball rivalry was a 1961 game when two New York Jews, Heyman and UNC's Larry Brown, exploded into fisticuffs as southern loyalties trumped ethnic bonds.

Another New York Duke basketball player, Marshall Rauch, married a Jewish co-ed from Gastonia where he settled and was elected to the state senate for twelve terms, becoming perhaps the state's most powerful politician. In 1970 a newspaper asked, "Can a tall, dark and handsome Jew from New York City survive and prosper as an aspiring politician and manufacturer (of Christmas ornaments no less) in rural, agricultural, predominantly Protestant North Carolina. Answer: It's what's happening."<sup>37</sup> The New Yorker may not have been native, but he was no longer lonely. In 1950, one in twelve southerners was northern born; by 1980, it was one in five.<sup>38</sup>

Ambitious southerners have long dreamed of making it in New York no less than the thousands of poor blacks—and poor whites as well—who undertook the Great Migration north in search of opportunity. North Carolinians John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk achieved jazz immortality in the city. Thomas Wolfe did not go home again to Asheville; he went to New York, where he found solace in the arms of a New York Jew. Nor was Faulkner a stranger to New York. Eudora Welty studied advertising at Columbia University, returning home only when her father died. Tennessee Williams's life traced a triangle between New Orleans, Key West, and New York, and, as for Truman Capote, there is *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Mississippi's Willie Morris wrote memoirs *North toward Home* and *New York Days*. As Morris said in an interview with Charlie Rose, a North Carolinian who also made it big in the city: "This is one of the sturdy chords in American literature—the provincial coming to New York—and being immersed in its drama, its power, its glamour." Literary critic Elizabeth Hardwick's obituary noted that as a southern Protestant reared in Kentucky, she had always had "her eye on New York City and its culture." In 1979 she told an interviewer: "Even when I was in college, 'down home,' I'm afraid my aim was—if it doesn't sound too ridiculous—my aim was to be a New York Jewish intellectual."<sup>39</sup>

There is nothing more southern among southerners with ambition than the desire to escape the South, to sample the cosmopolitan world, to be able to discover home, as expatriates have done everywhere, by leaving it. Having a play on Broadway

*Harry Golden and Billy Graham at a book presentation luncheon. Golden (right) shakes hands with Mayor Stanford Brookshire of Charlotte. Seated are Graham (left) and George Ivey, Sr., owner of Ivey's Department Store. The occasion was the presentation of Bible Words That Guide Me, edited by Hubert A. Elliott, published in 1963, with favorite Bible verses by well-known people including Golden and Graham. (Courtesy of Special Collections, Atkins Library, UNC-Charlotte.)*

or being published in New York was a benediction and validation for southerners, who knew that they came from a benighted region of racism, poverty, disease, and illiteracy. Making it in New York was the ultimate refutation of any feelings of inferiority, of that supercilious northern attitude that equated a southern accent with ignorance. The final crusade of Billy Graham's long evangelical career was a triumphant revival held in New York City, which he described as his valediction.

Golden was available locally to give southerners his New York blessing without their having to travel north. He was hardly



the first New York Jewish comedian to play a southern stage. Jewish vaudeville acts and companies from New York have long toured local opera houses, often Jewish-owned. In 1895 Simeon Archibald Schloss assumed management of an opera house in Wilmington, North Carolina, building a chain that controlled fourteen regional houses. Linked to the Theatrical Syndicate of New York, Schloss brought Shakespeare, melodrama, minstrel shows, and symphony orchestras to places like Monroe, Tarboro, and Charlotte.<sup>40</sup> Golden, too, had a sense of himself as an ambassador of cosmopolitan culture, a member in good standing of North Carolina's literati, who included Shakespeare in his lecture inventory. Look at the cultural calendars of virtually any southern city today, and you will find at its local arts center a Broadway theater series cheek by jowl with blues festivals and bluegrass concerts.<sup>41</sup> Robert Weiss, a New York choreographer who turned the Carolina Ballet into a national company, splashes its *New York Times* reviews in all its promotional materials.

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Caricatures of a parochial South and a cosmopolitan North exaggerate differences. To regard Harry's labor and civil rights activism as an alien import is to overlook the region's own progressive traditions, which, however beleaguered, have been persistent undercurrents of North Carolina history. That the South is racially, religiously, and politically conservative is measurably true, but Golden's liberalism is hardly alien to the mind of the South. When Charlotte schools integrated, several did so without incident although at one middle school a black girl was cursed and spat upon. The Charlotte City Council responded by passing a resolution, endorsed by the mayor, denouncing "die hards" and "stubborn attitudes" and pledging to keep schools open: "We believe in changing times, the live and let live policy."<sup>42</sup> Golden relished telling southern audiences, both Christian and Jewish, that he was saying what they were thinking and he noted how his remarks were always greeted with applause, even standing ovations. North Carolina may have elected and re-elected Jesse Helms, but it also sent progressives Frank Graham, Kerr Scott,

Terry Sanford, and John Edwards to the Senate, and Scott, Sanford, and Jim Hunt to the governor's house. Scott's 1948 gubernatorial campaign slogan was "Go Forward." Scott and Graham were Golden's friends and intimate correspondents.

As a southerner, Golden was never alone in his crusading, liberal, personal journalism. P. D. East in Mississippi and Arnold Eiseman in Savannah also self-published newspapers that were out of step with their neighborhoods. Editors like Sylvan Meyer of Gainesville, Georgia, and Hodding Carter of Greenville, Mississippi, along with Ralph MacGill of the *Atlanta Constitution*, bravely fought against the segregationist tide. Golden and MacGill joined Carl Sandburg, a fellow NAACP member, at the poet's North Carolina mountain home to renew their sprits and cogitate on the issues of the day. Sandburg, a Chicagoan who also embraced the South as his own, found himself "washed by waves of Southern hospitality."<sup>43</sup>

Golden's advocacy did provoke racial extremists. The South has been notable for its courtesy, but also for its hatreds. When asked what quality of Harry Golden he admired most, his friend Walter Klein cites his bravery in brushing off menacing calls and letters.<sup>44</sup> In 1962 Golden alerted the FBI to one such death threat, noting offhand that he received "vast" vitriolic mail and "crackpot phone calls."<sup>45</sup> In refusing to castigate the South before Congress or in national publications Harry was not standing solely on principle but was toeing a strategic line of self interest, constantly aware of just how far he could go. His discretion tempered his valor. Yet, among Golden's voluminous collected papers at Special Collections of Atkins Library at UNC-Charlotte, letters expressing interest and support are more numerous than hate mail.

Antisemitism was important to Golden's worldview and sense of himself. Like many of his generation, his perspective was shaped by the personal experiences of a ghetto youth and by the Holocaust. He wrote of antisemitism as a "constant of western culture," and it validated his own marginality and fellowship with the oppressed and persecuted.<sup>46</sup> Dramatist Paul Green, in his folkloric dictionary of the southern vernacular, defined a "Jewish

disease" of hypersensitivity.<sup>47</sup> Violent antisemitism provoked fear. Dynamite was planted at synagogues in Charlotte and nearby Gastonia in the late 1950s, but prejudice in Charlotte more commonly took the form of the country-club social discrimination commonplace in the America of Golden's day. But even there the alleged indifference of Charlotte's "power structure" to him can be explained without reference to his being a "little fat Jew." Where in the America of the fifties or sixties would a "power structure" respect a person who agitated for labor unions, organized a clemency petition for a convicted communist, advocated for a gay man convicted of sodomy, and had a criminal past for securities fraud?<sup>48</sup> A rumbled, ill-dressed man was not likely to cut much of a figure with the pin-striped, uptown crowd. Golden himself was puzzled by Charlotte's Jewish millionaires who perceived themselves as outsiders.

Golden felt southern, which did not contradict his New York nostalgia. However much he may have differed from his neighbors in his views on race and social justice, he sat on his front porch sipping bourbon from his rocking chair. As Chapel Hill literary scholar Louis Rubin, Jr., observed in his memoir *My Father's People: A Family of Southern Jews*, "What is striking is the swiftness with which the process that sociologists call 'acculturation' took place" among Jews who came South.<sup>49</sup> A tolerant, ecumenical man, married to an Irish Catholic, Golden had an innate sense of courtesy that harmonized with southern codes of civility. In a 1962 letter to George Ivey, Jr., Golden wrote, "I doubt seriously whether I have ever held up to scorn and ridicule any man or institution."<sup>50</sup> As Stephen Whitfield notes, Golden lacked two New York qualities: the "caustic" and the "tragic."<sup>51</sup> When two stalwarts of the northern Jewish intelligentsia, Philip Roth and Ted Solotaroff, attacked Harry for being both a Jewish sentimentalist and a southern apologist, Golden took personal umbrage, lamenting "it must be sad to go through life with fists so tightly clenched."<sup>52</sup>

Harry Golden challenged Jewish stereotypes of southerners as much as he challenged southern stereotypes of New York Jews. He constantly told both Jews and southerners how much he loved

them. A refrain in southern-Jewish oral histories describes an encounter with northern brethren who express shock upon learning that Jews actually live in a place where hooded Klansmen burn crosses and biscuits are baked in pig fat. Southern Jews, in turn, express their bemusement at how contentedly and comfortably they live with their gentile neighbors compared to the anxieties of northern Jews.<sup>53</sup> As a sentimentalist, Golden, in his stories, touched the hearts of a people who live, as Eli Evans reminds us, in "a storytelling place."<sup>54</sup>

Not only have Jews acculturated to the South, but the South has also acculturated to the Jews. W. J. Cash recognized an Old Testament severity in southern Christianity as expressed in its ballads and spirituals.<sup>55</sup> Golden played to southern philosemitism, that romantic religiosity that viewed Jews not as Christkillers but as People of the Book, of the Savior's very flesh and blood. Beyond religious philosemitism, ethnic Jewishness also became pervasive as the region integrated into the mainstream American culture principally through the medium of television. Golden became a national celebrity in the late 1950s and 1960s, traveling to New York to appear on the Jack Paar and Dave Garroway shows. Edward R. Murrow came to Charlotte to interview him for *Person to Person*. In Golden's day southerners, too, laughed aloud in their living rooms at wise-cracking Jews like George Burns, Jack Benny, Sid Ceasar, and Milton Berle. In succeeding generations they guffawed with the rest of the nation at self-conscious Jews like Woody Allen, Jerry Seinfeld, and John Stewart.

As northerners flocked to the Sunbelt, drawn by its temperate climes and booming economy, North Carolina became more multicultural. Its Jewish population has grown exponentially. Yiddishisms like *schmooze* or *kvetch* no longer definitively mark the speaker as a Jew, and a sports page congratulated a black Davidson basketball player for his on-the-court "chutzpah."<sup>56</sup> Across the South the bagel has fruitfully multiplied, sometimes blended with blueberries, while the traditional biscuit has to be hunted. Golden's pioneering efforts to enlist Christian fundamentalists in support of Israel has become so pervasive that some evangelicals outdo Jews in their zeal for Zion.

*Harry Golden with his three surviving sons, May 1969.*

*They are, left to right, Richard, Billy, and Harry Jr.*

*A fourth son, Peter, died in 1958.*

*(Courtesy of Special Collections, Atkins Library, UNC-Charlotte.)*

### *Changing Times*

When Golden closed the *Carolina Israelite* in 1968 he recognized that the times had moved beyond him. That fact, more than any local or regional alienation, accounted for the newspaper's demise. His audience of immigration-era Jews was aging and dying. A new generation of college-educated, suburban Jews was little interested in Lower East Side nostalgia. People were no longer buying what he was selling, and he was tired of losing money. In his last column he wrote in capitals: "THE CAROLINA ISRAELITE WAS A VENTURE FOR PROFIT." He recognized that print

journalism was yielding to television, and even the metropolitan dailies were suffering. He was expending his income from book royalties, speaking fees, and syndicated columns to support a dying medium. His advertising salesmen, conniving and hard-drinking, tested his tolerance. Moreover, Golden now played on the national stage with an open mike at *The Nation*. Although he did not mention it, he also closed the newspaper one year after the Six Day War. A passionate Zionist, he had written ardently of the valiant struggle to create a Jewish state, often in bold headlines, but after the 1967 war he wrote an occasional, tepid column opposing arm sales to Arab states or saluting Israel's foreign aid to Africa. The postwar issue featured New Year's wishes to his Jewish readers and a report on his gall bladder operation. Like the Israelis, Golden was no longer an embattled underdog, a stance that had once fired his inspiration. More especially, the "fight for civil rights lost its romance." He observed, "There was something inherently absurd about segregation when I began the *Israelite* in the early 1940s." By 1968 younger African American black power advocates like Stokely Carmichael had spurned white patronage, and integrationists like King found themselves contending with black separatists. The black antisemite that he had once dismissed as comic and unconvincing was now bitter and menacing. Golden lamented the changed ethos of civil rights in his final editorial in the *Israelite*: "There is nothing funny about it anymore nor do I attempt to find its humor." He saw "no end in sight." Simply put, Golden was burned out. The crusader, not in the best of health, had lost his fire. Three months after Golden's last issue, King would be shot dead.

Seen in perspective, Harry Golden's trajectory from a regional personality to a national celebrity reflected larger southern transformations and expressed the larger ambitions of his home city. If his writings were nostrums to placate middle-class suburban sensibilities, as Solotaroff suggests, they were coming from a Charlotte that was less provincially southern and more suburban like the rest of America.<sup>57</sup> Charlotte, too, was passing Harry Golden by. It no longer had interest in his nostalgia or the time for his neighborly conversation. Like Atlanta, it was too busy to hate.

*Title page,  
Amerika Sheli (My America),  
by Harry Golden, published in  
Israel, in Hebrew, and containing  
selections from Only in America  
and For 2¢ Plain.  
(Courtesy of Special Collections,  
Atkins Library, UNC-Charlotte.)*

In his last issue, Golden recognized the city's changed racial ethos: "They'd make Martin Luther King Mayor of Charlotte tomorrow if somehow he could promise no collective bargaining." In 1963 he had written dramatically about the brave struggle of a black architectural student to integrate Clemson University. Two years after Golden died in 1981, Harvey Gantt would serve the first of his two terms as Charlotte's mayor. Jews who were once civic outsiders now had their names on a downtown museum and art center.

North Carolina was reaching out to the nation, and the nation was coming to North Carolina. The evolution from *Carolina Israelite* to *Only in America* anticipates the emergence of Charlotte's North Carolina National Bank into the Bank of America. NASCAR followed a similar route from its moonshine origins on country dirt roads to a national sport covered by the *New York Times*. The Charlotte Bobcats compete in the National Basketball Association and the Panthers were one touchdown away from the National Football League's Super Bowl. Down the road in Raleigh, playing "redneck hockey" on ice under the southern sun, the Carolina Hurricanes won the National Hockey League championship in 2006. Its RBC arena is named for a Canadian bank.

Never modest about his prescience, Golden in 1954 boasted that "I have spread the name of this city far and wide—(with 4 subscribers in Africa, I now cover every continent)."<sup>58</sup> Golden, like Charlotte, went global. The Atkins Library holds copies of his books in eight languages. His horizons were those of a South that increasingly saw itself as an international player. I-85 from Charlotte to Greenville, South Carolina, is nicknamed the Autobahn for all the German firms located there, and Lufthansa and British Airways serve the local airport. Charlotte is now a global banking center, and Wachovia, First Union, and Bank of America rank among the world's largest. A post-modernist barn in Charlotte serves as headquarters for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's International Ministries with offices in seven nations. When Graham left for the Holy Land, Golden gave him tourist advice and did networking.

Harry Golden, the *New Yorker* as southerner, offers a corrective to myths and stereotypes. Exulting in both his urbanity and regionalism, he challenges essentialist views of both southern and Jewish identity. His contradictions were indeed those of the South itself, which dreamt of New York even as it bedded in cotton fields. Charlotte is the kind of place that puts front-porch rocking chairs in the soaring atrium of its international airport. Identity is never one thing and the South has always been more complex, nuanced, and ambiguous than its myths and stereotypes. The South, despite its traditionalism, has absorbed new elements, accepting what it nominally rejects and evolving over time. Harry Golden as *New Yorker* and southern Jew embodied the multitudinous, cosmopolitan South that insists on its difference even as it becomes more generically American, that claims to be laid-back even as it competes fiercely in global markets, that calls Mayberry home even as it builds skyscrapers ever higher.

To anyone who wanted to know what folks in New York thought of North Carolina, here was the transplanted Harry Golden to tell them: I love you.



## NOTES

I thank Robin Brabham, Special Collections, Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, for providing research assistance and gracious hospitality as a Harry Golden Visiting Scholar.

<sup>1</sup> Harry Golden, *The Greatest Jewish City in the World* (New York, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> *Raleigh News & Observer*, March 1, 1968.

<sup>3</sup> John Kobler, "Why They Don't Hate Harry," *Saturday Evening Post*, September 20, 1958, 125.

<sup>4</sup> W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1941), 342.

<sup>5</sup> *Carolina Israelite*, January-February, 1968. This essay replicates Golden's sometimes eccentric capitalization and punctuation.

<sup>6</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, March 17, 1968.

<sup>7</sup> Morris Speizman to Walter Barr, December 29, 1969, Harry Golden Papers, Atkins Library, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, hereafter, Golden Papers. Included is Golden's undated letter to the newspaper. All correspondence is in the Golden Papers unless otherwise noted.

<sup>8</sup> Morris Speizman, "Harry Golden: Every Man has his Quota of Warts and Pimples," May 1983, typescript, Morris Speizman Papers, Atkins Library, University of North Carolina, Charlotte.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Kobler, "Why They Don't Hate Harry," 124.

<sup>10</sup> Harry Golden, *The Right Time: An Autobiography* (New York, 1969), 264.

<sup>11</sup> *Raleigh News & Observer*, March 1, 1968.

<sup>12</sup> Harry Golden to Lewis Bernstein, February 24, 1949.

<sup>13</sup> Harry Golden to Elliot P. Cohen, December 24, 1953.

<sup>14</sup> Harry Golden to Dr. George Mitchell, February 2, 1956.

<sup>15</sup> Kobler, "Why They Don't Hate Harry," 124.

<sup>16</sup> *Richmond News Leader*, April 4, 1958.

<sup>17</sup> Kobler, "Why They Don't Hate Harry," 124.

<sup>18</sup> *Carolina Israelite*, June, 1954.

<sup>19</sup> *Carolina Israelite*, September-October, 1957.

<sup>20</sup> *Carolina Israelite*, September-October, 1958.

<sup>21</sup> Kobler, "Why They Don't Hate Harry," 124.

<sup>22</sup> *Guild Reporter*, March 28, 1958; Golden, *The Right Time*, 343-344.

<sup>23</sup> "The Strange Case of Harry Golden," *Life*, October 6, 1958, 59-60.

<sup>24</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, October 1, 1978.

<sup>25</sup> David Goldfield, *Region, Race, and Cities: Interpreting the Urban South* (Baton Rouge, 1997), 280.

<sup>26</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, 1960), 3.

<sup>27</sup> See Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York, 1970).

<sup>28</sup> Goldfield, *Region, Race, and Cities*, 273.

<sup>29</sup> Kobler, "Why They Don't Hate Harry," 126.

<sup>30</sup> *Carolina Israelite*, August, 1957.

<sup>31</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, March 15, 1878.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers in the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (New York, 1989), 34.

<sup>33</sup> *Greensboro Patriot*, September 7, 1881.

<sup>34</sup> A. J. Ayres, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York, 1992), 55.

<sup>35</sup> "Changing the Name of Hemp," *The State*, September 4, 1943, 18-19.

<sup>36</sup> *Jewish Week*, March 9, 2007.

<sup>37</sup> *Raleigh News & Observer*, March 1, 1970.

<sup>38</sup> Goldfield, *Region, Race, and Cities*, 290.

<sup>39</sup> Jack Bales, ed., *Conversations with Willie Morris* (Jackson, MS, 2000) 130; *New York Times*, December 5, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Wilson, "That's Entertainment," *Our State*, October, 1996, 30-33.

<sup>41</sup> Curiously, it was in New York where Harry met humiliation when a dramatic rendition of *Only in America* flopped on Broadway. No one suggested antisemitism caused its failure.

<sup>42</sup> City of Charlotte, North Carolina, October 1, 1958, Golden Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York, 2006), 205; John Egerton, *Speak Now against the Day: The Generation before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (Chapel Hill, 1994), 345. Golden self-consciously modeled his *Carolina Israelite* on *American Freeman* published by E. Haldeman-Julius, a Jewish immigrant's son from Philadelphia who became a crusading journalist in Kansas.

<sup>44</sup> Walter Klein interview with author, June 11, 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Harry Golden to FBI, Charlotte, NC, August 30, 1962.

<sup>46</sup> Harry Golden to Bob Suritz, February 10, 1965.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Green, *Paul Green's Wordbook: An Alphabet of Reminiscence* (Boone, NC, 1990), 604.

<sup>48</sup> For Golden's efforts on behalf of Junius Scales, the convicted communist, see "A Petition for Executive Clemency," April 16, 1962, and related correspondence in Golden Papers.

<sup>49</sup> Louis Rubin, Jr., *My Father's People: A Family of Southern Jews* (Baton Rouge, 2002), 3.

<sup>50</sup> Harry Golden to George M. Ivey, Jr., July 6, 1962, Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina. Golden counted among his friends and intimate correspondents people like Governor and U. S. Senator Kerr Scott, University of North Carolina President and U. S. Senator Frank Graham, evangelist Billy Graham, dramatist Paul Green, *Atlanta Constitution* editor Ralph McGill, and UNC sociologist Howard Odum.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen J. Whitfield, "The Golden Era of Civil Rights: Consequences of The Carolina Israelite," *Southern Cultures* (forthcoming).

<sup>52</sup> Theodore Solotaroff, "Harry Golden and the American Audience," in *The Red Hot Vacuum and Other Pieces of Writing on the Sixties* (New York, 1970), 54, 61, 66, 68; Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (New York, 1976), 141, 144; Harry Golden, letter to the editor, *Congress Weekly*, undated typescript, Golden Papers.

<sup>53</sup> The popular image of New Yorkers as rude and uncaring would suffer a deathblow on 9/11 – September 11, 2001 – with the bombing of New York's Twin Towers.

<sup>54</sup> Eli Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York, 1976), 13.

<sup>55</sup> Cash, *Mind of the South*, 58-59.

<sup>56</sup> *Raleigh News & Observer*, March 21, 2008.

<sup>57</sup> Solotaroff, "Harry Golden and the American Audience," 56-57, 61.

<sup>58</sup> *Carolina Israelite*, March, 1954. I thank Robin Brabham for the citation.

## Charleston Jewry, Black Civil Rights, and Rabbi Burton Padoll

by

Allen Krause

When Burton Padoll was a young man growing up in Youngstown, Ohio, becoming a professional within the Jewish community was the last thing on his or his parents' minds. Born in 1929, Padoll's genealogy was unusual for a rabbi in that his maternal grandfather, having come from Poland, married an Irish woman from Chicago. Having been raised as a Roman Catholic, she had converted to Judaism prior to their marriage. Padoll recalls his family as "totally assimilated" and "non-practicing" and located in what he called "a totally non-Jewish world." Throughout his elementary and high school years he was "the only Jewish kid in my class." Yet, even though there was no observance of Judaism in his home, at some point during his childhood his parents joined a nearby Reform congregation, where Padoll discovered "a dimension" of his Jewishness that he had never experienced. His grammar school years were very difficult; in his words, "I took an awful lot of shit all my growing up years," being picked on as a "curly-haired Jewish sissy." As a teenager he found refuge in youth activities at the synagogue and, when so involved, felt for the first time an appreciation for being Jewish. While in high school he attended a North America Federation of Temple Youth convention at the Cincinnati campus of the Hebrew Union College that made an impression. However, even though his rabbi, Sidney Berkowitz, believed that Padoll had the potential to become a rabbi, he resisted and entered college "with no idea whatsoever" what he was going to do with his life.

Drawn to teaching and social work, he also considered going into the theater. It was almost an epiphany at the end of his freshman year at Ohio State University, when it came to him that the rabbinate combined all three of his interests—teaching, helping people, and acting. As he later recalls, he was “concerned about the God issue,” but he decided “to hell with it; why should I let something like that stand in my way?” Thus he entered the seminary very poorly equipped, especially in the Hebrew language since, as he told Dale Rosengarten and Solomon Breibart in an interview, he had “absolutely no Jewish background.” This sense of academic inadequacy remained with him throughout his career; he never felt comfortable with Hebrew, nor did he feel confident about his Jewish knowledge. He attributes his success in getting through the Hebrew Union College “not with flying colors, but with good colors,” to his ability to cram and to do well on exams. Ordained by the seminary in 1957, he ended up taking an assistant rabbi position at Temple Ohabei Shalom in Brookline, Massachusetts, where he spent the next five years. At the end of his first year, he went into classical analysis, which he continued until he departed in 1961. “I finished my analysis,” he said in the interview, but “it didn’t do any good.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1961 Burton and his wife, Natalie, relocated to Charleston, where he became the rabbi of congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (Holy Congregation, The House of God, or KKBE). Padoll’s residency at KKBE spanned the height of black civil rights activity in South Carolina, ending in mid-1967, when he moved to New York City where he became the associate rabbi at Temple Shaaray Tefila. His tenure there was the shortest of his career, only two years, after which he accepted the position of rabbi at Temple Beth Shalom in Peabody, Massachusetts. This proved to be a good match, since he served Beth Shalom until 1989, when the congregation gratefully bestowed upon him the title of emeritus. Beset by health problems, Padoll then relocated to Mount Jackson, Virginia, where he and his second wife, Sheila, opened an antique store. Burton Padoll died at the age of seventy-six, on December 22, 2005.

*Rabbi Burton Padoll, 1962.*  
*(Photo: Gift of Sheila Padoll, courtesy of Jewish Heritage Collection,  
College of Charleston.)*

Since Padoll was an outspoken supporter of integration, the general belief, which he also held, was that he was forced out of KKBE mainly because of this issue.<sup>2</sup> This is not an unreasonable position, given the fact that so many Christian clergy throughout the South were summarily dismissed from their pulpits for this reason during the 1960s,<sup>3</sup> as many believe happened also to rabbis Charles Mantinband and David Ben Ami in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Perry Nussbaum in Jackson, Mississippi, Seymour Atlas in Montgomery, Alabama, and Emmett Frank in Alexandria, Virginia.<sup>4</sup> This paper will focus on Padoll's Charleston years and the role Jewish merchants played vis-à-vis the civil rights movement, and offer another explanation of why the rabbi left KKBE.

### *Charleston's Jewish Community*

In 1806, fifty-nine years after KKBE was organized, the congregation's lay leaders, seeking qualified religious leadership, wrote a letter to the elders of the Sephardic congregation in London in which they said:

In a free and independent country . . . where civil and religious freedom go hand in hand, where no distinctions exist between the clergy of different denominations, where we are incorporated and known in law; freely tolerated; where, in short, we enjoy all the blessings of freedom in common with our fellow citizens . . . we are men, susceptible of that dignity which belongs to human nature.<sup>5</sup>

Thus they explained that it was very important for them "never to act politically as a religious sect but simply as Americans." In 1832 a group of "Eighty-Four Israelites" of Charleston expressed this even more forcefully in an open letter in the local newspaper, which said:

We wholly disdain any wish or intention to be represented as a peculiar community.

And . . . we discountenance the idea of selecting any individual for office . . . upon the ground that such individual belongs to a particular sect.<sup>6</sup>

One hundred and fifty years later much the same could be said about members of the Charleston Jewish community, who were, in many respects, not unlike their non-Jewish neighbors.

With the probable exception of those whose families had come over from eastern Europe, especially those who had fled the Polish town of Kaluszyn, there really was very little difference in the way Charleston Jews lived their lives from Charleston's Christians. Before going into detail about the similarities between the city's Jews and non-Jews, it would be useful to understand community divisions. During the formative years of those individuals who made up the Charleston Jewish community in 1960, there was, as some would call it, a virtual caste system.<sup>7</sup> The Downtown Jews were composed of those like the Tobiases, the Möises, the Mordecais, and the Lazaruses, who could trace their Sephardic Charleston roots to the eighteenth century, along with those Jews whose families had come from central European countries like Germany and Austria during the nineteenth century. The Uptown Jews arrived beginning in the late nineteenth century from eastern Europe. The Downtown Jews lived in one area of the city, and almost all were affiliated with KKBE, the Reform synagogue, while the Uptown Jews were generally found in their less upscale area, and were affiliated with one of the two Orthodox synagogues, the more prestigious Brith Sholom, or Beth Israel, founded by the less acculturated Kaluszyners. In 1947 some of the Uptown Jews joined with a few families from KKBE to found Emanu-El, the city's first Conservative synagogue. A strict code prevented Downtown Jewish girls from socializing with their Uptown counterparts. The code seemed to be somewhat looser for the boys, especially when they reached high school, when boys from both groups joined the very popular AZA social club, which was affiliated with the adult B'nai B'rith. For the girls, and for the preteen boys, the most important social setting was their religious and Hebrew schools.

Outside of the synagogue schools, the main friendships that most Charleston Jewish grammar school children had were with non-Jewish neighbors. A high percentage of Jewish adults, recalling their childhood in the 1960s, could not relate any



antisemitic episodes. Quite to the contrary, they felt totally accepted by their Christian counterparts, played with them, spent time in their homes, would go to each other's places of worship, and never had a feeling of being "set apart."<sup>8</sup> Curiously, this seemed to change for at least some of these people when they reached their teens. Although most of them had no problem dating non-Jewish neighbors, some of them, like Sanford Patla Olov, experienced a growing awareness that "as you grow up in a non-Jewish atmosphere . . . the realization comes . . . that the real friends are the Jewish friends." Asked "Where was that apparent to you?" he answered, "sometimes social functions, you were not invited. As their parents would invite their Christian friends. . . ." When asked whether or not he was invited into these people's homes, Olov responded, "Oh yeah, until that feeling of exclusion finally came in" in his later teens.<sup>9</sup>

There were other ways that Charleston's Jews blended into the non-Jewish world. Almost without exception, they were all raised in homes that employed black maids, cooks, and/or nannies. In many cases their connection with these individuals spanned decades. Like other Charlestonians of means, many if not most of them had summer residences on either Folly Island or Sullivan's Island to which they often brought these household workers. In addition, the food that their cooks prepared was, at least in the case of the Downtown Jews, hardly different from what their non-Jewish friends ate. Even those Jews who practiced some degree of kashrut often ate forbidden foods like pork and shellfish when they dined outside the home. In one rather ingenious family, the laundry room was not considered part of the house, so the children would retreat there, along with their mother, in order to enjoy a shrimp cocktail.<sup>10</sup> The father of this same family ate bacon but saw ham as being "totally out of the question." Another person whose mother kept a kosher home was regularly taken out by his father for bacon and eggs. For the most part, Charleston's non-Orthodox Jews did not keep even a semblance of the dietary laws. They ate, as one interviewee put it "a normal American diet." The blurring of kashrut regulations by acculturating Jews of eastern European origin and dismissal of

them by Reform Jews thus reflected national Jewish norms of accommodation.

Another sign of assimilation was the heavy emphasis on playing an active role in the community. Many Charleston Jews were active in fraternal organizations (especially the Masons), many served on boards of the library, the art museum, the Federation of Women's Clubs, the Salvation Army, or the United Way, and many more groups. Doris Meddin recalled that in the first year of her marriage she was active in twenty-one different organizations. Jews not only served on the boards of these organizations, they often were elected to lead them. A few even belonged to the Daughters of the American Revolution, one of the city's most prestigious organizations. In addition to doing so out of a sense of gratitude or for business reasons, Jews were active in this manner because it was expected of them. It was the southern way. If you wished to be considered part of the city's genteel elite, this is what you had to do. Understanding how important this was within the Jewish community, it is no surprise that inscribed on an honor roll plaque of women volunteers in City Hall, four of the first six listed are Jewish.<sup>11</sup>

Although all the white citizens of Charleston took pride in their city's history, the Jews connected to KKBE were particularly proud of their congregation, which is known as the birthplace of Reform Judaism in America. They rightly considered the building on Hasell Street a national treasure; after all, how many other congregations in the United States offer daily tours of their sanctuary to tourists? Rich in history and tradition, many in the Reform Jewish community considered it a great honor for someone to be invited to serve the congregation as its rabbi. Thus the members of KKBE felt doubly blessed to be residents of Charleston.

Nonetheless, as well-integrated and as proud as the Jewish community was, Charleston was not Camelot. Although most denied having experienced antisemitism, still, when the interviewer continued to probe, many spoke of feeling like outsiders, of not feeling completely accepted. For example, Mortie Cohen, who began by saying "I never felt that I was not wanted or

welcomed," recalled a country club incident when a Jewish friend was blackballed.<sup>12</sup> Dorothea Shimel Dumas remembered how her father was not put up to become a federal judge because someone in power asked, "Can't we find someone with the same ability that is not Jewish?"<sup>13</sup> Mordenai Hirsch, a direct descendant of the eighteenth century Lazarus family, explained that her mother, a member of the DAR, believed being Jewish prevented her from becoming the regional president or even the president of the local chapter.<sup>14</sup> Avram Kronsberg recounted that Thomas Tobias, whose family also had been in Charleston decades before the Revolutionary War, had been elected to the elite Carolina Yacht Club but that when Tobias proposed Rabbi Allan Tarshish for membership he was told in no uncertain terms "Don't try to bring another Jew in here." And then there was Cotillion, where children and young adults would learn the manners and proper social behavior in the context of formal dance, where the "No Jews Allowed" sign was clearly imprinted on the Jewish psyche. Maybe this is why a significant number of those interviewed as part of the Jewish Heritage Collection's Oral History Project eventually declared that their true friends were fellow Jews. Sanford Olasov put it succinctly, "As you grow up in a non-Jewish atmosphere . . . the realization comes . . . that the real friends are the Jewish friends. Even as adults, you realize that your genuine friends are not your Gentile friends." Olasov provided an example: when he was vice president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, he asked a school friend, now a Baptist minister, to give the blessing at a meeting, and the minister went on to ask the blessing "in Christ's name."<sup>15</sup>

One should not assume, based on the lack of observance of the dietary laws and involvement in non-Jewish volunteerism and in non-Jewish fraternal organizations, that the Jews of Charleston paid little or no attention to Judaism. Those in the Orthodox community were generally more religiously observant, but even the members of KKBE made their way to synagogue at least on occasion, sent their children to religious and Hebrew school, participated in Jewish organizations like B'nai B'rith or Sisterhood or the Jewish Community Center, observed key Jewish holidays,

*Synagogue Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim,  
86 Hasell Street, Charleston, South Carolina.  
(Photo: KKBE congregational records, courtesy of  
Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston.)*

and were proud to let it be known that they were Jewish. From a number of the interview transcripts it can be inferred that Charleston's Jews differed on another important front: they were apparently less likely to be dyed-in-the-wool segregationists. This is not to say they were enthusiastic integrationists; very few probably were. Indeed, the merchants of King Street, many of whom were Jewish, were not at all happy with the picketing and the loss of business. But, once the underside of the southern way of life was exposed and challenged, they seemed to be more likely to feel twinges of guilt. Mortie Cohen spoke of a black plumber in the town of St. Matthews who "was arrogant." By that he means "he didn't probably [say] sir or ma'am or move off the sidewalk when you were coming." When some of the local townspeople "beat

the living hell out of him," Cohen says "it was just the worst experience I've ever had in my life."<sup>16</sup> Avram Kronsberg admits to having opposed civil rights when picketing broke out in 1963, but "when President Kennedy was assassinated . . . what I heard was people clapping and cheering and it made me sick to my stomach. That's when I guess this whole naiveté that I had . . . began to disappear, when I realized that I could no longer pretend that I was something that I wasn't."<sup>17</sup> Dumas talked about a Jew who, it appears, was not at all happy about the prospect of integration. When a storm broke out one summer on Sullivan's Island and lightning struck the house of Irving Steinberg, the next day "he put out this big sign: 'God, you made a mistake. . . . You really meant to put it across the street, at Judge Waring's house, not mine.'"<sup>18</sup> Steinberg seems less representative of Charleston Jewry than were the Jewish teenagers at Rivers High when the school was integrated in 1963. According to Sol Breibart, who taught there that year, the Jewish students "were very, very cooperative in trying to make the transition as easy as possible."<sup>19</sup> Since memories of events that occurred over forty years ago can be both selective and inaccurate, none of this should be considered sufficient evidence to conclude that Charleston Jews in the sixties were any more likely to be receptive to integration than their non-Jewish neighbors. There is, of course, the well-known example of one of the state's most powerful Jews, Solomon Blatt, who served as speaker of the State House of Representatives for over three decades and, for most of that time, was an ardent opponent of integration, but he had so little connection to his Judaism that a Baptist and a Lutheran minister participated in his funeral service.<sup>20</sup> Conversely, in the interviews the author conducted with twenty-five southern rabbis in 1966, twenty of them rated their congregants as "basically moderate or liberal on the [African American] civil rights issue."<sup>21</sup> Moderate or not, there is no question that the Jewish community was nervous about and felt threatened by what became known as the "Charleston Movement."

*Civil Rights in Charleston*

When Burton Padoll decided to uproot his young family and move to Charleston, he was choosing to settle in the first state to secede from the Union and the first to fire upon Union soldiers, as it was also destined to be the first to challenge the 1965 Voting Rights Act. In addition, Charleston, as historian Stephen O'Neill has written, was "a city . . . preoccupied with race throughout its history, a city that saw its very self-identity profoundly threatened" by the emerging civil rights movement.<sup>22</sup> But, with or without the consent of Charleston's white citizens, there was serious change in the air.

One of the most important catalysts to that change was World War II. Many southern blacks had served in the military side-by-side with whites, and, when they returned at war's end, they were increasingly unready to put up with racial business as usual. A key factor in the angst of the times was the great difference in the standard of living between white and black. In 1950, the median income of African American families in Charleston County was one-third that of whites, while their percentage of unemployment was three times higher. Only 27 percent of the non-white homes had inside toilets, compared to 87 percent of white households. Those numbers showed only a modest improvement a decade later.<sup>23</sup>

With South Carolina's whites very much aware of the ill winds that were brewing, the May 17, 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision<sup>24</sup> hit Charleston as hard as any other city in the South, and, in O'Neill's words, "caused the city's business and civic leaders, its politicians, and especially its daily paper, the *News and Courier*, [to] forcefully and prominently elevate the issue of race above all others in their attempt to defend the peninsular city." For the next two decades "every community social and political issue was overshadowed or at least strongly influenced by racial questions."<sup>25</sup> White Citizens' Councils thrived, and the sentiments they expressed were shared by an overwhelming majority of white Charlestonians.<sup>26</sup> Resistance was so great that by 1963, nine years after the *Brown* decision, South

Carolina stood with Mississippi as the only states that had not even achieved a token integration of the public schools.

The growing unrest among black Carolinians did not go unnoticed in Columbia, the state's capital. As early as 1951, Governor James F. Byrnes, in an attempt to hold off desegregation by making separate truly equal, began a school equalization policy, funded by a sales tax. In that same year, the South Carolina General Assembly established a special legislative committee, the South Carolina School Committee, to prepare the way "in the event that the Federal Courts nullify the provisions of the State's Constitution regarding the establishment of separate schools for the children of the white and colored races."<sup>27</sup> A staunch segregationist, Senator L. Marion Gressette, was appointed committee chair.

The black community also had its leaders. Some of them came from outside the state, specifically from the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Representatives from these groups attempted to establish an organizational presence in the state in the early 1960s, but they were unable to play anything more than a supportive role to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which, for reasons explained below, remained "the preeminent civil rights organization in South Carolina."<sup>28</sup> It was the NAACP working together with local black churches that mobilized blacks throughout the state.

In 1950, the president of the Charleston branch of the NAACP, J. Arthur Brown, a realtor and one of the more important local black leaders, launched a massive voter registration drive in Charleston County and also mounted a protracted legal campaign to desegregate the city's public parks.<sup>29</sup> In July 1955, he played an important role as the NAACP petitioned to integrate schools in Charleston, North Charleston, and the nearby suburb of Mount Pleasant. In response, the *Charleston News and Courier* published the names of the petitioners, so that the Citizens' Council members would find it easier to show their displeasure.<sup>30</sup> This intimidation, joined with the state legislature's refusal to provide



state funds to any school that obeyed the *Brown* directive, made progress on this front extremely difficult.<sup>31</sup> Within a short time Brown moved on to become the state NAACP president, to be replaced by the Reverend B. J. Glover of the Emanuel AME Church, who in turn gave way to F. O. Pharr. As statewide president, Brown developed a strong relationship with Roy Wilkins, national head of the NAACP, which proved invaluable in providing financing for what is now known as "The Charleston Movement."<sup>32</sup>

According to a census taken by the Charleston Jewish Welfare Fund, approximately 750 Jewish families resided in the city in 1962. It is safe to say that none of them was sanguine after the *Brown* decision of 1954. Being an integral part of the Charleston community, while at the same time feeling somewhat on the outside, their anxiety level rose as their city struggled with the growing expectations of the local black population. This led to the creation in early 1960 of the Jewish Community Relations Committee of Charleston (JCRC), an agency of the Jewish Welfare Fund. Three KKBE lay people were on this committee, Bernard Olov, Jeanette Felsenthal Pearlstine, and Thomas J. Tobias, who was elected the committee's first chair. The three rabbis on the committee were N. L. Rabinovitch from Orthodox Brith Sholom Beth Israel, Hillel Millgram from Conservative Emanu-El, and Allan Tarshish from Reform KKBE. At its May 16, 1960, meeting concerns were expressed regarding the Ku Klux Klan, with the minutes noting that "the Klan was going stronger in South Carolina than anywhere else in the South." There was also discussion about "negro picketing" that was taking place in Savannah, Georgia. JCRC secretary Nat Shulman was asked to "keep in touch" with the Jews of Savannah "so if such a situation should occur in Charleston, we would know how the Savannah Community handled the problem and the role played by the [Savannah] Jewish Community."<sup>33</sup>

According to the March 20, 1961, minutes, Arthur Levin, Southern Section Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League, brought the committee information about "the sit-in situation and school desegregation problems in Atlanta." Some of



the JCRC members attended a meeting of the Southern Jewish Community Relations Councils in Atlanta the last weekend in February, and they reported that “these problems are not *Jewish problems* [emphasis in original]; they are problems of the total community,” and, reflecting a sense of vulnerability, they cautioned that “the Jewish community would have to take their stand [only] if and when the overall community acted.” Particular concern was expressed regarding the sit-ins and boycotts, since so many Charleston Jews were merchants. A decision was made to invite Joseph Moseson, executive director of the Savannah Jewish Council, to address the committee on April 14 regarding the “sit-in situation and boycott which is presently going on in Savannah.”<sup>34</sup>

To some extent this was a case of closing the barn door after the animals had fled. On the first day in April 1960, two months after Greensboro and just a month after a group of fifty black students conducted very brief sit-ins at Woolworth’s and S. H. Kress’s lunch counters on Main Street in Columbia, Charleston witnessed its first sit-in. Two dozen students from Burke High School, led by James G. Blake, senior class president and leader of the NAACP Youth Council, Harvey Gantt, and Minerva Keane, sat in at the Kress store on King Street.<sup>35</sup> Three years later, Blake and Gantt were to play much larger roles in the state’s drama of desegregation, but, in the meantime, as 1960 drew to a close, the Reverend I. DeQuincy Newman, the South Carolina field secretary for the NAACP, in anticipation of the coming Christmas season, called upon the state’s blacks to boycott all businesses that observe segregation as a matter of policy.

On the Saturday before Easter the next year, another action took place on King Street, which appears to have been the beginning of a very selective and continuous boycott of a small number of merchants and businesses.<sup>36</sup> In response, a JCRC luncheon meeting was convened on April 14 at which Joseph Moseson, director of the Savannah JCRC, spoke to the committee and to several merchants from King Street “with reference to the boycott in Savannah by the Negro community.”<sup>37</sup> The JCRC minutes of the October 30, 1961, meeting reflect the disturbances

that were now an ongoing part of the city's life. Committee member Edward Kronsberg, owner of Edwards, a five-and-dime store on King Street, reported that the boycott "was quite effective." Since ninety percent of his business at the store came from the black community, he explained that he was under great pressure to employ African American salesclerks, adding that he had actually hired two blacks to service the ice cream and popcorn counter, but this created a strong negative reaction from competitor merchants and from white customers, forcing him to "discontinue employing Negroes as clerks." Kronsberg was also asked to approach the president of the local Retail Merchants Association "as to the possibility of having them invite his counterpart from Savannah to speak on the problems that Savannah faced and how they solved those problems."

The sole topic of the February 1962 meeting, as reflected in the next available minutes, was the Sunday closing law being proposed in Columbia, while the March 18 special meeting was concerned only with a personal embroilment between N. L. Rabinovitch, rabbi of Brith Sholom Beth Israel, and I. L. (Lee) Banov.<sup>38</sup> The issue of civil rights did not resurface until March 27, and it was the new KKBE rabbi who was central to the discussion.

#### *The New Rabbi Arrives*

Burton Padoll's tenure at KKBE began on June 1, 1961. During his years in Brookline, he had been very active in the struggle for fair housing practices and frequently used the pulpit to share his prophetic views regarding civil rights.<sup>39</sup> He was horrified at what was going on in the South and felt very frustrated that he was not engaged in the struggle for black equality. Thus, when the pulpit of KKBE opened, he applied. When he came to Charleston in mid-April 1961, as a candidate for the KKBE position, he preached a sermon that at least implied where his passions lay, and which should have been the "writing on the wall" to the congregation's lay leaders. In the sermon he spoke of how Joseph adopted the local manner of dress and speech, lived at ease in an Egyptian mansion, and yet remained "insecure, unrelaxed, frightened and alarmed." Once Joseph's

Hebrew identity was discovered his fears proved to be “unfounded” and he realized that “his years of anxiety and deceit had been for naught.” Padoll continued:

[The] average American Jew . . . lives behind a barricade of artificiality and deceit for fear of . . . being discovered as what he really is . . . he too will be accepted . . . he can finally begin to put the ideals of his faith into practice for the betterment of all mankind. . . . Why is it that in a world so desperately in need of all we have to offer, we remain silent. . . . The time is long past due when we must become a live, vibrant core of the prophetic faith we represent. . . . Then can rabbi and congregant together . . . be truly indignant . . . against the unending tentacles of prejudice that threaten the security of all mankind. . . . It is not that we have no stand to take. . . . It is simply that we have continually pushed it aside for fear of endangering our position.<sup>40</sup>

In the 1999 interview Padoll asserted that he was no pig in a poke, but that he told the representatives of the KKBE board of trustees “exactly how I felt, that I wanted to do something constructive as far as civil rights were concerned.” The memory of Sheila Padoll, his second wife, is also instructive. When asked why her husband chose to go to Charleston, she answered, “He went there because he wanted a Southern pulpit and this one, evidently, was available. He went there to make a difference in the civil rights movement. *That* was the reason he went there, because he *liked* the Northeast [emphasis in original].”<sup>41</sup> Though some of those who were congregational leaders at the time have said in recent years that they had no idea what Padoll’s views were on civil rights prior to offering him the position, Padoll’s recollection, given his April 14 sermon and the evidence to follow, seems more persuasive.

Once Burton and Natalie Padoll settled into the congregational community, he did not hesitate to make his position on civil rights known. In a sermon delivered on December 16, 1961, while speaking of the Adolph Eichmann verdict, Padoll said “The potentiality for genocide exists in every man—yes, even in each of us who nurture and pamper our own prejudices and bigotries with . . . blatant rationalizations that they

*Edwards store, 517 King Street, Charleston, South Carolina, c. 1950.*

*Edward Kronsberg's five-and-dime store had a mixed clientele.*

*(Photo: Gift of Mickey Kronsberg Rosenblum,  
courtesy of Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston.)*

are either justified . . . or harmless . . . the understanding man will fight against this with every ounce of strength he owns.”<sup>42</sup> At the very latest, it was on March 2, 1962, when Padoll spoke directly and clearly to the issue of integration.<sup>43</sup> In a sermon that he titled “Inter-racial Communication” he said:

[Forty-three] percent of the citizens of this community . . . are Negroes who, due to the “proud and enforced traditions” of our community find themselves in a world with separate drinking fountains and rest rooms, separate schools and hospitals, separate neighborhoods and hotels, separate restaurants and laundries and jobs and unions and wages and churches and just

about everything else! . . . They are sick unto death of the treatment they receive at the hands of their "benevolent" fellow citizens in this wonderful and beautiful city. . . . A year ago last month, when I met with the Board of Trustees of this Congregation, I explained to them that one thing I would strive to do, as your rabbi, would be to establish some lines of communication with the black community.<sup>44</sup> . . . Just recently . . . [a] handful of respected Charleston citizens, white and black, have finally begun to talk . . . We have requested the appointment of an official Bi-Racial Committee that could sit down and address the problems confronting our community. "What problems?" people have asked. "Charleston is a peaceful town, free of strife," we've been told. . . . But the problems . . . are about to become quite evident to all of us unless we are willing to confront the seriousness of the situation.

The March 27 minutes of the JCRC shed light on the comments in this sermon. After a brief discussion of the Rabinovitch-Banov quarrel, the committee turned to the "present race relations problem" and "the recent start of a boycott of some King Street merchants." At that point Padoll was asked to report on his efforts to help form a biracial committee. Several meetings had been held since January with leaders of the African American community.<sup>45</sup> He reported that the meetings were informal, and among those present were other members of the JCRC, namely its chair, Thomas Tobias,<sup>46</sup> and its secretary, Nat Schulman. Tobias then noted that the JCRC "has a special interest in maintaining favorable race relations, as Jewish merchants would be particularly affected by a boycott such as Savannah experienced."

Padoll then disclosed that his informal committee had decided that the mayor be asked to appoint an official biracial committee. City Attorney Morris Rosen, a member of KKBE, was approached on this matter, and Padoll reported that Rosen's reaction was that it would not be politically practical for Mayor Pro-Tem J. Palmer Gaillard to appoint such a committee "without a clear and present racial emergency, and that it would be difficult for him to get representative white citizens to serve at this time." A short time later the assistant corporation counsel for the City of Charleston, DeRosset Myers, confirmed Rosen's response. Padoll

*Charleston Movement broadside, c. 1963.  
Several Jewish-owned stores are among those to be boycotted, including Berlin's,  
Levy's Boys' Store, Lesser-Tanenbaum, Jack Krawcheck, and Rosalee Meyers.  
(Courtesy of Avery Research Center, College of Charleston.)*

ended his report by saying that, since no further action was possible under the circumstances, the racial study group had discontinued its meetings. The very next sentence in the minutes reads: "Since then a King Street boycott has been started by the Negro community." Edward Kronsberg, a member of the JCRC, stated that his store "seems to be getting the brunt of the picketing." He continued that he was "in no position to hire Negro clerks," since "he had hired two or three Negro clerks last Easter, and serious problems arose not only with his white employees and the public reaction, but especially from other merchants making capital of his situation."<sup>47</sup> The March 2 "Inter-racial Communication" sermon quoted above should be seen in the light of the information provided by the JCRC minutes. Padoll concluded that sermon by asking his congregants to phone or write Gaillard demanding the appointment of such a committee.

On March 17, ten days before the JCRC meeting, actions on King Street escalated. This time it was not only sit-ins at lunch counters and an unobtrusive boycott of a few stores: The net was spread even wider with more merchants being picketed with the demand that they hire blacks for jobs *in the front* of the store, not only in the warehouse or stock room. The activity was deemed sufficiently significant to be covered in the next issue of *Time* magazine. Four weeks after the March 2 sermon, while the King Street boycott was still in progress, Padoll reminded his congregation, "I tried to . . . give you some information. . . . But it was as though I had written dirty words upon these sacred walls. . . . This attempt on my part produced . . . only anger, hurt and misunderstanding." Again, on April 13, he returned to the subject: "What do we do about racial and religious discrimination in our community . . . We . . . fill our lives with meaningless and distracting rituals . . . with habitual concerns over our dress and speech and food. . . . And these trivia become the *issues* [emphasis in original] of our lives . . . Amos warned us . . . to 'let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.'"<sup>48</sup> During the holiday of Passover one week later, Padoll asked how Jews, of all people, descendants of slaves, could deny freedom to others. On May 25 he castigated the local newspapers, the *News and*

*Courier* and the *Evening Post*, for their failure to provide coverage of the King Street boycott and of the fact that at least seven downtown merchants hired Negroes as clerks or cashiers "under pressure of a seven-week buying boycott."<sup>49</sup>

Due to insufficient attendance, no JCRC meetings were held during April and May. At the June 21 gathering, a lengthy discussion took place with regard to the African American boycott situation. Kronsberg again stated that his store was being singled out by the picketers,<sup>50</sup> and he suggested that the Reverend Glover, pastor of Emanuel Church on Calhoun Street, was playing a leading role. He then announced that "a plan of action was being worked on at the present time about which he was not at liberty to speak."

In early May, as the picketing continued, the *Charlotte Observer* reported that "At least seven downtown merchants in Charleston have hired Negroes as clerks or cashiers under pressure of a seven-week buying boycott. It is the biggest breakthrough of Negroes into white collar jobs in the city or probably the state." To no one's great surprise, the two Charleston newspapers, the *News and Courier* and the *Evening News* took a head-in-the-sand approach and totally ignored the city's most newsworthy story. In August 1962 activist pressure elsewhere in the state resulted in the establishment of a biracial committee of eighteen whites and thirty blacks in Greenville, while in that same month eight lunch counters along with sixteen other Columbia businesses agreed to voluntarily desegregate. Behind the scenes, but on everybody's mind, was the process taking place in the courts that would decide whether or not Harvey Gantt would be the first black to integrate a South Carolina college campus. The outcome was really not in doubt. Other cases in other states had already been adjudicated.<sup>51</sup> Facing the inevitability of school integration, as early as January Governor Ernest F. Hollings had held a press briefing in which he said, "before 1962 has passed, South Carolina's legal defenses [of segregation] will fall like a house of cards. You might as well start preparing your readers for the inevitable. We are not going to secede."<sup>52</sup> In October the governor reiterated that "South Carolina must maintain law and



order, and we will not tolerate an Oxford or Little Rock in our state."<sup>53</sup> In his farewell address to the General Assembly, Hollings explained, "As determined as we are we . . . must realize the lessons of a hundred years ago, and move on for the good of South Carolina and the United States. This should be done with dignity. It must be done with law and order."<sup>54</sup> Hollings had already brought together a group of five influential South Carolinians to work with him quietly behind the scenes "to ensure that when and if desegregation occurred, it would do so peacefully and above all, that Clemson would not be closed as state law now mandated." This group included some of the leading businessmen of South Carolina along with Senator Edgar Brown, president pro tem of the state senate and chairman of Clemson's board of trustees, and Wayne Freeman, editor of the *Greenville News* and a member of the Gressette Committee.<sup>55</sup>

As 1963 began, a significant omen of the stance the new governor would take was to be found at his inauguration barbecue, when over a hundred blacks were served without incident. Donald S. Russell quickly went on record, saying, "Whatever may be our opinions . . . we shall meet and solve this problem peaceably, without disorder, and with proper regard for the good name of our state and her people." With critical support from the state's leading businessmen, the Gressette Committee, and most of the state's newspapers, Harvey Gantt's presence at Clemson in February caused hardly a ripple in the normal campus routine. In one of his rare interviews, Gantt offered his own explanation: "If you can't appeal to the morals of a South Carolinian, you can appeal to his manners."<sup>56</sup>

In the midst of all this, Padoll devoted his Yom Kippur morning sermon to the problem of segregation. Thus, on October 8, he told the people in the pews:

We live in an age and in an atmosphere where even [the] mention of the moral demands of social justice causes us alarm. It is an emotion-laden subject which we often relegate to the area of politics and say that religion should not therefore interfere. . . . [But] religion isn't simply Bible tales and explanations of historical practices. Religion encompasses . . . injustice,

immorality and sin. . . . This is Charleston, the Holy City of the South. It has had a glorious kind of past. . . . It is, however, the immediate present with which we must be concerned. . . . [What] if we, who comprise only 1% of the total population of Charleston, what if we . . . could not live in decent neighborhoods; couldn't send our children to decent schools; couldn't eat in decent restaurants; couldn't use a decent public restroom . . . couldn't take our children . . . swimming or to a public playground. . . . These restrictions, my friends are moral sins. . . . And we know that this is true. . . . We know without the slightest doubt . . . that the overall treatment of the American Negro is morally wrong and that it should be changed. . . . [This] is Yom Kippur, and we must realize that the only road to atonement is through positive action against our failures of the past. . . . [Our] silence in the face of moral responsibility is the sin of which we are accused today. . . . We have stood by as a community of "silent onlookers" even though the time has come to speak and act.

He chastised the Jewish community for sitting "with our fingers . . . in our ears . . . convinced that *anonymity* is the only sensible way," comparing this behavior to the behavior of the silent masses in Germany who sat by as they saw the Holocaust unfold.<sup>57</sup>

The pattern established in the early months of Padoll's tenure seems to have continued. Many of the themes are repeated in sermons delivered in 1963, including his concern for the inaction of the Charleston Jewish community. On February 1 he told the congregation that the most dangerous people "to the cause of freedom and right" are the people "who pretend to be humanitarians," who "vehemently deny any strain of prejudice in their make-up and then stand in opposition to human justice on the basis of some spurious legalistic rationale."<sup>58</sup>

The pressure for change that marked 1962 did not abate as the state moved into what Maxie M. Cox called "The Year of Decision." Isolated picketing and sit-ins continued, until, on June 5, I. DeQuincy Newman announced that the NAACP would begin massive demonstrations in eight South Carolina cities, one of which was Charleston, unless serious negotiations began to solve racial differences. In anticipation of this new campaign, the

*"The Charleston Negro" poster, c. 1963.  
(Courtesy of Avery Research Center, College of Charleston.)*

pastors of Charleston's activist black churches, assisted by Newman, J. Arthur Brown, and James Blake, now a nationally recognized NAACP official, had been busily preparing for a course of action consonant with the maxim of historian David R. Goldfield that southern whites tended to make concessions "only when the economic balance sheet could not withstand further disruption."<sup>59</sup>

In Charleston disruption began on June 9 with a prayer march through downtown. On June 10, thirteen blacks sat-in at the Kress lunch counter on King Street, forcing its closure. To the shock of many, following the example set with Clemson, Thomas Waring, Jr., encouraged Charlestonians to "keep their composure for the good of both whites and Negroes," even though his two newspapers, the *Charleston News and Courier* and the *Evening Post*, were rightly known as being among "the South's noisiest advocates of segregation."<sup>60</sup> As Goldfield had predicted, there can be little doubt that Waring's moderate response was heavily influenced by Charleston's dependence on its \$25 million-a-year tourist trade.<sup>61</sup>

On June 13 the movement gathered steam when eight blacks, including Newman, were arrested trying to integrate the restaurant at Hotel Fort Sumter. Though the arrests of demonstrators continued, by the end of the third week in June, the lunch counters at Kress, Woolworth, and W. T. Grant had desegregated, and the leaders of the Charleston Movement returned their attention to the King Street merchants. Picketing began a week later, with blacks being urged to avoid all businesses on the street until their owners had agreed to remove all signs indicating segregation, to end racial discrimination in hiring and promotion practices, and to extend the same courtesies to black customers as were extended to whites. Thomas Waring, who continued to believe that the demonstrations were the product of outside troublemakers, nonetheless again warned against violence. In an editorial titled "Need for Patience and Tolerance," Waring wrote, "Charleston has already demonstrated a great amount of patience and tolerance. A great deal more may be required in the hot weeks ahead."<sup>62</sup> Some of these King Street

stores, in many cases those owned by Jews, catered primarily to a black clientele, which meant that they were now under considerable financial pressure. Making matters worse, the National Association for the Preservation of White People (NAPWP) picketed every store that met any of the NAACP demands.

On the night of July 16 a group of five hundred black protesters gathered across the street from the *News and Courier* building. Violence broke out when one of the protesters threw a brick, which hit a policeman in the face. This brought the National Guard and the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division to the city. The next morning the *News and Courier* editorial called upon white Charlestonians to go out of their way to shop at the King Street businesses that were being picketed by blacks. That night a crowd of over one thousand gathered to hear Glover, who expressed regret for the injuries suffered by the police and firemen, but promised that the demonstrations would continue and that they would do so peacefully. On July 18, at a pretrial hearing, bail bonds for Newman and Blake were set at fifteen thousand dollars each. Although many white business leaders believed that the NAACP would soon run out of money and be forced to suspend its activities, Wilkins promised Brown that the Charleston Movement would get the funds it needed, and made good on this promise by providing forty thousand dollars as bail money.<sup>63</sup>

By late July, the Charleston Movement had staged daily demonstrations for almost eight weeks and had involved fifteen thousand black Charlestonians in protests that led to more than eight hundred arrests. As picketing continued, the businesses along King Street suffered a 20 to 50 percent decline in customers. On July 23, Mayor Gaillard met with a group of approximately one hundred white merchants and found that many of them were ready to make concessions. By the end of the meeting over sixty of these merchants signed confidential statements promising the mayor that their stores either were now or would immediately be desegregated. They agreed to several of the NAACP's demands, including equal opportunities for employment for blacks; equal

pay, clothing, and promotion practices; the use of courtesy titles for all customers; the removal of segregation signs from water fountains and restrooms; the policy of serving all customers in turn; and the policy of allowing all customers to try on clothes. Fearing retaliation from white customers, these merchants, many of whom were Jewish, refused to publicly identify themselves, and the mayor agreed to keep their names confidential. Following this meeting, Gaillard met with seven of the movement leaders and informed them of the concessions. The next morning an official announcement was made informing the community regarding the merchants' compliance under the condition of anonymity, at which point Newman announced that the NAACP had called a halt to mass demonstrations, but selective picketing would continue of those stores that had not changed their policy. Newman then criticized a group of two hundred blacks who had demonstrated outside the Hotel Fort Sumter, calling this demonstration a mistake, and promising that protest groups would be kept to small numbers and that the targets would be selective. One day later, on July 26, when picketing along King Street resumed, the identities of those merchants who had agreed to lower racial barriers in their stores now became obvious, since their stores were not picketed. The NAPWP then began a counter-protest, picketing those stores that had agreed to desegregate.<sup>64</sup>

By mid-August, as the picketing continued and businesses suffered an even more drastic shrinkage of revenues, 120 downtown merchants had agreed to desegregate. In recognition of this, on September 3, the Reverend F. O. Pharr, the new head of the Charleston NAACP chapter, announced the indefinite suspension of all demonstrations, marches, and selective buying campaigns. The mayor continued his discussions with merchants and with leaders of the Charleston Movement, which resulted on September 25 in the formation of a new biracial committee with the members' names made public. Two of the seven white members of this committee were Edward Kronsberg and Thomas Tobias. These two men had easy access to Mayor Gaillard, and had, from the beginning, been part of the process that resulted in the formation of this committee.<sup>65</sup>

While King Street was in turmoil, Charlestonians were preparing for the integration of School District 20, which included fourteen public schools within the city limits. In accordance with a court order issued on August 22 by U. S. District Court Judge J. Robert Martin, integration was to take place with the beginning of the fall semester. Again following the example set during the integration of Clemson, the school board announced that, barring a legal reversal of the order to desegregate, the district would peacefully comply. By making this public statement of compliance and by calling on all citizens to respect their decision, the trustees of District 20 set the tone that they wanted the community to follow. Thomas Waring, whose editorials had previously called for white Charlestonians to man the ramparts in defense of school segregation, again, recognizing that the battle had been lost, now advised against open resistance and refused to call for the closure of the public schools. As Cox comments, "The bloodshed at Oxford, Mississippi, and the images of federal troops in Little Rock, Arkansas," loomed large in Waring's mind, as it did in the minds of Charleston's business community. As a result, when eleven youngsters, including Millicent Brown (J. Arthur's daughter), integrated James Simons and Memminger elementary schools and Rivers and Charleston high schools, they encountered no violence, but rather only some hostile stares and booing.<sup>66</sup> Charleston schools were the first public schools in South Carolina to be integrated.

As things heated up in Charleston, Burton Padoll kept the heat on at KKBE. In October he raised the issue of black activism and sarcastically asked, "How can people act this way? Why won't they allow themselves to be dealt with as inferior? They would be so much happier, so much more content." He continued:

If others . . . don't fight back, then we can ignore our own self-hatred . . . men still find themselves quite often in need of slaves in order to feel superior . . . to give them the feeling of completeness that they lack within themselves. . . . But by so exploiting one's fellowman, we lose our every chance for recovery and development. . . . Every man needs to find himself recognized as a man—not a black man or a yellow man or a

Christian man or a Jewish man—but first and foremost, as a man.<sup>67</sup>

On Yom Kippur, 1964, in a sermon titled “The Journey Ahead,” Padoll told his congregants that “we can live together and strive together as we move forward in our own independent ways. We can understand the methods and the motivations of one another; we can respect the differences we manifest as we earnestly and sincerely move toward our destination.” A few months later, in response to the violence in Alabama and the martyrdom of Jimmie Lee Jackson, James Reeb, and Viola Liuzzo, he appealed to his people’s patriotism, saying:

The situation in Alabama—and elsewhere in the country today—is untenable in a democratic society like the one in which we live. Those individuals who would identify themselves with American democracy must begin to do something about it. And so I speak to you this evening as Americans rather than as Jews.

By mid-1965 Padoll had reached a stage of utter despair in terms of his congregation. With a sense of righteous pain reflective of his biblical heroes Amos and Jeremiah, Padoll told them that his words had fallen on deaf ears and timid, if not hard hearts: “My requests of you over these past critical years have been based primarily on your responsibilities toward your fellow man . . . but . . . many of you have refused to listen. You have said that this is not a ‘Jewish’ problem and that therefore you would not lead the way. . . . [You] already lost the chance to lead the way—it has been taken out of your hands in this community.” He went on to explain that on Tuesday (April 23) the top echelon of the community, “white and Negro” met to create the Charleston Council on Human Relations. “There were some Jews present,” he said, but only those few “who have not allowed themselves to be intimidated by the overwhelming fear of the loss of security which has dominated so many Jews of Charleston.”<sup>68</sup>

#### *A Parting of the Way*

It is clear from the tone of Padoll’s sermons that he was unhappy with the response of many of his congregants to his prophetic pleas. In turn, it appears that some of the members of



*Detail of original typescript of Padoll's sermon, April 1965.  
(Courtesy of Allen Krause.)*

the congregation were equally unhappy with the causes that their rabbi advocated. An early sign of this estrangement is reflected in a letter dated November 5, 1963, which Padoll addressed to the board of trustees. The letter relates that he had a meeting with Edwin Pearlstine, Jr., president of the KKBE Brotherhood, discussing the congregation's dinner dance, which was scheduled to take place on November 23. Padoll wrote that he voiced his approval for the dance, but requested that it not be held at the Hotel Fort Sumter because of their "announced public stand against integration." The letter continued: "We, as a Congregation

... have assumed no public stand—but as a religious institution I think that it behooves us not to lend our public support to individuals or establishments that have openly voiced segregationist positions.” Having explained this to both Pearlstine and to the Brotherhood board, Padoll apparently thought that his advice would be taken. Instead, on October 27 at the KKBE semiannual meeting, Pearlstine announced that the event’s venue was to be the Hotel Fort Sumter. The rabbi’s letter concluded: “I want this Board to know, and I want the minutes of this meeting to reflect my firm disapproval of the Brotherhood Board’s decision, the personal affront to me which I find implicit in that decision, and, of course, my refusal to participate in the affair.”<sup>69</sup>

Edwin Pearlstine, Jr., was a formidable person to have as an opponent. His grandchildren represented the sixth generation of his family on American soil, dating back to Jacob Pearlstine who immigrated to this country prior to 1850. In addition to these credentials, Pearlstine was a successful businessman; Pearlstine Distributors Incorporated was one of the oldest and largest privately owned companies in South Carolina. Founded by Isaac M. Pearlstine in the weeks following the Civil War, Pearlstine Distributors began as a wholesaler of groceries, hardware, wine, and soda, and over time added to its list of products both domestic and imported beer. The Pearlstine family had a distinguished record of civic involvement and philanthropy. During the 1960s they were the most generous patrons of the synagogue, which is reflected by the fact that its main social hall now bears their name. In addition, as is the case in so many southern Jewish communities where members choose others within the community as spouses, the Pearlstines are related by marriage to four other prominent KKBE families: the Kareshes, the Krawchecks, the Jacobs, and the Horniks. Indirectly this also connected them to the Levkoffs, Robinsons, Ellisons, Nussbaums, Pinkussohns, Reads, and Needles. Of these only the Levkoffs were not members of KKBE in the 1960s.

By April 1965 the situation had escalated to a confrontation in which a group of lay leaders was determined to sever the congregation’s connection with Padoll. The board minutes

in February hint at this growing dissatisfaction when they noted that Dr. Leon Banov, Jr.,<sup>70</sup> a respected member of the greater community and the man who was to become the next president of the KKBE, was given the task of "considering the responsibilities and duties of our rabbi" so that "all will know whether or not the rabbi is performing the duties expected of him."<sup>71</sup>

Despite the opposition to Padoll by some of the congregation's leaders, when word filtered down to the members the rabbi received an outpouring of support. Letters of praise began to come in, and, most impressive, was a petition expressing "warm appreciation of the services that Rabbi Burton L. Padoll has given our congregation," noting that "We look forward with confidence to his re-election as our spiritual leader." This petition was signed by 243 individuals, representing what appears to be 137 congregational family units out of a total of about 210, reflecting that Padoll had the support of at least somewhere between 65 to 75 percent of the congregation. Bowing to this impressive response the board voted to renew his contract, but only by a vote of nine to seven.<sup>72</sup>

The fact that almost half of the board of trustees was ready to act counter to the desires of about two-thirds or more of the congregation did not bode well for the future. Padoll's report to the April 1966 congregational meeting makes it clear that the issues had not disappeared. In that report he stated that, when he spoke in the community, "I speak as an individual, as a rabbi, as a representative of Judaism and as the rabbi of Beth Elohim" and though he is "always aware of the multiple responsibility" this entails, he continued "I have not permitted it to inhibit me in the nature of what I have had to say." Stating that he spoke for the vast majority in the congregation, he also noted:

[There] are some who disagree . . . and that despite their disagreement I include and involve them in the causes which I support. But this must be! If the time should come when I fail to represent you honestly on matters of principle . . . if necessary, by a vote of the membership we shall determine whether or not this congregation has been fairly represented. Depending on the

outcome of such a ballot and the strength of your convictions and/or mine on the issue . . . certain changes may have to [be] made either in whom I represent or who represents you.<sup>73</sup>

Having thrown down the gauntlet it did not take long before the temple's leadership picked it up. Beginning February 15, 1967, and continuing through March 4, a series of letters were written by congregants to the attention of the board, to board secretary Henry Freudenberg<sup>74</sup> or board president Dr. Leon Banov, Jr. Much more strident than the letters written in 1965, many of these expressed dismay that the board should even be considering not offering Padoll a new contract. One letter ends with the admonition that "the Board of Trustees, which represents the entire congregation, [should] do its utmost to prevail upon Rabbi Padoll to remain here." Another asks "Would the 'Board' consider an open Board meeting where members, pro & con may express themselves?" A third argued that "15 members do not know the feeling of the rest of our congregation."<sup>75</sup> Other letters expressed not only dismay but also anger that the board was betraying the congregation's trust:

We understand that the Board of Trustees of the Congregation has apparently ruled out and is unwilling to retain the services of our outstanding and devoted Rabbi, Burton Padoll. . . . We are emphatically in favor of everything possible to encourage Rabbi Padoll to remain on, and we look to the Board of Trustees to keep faith with the members of the Congregation and consider our wishes.<sup>76</sup>

Why has it become necessary to beg and plead with a Synagogue Board to retain an outstandingly bright and vibrant young Rabbi? Why is it not enough that a Rabbi satisfy the majority of his Congregation?<sup>77</sup>

A total of thirty-four such letters of support were received, representing between thirty-seven and forty family units. In contrast, only nine letters were written in opposition to Padoll, of which three were written by a husband and wife, Marion and Ruth Hornik, and one by Lee Banov, a cousin of board president Leon Banov, Jr. The Banov letter begins:

It has come to my attention that a group of members are bombarding the Board of Trustees of The Congregation with letters to make it appear that a preponderance of the membership would like to have the incumbent rabbi remain in the pulpit of the congregation. I do not believe the majority want the present incumbent to remain but rather that a large and evident majority believe the congregation would be better off to make a change. . . . The Board should not be swayed by a volley of letters from either side of the matter.<sup>78</sup>

Telling is a short handwritten note that Leon Banov, Jr., wrote to Henry Freudenberg: "'Tis fashionable for members of the John Burt Society to write letters."<sup>79</sup>

The end of the matter came with a letter written by Padoll to the congregation, dated March 10, 1967:

What I have to say to you in this letter is somewhat premature. However, due to the confusion and misunderstanding that has developed over the past several weeks, the Board of Trustees has urged me to write it.

At the January meeting of the Board, I expressed the fact that I was in the process of seeking another pulpit but that I had no immediate prospects. Again, at the meeting of March 7, this week, I confirmed my continued interest in effecting a change. I explained that I am still unable to give any definitive answer regarding the immediate future, but I hope that the process will not be too lengthy.

I therefore did not ask the Board for a new contract—nor was I in a position to submit my resignation now. Rather, I simply requested a continuation of my present contract until such time as my placement situation is resolved. When such time arrives, which may still be many months, I will officially resign and give the Congregation notice. The Board complied with my request.

Beyond this, it seems essential to me that I make a few additional remarks. First, I am painfully aware of the negative attitudes towards me that exist within the congregation. Although they have not influenced my ultimate decision, with all my heart I wish they were not so.

At the same time, I am gratefully aware of the strong positive feelings regarding my ministry which are shared by so many in

Beth Elohim. . . . They, more than anything, have made my decision a difficult one. . . . I have accomplished much of what I set out to do, and for this I feel good. At no other time during these past six years could I have honestly and completely made that statement. At this stage of my career, however, I feel a growing sense of responsibility toward my family and myself in terms of financial security and further growth and progress. It is for these reasons alone that I seek a change in congregations.<sup>80</sup>

On July 27, 1967, Padoll submitted his formal resignation to board president Gordan B. Stine, announcing that he had accepted a position as the associate rabbi of Temple Shaaray Tefila in New York City.

*What Caused Burton Padoll's Departure from Charleston?*

*His Strengths*

Although it is tempting to attribute Padoll's difficulties at KKBE to his civil rights activism, there were other factors that contributed to his relatively brief tenure in Charleston, especially given his impressive strengths as a rabbi.

The numerous letters of support sent to the board in 1965 and 1967 clearly reveal certain themes. The first is his obvious skill as a teacher and preacher. Very common is praise of his "keen intellect" and his wealth of knowledge. Equally prominent is appreciation for his sermons, which "show much thoughtful preparation and brilliance" and which are "beautiful and deeply arousing."<sup>81</sup> There is likewise gratitude for his stimulating discussion groups, educational seminars, and book reviews. "I have never enjoyed lectures as much as those delivered by him," Mary Singer wrote in 1967, while Marian Slotin, also in 1967, pointed out, "[When] for over four years Rabbi Padoll draws thirty-five to fifty women each month and has them reading pertinent books of the day . . . I feel that he is reaching a good percentage of the congregation, aside from the excellent sermons he gives us from the pulpit."<sup>82</sup> One of his critics said much the same thing but with a negative spin: "He had a tight group that studied with him—his 'groupies';" while another

one of his opponents noted that “His sermons were thought provoking.”<sup>83</sup>

Padoll’s skills in teaching were not limited to the adults in the KKBE community. He was at least equally talented in reaching the youth, especially those of high school age. Even members who wanted to sever the rabbi’s ties with the congregation admitted that he had good rapport with the teenagers.<sup>84</sup> “Burton Padoll . . . has inspired so many of our young people,” wrote one, while another said, “I have been assistant advisor to the Temple Youth Group for the past three years and I know that the young people have a great deal of respect for Rabbi Padoll. He is always available to listen to them and advise them.”<sup>85</sup> Among his strongest supporters were the teens themselves, some of whom wrote letters to the board asking that his contract be renewed. Most impressive was a letter from David Furchgott, a member of the KKBE youth group and president of the Southeast Federation of Temple Youth (SEFTY), the division of the National Federation of Temple Youth that encompassed Reform youth groups in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Furchgott wrote that Rabbi Padoll “is one of the most highly valued advisors in SEFTY, and is well-known and liked by teenagers both in our congregation and the others. . . . I implore you to carefully consider your decision tonight for the benefit of those who, in the future, will be entrusted with the leadership of this congregation.”<sup>86</sup>

One of the reasons why Padoll was so effective with the teens was that he connected to the natural rebelliousness of adolescents in relation to the world their parents’ generation had created. David Furchgott was struck by the rabbi’s willingness to dialogue on controversial issues: “[All the youth-group] programs—they weren’t all centered on civil rights issues but they were centered on human rights in general, and on a range of social issues. Sometimes to the chagrin, I think, of some of the adults in the temple. At least that was the message that was indirectly coming through, and that was certainly the message that I got about why he was sort of being ‘called on the carpet.’”<sup>87</sup> Barbara Karesh Stender, who was in Padoll’s confirmation class, remembered,

*Solomon Breibart and Burton Padoll, Charleston, 2000.*

*(Photo: Gift of Dale Rosengarten, courtesy Jewish Heritage Collection,  
College of Charleston.)*

“We could ask any question we wanted and he would give us a straight answer—he was very honest. His openness and honesty are a lifelong memory for me.”<sup>88</sup> Carolee Fox, one of the volunteer teachers in the religious school, captured this when she wrote in 1967 that the young people are “enthusiastic” about their classes



with the rabbi because “he has brought controversial issues out in the open with no pussy footing.”<sup>89</sup>

*His Weaknesses*

Given Burton Padoll’s acumen as a preacher and teacher, and his considerable talent connecting with the teens in the congregation, was his outspokenness on controversial issues sufficient cause for him to be pressured to look for another pulpit? On this, there are grounds for reasonable doubt.

First, with all of his many fine attributes and skills, Padoll had a personality that rubbed at least some congregants the wrong way in that he did not suffer gladly those he considered to be fools.<sup>90</sup> Some people saw in him a self-righteous attitude, similar to the biblical prophets, which created in them, as it had in those being chastised by the prophets, a defensive response. His widow, Sheila Andelman Padoll, who served as his congregation’s president in Peabody prior to developing her personal relationship with Padoll, confirmed this when she spoke with the author.

ANDELMAN PADOLL: [He] was not afraid of taking an unpopular position. It didn’t bother him what the congregation thought; if that’s what he felt, he would take that position.

KRAUSE: So the Charleston experience did not in any way impact that?

ANDELMAN PADOLL: No, no. He believed in what he wanted to believe in—that was what he felt. And you couldn’t say as a [congregation] president, “I don’t think you should say this.” That would make him even say it more. . . . He was stubborn.

KRAUSE: Could that possibly have been one of the problems in Charleston?

ANDELMAN PADOLL: Might have been. . . . He was at times difficult, and you had to be a strong person to argue with him, because he could get very moody. . . . He was a very honest person. There was no subterfuge with him. He was honest, maybe too honest at times, and he was a very ethical person.<sup>91</sup>

Padoll himself later acknowledged much of this. In the 1999 interview he recalled, "I was like a bull in a china shop when I got here. I mean I was really messianic, and they weren't ready for messianism at that stage of the game." Later on in the interview, when Breibart suggested that "it probably would have made a big difference [if you had] handled yourself a little more diplomatically at first," Padoll's immediate response was, "Oh sure, no question."<sup>92</sup>

Compounding the problem for the rabbi was the relationship between his first wife, Natalie, and congregants. Charleston, being a southern city, had certain expectations regarding social graces and adherence to the code of southern hospitality, which, it could be argued, stood even higher in the pantheon of revealed law than some of the Ten Commandments. As Barbara Karesh Stender recalled: "The people in Charleston often say the socially correct thing rather than what they really think."<sup>93</sup> Not only was this behavior difficult for Padoll, it was equally problematic for the *rebbetzin*. A key transgression occurred midway in their stay in the community, important enough to be remembered and recounted by more than one source. The Padoll's second child, Melissa (Missy), was born in 1964, and, in accordance with tradition, the women of the congregation wished to graciously welcome the child and be helpful to her mother. Mordenai Hirsch, daughter of the beloved Jacob Raisin, who served KKBE as rabbi from 1915 to 1944, made one of these welcoming calls. When early on in our interview I asked her, "Was there any issue that you can remember that was controversial about Rabbi Padoll?" she answered, "His wife was kind of anti-social. When their child was born and I came over to their house with a present, she came out on the front porch and closed the door behind her and said that we can't go inside lest we disturb the baby. I don't think she was particularly well-liked within the congregation."<sup>94</sup> Freudenberg raised the same issue when I spoke with him: "He had a wife—I can't remember her name right now—she wanted her privacy. Rabbi Padoll was perfectly happy with the KKBE parsonage, but she wasn't. She put a sign on the door after she came home from the hospital with the baby saying 'No Visitors.' That went over

like a lead balloon."<sup>95</sup> Breibart, one of the Padolls' closest friends during and after their stay in Charleston, confirmed that Natalie was "not an outgoing kind of person,"<sup>96</sup> and Sanford Seltzer, one of Padoll's closest friends in the rabbinate, when asked whether civil rights advocacy was the main reason for Padoll's problems in Charleston, responded, "Bert [*sic*] certainly was no shrinking violet and expressed himself openly and forthrightly about the matter as he did with everything . . . Certainly, as you commented, his first wife, Natalie, was another factor. She disliked living there intensely and made no bones about it publicly."<sup>97</sup>

The picture that emerges from the interviews and the archival materials is that there was a minority of the congregation, many of whom were among its leaders, who felt excluded from the circle of people whom the Padolls chose as friends, and that this was an important part of the opposition to his continued tenure at KKBE. Surely Natalie Padoll's coldness to them was an element of this, but Burt Padoll's personality was at least equally a part of the equation. Breibart's response to questioning along these lines provides persuasive support for this reasoning.

KRAUSE: What was the response of the synagogue leaders and of the congregation as a whole to the civil rights activities once they saw that Rabbi Padoll was involved in them?

BREIBART: I don't recall that there was any particular reaction. If there was reaction, it was reaction among themselves. It didn't get out into the open.

KRAUSE: So this was not a synagogue-wide issue. There were a few people or a small group that was upset?

BREIBART: Yes, as long as he didn't step on too many toes he could get by with it, but as I said, the thing that drove him away was the personal animosity of a certain group of people who kept after him. . . .

KRAUSE: Are you suggesting that this personal animosity was less based on his civil rights activity and more based on personal items?

BREIBART: That is what I'm saying. . . .

KRAUSE: [Burton Padoll] says in his interview [with Dale Rosengarten and Breibart, on October 21, 1999] that they wanted him to socialize, he and his wife to socialize with them, and he told them that he wasn't interested in socializing with them. Would he have spoken that bluntly? . . .

BREIBART: Yes, he would have. . . . He wasn't one to socialize if he didn't like somebody; he didn't socialize with them. We were very friendly with him. The Tobias's were very friendly with him. We would be at each other's houses and so on. . . .

KRAUSE: Do you think that Rabbi Padoll, if he would have been a little more politic in the way he dealt with some of these people, would have been able to stay here as long as he wanted? . . .

BREIBART: Knowing Burt, he couldn't be politic [laughing], but yeah. . . . I was in my forties soon to be fifties. Those of us in that category, we liked him. We liked him very much. He would come to parties if you invited him to come to the parties. His wife now, his wife was a little bit different, but she would go, she would go along with him. . . .

KRAUSE: So it wasn't his civil rights activism, which is the major [question interrupted by Breibart's response.]

BREIBART: No – that might have been a part, but just a small part of it.

In the 1999 interview Padoll said: "These people in leadership positions, like the Bernstein boys (Manning and Charles) and Gordan Stine and Henry Freudenberg, all of whom were segregationist<sup>98</sup> wanted me and my wife to socialize with them and were very offended that we didn't do so and they really couldn't understand it. They felt that was part of my job as the rabbi, was to socialize with them. I told them to go to hell. I mean basically just like that. That did not endear me to them." The fact that Padoll's opponents said much the same thing as Breibart lends credence to his analysis.<sup>99</sup> When, in February 1965, Leon Banov, Jr., was asked by KKBE President Bernard J. Olasov, to find out for the board "the responsibilities and duties of our rabbi," his

report, delivered at the May 1965 board meeting, included the following:

The Rabbi's pastoral duties . . . are most apt to produce the largest variety of expressions of approval or disapproval . . . he should win friends and influence people for the congregation. . . . Members desire and would like the Rabbi to visit them at home and, in turn, would like the Rabbi to invite them to his home. The Rabbi should be a diplomat, display tact, exhibit friendliness and understanding. . . . He should be polite enough to make each of us feel that he is interested in us. [Politeness and courtesy were mentioned again and again by those writing in.]

Ruth Hornik, in one of her two letters to the board in 1967 wrote:

[Our] beloved and venerable Synagogue deserves . . . one who is not only a teacher but a person of spirituality, warmth and friendliness, humility, and, above all, one who sincerely cares about the members of his congregation. It is all very well to give a good book review . . . but that part doesn't . . . constitute the most important part of a rabbi's duties. I think he should get to know his congregation, not just a group whom he favors. . . . Maybe it is an old fashioned idea to regard a rabbi as a real friend.

Her husband, Marion Hornik, added in his letter: "Pulpit presence, interest in TYG [the Temple Youth Group], and community work are the qualities one expects in *all* rabbis, but the ability to get along with his Officers, Board, and all of his Congregation, and the possession of a genuine warmth of personality mark the above average spiritual leader. I join many of our Congregation in the hope that the Board will secure such a man for us." Similar sentiments were expressed by Ella Kaufman: "[Since] we all contribute to his salary, he should be Rabbi to the entire congregation, instead of a few of his selected friends." Finally, Lee Banov wrote in his letter addressed to the board of trustees: "the incumbent has no inclination towards pastoral duties, lacks the personality that would bring him into a closeness with the membership . . . and instead has the sort of attitude that

clashes with those he ought to inspire to work with him. This has been apparent since his arrival."<sup>100</sup>

In 1999 Padoll talked about the great animosity toward him that was exhibited by some members of the congregation. He particularly mentioned Leon Banov, Jr.,<sup>101</sup> president in 1967, who was "out for my ass morning, noon and night. He would tell patients in his office about me . . . and say, 'This is what my rabbi is like. He is psychotic. . . . [It] had reached a point where I had considered suing him.'" Breibart mentioned Freudenberg and Stine<sup>102</sup> as two of the leaders of the group aiming to push Padoll out of KKBE, and then spoke of Leon Banov, Jr.

I grew up with Leon and from the way he handled Burt and so on, we were very close to the Banovs. We used to exchange visits on holidays and so on—but this turned us off . . . have you ever heard it described how they met with him one night at a place on Folly Beach, and what they did, they told him, how they treated him, I wondered how he stayed there really even a few months or so after that. They were really horrible to him, horrible. He never got over it . . . If we mentioned anything to him in future years, he remembered that. . . . He didn't bring it up on his own, of course.<sup>103</sup>

Freudenberg's and Charles Bernstein's versions of that evening differed:

When Gordan [Stine] and I saw how the congregation was dissatisfied, one summer day Gordan and I picked up Burt Padoll and drove out to Folly Beach and told Burt it was time to move on and he agreed.<sup>104</sup>

When his contract came up for renewal there was a huge split in the congregation. Very influential in the decision were Henry Freudenberg, Gordan Stine, and myself. We took Rabbi Padoll out for an evening and asked him why he became a rabbi. He said that he liked teaching and liked to write. We were struck by the fact that his responses made no mention of his having a "calling."<sup>105</sup>

When asked the key reason for opposition to Padoll, Charles Bernstein is the only person to mention his vocal opposition to the Vietnam War:

He became very controversial—he was very outspoken against the Viet Nam War. That created a number of problems, since we have many members who were World War II and Korean veterans. This happened about midway through his tenure. In one sermon he attacked the Citadel, and a major KKBE donor [Milton Pearlstine] was a graduate of the Citadel. He got up and walked out in the middle of the sermon, and swore that he wouldn't set foot in the synagogue until Padoll was gone. He was one of the ten most respected individuals in the city. He maintained his financial support, however. Many people felt that Rabbi Padoll's stance reflected poorly on the Jewish community.

The fact that nobody else raised this issue<sup>106</sup> makes it suspect as an important reason for the opposition to Padoll. What is instructive, however, is Bernstein's view as to whether civil rights advocacy was the main complaint of those who worked against the rabbi:

Rabbi Padoll also took a very strong position on the issue of civil rights. Many of us were not in favor of being as strong as he was. I don't think there was anybody in the congregation opposed to the civil rights movement, but it was an issue of how he was approaching it. Had Burt approached it differently, he could have gotten away with it. The Jews in Charleston have a history of active involvement in all aspects of the city, political and financial, and there were marches in town, martial law imposed for a while, and that made it a more sensitive issue. In my recollection, there was not any support for the civil rights movement from local clergy at that time. My personal opinion is that . . . the civil rights issue would not have been a real problem. It was an issue, but it was not *the* issue [emphasis in original].

Anita Moise Rosenberg's take was similar:

The segregation/integration issue wasn't a big issue when compared with what was happening in our temple—compared

with the more internal issues. In fact, I don't remember him being involved in that issue at all.

As was Freudenberg's:

His sermons were thought-provoking and controversial but people didn't want to hear it all the time. Had he done it slower, maybe they would have accepted it more. And his wife didn't endear herself to anyone. He was truly outstanding—he was young, he was energetic, he got things accomplished—but he wore out his welcome.

*Charleston and Hattiesburg: When the Method Becomes the Message*

It was not easy in the South of the 1960s for rabbis to take up the cause of integration, even if it was only within the confines of their congregation. Yet, Charles Mantinband served as rabbi of Temple B'nai Israel in Hattiesburg from 1952 to 1962, during which time he spoke openly in the outside community against segregation, was a member of the NAACP, and served as the head of the Mississippi branch of the blatantly pro-integration Southern Regional Council.

How did Mantinband survive in such a hostile atmosphere? The answer, I believe, is because he was a charming human being, gentle and loving, who served the pastoral needs of his congregation and even the non-Jewish community throughout his tenure in Hattiesburg. In Mantinband's words:

Actually if you live in a town long enough you get to know everybody. If you get to know everybody, you're given the opportunity to befriend everybody, and if after ten years or more you have gotten this fellow a job, and this fellow you visited when he was in the hospital, and this person you were able to get a scholarship for his child, and this person you did him a favor and served on a committee with him, and he learned how human you are and all the rest of it, they'll say, "Well now, this fellow is out of step, and he's ahead of his times, and he's crazy, and we don't like what he says, but don't you touch him, he's my friend, and I like him." Whatever the case may be, I stayed a long time.<sup>107</sup>



In many ways, Burton Padoll had a hard act to follow when he arrived in Charleston. Mordenai Hirsch on a number of occasions emphasized how her father, Jacob Raisin, one of Padoll's predecessors, "got along with everybody. He never said anything, found anything bad with anybody, and so he was very much loved down here. . . . He was a very gentle person."<sup>108</sup> Though one might expect such words from a loving daughter, they are corroborated by the legacy of good will that has remained in the community memory. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that one could be over three decades in one pulpit without being well-liked by the congregation and at least most of its leaders. A clear benefit to Raisin's rabbinate was the fact that he married Jane Lazarus, one of whose ancestors was a founder of the congregation. Not only did she have roots, she was an active member of the Charleston community and was a helpful partner in her husband's rabbinate.

Allan Tarshish had a rough time initially when he assumed the KKBE pulpit in 1947. The aspect that made him controversial was his membership in the American Council for Judaism, an anti-Zionist organization. Dottie Dumas was appalled when, on the Friday night when Israel had been declared a state,<sup>109</sup> she went to services and "not one word was mentioned about the establishment of the state of Israel." She was so angry that her family moved over to congregation Emanu-El.<sup>110</sup> But, understanding the mood of the community, Tarshish quickly moderated his position, and it became a non-issue. He also was a man with good people skills and with a wife who fitted nicely into Charleston society. When he left after thirteen years he did so entirely of his own volition, mainly to seek a higher income in a northern congregation.

Surely it would be incorrect to dismiss out of hand the role that Padoll's civil rights advocacy played in his falling out of grace with some of the powerful members of KKBE, but it would also be wrong to ignore the human elements that are so essential to a rabbi's success in any congregation at any time. The evidence seems to be in accord with his friend Rabbi Sanford Seltzer's sense that "while his advocacy of civil rights may have been an issue for

*Padoll accepting congratulations upon receiving his doctorate from  
Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion,  
Cincinnati, 1982.  
(Courtesy of Sheila Andelman Padoll.)*

some people, I don't believe it was the basic cause for his departure."<sup>111</sup>

When discussing the Uptown and Downtown Jews, Avram Kronsberg said something relevant to understanding what I believe was a major factor in Padoll's problems in Charleston. Speaking about the Kaluszyner, a local group of eastern Europeans, Kronsberg said that they "didn't have the manners and didn't understand the city of Charleston and didn't play the game. Didn't even know that there was a game to play."<sup>112</sup>

In his doctoral thesis Maxie M. Cox asks why white South Carolinians, who were no less opponents of integration than the whites in Mississippi and Alabama, were able to avoid the "violence and disorder which plagued other Southern states dealing with the same difficult issue?"<sup>113</sup> Cox found that one of the reasons was that the political leaders of the state like Hollings, Gressette, and Russell, whose pro-segregation credentials were impeccable, made it clear that violence would not be tolerated. Furthermore the state's press, even those like Charleston's "bible of the segregationists," fell in line with what their political leaders advocated. They did this for a very good reason. They knew, as did the state's business leaders, that violence would wreak havoc with South Carolina's economy. All of these are undoubtedly true, but possibly the most important reason was an intangible one: the sense of good manners that was so embedded into the Carolinian concept of honor. The politicians, editorial writers, and businessmen invariably said we must do this to maintain "the dignity of our state," or, in the words of Governor Russell, we must do so "with proper regard for the good name of our state." Harvey Gantt was not joking when he said, "If you can't appeal to the morals of a South Carolinian, you can appeal to his manners."

Cox argues that Gantt was the perfect one to break the color barrier, since even strong supporters of segregation perceived him to be mild-mannered and in no way inflammatory; he was "just like any other South Carolina student who wanted to get a good education." Gantt was very careful to keep a low profile and not to flaunt his victory. For the same reason, unlike in other southern

states, it was not CORE or SNCC or even the SCLC of Martin Luther King, Jr., that led the integration fight in South Carolina, but rather the staid and familiar NAACP. Although protectors of the old system branded the NAACP as a Communist organization, the fact was that its leaders, for their time and place, were moderates, realists willing to make compromises and to allow the whites on the other side to save face. It was the South Carolina way.<sup>114</sup>

A good illustration of this civility can be found in a resolution adopted on June 10, 1963, by the city council of the city of Anderson, South Carolina, which reads:

WHEREAS, the citizens of Anderson have enjoyed harmonious race relations over a number of years, and

WHEREAS, the Anderson Chamber of Commerce, the Anderson Ministerial Association, the Anderson Merchants' Association, and the Anderson Junior Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 1200 of the leading citizens of Anderson, recognizing the necessity for immediate action in order that our harmonious relationships shall continue, and that the City of Anderson shall continue to prosper and grow, makes the following recommendations:

1. That the city ordinance, already invalidated by the Supreme Court, prohibiting the serving of meals to white and Negro persons be repealed.
2. That local Negro citizens be allowed the use of the Recreation Center building for special events and special programs they may plan. It is understood, of course, that they would make application in the usual manner for the use of this facility.
3. That Council give immediate consideration to the employment of Negro policemen.
4. That the City Council of the City of Anderson sanction the organization of a bi-racial committee to make such studies and further recommendations to Anderson City Council as they, in their discretion, deem advisable.<sup>115</sup>

Although the concept of southern manners was not exclusive to South Carolina, the state was unique in the way it applied this

concept to integration. It would be difficult to find another southern state where the governors acted as did Hollings and Russell; where the press, though overwhelmingly segregationist, was so moderate in its response to integration when the state's editors perceived integration as inevitable;<sup>116</sup> where business was so consistently mobilized into vocal opposition to violence; and, where there was so little violence during the 1960s. In fact, the only significant bloodshed that occurred in South Carolina during that decade took place in Orangeburg on February 2, 1968, long after the rest of the state had moved grudgingly but peacefully down the road to compliance with the need to integrate.<sup>117</sup>

Burton Padoll does not seem to have understood the importance of the system that Gantt called "manners," or, if he did understand it, he refused to buy into it. Mantinband, who served in the much more difficult venue of Hattiesburg, did understand it. In 1966 he told this author that he had made a vow to himself that he "would never sit in the presence of bigotry and hear it uttered . . . that I would not voice a contrary opinion and make my opposition felt and heard and known. I wouldn't be histrionic about it. . . . I wouldn't try to make a speech. . . . I just would register . . . what my religion compels me to think, and feel, and be, and how it makes me behave." He said also that it was important to have a sense of humor, and to use it, gently, as a way of deflating his antagonists. And, although Mantinband was active in many civil rights organizations, he very rarely used the pulpit as a platform in his fight against bigotry.<sup>118</sup>

Burton Padoll entered Charleston and hit the ground running, making impassioned pleas from the pulpit, acting, as he later realized, like "a bull in a china shop." In every good way, Padoll was a true reincarnation of his biblical heroes, men like Amos and Jeremiah. They too would have been forced out of town if they had come to Charleston.

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## NOTES

The author wishes to thank Dale Rosengarten, Solomon Breitbart, and Sheila Padoll, who made available to him much of the biographical material, and Melissa (Missy) Padoll, for providing many of her father's sermons..

<sup>1</sup> Burton Padoll, interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten and Solomon Breitbart, October 21, 1999, #T(a).Cha.1999.10.224., Jewish Heritage Collection, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston (hereafter cited as JHC-CC).

<sup>2</sup> Theodore Rosengarten and Dale Rosengarten, eds., *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life* (University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, SC, 2002), 36.

<sup>3</sup> James W. Silver, "Mississippi: The Closed Society," *The Journal of Southern History*, 30 (February 1964): 17.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Clive Webb, "Big Struggle in a Small Town," and Gary Phillip Zola "What Price Amos? Perry Nussbaum's Career in Jackson, Mississippi," in *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s*, ed by Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin (Tuscaloosa, 1997), 228 and 256; "Biographical/Historical Sketch," Rabbi Charles Mantinband Papers, 1931-1997, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi, Manuscript Collection, M327; "Ousted Rabbi in South Rips Jewish Bodies Over Rights," *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 1, 1965, 1; Vida Goldgar, "Tale of Two Mississippi Rabbis," *The Southern Israelite*, December 25, 1964; Harry L. Golden, "A Rabbi in Montgomery," *Congress Weekly* 24 (May 13, 1957): 8-9 and 24 (June 17, 1957): 14. The most comprehensive treatment of this subject can be found in Adam Mendelsohn, "Two Far South: Rabbinical Responses to Apartheid and Segregation in South Africa and the American South," *Southern Jewish History* 6 (2003): 63-132.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Reznikoff, *The Jews of Charleston: A History of an American Jewish Community* (Philadelphia, 1950), 100.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, interview transcripts of Saul Krawcheck, #T(d).Cha.1995.07.027. p. 9 and Judge Klyde Robinson #T(d).Cha.1997.09.166. p. 49, JHC-CC.

<sup>8</sup> This was not as true for the children who attended the Orthodox synagogues, whose social life tended to be more parochial.

<sup>9</sup> Sanford Patla Olasov, interview conducted by Michael S. Grossman, February 25, 1997, (MSG) #T(a).Cha.1997.02.125. JHC-CC.

<sup>10</sup> As described by Avram Kronsberg. Avram and Edward Kronsberg, interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten, April 11, 2001. (DR) #T(d).Cha.2001.04.255, JHC-CC. Another interviewee, when she heard that Rosengarten was from McClellanville, immediately responded: "The crab meat and the shrimp [in McClellanville] are wonderful! The crab meat is wonderful!" Dorothea ("Dottie") Shimmel Dumas, interview conducted by

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Dale Rosengarten, Constance Ackerman and Michael S. Grossman, January 2, 1997 (DR, MSG, CA) #T(a,d).Cha.1997.01.108; JHC-CC.

<sup>11</sup> Doris Meddin, recorded on January 25, 1997, in Charleston, South Carolina as panelist during the fourth annual meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, held in conjunction with Emanu-El's 50th Anniversary, #T(a).Cha.1997.01.112.

<sup>12</sup> Mordecai ("Mortie") Cohen, with Dorothy Idalin Gelson Cohen and Morris David Rosen, interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten and Robert Rosen, March 5, 1995 (DR, RoR) #T(v).Cha.1995.03.012, JHC-CC.

<sup>13</sup> Dorothea ("Dottie") Shimel Dumas, Renée Shimel Frisch and Jennie Shimel Ackerman, interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten, Constance Ackerman and Michael S. Grossman, January 2, 1997 (DR, MSG, CA) #T(a,d).Cha.1997.01.108, JHC-CC.

<sup>14</sup> Mordenai Raisin Hirsch with Rachel Marla Raisin, interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten, July 16, 1996 (DR) #T(a,d).Cha.1996.07.083, JHC-CC.

<sup>15</sup> Olasov interview, February 25, 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Mordecai (Mortie) Cohen and Dorothy Idalin Gelson Cohen, interviews conducted by Dale Rosengarten and Michael S. Grossman, June 13, 1997, (DR, MSG) #T(d).Cha.1997.06.153, JHC-CC.

<sup>17</sup> Avram Kronsberg. Kronsberg interview, April 11, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Dumas, Frisch, and Ackerman interview, January 2, 1997. U.S. District Court Judge J. Waties Waring, an eighth generation Charlestonian, was the first jurist in modern times to declare segregated schooling "inequality per se." Waring also outlawed South Carolina's white primary. See Cynthia Stokes Brown, *Refusing Racism: White Allies and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York, 2002), Chapter 3, and Tinsley E. Yarbrough, *A Passion for Justice: J. Waties Waring and Civil Rights* (New York, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Solomon Breitbart, interview conducted by author, May 24, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.scstatehouse.net/studentpage/sblatt.htm> (accessed May 13, 2008). For more on Blatt see Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear* (Athens, GA, 2001), 117-122.

<sup>21</sup> Allen Krause, "The Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights" (master's thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, 1966).

<sup>22</sup> Stephen O'Neill, "From the Shadow of Slavery: The Civil Rights Years in Charleston" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1994), 2, 90.

<sup>23</sup> From the testimony of Dr. Orville Vernon Burton to the Court in the case of *Moultrie v. Charleston County Council*, C.A. (No. 9 -01 562 11), November 14, 2003 (revised November 22, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> In 1947, some black parents in Clarendon County, SC, unhappy with the lack of school buses for their children, brought suit in U.S. District Court (*Levi Pearson v. County Board of Education*) asking for equal treatment for black children by the school district. Although their case was dismissed on a technicality, Judge J. Waties Waring urged the young NAACP lawyer, Thurgood Marshall, to seek not equality of schools but rather total integration. That case (*Briggs v. Elliot*) was filed in 1950. When the Supreme Court was

asked to decide re: *Oliver L. Brown et al. v. the Board of Education of Topeka (KS) et al.*, it bundled with that case three others, including the Clarendon County one.

<sup>25</sup> O'Neill, "From the Shadow of Slavery," 90.

<sup>26</sup> William D. Smyth, "Segregation in Charleston in the 1950s: A Decade of Transition," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 110-111; Minutes, County Board of Education, May 24, 1956, exhibit in *U.S. and Richard Ganaway, et al. v. Charleston County*, as cited by Burton, *Moultrie v. Charleston County Council*, 34; O'Neill, "From the Shadow of Slavery," 152, 154-156, 158, 166.

<sup>27</sup> Maxie Myron Cox, Jr., 1963 – *The Year of Decision: Desegregation in South Carolina* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1996), 7-8.

<sup>28</sup> R. Scott Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation: African-American Struggles for Educational Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926 - 1972* (Columbia, SC, August 15, 2006), 150.

<sup>29</sup> African American leadership, realizing the importance of political power, had begun to exert pressure in 1954 to gain representation on the city council and other local governing bodies. This, of course, was a lost cause so long as only a small minority of their constituency was part of the electorate. Understanding the need, in 1957 activists Esau Jenkins and Bernice Robinson established five citizenship schools in Charleston County, meant to prepare African American adults to successfully register to vote. See Peter F. Lau, *Democracy Rising: South Carolina and the Fight for Black Equality Since 1865* (Lexington, KY, 2006), 219-220; O'Neill, "From the Shadow of Slavery," 169; Smyth, "Segregation in Charleston in the 1950s," 122.

<sup>30</sup> O'Neill, "From the Shadow of Slavery," 198.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 152, 154-156, 158, 166.

<sup>32</sup> Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 150, 153.

<sup>33</sup> JCRC Minutes, May 16, 1960. B2, F5, MSS 1020, JHC-CC.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> John W. Meffert, et al., *Black America Series: Charleston South Carolina* (Charleston, SC, July, 2000), 11. Also see Smyth, "Segregation in Charleston in the 1950s," 121.

<sup>36</sup> Unlike some other southern cities, where Jewish stores were selected as the early targets of such picketing, there is little in the JCRC minutes or in the interviews that would suggest that Jewish merchants were being chosen based on their religion. Rather, the January 16, 1961, minutes state: "One of the important things with which all of us came away from this meeting [in Atlanta] was that both these problems are not *Jewish* problems; they are problems of the whole community, and that those of the Jewish community would have to take their stand if and when the overall community acted. In so far as the sit-in and boycott situation, this was most acute at the moment because of the fact that so many of our people are merchants." There were so many stores on this main business street owned by Jews that it was called "Little Jerusalem." JCRC Minutes, MSS 1020, B2, F6, JHC-CC.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> I. L. [Isadore Lee] Banov accused N. L. Rabinovitch, rabbi of the Orthodox congregation, of having called him "a renegade Jew" on Saturday morning, March 3, in the



presence of a large congregation that included some of Banov's relatives. In a letter to Alvin L. Rittenberg, president of Brith Sholom Beth Israel, Lee Banov wrote, "While no mention was made of my name the remarks were made in such a way *as to unmistakably identify the subject* [emphasis in original]." Banov threatened legal action if a public retraction was not made; Rabinovitch countered by saying he would not hesitate to sue for false accusations. The JCRC, supported by Alvin Rittenberg, president of Brith Sholom Beth Israel, urged the rabbi to "state from the pulpit that he had used a poor choice of word in 'renegade,' without compromising his feelings or his conscience." There is no further discussion of this in subsequent minutes. JCRC Minutes, February 2 and March 18, 1962. MSS 1020, B2, F6, JHC-CC.

<sup>39</sup> A number of sermons from his Brookline rabbinate support this fact. Burton Padoll, interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten and Solomon Breitbart, October 21, 1999, #T(a).Cha.1999.10.224, JHC-CC. Much of the information on Padoll's formative years is based on this interview transcript.

<sup>40</sup> "Charleston, South Carolina," April 14, 1961.

<sup>41</sup> Sheila Andelman Padoll, interview conducted by author, June 4, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> "The Eichman [*sic*] Verdict," December 16, 1961.

<sup>43</sup> Although Padoll was conscientious about keeping copies of his sermons, there are many weeks for which we have no evidence of what he said from the pulpit.

<sup>44</sup> This comment, made so early in his KKBE tenure, reinforces Padoll's later assertion that the Board of Trustees knew his position when they hired him.

<sup>45</sup> In the 1999 interview Padoll speaks of his connections with Father Henry Grant, a black Episcopal priest who "ran a youth center for the Diocese in downtown Charleston." He does not mention any other black minister in the interview and none appear in his papers presently available.

<sup>46</sup> Tobias could trace his Charleston roots back to the first half of the eighteenth century when his ancestor Joseph Tobias served as the first president, or *parnas*, of the newly-founded KKBE. He thus represented one of the elite Jewish families in Charleston.

<sup>47</sup> JCRC Minutes, March 22, 1962. MSS 1020, B2, F6, JHC-CC.

<sup>48</sup> "Foolish Thoughts in April," April 6, 1962; "Knock on Wood," April 13, 1962.

<sup>49</sup> "Shabbos Chol HaMoed Pesach," April 20, 1962; "Our Freedoms and Their Responsibilities," May 25, 1962.

<sup>50</sup> He gives no reason why. It seems reasonable to conjecture that it was because he had a large African American clientele, he had already hired African American salespeople whom he then removed under pressure, and because his store was one of the more successful ones in the city. Kronsberg's store produced sufficient income so that he was able to give a million dollars to the state of Israel in the mid 70s. Kronsberg interview, April 11, 2001.

<sup>51</sup> The most important, of course, was James Meredith's court-ordered enrollment at the University of Mississippi on September 30, 1962. Four years earlier nine black youngsters

broke the color barrier at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, as a result of court intervention. In both cases troops had to be called in to deal with mobs of angry protesters.

<sup>52</sup> Cox, 1963 – *The Year of Decision*, 18.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–17.

<sup>56</sup> Jack Bass and Walter Devries, *The Transformation of Southern Politics: Social Change and Political Consequence since 1945* (New York, 1976), 258.

<sup>57</sup> “The Racial Crisis: North and South,” October 8, 1962.

<sup>58</sup> “Gantt Takes Clemson!” February 1, 1963. In the light of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” written two months later, this appears even more relevant.

<sup>59</sup> Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 150.

<sup>60</sup> “The Paper Curtain,” *Time*, May 25, 1962. The *Charleston News and Courier* was called by Judge J. Waties Waring, the uncle of editor Thomas Waring, the “bible of the supremacists,”

<sup>61</sup> Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 151.

<sup>62</sup> Cox, 1963 – *The Year of Decision*, 403.

<sup>63</sup> Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 152.

<sup>64</sup> Cox, 1963 – *The Year of Decision*, 416.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 392–421.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 170–174.

<sup>67</sup> “The Slavery Complex,” October [n.d.], 1963.

<sup>68</sup> “Strange Fire in Alabama,” April 26, 1965.

<sup>69</sup> MSS 1047, B6, F3, JHC-CC.

<sup>70</sup> Dr. Banov, Jr., (1914–2002), a proctologist, was the son of Dr. Leon Banov, the public health officer for Charleston City and County for nearly fifty years. Leon Banov, Jr., and I. Lee Banov (1905–1985), first mentioned above on page 15, were second cousins.

<sup>71</sup> MSS 1047, B6, F3, JHC-CC.

<sup>72</sup> MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>73</sup> Though Padoll says “by a vote of the membership” the fact was that the board of trustees had the power to hire and fire without consultation with the members.

<sup>74</sup> Freudenberg, a graduate of the Citadel, served as president or chair of a number of Charleston organizations, including Congregation Beth Elohim, the Sertoma Club, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, and the Hebrew Orphan Society. He received a number of military awards, including a medal for service in the Korean War and the Meritorious Service Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. His wife was Maxine Triest Freudenberg.

<sup>75</sup> Dora Rubin to Dr. Leon Banov, Jr., February 19, 1967; Hannah and Samuel Brown to Banov, February 19, 1967; Bea Cohen to Banov, February 19, 1967. MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>76</sup> Harold and Lillian Jacobs to board of trustees, February 19, 1967. MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>77</sup> Claire Dumas to Henry Freudenberg, March 7, 1967. MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>78</sup> Lee Banov to board of trustees, March 1, 1967. MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>79</sup> Banov is thus connecting Padoll's supporters with a group that was anathema in the Charleston Jewish Community, the right-wing John Birch Society, whose arrival in town was a matter of concern reflected in the October 30, 1961 minutes of the JCRC. MSS 1020, JHC-CC. Lee Banov to Henry Freudenberg, March 4, 1967. MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>80</sup> MSS 1047, B7, F3, JHC-CC.

<sup>81</sup> Dutch and Mortie Cohen to board of trustees, February 18, 1967 and Jerry and Mary Ridel to board of trustees, February, [n.d.] 1967. The Cohens, who preferred a more traditional liturgy, joined the Conservative congregation, Emanu-El, but maintained an associate membership with KKBE because their children liked Padoll "so much and so did we." See note 88, below.

<sup>82</sup> Mary Singer to Henry Freudenberg, February 21, 1967, and Marian Slotin to Henry Freudenberg, February 17, 1967. MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>83</sup> Anita Moise Rosenberg, interview conducted by author, June 8, 2006. Henry Freudenberg, interview conducted by author, June 8, 2006.

<sup>84</sup> E.g., Charles Bernstein, interview conducted by author, June 8, 2006, and Marion Hornik to Henry Freudenberg, February 28, 1967. MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>85</sup> Nancee and Alan Rubin to Henry Freudenberg, February 17, 1967, and Yetta Rosen to Henry Freudenberg, February 21, 1967. MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>86</sup> David Furchgott to board of trustees, no date but placed in the folder with letters and petitions sent in February, 1965. MSS 1047, B46 F10, JHC-CC.

<sup>87</sup> David Furchgott, interview conducted by author, July 26, 2006. Furchgott's father, Max, was also one of Padoll's fans. He told Dale Rosengarten, "He was on to what was really happening in the world." Max Furchgott, interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten and Dale LeRoy Dreyfoos, July 14, 1995. (DR) #T(d,v).Cha.1995.07.033, JHC-CC.

<sup>88</sup> Barbara Karesh Stender, interview conducted by author, June 8, 2006. Dorothy (Dutch) Cohen remembered with approval the time when her son and Robert Rosen professed that they did not believe in God, so their parents "sent them to Rabbi Padoll . . . and they came back and they said, 'Oh, he believes just like we do.' So we didn't get very far. He did a good job because he sold them what they would buy." Dorothy (Dutch) Cohen, interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten and Robert Rosen, June 13, 1997 (DR, MSG) #T(d).Cha.1997.06.153, JHC-CC.

<sup>89</sup> Carolee R. Fox to Henry Freudenberg, February 19, 1967. MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>90</sup> In addition, there were some who perceived him to be cold and unfriendly. David Furchgott, one of his most ardent supporters as a teenager, illuminated this when he told me, "before I got married—maybe 17 years ago, I heard that he was living near here, near Washington, out on the Virginia-West Virginia border, and I went out one time with my then fiancée to visit with him. . . . I went out with sort of the idea in mind that if anybody was going to marry me . . . he was somebody that I had very fond memories of. . . . I thought maybe that Burt Padoll would be the perfect person to marry us, but I didn't say that to him—I decided to introduce him to this woman and spend a little bit of an

afternoon and I didn't really feel like I connected real well with him, so I just kind of let it sit. . . . I found it hard to find things to talk to him about, which was a surprise because he was such a strong influence on me when I was younger." Padoll seemed to have an easier time relating to teens than he did to many adults. David Furchgott interview, July 26, 2006.

<sup>91</sup> Sheila Andelman Padoll interview, June 4, 2005. In a letter of support sent to the board of trustees in 1967, Jack and Shifra Rosen said: "where will we seek to find a man, a teacher, of such out-spoken honesty, that this calling a 'spade a spade' is the only justifiable criticism?" Letter to Henry Freudenberg, February 28, 1967, MSS 1047, JHC-CC. Freudenberg, one of his staunchest opponents, said the same thing from the other perspective: "Burt Padoll was an ultra, ultra liberal and he tried to push that down everybody's throat." Freudenberg interview, June 8, 2006.

<sup>92</sup> Burton L. Padoll interview, October 21, 1999.

<sup>93</sup> Stender interview, June 8, 2006. Edward Kronsberg supported this when he told Rosengarten: "the newer [Jewish] families, they just don't have respect. . . . [There's] not that same courtesy. Everybody is just in your face and blunt. . . . The rules are you be courteous . . . certain things aren't said to people." Kronsberg interview, April 11, 2001.

<sup>94</sup> Mordenai Raisin Hirsch interview conducted by author, June 8, 2006.

<sup>95</sup> Freudenberg interview, June 8, 2006.

<sup>96</sup> Breitbart interview, May 24, 2005. Most telling was the fact that none of the individuals I interviewed, not even Breitbart, could remember the first name of Natalie Padoll. With Breitbart it was an incidental comment: "Missy was born after they were here, and, in fact, when Burt took, *I can't recall his wife's name right off hand now* [emphasis added], took his wife to the hospital with Missy, Billy stayed at my house." When I asked Charles Bernstein about her, his response was, "I don't remember his wife at all—I can't even remember her name," while Henry Freudenberg said in passing, "He had a wife—I can't remember her name right now—she wanted her privacy."

<sup>97</sup> Sanford Seltzer to author, June 9, 2005. When asked about Natalie Padoll, David Furchgott responded, "I can only sort of remember her in comparison to [the wife of] Rabbi Tarshish, who was there before, and I think she was probably less involved and a little bit more stand-offish."

<sup>98</sup> This might have been true, but it does not appear to have been the crucial factor, given the words of Seltzer and especially his friend, Breitbart, who maintained a friendship with him until Padoll's death, visiting him on trips north. Padoll could have continued his social activism and not have been forced out by the board if he would have made an effort to maintain good relations with its members.

<sup>99</sup> It is also instructive that in the March 7, 1957, congregational minutes, a Mr. Hirschmann (probably Jerold Hirschmann), who was treasurer of the congregation, "expressed his opposition to any address to a Negro group by the Rabbi [Allan Tarshish] in his official capacity [he was probably speaking at one or more of the black colleges in and around Charleston]. After some discussion, the board expressed the sentiment that "the Rabbi as an individual has the right to speak wherever he wishes and should not be

restricted in this in any way." At the next board meeting, on April 4, Hirschmann resigned from his board position. In other words, the board at that time was supportive of the rabbi engaging in outreach to the black community, which is what Padoll was doing not too many years later. MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>100</sup> MSS 1047, JHC-CC.

<sup>101</sup> In 1994 Senator Ernest F. Hollings, native Charlestonian and past governor of South Carolina, placed in the public record praise of Banov on the occasion of his fiftieth wedding anniversary. Hollings notes Banov's many contributions to the Charleston community "which have touched the lives of many thousands of others in Charleston."

<sup>102</sup> Gordan Stine, a Doctor of Dental Surgery, was instrumental in the chartering of the Medical University of South Carolina, located in Charleston. The dental library at that university bears his name.

<sup>103</sup> Breibart interview, May 24, 2005. There is good reason to believe that Breibart is wrong in inferring that Banov was with Bernstein, Freudenberg, and Stine when they took Padoll out to Folly Beach.

<sup>104</sup> Freudenberg interview, June 8, 2006.

<sup>105</sup> Bernstein interview, June 8, 2006.

<sup>106</sup> To the contrary, this is the interchange during the Freudenberg interview:

Q: Do you recall him speaking about the Viet Nam War?

A: I don't remember any Viet Nam controversy.

<sup>107</sup> Charles Mantinband, interview conducted by author, June 24, 1966.

<sup>108</sup> Mordenai Raisin Hirsch with Rachel Marla Raisin, interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten. (DR) #T(a,d).Cha.1996.07.083, JHC-CC.

<sup>109</sup> May 14, 1948.

<sup>110</sup> Dumas, Frisch, Ackerman interview, January 2, 1997.

<sup>111</sup> Seltzer to author, June 9, 2005.

<sup>112</sup> Kronsberg interview, April 11, 2001.

<sup>113</sup> Cox, 1963 – *The Year of Decision*, 468.

<sup>114</sup> Robert Botsch, professor of political science at the University of South Carolina, Aiken, wrote about NAACP Field Secretary I. DeQuincy Newman: "Newman was a gentlemanly diplomat," who "knew when to push and how far to push," and "understood that good manners is at the heart of doing business in South Carolina." <http://www.usca.edu/aasc/newman.htm> (accessed February 19, 2008).

<sup>115</sup> Cox, 1963 – *The Year of Decision*, 500.

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, Susan Weill, *In a Madhouse's Din: Civil Rights Coverage by Mississippi's Daily Press, 1948-1968* (Westport, CT, 2002).

<sup>117</sup> Cox, 1963 – *The Year of Decision*, 432-445.

<sup>118</sup> Krause, "The Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights," 155, 159.

PERSONALITY PROFILE

A Sephardic Physician in Williamsburg, Virginia

by

Alan L. Breitler and Susan Pryor

The typical economic picture of Jewish immigrants during much of the nineteenth century is of individuals who arrived with scant financial resources. Using experience from Europe and credit from Jewish wholesalers, they traveled as peddlers with their *pekls* filled with merchandise, saved enough to purchase horse and buggy, which extended their routes and increased their goods for sale, settled in small towns to found clothing stores, and, after the Civil War, transformed these into department stores. With the massive influx of eastern European Jews beginning in 1881, many found jobs in the needle trades of northern industrial metropolises while others spread across the country replicating the earlier pattern. During both periods a minority brought craft skills and some capital and-or contacts that helped them establish businesses in towns and cities. Obviously this rosy picture ignores frequent moves, business failures, and other economic and social challenges. During both periods, the emergence of Jewish professionals tended to wait for the second or even third generations.

The colonial era offers a somewhat divergent narrative. Individual Jews in virtually every colony bought and sold goods, although not typically as peddlers. Gradually groups of Jews settled in port cities where they became merchants, established families, and created Jewish communal life. Yet a small number also came with professional credentials, including at least three who had been trained as physicians. The stories of two of these

have already been documented. This article sheds light on the life and career of the third, Dr. John de Sequeyra. A brief comparison and contrast of the three men explicate both their careers as physicians and the divergent ways in which they behaved as Jews in an overwhelmingly Christian environment. As these examples illustrate, the paucity of Jews and the fact that they filled important niches influenced both the willingness of society to allow them to make certain choices as well as the choices themselves.

*The Sephardic Background*

During the golden age under the Moors on the Iberian Peninsula, Jews obtained secular educations and rose in the ranks of business, government service, and the professions. As Muslim rule waned, Roman Catholic officialdom curtailed Jewish rights and opportunities culminating in the Spanish Inquisition when in 1492 Jews were forced to convert or flee. An alliance with Portugal resulted five years later in the spread of Spain's policies against the Jews. The crypto-Jews of Spain and Portugal lived openly as Catholics and secretly as Jews. But many others fled to Holland, and eventually, Great Britain. Jewish communities emerged in both places during the mid 1600s.<sup>1</sup> The Spanish and Portuguese congregations in Amsterdam and London served largely as sponsoring synagogues for those who ventured to the Dutch and English colonies in North and South America.<sup>2</sup>

Religious practice and commitment varied among emigrating Jews. Some, for various reasons, chose not to return to Judaism. Others remained Jews but lacked knowledge or commitment after having spent years without Jewish education, institutions, or outward practice. Still others renewed their commitment to Judaism even going so far as to undergo circumcision as adults or to have marriages reconstituted under rabbinic auspices.

Economically, families typically arrived in London or Amsterdam with little capital but with skills and sometimes business contacts. Gradually some rose to become the backbone of their Sephardic communities. Others remained desperately poor. Some supported colonial ventures, according to their economic class, as business investments or to make a better life overseas than the one

they envisioned in Europe. Like their middle and upper class Christian counterparts, they also used the colonies as a dumping ground for their poor, especially if they feared that a backlash against all Jews might be caused by the image of the Jewish poor and criminal element.

The lives of physicians John de Sequeyra, Samuel Nunes Ribiero, and Jacob Lumbrozo were deeply impacted by all of these forces and trends.

*De Sequeyra's Family History and Early Life*

Little is known about the de Sequeyra family. Possible relatives with similar names made achievements in the medical and scientific community, most notably Isaac de Sequeira Samuda in England, the first Jewish member of the Royal Society. De Sequeyras were members of the Sephardic community in London.<sup>3</sup> The family name de Sequeyra "means the place without (or lack of) water, dry." It apparently derived from the province of Salamanca, or Esquerria, situated in the Spanish province of La Coruna. Like many surnames over generations, variations occurred. In 1279 the Esquerria family name appeared. In the fourteenth century the name Ben Esquerria was recorded, with "Ben" referring to the Hebrew usage for "son of." During the eighteenth century, the variants Sequerra and Sequeyra were used. In south Portugal the Faro Jewish cemetery graves display Sequeira family names.<sup>4</sup>

In 1678 Abraham Israel de Sequeira, a Portuguese Jew, died in London and was buried in the Jewish cemetery.<sup>5</sup> A son born in 1665 and also named Abraham survived him and became a physician. Employment as a physician was far from unusual. Many Sephardim had attained high levels of learning and had risen in the professions, including medicine, in pre-Inquisition Spain and Portugal, and they and their descendants continued in such lines of work.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Abraham de Sequeira married Sarah Henriques, and they had at least two sons and two daughters, John, Joseph Henriques, Esther, and Deborah, and possibly another son, David. Esther, Deborah, and David have disappeared into history without any as-yet-uncovered trace. Joseph became a physician, married Cath-



erine de Roza, also known as Leah Henriques, had two daughters, Esther and Rebecca, and traveled to Goa, a major Portuguese outpost on the Indian subcontinent, where he practiced medicine. His brother John indicated Joseph's posting in his thesis, "De Peripneumonia Vera," with the author identified as "Sequeira (Sigueijra) Joannes de. Anglo-Britannus, Sept. 11, 1736 at 24-Med. M.D. Leyden, Feb. 3, 1739" and "Dedicated to his brother Joseph Henry de Siqueyra, M.D. of Goa, East Indies."<sup>7</sup>

Born in London in 1712, John de Sequeyra was thirteen or fourteen in 1726 when a group of refugees from the Portuguese Inquisition arrived in the city. Sponsored by the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation, Bevis Marks, London, they settled into that community. One member of the group, Isaac Nunes Henriques, who may have been related to Leah Henriques, married Abigail Sequeira, who was possibly related to John de Sequeyra.<sup>8</sup> In 1733, the original group plus (at least) Abigail, now forty-two in number, immigrated to Savannah, Georgia. Among them was a physician, Dr. Diogo (Samuel) Nunes Ribiero. His medical prowess greatly facilitated their acceptance in the fledgling colony.

Whether or not Abigail Sequeira was related to de Sequeyra, news of Nunes's medical success surely reached Bevis Marks since members of that congregation were deeply involved with negotiations with the Georgia trustees. De Sequeyra likely learned of Nunes's work before he left London to attend medical school in Leyden, Holland, under the tutelage of the renowned Dutch physician and botanist Hermann Boerhaave, or by the time he graduated from medical school on February 3, 1739.<sup>9</sup>

In Holland the young student would have found a welcoming Jewish community, especially within the Spanish and Portuguese congregation in Amsterdam. Between 1739 and 1745 almost nothing is known of the recent graduate's whereabouts. He may have married a woman named de la Cour in London, or he may have taken the grand tour of European cities, a not uncommon extended vacation for elite young English gentlemen. What is obvious is that his family was much better off financially than those who were sent to Savannah partly so that they would not

*Portrait of Dr. John de Sequeyra by William Dering, 1745–1749.  
The artist lived in Williamsburg at the time this portrait was painted.  
(Courtesy of Winterthur Museum, bequest of Henry Francis du Pont.)*

become wards of Bevis Marks. Nonetheless de Sequeyra chose to emigrate for unknown reasons.<sup>10</sup>

*Life and Career in Williamsburg, Virginia*

The War of the Austrian Succession raged from 1739 to 1748. French ships pirated British vessels from colonial bases in the Lesser Antilles or sought shelter at the French Canadian fortress of Louisbourg. The ship on which de Sequeyra came to Williamsburg in 1745 fell prey to a French corsair, and his medical diploma, among other possessions, was stolen. He subsequently wrote to the University at Leyden to obtain a new diploma.<sup>11</sup>

In the year of his arrival, Williamsburg, Virginia, was a colonial city that had no physician, although there were apothecaries operated by individuals called doctors where medicines were sold and many community medical needs were served. One of these medical functionaries was John Galt. De Sequeyra befriended the younger Galt and eventually they became colleagues.<sup>12</sup>

From all outward signs a bachelor, de Sequeyra lived in at least two different lodgings in town. Until October 1771 he rented from William Carter, and from 1772 to 1790 he leased the eastern part of what is now Shields Tavern from William Goodson. He paid rent to Goodson's estate in 1786 and to his widow, Mary Goodson, in April 1790.<sup>13</sup>

Little is known concerning de Sequeyra's religious practices or beliefs from papers left behind, most of which deal with medical issues.<sup>14</sup> According to Emma Powers, author of a brief article on de Sequeyra, "Certainly there was no temple or synagogue in town—the closest sizable Jewish populations were in Richmond and Norfolk, and they came into being only after the Revolution."<sup>15</sup> At best only an isolated Jew held temporary residence in Williamsburg. Yet neither Richmond nor Norfolk was a great distance away and some contact was possible. Under Virginia colonial law the Church of England was the established church and, as the head of a household, de Sequeyra would have paid a required annual tax to the Bruton parish vestry. All free persons twenty-one years old and older were also required to attend the local Anglican parish church at least once a month but the law

was enforced only intermittently. When petitioned by dissenters, the Virginia General Assembly suspended payment of taxes to the Anglican Church during the American Revolution. The Church of England was officially disestablished as of January 1786 under the provisions of the landmark Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom. Notwithstanding, de Sequeyra never denounced his Judaism, a religion with which he was identified.

Soon after de Sequeyra's arrival in Virginia, he began writing "Notes on Diseases in Virginia," a project he continued through 1781.<sup>16</sup> Another document attributed to de Sequeyra by historian Harold B. Gill, Jr., at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (CWF), is the so-called "Smallpox List" covering about eighty-five households in Williamsburg, which de Sequeyra recorded during a smallpox epidemic that began in February 1747 and lasted into 1748. Modern historians at CWF find the list useful for information about the epidemic and as an informal census of the City of Williamsburg in the mid-eighteenth century, since it contains names of household heads and the number of people in each household that the doctor visited.<sup>17</sup> His records were more detailed than those of his medical colleagues and both "Notes on Diseases" and the "Smallpox List" reflect his systematic and scientific study as well as his knowledge of medicine. De Sequeyra was venturing beyond just treating individual patients to developing statistics of diseases and treatment that might aid him to meet future medical crises.

On December 14 and 16, 1769, de Sequeyra attended epileptic Martha Parke "Patsy" Custis, daughter of Martha Washington, who ultimately was lost to an epileptic fit at the age of seventeen, in 1773. George Washington had grown to love this girl he called his "sweet innocent" stepdaughter. His account books for the last years of her life are poignant in their record of expenditures for medicines interspersed with those for the clothing and the types of toys and accessories that a father enjoys buying for a daughter. Among those expenditures are records of payment to Dr. John de Sequeyra.<sup>18</sup> In 1770, de Sequeyra was "called to attend Lord Botetourt," governor of the colony from 1768 to 1770, "during his fatal illness of bilious fever and St. Anthony's fire (erysipelas)."

Care of the governor and Washington's step-daughter imply the high regard in which de Sequeyra was held by prominent individuals.

From 1773 until his death in 1795, de Sequeyra served as the first visiting physician to the Public Hospital for the Insane (as described in hospital account records: "the hospital for idiots, lunatics, & persons of unsound mind") and, from 1774 also until his death, as a member of the hospital's board of directors.<sup>19</sup> De Sequeyra was obliged to petition for payment for his services at the hospital.<sup>20</sup> Besides his appointment to the public hospital, there is no record of him serving in any other public or official capacity.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless it is clear that for half a century de Sequeyra was a major physician in Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia for most of that time. Records indicate that he persevered in the middle of at least one epidemic, that he cared for members of Virginia's elite, and that he played a major role in the formative years of a pioneering hospital. His expertise ran from general practice to epidemiology to pre-modern psychology. He maintained copious records, which indicate he viewed his role as a researcher attempting to discern patterns. Moreover, de Sequeyra was credited by Thomas Jefferson with introducing the tomato as an edible food to the colonists.<sup>22</sup>

De Sequeyra owned at least two slaves, a man named Cain and a woman named Sally, also known as Sally Green. At his death, he bequeathed Green her freedom and awarded her Cain, and Green, in turn, freed Cain on the same day de Sequeyra's will was recorded in York County, Virginia.<sup>23</sup> Why de Sequeyra may have done this is an unanswerable question, but it may have been because he wanted Green to receive some financial benefit from the ownership of Cain. Cain paid Sally for his freedom. The provisions of his will imply that the doctor had granted Green her freedom, that he intended the same for Cain, and possibly even that Green and Cain may have had a personal relationship. In post-Revolutionary urban Virginia, for someone of his class, de Sequeyra's ownership of a few household slaves and his bequests were far from unique. During the 1790s slaveholding was

*Shield's Tavern, current view, from the east,  
 Duke of Gloucester Street, Colonial Williamsburg.  
 DeSequeyra lived here from 1772 to 1790,  
 in three rooms he leased in the eastern section of the house.  
 (Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.)*

being brought into question in the upper South and his posthumous actions would have been viewed as reasonable and benevolent.

A Richmond newspaper announced the death of Williamsburg's "eminent famous physician" in early 1795. No other information was in the brief obituary.<sup>24</sup> De Sequeyra's burial site is unknown. Although he was obligated by law for a time to pay taxes to the Church of England, nonetheless he was known as a Jew by some Williamsburg residents and never formally converted.<sup>25</sup> During his half-century in Williamsburg, de Sequeyra lived an acculturated life that was not totally different from crypto-Jews in Portugal. However, unlike them he was an

accepted and even notable member of the Williamsburg community who did not suffer the overt antisemitism to which they were subjected. John de Sequeyra's story reminds us that not all Jews came to colonial America as peddlers, traders, or craftsmen, and that not all single Jewish men in isolated situations wandered from place to place.

*Contrast, Comparison, and Conclusions*

From a comparative perspective, de Sequeyra's experiences illustrate variations on several themes. Diogo Nunes Ribiero, noted above, had actually served the grand inquisitor of Nunes's native Portugal while living as a Crypto-Jew. According to historian Mark I. Greenberg, when in 1703 Nunes was accused of being a Judaizer, someone who sought to return people to the faith, he confessed and repented. Undergoing torture, he implicated his wife and other family members. He finally departed for London with numerous family members where he openly espoused Judaism. For five years he practiced medicine among the Sephardic poor. In 1733 he and his family departed for Georgia with the first group of Jews to arrive in the new colony. These Jews had been sent by members of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation because the synagogue was becoming overwhelmed with aid to indigent Jews and did not want gentile society to look down on Jews as poor wards and criminals. In London, Georgia's ruling trustees did not want Jews. Yet, as the ship *William and Sara* arrived in port, a yellow fever epidemic devastated the small group of colonists; among the fatally stricken was the colony's physician. Nunes treated the colonists and refused compensation. Partly because of Nunes's services and skills and partly because the Jews would take care of their own people, James Oglethorpe, the trustee in direct charge in Savannah, came to their defense and the London trustees relented. Nunes's travels did not end. In 1740, while the Spanish fought the British in the War of Jenkins's Ear (known in Europe as the War of Spanish Secession), Nunes, his wife, and children fled to Charleston for fear that a Spanish victory in Georgia would bring the Inquisition with it. In Charleston

the Nunes family participated in a flourishing Jewish community.<sup>26</sup>

Jacob Lumbrozo worked as a physician and commercial trader in seventeenth century Baltimore. Born in Lisbon, Portugal, Lumbrozo moved temporarily to Amsterdam, then to England. He arrived in Baltimore around 1658, the year Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore, the proprietor in charge of Maryland, issued the Act Concerning Religion, which granted rights to all those who believed in Jesus Christ and seemingly denied them to others. The act was designed to protect Catholics against the power of Anglicans (members of the Church of England) in the colony and in Britain's Parliament.

Unlike de Sequeyra and Nunes, Lumbrozo was a controversial figure in and out of court cases and questionable personal relationships with gentile women. When Lord Baltimore passed the Act Concerning Religion, Lumbrozo made an issue of his Jewish identity and openly challenged the divinity of Christ. Historian Eric L. Goldstein argues that Jews were accepted in practice in the colony so long as they did not openly make such attacks. But, even in Lumbrozo's instance, the case did not hold him back unduly. He escaped punishment when a new British ruler came to power and a general amnesty was granted in his honor. Lumbrozo remained in Baltimore practicing medicine, participating in trade, marrying a Christian, and frequently going to court.<sup>27</sup>

The study of colonial physicians adds insight into how Jews adjusted to, as well as why they were accepted in, the colonies. Living in relative isolation from other Jews, Lumbrozo chose to emphasize his religious differences with those in power although the demographic reality resulted in his intermarriage. De Sequeyra probably remained unmarried and left behind no evidence of participating in Jewish activities while living in Williamsburg, although he did not convert to Christianity, and he was known to be a Jew. Nunes, directly impacted by the Inquisition and residing with his family in larger Jewish communities, openly practiced Judaism and used his talent to overcome prejudice without, however, fomenting conflict.



Comparing and contrasting the behaviors of these three Sephardic physicians indicates that Jews with important skills could largely acculturate, maintain their religious identity circumspetly, or go out of their way to express their differences with the majority. That they performed needed services filling important niches facilitated their ability to do so in colonies where the letter of the law bent to practical circumstances.

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## NOTES

The authors thank Linda Rowe, Historical Research Department, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, for reviewing and providing important comments on earlier and final versions of this article.

<sup>1</sup> "1656—a good year for Jews," BBC News, September 13, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/magazine/5341424.stm> (accessed September 3, 2007). On the Iberian and British background of the Sephardic experience see Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York, 1992); David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia, 1996); Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison, WI, 1995); Michael Alpert, *Crypto-Judaism and the Spanish Inquisition* (New York, 2001); Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society, 1714–1830* (Philadelphia, 1979); David S. Katz, *Anti-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603–1655* (Oxford, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> "The Jewish Community of London," Museum Of The Jewish People, the Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora website, <http://www.bh.org.il/Communities/Archive/London.asp/London.asp> (accessed August 12, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> *Stepney Parish, The Environs of London: County of Middlesex*, III (London, 1795), 418–488.

<sup>4</sup> Sureau and Carlos Bandeira de Mello, "Siqueira Family," <http://www.saudades.org/namesfrombrazil2.html> (accessed September 1, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> David Kaufmann, "Four of the Oldest Epitaphs after the Resettlement of the Jews in England," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 1 (January, 1889): 89–94.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Shosteck, unpublished notes, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati. The possible birth of a third son, David, could not be verified. On Sephardic physicians see, for example, Richard Barnett, "Dr. Jacob de Castro Sarmiento and Sephardim in Medical Practice in 18th-Century London," *Jewish Historical Society of England Transactions*, 27 (London, 1982): 90, 110–111.

<sup>7</sup> R. W. Innes Smith, *English-Speaking Students of Medicine at the University of Leyden* (London, 1932), 208. In the *Acta* (University of Leyden official record) he is described as "Iohannes de Sigueyra, Portugalensis."

<sup>8</sup> Dana Clark Felty, "Related to a Nunez, a Minis or a Sheftall? Your ancestors could be Jewish," *Savannah Morning News*, August 30, 2007, <http://www.savannahnow.com/node/351350> (accessed September 30, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *English-Speaking Students*, 208. For more on colonial Savannah Jewry and further references see Mark I. Greenberg, "A 'Haven for Benignity': Conflict and Cooperation Between Eighteenth-Century Savannah Jews," in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark K. Bauman (Tuscaloosa, 2006), 12-32.

<sup>10</sup> Shosteck, unpublished notes; Saul Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry, 1733-1983* (Savannah, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> Cindy Vallar, "Pirates and Privateers: The History of Maritime Piracy," <http://www.cindyvallar.com/privateers.html> (accessed September 3, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> "Brief History of Eastern State Hospital and the Treatment of Mental Illness in America," <http://www.esh.dmhmsas.virginia.gov/crossroads/history.htm> (accessed October 1, 2007). According to Linda Rowe, "There were at least two university trained physicians in early Williamsburg, well before Dr. de Sequeyra's arrival: Dr. William Cocke (1672-1720) received the M.B. (Bachelor of Medicine) in 1693 from Cambridge and was elected to a fellowship of that college in 1694 and Dr. Archibald Blair (ca. 1665-1733) who graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 1685 (he may have received his medical training post-graduation)," Linda Rowe, notes, November 30, 2007, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA.

<sup>13</sup> Emma Powers, "A Biographical Sketch of Dr. John de Sequeyra," in *Freeing Religion Resource Book*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation *Becoming Americans: Our Struggle to be Both Free and Equal* (Williamsburg, VA, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> Robert Nicolson, "A List of Taxable Articles in the City of Williamsburg Taken for the Year 1783 Under the Revenue Act," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine* (October, 1914): 133-142.

<sup>15</sup> Powers, "Biographical Sketch," 1; Melvin I. Urofsky, *Commonwealth and Community: The Jewish Experience in Virginia* (Richmond, 1997), 4. Urofsky notes that a Dr. Isaac Levy practiced medicine and entered into business in western Virginia but it is unclear whether he arrived before the American Revolution.

<sup>16</sup> Urofsky, *Commonwealth and Community*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 4; Susan Pryor, "Dr. John de Sequeyra: A Biographical Sketch," *Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter* 21 (Summer 2000): 28-29.

<sup>18</sup> "Dr. Sequeyra visited Patsy today and on 14 Dec., probably at Eltham (receipt of John de Sequeyra,) 16 Dec. 1769," Richard N. Venable Diary (Virginia Historical Society); Custis Account Book and Ledger A, 299, 201, Custis Papers, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia; "de Sequeyra:" Colonial Williamsburg Historical Glossary (d-h),

<http://www.history.org/Almanack/resources/glossary/rsrcehg2.cfm> (accessed September 1, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Brief History of Eastern State Hospital and the Treatment of Mental Illness in America, <http://www.bipolarworld.net/Bipolar%20Disorder/History/hist5.htm> (accessed April 24, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Legislative Petitions Database, Library of Virginia, <http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/gov/petitions/nameresults.asp> (accessed April 24, 2008)

<sup>21</sup> Powers, "Biographical Sketch," 1.

<sup>22</sup> Urofsky, *Commonwealth and Community*, 4; Peter Egill Brownfield, "An Exploration of Four Hundred Years of Jewish History in Virginia," a review of *Commonwealth and Community: The Jewish Experience in Virginia* (Richmond, 1977), by Melvin I. Urofsky, in *Issues of the American Council of Judaism* (Winter 1999).

<sup>23</sup> The provisions of Cain's emancipation by Green reads as follows: "Know all men by these Presents that I Sally Green of the City of Williamsburg for divers good causes me thereto moving, but more especially for and in Consideration of the sum of ten shillings by Cain to me in hand paid the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge and thereof acquit and discharge the said Cain. I the said Sally Green doth by these Presents emancipate and set free the said Cain who was formerly the property of the late John DeSequary and by him to me given by his last Will and Testament. In Witness where of I have hereunto set my Hand and affixed my Seal this 29th Day of April 1795.

Sally (X) Green

Witnesses: Benjamin C. Waller, J: M: Galt

Recorded in York County Court 20 July 1795"

York County Records, Deeds 7, p. 150, the College of William and Mary; Nicolson, "A List of Taxable Articles in the City of Williamsburg."

<sup>24</sup> *Richmond [VA] Gazette*, March 18, 1795.

<sup>25</sup> Shosteck, unpublished notes.

<sup>26</sup> Richard D. Barnett, "Dr. Samuel Nunes Ribeiro and the Settlement of Georgia," in *Migration and Settlement: Papers on Anglo-American Jewish Settlement* (London, 1971), 63-97; Greenberg, "'Haven for Benignity.'"

<sup>27</sup> Eric L. Goldstein, *Traders and Transports: The Jews of Colonial Maryland* (Baltimore, 1993), *passim*.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Tales of Two Weddings

Henrietta Shebeiner marries Aaron Davis,  
June 7, 1870, Eufaula, Alabama

**D**uring Reconstruction southern newspaper editors consistently illustrated an interest in their Jewish neighbors and a fascination with their customs. Near the time of major Jewish holidays, articles explaining the history of the celebration and the associated rituals were routinely printed. The Jews themselves, largely German-born immigrants who established small stores, were welcomed and valued for their economic contributions, their education, their commitment to their faith, and even a certain degree of exoticism they brought to their adopted communities. The editor of a Tallahassee newspaper esteemed many of his Jewish neighbors as “the most orderly, enterprising, and public spirited citizens we have.”<sup>1</sup>

An example of this favorable attitude and interest is found in a charming article in the Bainbridge [Georgia] *Southern Sun* reprinted from the *Eufaula* [Alabama] *Times*. The editor of the Eufaula newspaper describes his pleasure at attending the celebration of the wedding of Mr. Aaron Davis of Bainbridge and Miss Henrietta Shebeiner of Eufaula held at the residence of the bride’s uncle, Mr. W. E. Barnett in Eufaula. His enthusiasm and delight speak for themselves. Yet note that his use of the phrases “Israelitish friends” and

“Hebrew friends” could be read as both inclusive and exclusive even though there is nothing else in the article indicating that this wedding was different from others held in the town.

It is easy to think of Jewish life in small towns as isolated. Yet this and even more so the following document illustrate ties of family often reinforced through business between Jews in neighboring towns and states, in this case Bainbridge, Georgia, and Eufaula, Alabama. Jews thus fashioned a community from southeastern Alabama to northern Florida and southern Georgia. In many ways, although not evident here, Savannah, with its port for goods and Jewish infrastructure—rabbis, foods, larger pool of potential Jewish mates, Jewish social outlets, etc.—acted as a center to these peripheral communities.

MARRIED—On the evening of June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1870, at the residence of the bride’s uncle, Mr. W. E. Barnett, Mr. Aaron Davis, of Bainbridge, Ga. to Miss Henrietta Shebeiner, of this city [Eufaula, AL].

This is the first Jewish wedding ever happened in Eufaula, and our Israelitish friends spared neither pains nor money to make it a grand affair, and they can now feel assured that they were entirely successful. As we (the Junior) were fortunate enough to be present on this occasion we speak knowingly when we say that it was indeed a grand affair. The supper was particularly fine, and reflects much credit on Mr. Leben, the confectioner who furnished it, and was evidently enjoyed exceedingly by the large crowd in attendance. After the supper was over, music was introduced, and then those who felt inclined to ‘trip the light fantastic toe,’ were offered an opportunity, and all present seemed to take advantage of it, and the dance was kept up until the ‘wee sma’ hours.

We would like very much to give an extended notice of this wedding, but our time and space will not permit—We will remark, however, that we hope some other Hebrew friends will soon marry, and we may be present on the occasion; for we have a great weakness for good eating and drinking, and have

discovered that they are behind none when it comes to ‘fixing up’ for a wedding.

–Bainbridge, Georgia, *Southern Sun*, June 16, 1870 from *Eufaula Times*, June 9, 1870.

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Daniel R. Weinfeld is an attorney residing in Hartsdale, New York.



Rosa Benjamin marries Jacob Katz,  
July 7, 1886, Micanopy, Florida

The Rosa Benjamin/Jacob Katz wedding brought together an extended Benjamin family that originated in Prussia, many of whose members settled in North Central Florida in the 1860s, 1870s, and early 1880s. They and their descendants became involved in Jewish organizations and contributed to the development of the state in business, transportation, politics, and architecture, primarily in Micanopy, Ocala, Jacksonville, and Orlando. The wedding story illustrates their economic success and integration into the larger non-Jewish society and reveals kinship, marriage, and business connections as well as a family chain migration pattern.

Rosa Benjamin and her family were not the first Jews associated with Micanopy. The original landowner was Moses Elias Levy, who, in 1822, purchased massive acreage that included what was to become the town. By the time Levy’s son, David Levy Yulee, ushered Florida into statehood in 1845 about one hundred Jews called the state home. A substantial migration augmented this number following the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> The Benjamins exemplify the settlement patterns of both the pre- and postwar migrations.

Simon H. (known as S. H.) Benjamin, a dry goods and furniture merchant and brother of the bride, had emigrated

with his family from Prussia to Savannah in 1872. By 1880 he was head of a household in Micanopy that included his father, H. Benjamin, age sixty-one; his mother Hanna, age fifty-five; and his sister Rosa, nineteen. Such extended family living arrangements remained fairly common among middle and upper class Jews until some time after World War II.<sup>3</sup>

In 1883 S. H. Benjamin invited Prussian immigrant Jacob Katz to become his partner in S. H. Benjamin and Co. The company included stores in Micanopy and Jacksonville. Also in 1883 Benjamin and Katz purchased ten acres of land. Two years later they built the Benjamin Building, Micanopy's first two-story brick business structure. The partnership, cemented by marriage ties the year after the building opened, continued until 1901, when the partnership was dissolved.<sup>4</sup>

By the time S. H. Benjamin and his family settled in Micanopy, his cousins were living twenty-six miles to the south in Ocala.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the first of those Benjamins to arrive in Florida was Simon Benjamin. Born in 1850 in Prussia, he arrived in Waldo, Florida, at the age of seventeen. There he ran a store that was probably purchased for him by relatives. He remained in Waldo for a few years until, according to family lore, he was run out of town by the Ku Klux Klan because he was a Jew. Under the protection of a former Confederate officer, Simon relocated to Ocala, where he was soon joined by his elder brother Solomon and later by brothers, Morris and Herman, and at least two of his four sisters.<sup>6</sup>

By 1873 Ocala's Jewish population was sufficiently large to found a congregation, United Hebrews of Ocala, and to establish a cemetery. According to the congregation's history, Ocala offered much to draw these pioneers: "Mild climate, rich soil, and abundant available water made possible the surplus production of citrus, cotton, vegetables, and livestock. The east-west chain of rivers and lakes, with portage needed only for short overland distances, seemed to invite entrepreneurs in transportation and marketing."<sup>7</sup>

In 1884 brothers Simon, Solomon, and Morris, and brother-in-law William Fox were four of the five principals

who established the East Florida Ice Co. that pioneered refrigeration and cold storage in Marion County. Then, in 1892, Simon, Solomon, and brother-in-law, Louis Fox, were among investors that formed the Silver Springs, Ocala, and Gulf Railroad. In 1882, Solomon served as president of the Marion County Board of Commissioners. Both William Fox and Simon Benjamin succeeded him on the commission in the 1890s.<sup>8</sup> At the time of the wedding, Simon and his brother Morris were living in Atlanta. But Simon soon returned to Ocala where he and his immediate family remained until they moved to Jacksonville in 1901.

Eighty guests traveled from as far away as Charleston and Atlanta, representing family friends and relatives throughout the South. Yet the gift list and honeymoon plans illustrate broader ties. Gifts came from New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey besides Florida, Alabama, South Carolina, and Georgia, and the newlyweds spent their first two months as husband and wife visiting Atlanta, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, and New York. Dr. Isaac P. Mendes of Savannah officiated. Perhaps the family had special ties to the rabbi because other rabbis resided in Florida by that time.<sup>9</sup> Although living in small towns, these Jews were clearly not isolated.

The affluence and prestige of the family is clearly shown, as the family intended, in the descriptions of the wedding, women's clothing, gift list, and especially the who's who guest list. Joining in the wedding festivities, besides Benjamin relatives, were Jewish families from North Central Florida and distant places, but also notable citizens of Micanopy. As a highly ecumenical example of the latter, John E. Thrasher III writes, "Rev. Bailey was one of the founding members of the New Mt. Arnow Baptist Church at Flemington (a community about eight miles south of Micanopy) and later pastor of the Micanopy Baptist Church. His wife was the founder of the Baptist Church's Women's Christian Missionary Union, which spread nationwide." Dr. Harvey Lucious Montgomery, Sr., and



his wife, John Jacob Barr and his wife Lillian, and the Edwards and Turner families were affluent and outstanding town folk.<sup>10</sup>

S. H. Benjamin arranged a highlight with the superintendent of the Florida Southern Railway. The train made a special stop to pick up the newlyweds in the afternoon following the ceremony to begin their honeymoon.<sup>11</sup>

In 1901 S. H. Benjamin and Jacob Katz dissolved their partnership. S. H. and his wife, Flora, moved to Newburg, New York, where he died in 1919.<sup>12</sup> Jacob and Rosa Katz remained in town until a fire destroyed the store in 1903. They then may have moved to Savannah briefly, where their son, Harry, previously celebrated his bar mitzvah on June 29, 1901. By 1910 Rosa resided as a widow in Jacksonville.<sup>13</sup>

Simon of Ocala had moved to Jacksonville in 1901. He served as president of congregation Ahaveth Chesed from 1911 to 1921, a position his son, Julien P. Benjamin, Sr., held from 1928 to 1931.<sup>14</sup> Another son, Roy Benjamin, Sr., became an architect renowned throughout the state especially for his theaters.

Probably the first Jewish wedding in the town, the occasion prompted major coverage in *The Micanopy Gazette*, written in the meticulous descriptive style of the times. Success had been achieved and these Jews felt sufficiently comfortable in their surroundings to celebrate it.

#### THE MARRIAGE OF MISS ROSA BENJAMIN AND MR. J. KATZ *The Ceremony – The Dress – Dinner – Departure. A Grand Affair.*<sup>15</sup>

The guests commenced to arrive at 9 o'clock on Wednesday morning and by the time appointed for the ceremony there were representatives from Atlanta, Savannah, Charleston, Ocala, Gainesville, Boardman, Tacoma and Micanopy; number 80 people. For a few minutes the guests chatted pleasantly until 10 o'clock when all eyes were turned toward the doorway to catch the first glimpse of the bride and groom. On entering the parlor where the ceremony took place, the bride leaning on the grooms

arm, they were accompanied by the bride's mother and brother, Mr. and Mrs. Wm Fox, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Fox and Mr. and Mrs. M. Shiretzki, and took their proper positions under a very pretty canopy, specially provided for the occasion, where the Rabbi, Dr. Mendes, of Savannah, performed the marriage ceremony according to the Jewish rites. The ceremony was very impressive and beautiful, and created a deep feeling among all present. At its conclusion Mrs. Benjamin showed deep emotion and was the first to tender her congratulations to the newly married couple, and was followed by other relatives and friends in turn.

The bride wore an enchanting wedding dress of ivory satin, the entire front of lace embroidery with pearl seed. An orange blossom garniture commencing on the veil in a superb coronet was continued throughout the costume. Her veil was of silk tulle three yards in length, completely enveloping her, and extending the entire length of her court train. The waist cut with square neck; Mary Antonio, collar edge with pearl seed, pearl neck-lace, corsage bouquet of the traditional orange blossoms, white satin fan with mother of pearl handle, and duchess lace handkerchief. She carried no flowers and wore no jewelry except a necklace and a gold wedding ring.

Mrs. H. Benjamin, mother of bride, wore a handsome black silk with jet trimmings.

Miss Rosalie Wish, niece of the groom, a cream albatross trimmed with Egyptian lace and ottoman ribbons, ornaments, natural flowers.

Mrs. Wm, Fox wore a handsome black silk, with cut jet trimmings.

Mrs. Louis Fox wore a garnet silk trimmed with garnet and gold embossed silk.

Mrs. M. Shiretzki wore a black cashmere with passamentarie trimmings

Miss Jennie Brown wore a pale pink nuns-veiling, with flounces of real lace ornaments of natural flowers and ribbons.

Mrs. D. Nathan wore a black silk.

Miss Gussie Nathan wore a white mull with front of Oriental lace.

Miss Lillie Nathan wore a white Persian lawn. The entire over-suit was of hand-worked lace.

Miss Hannah Nathan wore a white Egyptian lawn, with trimmings of lace.

Mrs. L. Montgomery wore a black silk with lace over-suit.

Mrs. R. B. Taylor wore a handsome black silk with cut jet trimmings.

Mrs. J. J. Barr wore a heavy black silk.

Miss Allie Brown wore a cream nunsveiling with lace over-suit, pearl ornaments.

Miss Tillie Brown wore a Nile green albatross with garnet velvet trimmings.

Miss Yetta Endel wore a dainty costume in pink, ornaments of natural flowers.

There were many other beautiful customs which our reporter failed to note.

From the parlor the wedding party and company proceeded to the dining room where the wedding dinner was served. There were four tables, most handsomely decorated and loaded down with the choicest viands, which were greatly relished by the assembled hosts. Among the drinkables were champagne, Rhine, Hungarian and sweet wines. During the repast twenty-five telegrams of congratulations were read, from many of the leading cities of the South and East, which added an additional evidence of the great popularity of the bride and groom. Pleasing toasts were responded to by Messrs. Simon and Morris Benjamin, of Atlanta, L. Fox and I. Schwerin of Ocala, Revs. Turner and Bailey, Rabbi Mendes, Gus. Roth, Joe Manassee, and Dr. Montgomery.

After an hour's further pleasant social conversation the bride and groom made preparations for their departure. The bride's travelling dress consisted of very handsome steel gray cashimere, with trimmings to match. The special train arrived at 2:15 p.m., when the bride and groom took their departure for an extended wedding trip. It is expected they will visit Atlanta, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, New York, and many other leading cities. They will be absent about two months. They were followed by the best

wishes and benedictions of hosts of friends for their future happiness and prosperity which now seems so well assured.

#### THE PRESENTS

Elegant plush case of solid silver table ware, Benjamin Bros., of Atlanta; silver cake basket, Mrs. L. Montgomery; silver fruit and flower stand, Mr. and Mrs. M. Shiretzki; carving sett, Mr. Herrman Benjamin; silver lemonade sett, R. I. Kohn, N.Y.; silver cake basket, Misses Edwards and Marshall; silver butter dish, I. H. Levine Hawley, Pa; silver butter dish, Schwerin Bros., Ocala; silver syrup pitcher, Miss Endel, Gainesville; 1/2 dozen silver tablespoons, Mr. and Mrs. Wellman, Brooklyn, N.Y.; silver fish carving sett, Mr. and Miss Brown, Ocala; silver sugar spoon, Mr. and Mrs Cohn, Chester, S.C.; one plush case of 1/2 dozen silver teaspoons, butter knife and sugar spoon, Mr. and Mrs. Kaminskis, N.J.; 1/2 dozen teaspoons, Mr. and Mrs. I. Heyman, Chester S.C.; silver fish knife, T. Brown, Gainesville; 1/2 dozen silver teaspoons and sugar spoon, Mr. and Mrs. H. Beck, N.J.; plush case with silver soup ladel, S. H. Benjamin; silver cake basket, Isidor Bladey, Patterson, N.J.; silver swinging water pitcher goblets and tray, Messrs. Roth and Manassee, two hands bust figure, Mr. and Mrs. W. Fox, Ocala; photograph album, Alber Fox, Ocala; crochet tidy, Miss Annie Heyman, Chester; crochet tidy, Miss Ida Cohen, Chester; pillow shams, Misses Nathans; hand embroidery sofa pillow, Miss Tillie Brown, Gainesville; hand embroidered chenille photograph case Mrs. R. B. Taylor; hand embroidered plush tidy, Miss Baskett; bronze Plague, Mr. and Mrs. M. Bauer, N.J.; 2 steel engravings, Mr. and Mrs. L. Fox, Ocala; 2 oil paintings, Mr. Ottensoser, Eufala; 1 oil painting, Mr. and Mrs. Nathan; silver gravy spoon, Mr. and Mrs. S. M. Rosenberger, Camden, S.C.

— *The Micanopy Gazette*, July 8, 1886

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 NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Tallahassee [Florida] *Sentinel*, October 1, 1870.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Alan Green and Marcia Kerstein Zerivitz, *Jewish Life in Florida: A Documentary Exhibit from 1763 to the Present* (Coral Gables, FL, 1991), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Micanopy, Alachua County, Florida. Twenty years later, S. H. Benjamin (transcriber's error showed first name "Somers"), merchant, age forty-five, married for twelve years, was listed as the head of household that included wife Flora, age thirty-four, born in New York, and four children, ages three to eleven. The Katz family living next door was composed of Jacob Katz, age fifty, married fourteen years; wife, Rosa, born in Prussia, forty-three, (mother of five children, three living, ages seven to thirteen); and widowed mother Hanna Benjamin, seventy-two. Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Micanopy, Alachua County, Florida. Census information supplied by John E. Thrasher, III, assistant archivist, Micanopy Historical Society Museum, hereafter MHSM.

<sup>4</sup> *The Micanopy Gazette*, July 8, 1886, carried a half dozen advertisements for S. H. Benjamin and Co. for such diverse commodities as baby carriages, Mason jars, millinery, and tomato wraps on the same page as the wedding story. The Benjamin Building exists today as O'Brisky's Book Store, minus its second story, which was destroyed by fire. Jacob Katz, handwritten statement of his life history (copy); deed of sale to S. H. Benjamin and Jacob Katz, Alachua County, State of Florida, July 12, 1883; mortgage deed to S. H. Benjamin; and notes by Marcia Jo Zerivitz from conversation with Olga Walker, granddaughter of Jacob Katz, 1988; all in Benjamin Family File, Micanopy archival box, Jewish Museum of Florida, Miami Beach (hereafter cited as Benjamin Family File).

<sup>5</sup> George Benjamin, interview by Rachel Heimovics Braun, August 10, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Besides Florida, Benjamins lived in Charleston, SC, Savannah and Atlanta, GA, and elsewhere in the South. George Benjamin, telephone interview by Rachel Heimovics Braun, August 6, 2008. Simon Benjamin's family immigrated to the U.S., arriving in Savannah in 1854, when he was four years old. His grandfather, Simon Benjamin, was born in Prussia c. 1796, and married Rozalie; their son Michel, was born c. 1818 in Prussia. Michel married Roschen Braun c. 1840. Their children, all born in Hiereswerda, Prussia, were, in birth order: Solomon, Amalia, Rozalia, Simon, Morris, Dora, Jennie, and Herman. Dora married William Fox, and Jennie married his brother Louis, all lived in Ocala. Rozalia married Solomon Shiretski and Amalia married Michalis Shiretski, who may have been Solomon's

brother. (Elsewhere the name is spelled *Shiretzki*.) Jill Benjamin interview, by Rachel Heimovics Braun, August 10, 2008; Jill Benjamin email to Rachel Heimovics Braun, August 13, 2008. By 1880, Amalia and Michalis Shiretzki were living in Micanopy, where he ran a "billiards saloon." John E. Thrasher, III, email to Rachel Heimovics Braun, August 15, 2008. M. Shiretzki's residence was considered among the finest in town. See Carl Webber, *The Eden of the South* (New York, 1883), 58.

<sup>7</sup> Both the congregation and cemetery continue to exist albeit under different names. *Temple B'nai Darom Celebrating Over One Hundred Years of Jewish Heritage in Ocala, Marion County, Florida* (Ocala, 1981), 15.

<sup>8</sup> City of Ocala, Florida *Tusawilla Park Historic District* <http://www.ocalafl.org/COO2.aspx?id=596> (accessed July 28, 2008). Citation graciously provided by Toby Johnson, Reference Librarian, Ocala.

<sup>9</sup> Rabbis, for example, served Ahavath Chesed in Jacksonville continuously from 1882 through 1887. Natalie H. Glickstein, *That Ye May Remember: Congregation Ahavath Chesed, 1882-1982/5642-5742* (Jacksonville, FL, 1982), 118.

<sup>10</sup> John E. Thrasher, III, email to Rachel Heimovics Braun, August 14, 2008; Webber, *Eden of the South*, 58.

<sup>11</sup> J. A. Lawerd, Superintendent, Florida Southern Division, Florida Southern Railway, Palatka, FL, July 1, 1886 to S. H. Benjamin, Micanopy, Benjamin Family File.

<sup>12</sup> Dissolution of Partnership (copy), March 1901, Benjamin Family File.

<sup>13</sup> Biographical information about S. H. Benjamin and the Katz family in this paragraph supplied by John E. Thrasher, III. Invitation to Harry Katz's bar mitzvah, Benjamin collection, MHSM. On Rosa, her three children, and mother in Jacksonville, see Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida.

<sup>14</sup> Glickstein, *That Ye May Remember*, 118.

<sup>15</sup> Original article in Benjamin collection, MHSM. MHSM houses a permanent Benjamin exhibit. John E. Thrasher, III, MHSM, prepared the final typescript of the article for this publication. The article appears without correction to errors in punctuation and spelling in the original.



## Book Review

**Jewish 'Junior League': The Rise and Demise of the Fort Worth Council of Jewish Women.** Hollace Ava Weiner. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008, 188 pages.

Research scholars in the field of women's studies have been debating the differences between women's and feminist organizations for at least the last two decades. There is little consensus regarding how to view women's activities that do not necessarily follow a feminist agenda. Some suggest that any women's organizing is a form of women's empowerment, while others see these efforts as instruments of women's cooptation into traditional roles without transformative impact. In her recent book, Hollace Ava Weiner offers some contribution to the debate by examining the emergence, activities, and eventual disbanding of one non-feminist women's organization—the chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women in Fort Worth, Texas (NCJW-FWT). The book provides a sympathetic description of how this organization formed as a means for the high-society, affluent Jewish women to assist their local community. The NCJW-FWT maintained the traditional gender separation significant to religious communities, which served to further define women's volunteerism as an extension of their caretaking responsibilities. Since such organizations have been a critical element of American democracy's emphasis on grass-roots community involvement, it is interesting to read how this played out in the case of Jewish women living in largely non-Jewish areas. As the book skillfully demonstrates, this organization dealt with the Jewish identity question by choosing open and quite strict secularism. The book also allows readers to understand how women involved in the NCJW-FWT gained confidence and skills to become business leaders and political figures outside of the Jewish community. The



book, thus, demonstrates that civic organizations, such as the NCJW-FWT, that were initially focused on assisting others eventually helped their members, too.

Weiner's book is honest about the variety of contradictions that characterized this organization, such as its cool attitude toward recent Jewish immigrants, its inability to respond to the arriving Holocaust survivors, its elitism, and its dislike for the working class women. The NCJW-FWT was an organization that recruited mainly upper middle-class women, and followed their vision of public service. The organization had difficulty responding to the changing political and social scene and was thus clearly unable to adapt to the growth of identity politics in the 1960s. Consequently, the NCJW-FWT lost relevance in the eyes of the young Jewish women of the baby-boomer generation. The volunteer work of the affluent women of NCJW-FWT had limited appeal among younger women of recent generations, most of whom worked outside the home and were more interested in dealing with their own issues than helping those less fortunate. As Weiner demonstrates, the NCJW-FWT had enough ability for self-reflection to understand that its time had passed and to end its functioning, actually to everyone's surprise.

Weiner presents an accessible and well-written public history of one organization in one city. Without a doubt, the book is well done. Weiner's writing is emphatic, yet objective; it is carefully researched, yet does not overwhelm readers with details. The author has a definite passion for the subject of Jewish history and enthusiasm for the local level women's organizing. She also has a solid grasp of the recent literature on women's activism and the history of the women's movement in this country. Weiner introduces references to the authorities in the field, such as William Chafe and Sara Evans, without imposing overly complex theoretical discussions that might be otherwise distracting to the reader.

At the same time, the book lacks depth, and is limited in scope. Moreover, it still gives off a sense of a well-written and nicely revised master's thesis (which it was originally). As a result, the readers are left with a feeling that they have heard a tiny part of a larger story, both in terms of women's activism and the

Jewish experience in the South. The author is aware of this problem and continuously tries to use NCJW-FWT as an example of larger trends in women's activism and Jewish history in this country. But the problem of having such a limited subject for a book cannot be avoided. So many themes could have been explored in greater depth—such as the complex relationship with the civil rights movement and African Americans in general, dilemmas of secularization versus Jewish religious revival and ethnic separatism, and the internal hierarchies within the organization and the Jewish society. These complex issues receive only fleeting attention in Weiner's book—more as footnotes to the story of one Jewish women's organization.

Nevertheless, the book gives a good, although neither particularly deep nor resonant, insight into Jewish women's experiences in Texas. I would recommend it to anyone interested in the history of Jewish life and the South.

*Ieva Zake*

Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ



## *Glossary*

**Ashkenazic** ~ having to do with the Jews and Judaism associated with central and eastern Europe

**Chutzpah, chutzpa** ~ gall, effrontery, brazen nerve, presumptuous arrogance

**Crypto-Jews** ~ Persons remaining faithful to Judaism in secret while practicing another religion that they or their ancestors were forced to accept

**Gefilte fish** ~ poached, minced fish ball (usually whitefish, pike, or carp) mixed with bread crumbs or matzo meal, eggs, and onion

**Hanukkah** ~ variants include Chanukah, Hanukah ~ Feast of Lights, eight-day holiday commemorating victory of the Maccabees over Syrian rulers, 167 BCE

**Kashrut/kosher** ~ Jewish laws governing food

**Kristallnacht** ~ the night of broken glass; Nazi destruction of Jewish property holdings including synagogues, and the beating and murder of Jews on November 9, 1938

**Kvetch** ~ to complain; someone who complains

**Matzo** ~ unleavened bread eaten primarily during Passover

**Pekl** ~ backpack used by peddlers for merchandise

**Rebbetzin** ~ rabbi's wife

**Schmooze** ~ to have a friendly, informal conversation

**Sephardic** ~ having to do with Jews and Judaism associated with Spain and Portugal

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

**Shtick** ~ a person's way of doing something; an act

**Yeshiva** (plural: **yeshivot** [also **yeshivas**]) ~ schools for Jewish learning, rabbinical seminaries

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

## *Note on Authors*

**Alan L. Breitler** is a faculty member at the University of Maryland and a frequent visitor to Williamsburg, Virginia.

**Allen Krause** has a master of arts in Hebrew letters (MAHL) from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (1967) and has done graduate work in American history at the University of Chicago and the University of California, Berkeley. During spring, 2005, he was the Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow at Harvard University. His article on "Southern Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement in the South" was published first in the *American Jewish Archives* and reprinted in *Jews in the South*, edited by Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson, and *Strangers and Neighbors* edited by Maurianne Adams and John H. Bracey. His article "The Enigmatic Judah P. Benjamin" appeared in *Midstream*. Krause served as Senior Rabbi at Temple Beth El of South Orange County from 1984 to his retirement in 2008. He has been a part-time lecturer at the State University of California since 1972 in addition to teaching at the University of Santa Clara. He is currently working on a book on the role southern rabbis played in the civil rights movement.

**Dan J. Puckett** is an assistant professor of history at Troy University in Montgomery, Alabama. He received his Ph.D. in history from Mississippi State University. He is currently completing a book manuscript, *The Jim Crow of All the Ages: Adolf Hitler, Race, and Civil Rights in the Heart of Dixie, 1933-1948*, to be published by the University of Alabama Press. This article was derived from his dissertation.

**Susan Pryor** is a medical historian with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

**Leonard Rogoff**, historian of the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina, writes and lectures on the Jewish South. After earning a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina, he has

taught at UNC, North Carolina Central University, and Duke University. He edited *The Rambler*, newsletter of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, and is the society's president-elect. A contributor to journals and anthologies, he has written entries on "North Carolina" for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and on "Judaism" for the *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*. He is the author of *Homelands: Southern-Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* and a recently published history of the Weldon, North Carolina, Jewish community. He conceived, researched, and wrote text for JHFNC's exhibit, "Migrations: the Jewish Settlers of Eastern North Carolina" and is now preparing a multimedia project, including a book, "Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina."

**Ieva Zake** is an assistant professor of sociology at Rowan University. She holds degrees from the University of Latvia, the Ohio State University, and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Among other academic publications, she is the author of *Nineteenth-century Nationalism and Twentieth-century Anti-democratic Ideals: The Case of Latvia, 1840s to 1980s* (2008) and a forthcoming volume *Anti-Communist Minorities in the US: Political Activism of Ethnic Refugees* (2009). Her research interests include nationalism, radical ideologies, sociology of intellectuals, feminist theory, and eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

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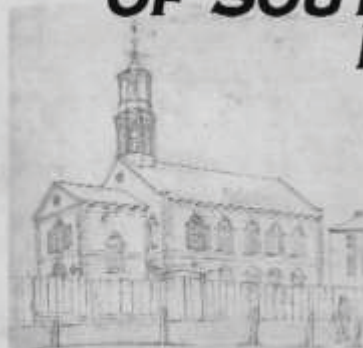
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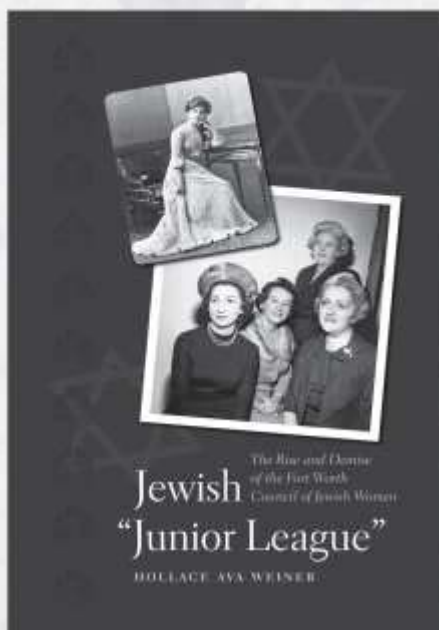
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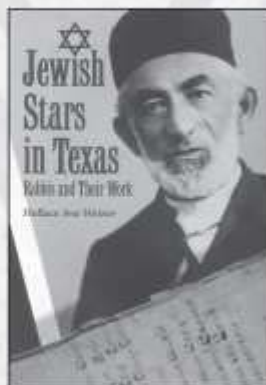
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