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SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Eric L. Goldstein, *Book Review Editor*

2005

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Correspondence concerning authors' guidelines, contributions, and all editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor, *Southern Jewish History*, 2517 Hartford Dr., Ellenwood, GA 30294; email: Markkbauman@aol.com. The journal is interested in unpublished articles pertaining to the Jewish experience in the American South. Publishers who wish to submit books for review should email egoldst@emory.edu. For journal subscriptions and advertising, write Rachel Heimovics Braun, *SJH* managing editor, 954 Stonewood Lane, Maitland, FL 32751; email: journal@jewishsouth.org; or visit www.jewishsouth.org.

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This volume is dedicated
to the memory of
Samuel Proctor
(1919-2005)

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From the Editor . . .

Except in the case of a special issue with commissioned articles, an editor does not know how or if articles will mesh until they have been submitted and accepted. Serendipitously, the first three articles in this volume complement each other well. Taken together the five articles explicate the forces that unified and sometimes divided Jews in the South and in America.

In the first of these, Hasia Diner revises her presentation from the 2004 Charleston conference. Her article provides an international perspective on peddling and how the peddling experience impacted on immigration, migration, community building, and individual and group interaction. According to Diner, this seemingly quintessential southern Jewish experience was hardly unique to the region at all.

The peddling and small town dry goods store phenomenon for Jews has been pictured as an idealized story of success. This picture often ignores the dangers involved. Daniel Weinfeld offers a case study of a Jew murdered in Florida during Reconstruction. Samuel Fleishman ran a store that catered to African Americans and he openly supported the Freedman's Bureau. Like others who bent and even broke southern taboos, Fleishman became vulnerable and paid with his life. Patrick Mason traces this vulnerability through the late nineteenth century with four models of violence perpetrated against Jews. Unearthing more incidents than hitherto imagined, Mason explains how Jews fit particular economic niches which, often coupled with latent antisemitism, made them targets for robbery and murder especially during times of economic hardship. Although Jews were widely accepted or at least tolerated in the South and benefited with economic mobility, they also had real reasons to feel fear particularly in rural and small-town areas.

Wendy Besmann describes life at successive junctures at the Hebrew Orphan Home of New Orleans. The leaders of the Home inculcated important values for success and the children were integrated into the community particularly through attendance at the Isadore Newman School. The story of the Home exemplifies the strengths of Jewish communal commitment to fellow Jews in need.

Peggy Pearlstein brings us forward to mid twentieth-century Charleston in a revision of her presentation at last year's conference. She describes the introduction of the Conservative movement in the city and region from the perspective of two activists and those with whom they worked. As people suburbanized and acculturated in the years surrounding World War II, many made the switch to Conservatism while others remained Orthodox. The New Orleans Home and Charleston's Jews both emulated national models besides following their own paths.

The able assistance of the editorial board was augmented by outside peer reviewers Cathy Kahn, Pamela Nadell, Gary Polster, Clive Webb, and Lee Shai Weissbach.

Everyone who had the pleasure of meeting Sam Proctor came away with his or her favorite Sam story. I remember early in the publication of this journal feeling somewhat frustrated over the difficulty in soliciting fine quality articles and dealing with authors who fought against making revisions that would improve their work. My wife, Sandy, and I happened to meet Sam and his wife, Bessie, at the terminal awaiting the departing flight from a SJHS conference. The longtime distinguished editor of the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Sam smiled that beguiling smile and counseled me that I was not alone in my travails and that I should keep plugging. I think of that conversation every year we put together this publication. Managing editor Rachel Heimovics Braun adds that Sam would have loved the article in this volume by Daniel Weinfeld, who never had the opportunity to talk to him. Samuel Fleishman's story is one that interested Sam very much. He never lost his excitement about uncovering Florida Jewish history and enthusiastically supported and doggedly encouraged the work of others in the field. Beyond his many other attributes, Sam was an

inspiring mentor. It is with sadness and the deepest respect that we dedicate this volume to the memory of Samuel Proctor, inspiring teacher, outstanding historian, dedicated archivist and editor, a founder and past president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, and the society's dear friend. Our thoughts, best wishes, and prayers go out to Bessie and the rest of Sam's family. He will be sorely missed and lovingly remembered.

Entering the Mainstream
of Modern Jewish History:
Peddlers and the American Jewish South

by

Hasia Diner

In his epic work, "Kentucky," Yiddish poet I. J. Schwartz put onto center-stage the life of a Jewish peddler, who "came with pack on his shoulders." Composed between 1918 and 1922 and published initially in serial form in the literary journal *Zukunft*, "Kentucky" solidified a long standing image, that of the "Jew from afar" who had made his way "into the unfamiliar/His feet sore, his heart heavy, /A pack on his back, a stick in his hand," who announced to all around him, that "I carry my business on my back." Joshua, the peddler, sold to, interacted with, and commented on, with lyrical depth, both the black and white denizens of this southern state, which gave the poem its name. This literary work provided one more link in a chain of discourse that linked the South, the Jews, and peddling.¹

Yet by merely changing the place names and the descriptors of climate, topography, and makeup of the larger population, Joshua's experiences in Kentucky could be seen as one of the paradigmatic Jewish phenomena of the modern world. The story of the Jew as peddler in a new country, navigating new languages, new mores, and complex racial and religious dramas as he went about his businesses could literally have been located in any place in the new world of the eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries.

Emphasizing the near universality of Jewish peddling, both in terms of time and place, transforms southern Jewish history from a curiosity, notable for its divergence from the larger

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narrative of modern Jewish history or, more specifically, American Jewish history. Rather, it places it squarely into the overarching paradigm, one which posits a confluence between trade, migration, cultural flexibility, and adaptability, as well as the “betweenness” of Jews as they negotiated among diverse peoples.

For scholars of southern Jewish history who insist on the uniqueness of their region, paying focused attention to the experiences of peddlers as immigrants raises serious question about their very enterprise. These migrations propelled the peddlers from the long-settled regions of central and eastern Europe to multiple frontier societies, new worlds that included the British Isles, a place with a very sparse Jewish presence before the nineteenth century, as well as North and South America, parts of Africa and the Antipodes. The fact that so many Jews, almost universally young immigrant men looking for a way to get a start in a new land, came to the American South as peddlers, has tended to blind observers’ eyes to the global dimensions of this experience. Those Jews who decided to leave their homes in central and eastern Europe from the eighteenth century into the early years of the twentieth by means of peddling and decided to relocate to the southern states joined a global movement. Little distinguished them from their literal and metaphoric peers who went to multiple regions, lands, and continents and who did so as peddlers. The decisions they made as to where to go in order to sell to rural customers from packs on their backs, and then horse-drawn wagons, reflected familial networks, Jewish communal structures, and the paucity of settled merchants able to provide goods to remote rural dwellers, and not the particular lure of the southern part of the United States. As such, by looking at immigrant Jewish peddlers, the American South, long conceptualized by its own residents and by outsiders as unique, becomes like other parts of the United States and the new world.

The Ubiquitous Jewish Peddler in Global Perspective

The ubiquity of Jewish peddling and its inextricable connection to migration awaits a full and systematic historical

accounting.² Any conceptualizing about Jewish peddling and the differences between places and times must at present rely on anecdotal gleanings. But the vast trove of scattered evidence, usually derived from memoir, autobiography, the press, Jewish apologetic literature, and from local and regional histories—like that which defines the field of southern Jewish history—points to the historic truth. Jewish men considered migration and peddling as yoked phenomena. This recognition and the behavior stimulated by it represent a broad, deep, and profound historical reality. It could be seen as one of the important common Jewish experiences.

The literature produced by Jews in order to defend their people from attack, for example, offers a place to start thinking about peddling and its connection to migration in global and then local terms. Besides the larger and deeply pervasive antipathy towards Jews that existed throughout the western world in the modern period, peddlers tended to raise local suspicions since they did not quite belong anywhere. Likewise because the mode by which they made a living differed so radically from the more “normal” means of the vast majority of those to whom they sold—agriculture—they emerged as targets sometimes of violence but more often of negative imagery. So, Israel Abrahams, the distinguished British scholar of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, like many other Jewish intellectuals of his time, saw in the study of history a way to defend the Jews. In his most highly regarded book, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (1896), in a chapter on “Trades and Occupations,” he took on the French writer Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu who had asserted that Jews shunned “arduous physical undertakings” because they tended to be “averse to dangerous occupations.” Abrahams sought to prove that the Jewish tendency to avoid certain livelihoods grew out of sources other than a fear of hard work or cowardice in the face of danger. “The Jewish peddler,” wrote Abrahams, “of recent centuries was no coward; had he lacked courage, he must have remained at home.”³

Although writing about the Middle Ages, an era in which European Jews entered in large number into this field, Abrahams’

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words offer a template for thinking about Jewish peddling, Jewish migrations, and the linkages between these two global phenomena, which also left their profound mark on one very small corner of the world, the American South. Going out on the road, laden with a jumble of goods, or sometimes specializing in one particular type of ware, functioned in the modern (and indeed earlier) era as a profound, binding, and nearly universal Jewish experience. Not that all Jews peddled, but rather because so many did for some period of time, the history of Jewish peddling played a pivotal role in the shaping and functioning of nearly all Jewish communities. Particularly after the eighteenth century, peddling served as a powerful vehicle for fostering Jewish migrations out of more stable, but economically declining regions, to new lands, wide open for settlement and business. Peddlers, prosaic and peripatetic figures who left little in the way of paper trails, can be seen as the juggernauts of Jewish migrations. Their experiences on the road as the human engines who drove the massive Jewish population shift, which brought Jews out of central and eastern Europe into a variety of new lands, deserves historicization.

Historians, Abrahams' statement notwithstanding, have largely ignored peddlers and peddling as a formative Jewish experience. References to peddlers abound. Systematic and focused analysis does not. Scholars of the modern Jewish experience have produced a robust literature on Jews as industrial laborers, for example. Certainly in the realm of American Jewish history, historians have studied, referred to, and invested with great analytic significance the clustering of Jews in the garment industry, primarily as laborers and to a lesser degree as manufacturers. Studying Jewish workers in the needle trades has allowed historians to chart oppressive work conditions, worker militancy, class consciousness, and union organizing, and to connect the history of Jews with the dramatic and heroic narratives of labor history in a number of countries.⁴

But peddling, a field of Jewish enterprise through which on a global scale millions of Jews passed, has not been the focus of any systematic research and analysis. Indeed with the exception of

a few articles, many of them with a decidedly southern focus, it has almost completely eluded the attention of historians.⁵

This absence in the scholarship merits thinking about in and of itself inasmuch as Jewish peddling functioned as one of the longest and most consistent aspects of Jewish history in the modern period and before. In their pre- or non-migratory lives, peddling represented perhaps “the” paradigmatic Jewish means of livelihood, with maybe money lending as a competitor for that status. The particularly attractive narrative of Jewish immigrants in America as industrial workers and the dramatic tale of their union organizing may also provide a way to think about why southern Jewish history, characterized so profoundly by commerce, has gotten short shrift.

To date few historians have attempted to study the Jewish small business sector in America at all, whether urban or small town, northern, southern, or western, whether stationary or itinerant. Historians concerned with the Jewish past have almost purposely eschewed deep research on commerce, particularly at the more modest end of the business spectrum.

Even more so is this the case with the peddlers, whose presence caused so much negative local commentary and who stood at the bottom of the Jewish commercial hierarchy.⁶ Yet Jews and peddling had a history so much longer and deeper than that of Jews and industrial labor. Extending backward into the Middle Ages and encompassing nearly the entire world as known at the time, Jews engaged in the retail sale of wares from packs on their backs or from animal-driven carts. They sold to Jews and non-Jews. Both Jewish women and men developed their routes, forged relationships with customers, helped stimulate desire for new goods, and served as fixtures of many local economies. In some regions and towns peddlers outnumbered non-peddlers in the Jewish community, and the clustering of Jews in this one occupational group affected nearly all aspects of the Jewish experience.

Before turning to the peddling experience, its historical roots and its connection to migration, two kinds of peddling need to be delineated. The first of these took place on city streets. Urban peddlers hawked their goods, both foodstuffs and finished

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products, from wheelbarrows, pushcarts, or other kinds of contraptions at times slung around their necks and on their backs. These women and men engaged in work described by one historian as the “quintessential job of the urban poor and a particularly easy form of first employment for the newly arrived.” They differed, however, from the peripatetic peddlers, the subject of this essay and the ones who left their impress on the rural South, in that, at the end of the day, they repaired to their places of residence. They lived in Jewish enclaves, participated in Jewish societies, and interacted with other Jews. The second kind of peddler embarked on relatively lengthy road trips, spent time among non-Jews, did not return home with nightfall, and faced the challenge of living away from settled Jewish communities. This held, although in somewhat different ways, for both Jewish peddlers who plied their wares in Europe and those who chose to join the exodus to a series of new world places.⁷

Numbers of Jewish peddlers in the pre-migration setting varied from place to place and changed over time. They also can be elusive in that the peddlers came in and out of towns and regions, and individuals peddled at some point or another in their lifetimes. But just a few samplings of efforts at counting peddlers in pre-migration Europe demonstrate the significance of peddling to Jewish history. In 1863, one writer for the French Jewish newspaper, *Univers Israelit*, looking backward to an earlier era, remarked that “during the First Empire peddling was the chief occupation of Jews. Thus according to the census of 1808, twenty of approximately twenty-six Jewish families of Fontainebleau were so engaged; in Versailles, Orleans and Nantes all the Jews were peddlers.” In Wurttemberg in 1812, no fewer than 85.5 percent of the Jews made a living as “hucksters,” and a study of Polish Jewry in the nineteenth century stated quite simply, “a majority of the Jewish population in Poland made their living in trade, but this principally meant peddled trade rather than retail.” It may not be at all outrageous to suggest that every European Jew would have known peddlers as family members and neighbors, real presences in the ordinary course of everyday life.⁸

Poor Jewish Peddler or Beggar.
German hand-colored etching
by unknown artist, nineteenth century,
19 cm x 11.5 cm.
(Courtesy of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York.)

The reality of Jewish peddling not only impacted on the peddlers themselves and their families, but Jewish community life both responded to and took its form from the ubiquity of the peddlers' presence. Jewish communities in the pre-modern and pre-migration settings, for example, made certain that either individual Jews or the community as a whole provided food and lodging for Jewish peddlers. The existence of hundreds of scattered Jewish communities in relative proximity to each other also meant that these peddlers in the Germanic states, Poland, Alsace, and elsewhere on the Continent did not have to return home for the Sabbath. They could often avail themselves of Sabbath services in the towns along their route. They spent holidays away from their own families but still in the comfort of Jewish homes.

The European Jewish economy rode on the backs of peddlers, and this fact made the peddlers' presence a constant feature of Jewish life and forged Jewish relationships independent of place of residence. Peddling along Jewish routes helped make the Jewish people transnational. It fostered a sense of themselves as cosmopolitans rather than as locals. Jews in one country came to be familiar with Jews from another. They learned each other's cooking styles and modes of dress as well as the details of lived life in the communities they came to. In the 1770s, as one of many possible examples, the bishop prince of Paderborn allowed Polish Jewish peddlers to come into his territory. Later when their number grew too large, he rescinded the invitation.⁹ Regardless of the fickle whims of the Paderborn official, local Jews came in contact with Polish Jews in their homes, synagogues, and other sites of Jewish community life. Among other profound implications, this reinforced the maintenance of Yiddish, a transnational Jewish language that allowed Jews to communicate with each other regardless of whether they hailed from Alsace in the West or as far east as Lithuania and the Russian lands. Peddling as such sustained the Jews' linguistic continuity at the same time that it exposed them to the many variants of Jewish practice.

Similarly the peddlers took on, by circumstance, a political role in the age before newspapers: they served as crucial agents of information, linking Jewish communities and making possible

the emergence of an integrated Jewish identity within and beyond the borders of particular nation states. Historian Jacob Katz in his elegant *Out of the Ghetto*, linked the peddlers of "Ghetto Times," the title of the first chapter of the book, with the statement that no Jewish community, "even the largest, could be said to have been self-contained or self-sufficient. Business transactions brought members of different communities into touch. . . . It was a typical feature of Jewish economic activity that it could rely on business connections with Jewish communities in even far-flung cities and countries." Katz, expansive in the scope of his thinking, saw this internationalism as paradigmatic of both business and community life among these Jews and asserted that it characterized not just the highest levels of commerce, but also "peddlers, even if they did not travel great distances or even go abroad."¹⁰

In the European setting, Jewish peddling played a crucial role in forging relationships between Jews and non-Jews. Jews not only sold to non-Jews, but they often bought agricultural goods as well as scraps, like bones and rags, which could be reused, from non-Jews, thus enabling inter-religious contact. At times Jewish peddlers spent the night in Christian homes or in inns catering to varied kinds of wayfarers. The Jewish peddlers, as it were, taught their Christian customers something about Judaism, and real, as opposed to mythic, Jews. In a family reminiscence of the peddling experience in the early nineteenth century in Rhenbischsheim, a small German town, Moses Kahnmann's grandson recalled that his grandfather described how he "occasionally might find in a village inn or with a friendly peasant a pan especially marked with the sign of kashrut, for the exclusive use of Jewish guests," the majority of whom came as peddlers. Others, both in personal memoirs and in historical studies, observed, "the pedlars [*sic*] stayed overnight with peasant acquaintances with whom they left their own kosher crockery for repeated uses." Peasant meant non-Jew and such respectful behaviors demonstrated the possibility of Jewish-Christian amity in an otherwise hostile environment and underscored the significance of the peddlers as historical actors.¹¹

The history of Jewish life in Europe could be narrated around the history of peddling: its actual details, in terms of what

peddlers sold, to whom, by what means, and for what price. Such a study would examine how Jewish peddlers interacted with, or avoided, non-Jewish peddlers and the ways in which Jewish peddlers and settled town merchants, both Jewish and gentile, influenced each other.¹² It would explore the impact of peddling on the Jews' inner communal lives and on the multiple ways in which peddling affected relationships between Jews and Christians as individuals and as members of distinct communities. How peddling figured into Christian polemics against the Jews, how it emerged as matters of the state as many rulers and decision makers pondered the assets or liabilities of the Jewish peddlers, and how Jews who represented their people to those with state power fretted over the peddlers' visibility and distinctiveness all represent crucial and conceptual issues with which such a history would be concerned.¹³

Peddling clearly provided the overarching economic and, as such, political, social, and cultural framework for the lives of many, indeed most, European Jews in the period before the late eighteenth century, the period that heralded the onset of modernization, the beginnings of emancipation, and the first stirrings of the massive east to west migration that profoundly transformed Jewish life.

New World Immigration and Peddling

Although Jewish peddling did not come to an end in eighteenth-century central and eastern Europe, at that point in time another transformative factor entered into Jewish life and made peddling an even more significant force in the history of the Jews.

From the eighteenth century onward, peddling provided central and eastern European Jews with an effective means by which they could not only enhance their chances of making a living, but also it gave them the opportunity to find new places to live, among those the American South.

That is, peddling as a familiar occupation, as the Jews' economic *métier*, became caught up with and indeed facilitated the great movements of Jews out of long-established places of residence to a series of new worlds. Nearly every place that Jews

Jewish Peddler in the United States with His Wagon and a Customer.
Daguerreotype, by unknown photographer, nineteenth century.
(Courtesy Richard W. Welch, Graphic Antiquity
and the Jacob Rader Marcus Center,
American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.)

went as they left continental Europe, central and eastern, opened up to them through the actions of peddlers, men who took up their old-style trade but in radically new settings.

The act of leave taking pivoted in a number of ways around the peddling phenomenon. Notably, these new world Jewish peddlers may not themselves have ever peddled before their migrations. Many came from the ranks of young men unable to find a place for themselves in the local economies of the regions where they had grown up. Migration offered them a way of establishing themselves as adults. They may have been too young to have ever peddled themselves, but when they needed to find a means of migration and a means of making a living in their new homes, they turned to what they knew. After all, they would have known in their immediate families and in their villages many peddlers whose experiences and skills they could draw on. In addition, these young Jewish emigrants abandoned precisely those places where Jewish over-competition in the field of peddling had made it impossible for them, as young people, to get started with their lives. Finally, the young men poised to emigrate by taking up the peddlers' pack departed from towns and regions that no longer needed peddlers because new commercial realities undercut the peddlers'—and the Jews'—longstanding modes of making a living.

Instead, these young men began a process of moving outward, discovering as Jews a number of new worlds. Peddling, the old, familiar economic *modus operandi* of the Jews, structured and linked physical movement and the process of discovery. This new age of Jewish peddling took Jews out of continental Europe and brought them over the course of the next two-and-a-half centuries to no fewer spots around the globe than the British Isles, the Americas—North, South, and Central—South Africa, and Australia.¹⁴

Generally, the less developed a region, the poorer the internal transportation networks, the fewer settled merchants present, the further the distance from one settlement to another, and the more agrarian the region, the more attractive immigrant Jewish peddlers found it. Certainly the southern region of the United

States fit all of these criteria. The least urbanized part of the United States for the longest time, the most agrarian, and the one with the least articulated system of roads and railroads, it attracted Jewish immigrant peddlers well into the early twentieth century. In the absence of focused case studies of Jewish peddling, let alone comparative ones, one can at least begin with the hunch that the South's persistent agrarianism, its fairly small commercial class, and its lag in industrial and urban development as compared to other American regions, made it a particularly attractive magnet for young Jews looking to gain a foothold in American commerce.¹⁵

But nearly every other region of the United States at one time or another drew in and used the services of Jewish peddlers. References to the arrival, commercial and communal activities, and subsequent careers of Jewish peddlers in every part of the United States testify to that historical reality. Nearly every issue of the journal *Western States Jewish History*, for example, contains articles that refer to the presence of Jewish peddlers west of the Mississippi River. So, too, publications surveying the Jewish history of other parts of the United States demonstrate the national nature of Jewish peddling.¹⁶

A few non-southern examples will have to suffice to point to the national scope of the phenomenon. Of Boston's Jews in the years 1845 to 1861, 25 percent peddled at one time or another, while among those in Easton, Pennsylvania, the concentration moved from 46 percent in 1840 to 70 percent in 1845. In Iowa, in 1850, 125 Jews made their home and 100 peddled around the state. A non-exhaustive list of places where peddlers were the first Jews to appear and then settle would include Berkshire County, Massachusetts; Sioux City, Iowa; Chicago, Illinois; Chico, California; Monmouth County, New Jersey; Cincinnati, Ohio; Lancaster, Pennsylvania; and Rochester and Tupper Lake, New York. The list could go on for pages demonstrating the ubiquity of the phenomenon and also demonstrating the lack of a uniquely southern narrative.¹⁷

The South, then, was not the only region that supported such activities, although it may have continued to attract them for a

longer period of time. Yet in each one of these places and the many specific regions within them, peddlers were the first Jews (and sometimes the first white people) to penetrate these unknown spaces. In various lands the activities of the peddlers cleared the ground for the eventual formation of settled Jewish communities, while in others the peddlers—and the Jewish presence—disappeared leaving few traces.

The lack of a distinctive southern story needs to be set in the context of this phenomenon as not being a uniquely North American one either. The vast population transfer of Jews from central and eastern Europe westward moved along peddling routes, and the history of Jewish peddling in each new world has a history of its own. Each one stands as worthy of analysis. Jewish peddling in South and Central America followed a particular course no doubt different from that of Jewish peddling in South Africa or Canada. Furthermore, within any one of these continents or countries local variations also made for many different histories of Jewish peddling and Jewish migration. For example, Jewish peddlers in Quebec who sold to French-speaking Catholic customers who evinced hostility towards the idea of Canada as a modern, liberal, and British-oriented nation had a particular set of experiences that diverged from those of Jewish peddlers who cast their lot in the Anglophone provinces where Protestantism predominated and most women and men embraced their connections to Great Britain and its economic and political practices. Likewise in South Africa, Jewish peddlers sold at one time or another to the Afrikaner Boers and British, as well as to native customers, who had been colonized by both previously named groups. Each constituency had a different set of reactions to the peddlers as Jews, immigrants primarily from Lithuania, and bearers of consumer goods. Each history needs to be explored and each stands on its own.

Young Jewish men who showed up in the American South to peddle their wares found a particular racial landscape, one in which the black-white divide created a set of social practices not replicated in New England or upstate New York, where differences of class rather than color structured political relationships that the peddlers had to know about and deal with. Further west,

the presence of Indians and Mexicans as customers forced Jewish peddlers fresh from Posen or Lithuania to confront yet another set of on-the-ground realities as they sought to accomplish the goals of the migration: earn money, settle down, marry or bring wives and children left behind in either Europe or some other large city, and get on with life.

Interaction with Non-Jews

Yet certain characteristics have been shared by all new world Jewish peddling histories regardless of continent or country or region within. First, unlike old-world peddling, the immigrant peddlers sold only to non-Jews. This perhaps obvious point had tremendous historical significance, not just for the peddlers themselves but for the development of Jewish communities in these places. The young Jewish man who decided to leave Alsace or Lithuania, two important senders of Jewish migrant-peddlers, and try his luck in the Mississippi Delta, the Pacific Northwest, as well as the Transvaal, the Australian outback, the Argentine Pampas, the Irish midlands, the mining regions of Wales, or the foothills of the Andes, had no string of Jewish enclaves to turn to when the day ended, or at times even when the sun set on Friday, or when Jewish holidays punctuated the calendar.

Rather, these peddlers spent the days of the week only among non-Jews, depending on their customers for a place to sleep and eat before setting out again on the road. Since Jewish peddlers divided up the countryside among themselves, no one encroaching upon another's territory, they lived pretty much devoid of contact with other Jews. This reality reflected the fact that the first of the peddlers, as pioneers, went to places where no Jew had been before. Those who immigrated later and entered the field took the place of the Jewish peddlers who had amassed enough savings to be able to own shops in town. While the later peddlers sold to non-Jews who had already become acquainted with Jews, they still did not share the road or their weekday time with other Jews, and the newcomer peddlers, like their predecessors, spent days on end with no other Jews around them.

Jewish Fellowship

This then meant that new world Jewish peddlers, unlike their counterparts in the old world, did not travel as far, and they organized their selling lives when they could in such a way as to get back to Jewish enclaves for the Sabbath. The life histories of many of these immigrant peddlers repeatedly noted that their lives marched according to a kind of weekly rhythm. They went out on their routes on Sunday and returned by Friday to whatever existed in the way of a Jewish hub for Jewish food, fellowship, and rest. Joseph Jacob in his 1919 apologetic defense of the Jewish people, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization*, described how in England, which in terms of Jewish migration history must be thought of as a *new world*, "it was customary for the Jews of the seaport towns . . . to send out their sons every Monday morning to neighboring villages as hawkers, who would return in time for the Friday night meal." These hawkers, the British word of choice for peddler, came to be known within the Jewish community as "Wochers," that is, "weekly people."¹⁸ In Ireland, to which several thousand Lithuanian Jews immigrated after the 1880s and where nearly all the men peddled at one time or another, Jews described themselves and were described by their customers as "weekly men," the ones who showed up week after week at the farmhouse doors, ready to collect payment for previously purchased goods and to show the woman of the home some new "things" to buy.¹⁹ In Mississippi, as in many southern Jewish communities, former peddlers-turned-shopkeepers provided the space for those still on the road and needing a Sabbath resting place. In Natchez, the Millstein house became the place where, "many of the peddlers who came home . . . after a week's work would gather . . . for the Sabbath."²⁰

These spots of Jewish life scattered through the hinterlands, where peddlers spent their weekends and holidays, reflected the densely Jewish underpinnings to the migration and settlement. In these places peddlers ready to upgrade and settle met young Jewish women, daughters, and female relatives of Jewish merchants. The outlines of congregations began to take shape as numbers

grew, however minimally. Indeed, before congregations formed, peddlers fulfilled their Jewish obligations in these crossroad villages. The story of how the death of two Jewish peddlers in the area surrounding Meridian, Mississippi, compelled the few Jews living there in the 1860s to purchase land for a cemetery has been told as well about Woodville, Mississippi. It likewise could be and has been told about Australia, Ireland, South Africa, and Canada.²¹

The time off the road spent with other Jews, often fellows from familiar European places who spoke a common language, involved not just, or even primarily, Jewish activities but also socializing. In the country stores owned by former peddlers, those who relaxed, like Edward Cohen's grandfather featured in Cohen's family memoir, spent Saturday night in New Orleans, where "he'd rest, drink whiskey with the Alsatian [*sic*] peddlers and play poker all night."²²

Moise Cohen's recollection that he, a Rumanian Jew, found fellowship with a pack of Alsatian Jewish peddlers pointed out yet another implication for Jewish history of peddling around the modern world. It provided a common experience for young Jewish men drawn from many different European homes. Bavarian, Bohemian, Lithuanian, Polish, Galician, and Prussian Jewish men peddled alongside Alsations, Rumanians, and others in numerous countries. This experience, despite its centrifugality, actually served as a unifying force, representing a step on the road toward creating new Jewish identities based not on where people came from but where they had gone. The histories of fathers as peddlers and peddling's impact on family life became important experiences that immigrant Jews in their many, newest diaspora homes shared with each other.

The connection between peddling and the creation of Jewish life in the hinterlands played itself out in other ways. For one, Jewish peddlers who traveled to the larger cities, characterized as they were with substantial and institutionally rich Jewish communities, stocked up on matzo at the same time that they settled with creditors and replenished their supply of wares to sell when they went back on the road. In places like New York, Baltimore,

Cincinnati, and Philadelphia, Jewish peddlers loaded up with Jewish goods that they then brought back to Tennessee, Georgia, Mississippi, and the like. Perhaps even more dramatically, peddlers functioned as leaders of Jewish communities. No example more intriguing exists than that of Charles Wessolowsky, an immigrant peddler from Gollub, a town in the former Polish province of Posen, who, in the late 1870s, functioned as a kind of circuit rabbi throughout the American South, particularly Georgia, selling wares at the same time that he buried the deceased, performed marriages of Jewish couples, and consecrated synagogues and cemeteries.²³ So too Bernard Nordlinger, an Alsatian-born Jewish peddler who sold in the territory around Macon, Georgia, struck the small group of Jews living there as Judaically knowledgeable and they asked him to become their rabbi.²⁴

"Between-People" in Rural Economies

The reality that Jewish peddlers spent most of their time, while peddling, with non-Jews forced them into a quick encounter with difference and put them nearly immediately on the path towards learning new languages, cultures, and social realities. Wherever they went and lived in these liminal situations, they functioned as "between-people." They had no choice but to develop relationships with the people to whom they sold and to whom, perhaps more importantly, they wanted to sell. By definition they had to learn their potential customers' languages, literally and figuratively, and had to ingratiate themselves with the women—most often the people to whom they sold—who opened the doors, looked in the baskets, and made the decision whether or not to buy the eyeglasses, pictures, picture frames, curtains, blankets, pots, pans, and other sundry goods. They had to acquire knowledge of local social and political relationships, to figure out who and where the most likely customers lived, what topics to avoid, and what aspirations to play upon.

Yet, simultaneously, in one place after another around the peddlers' globe, the entry of Jewish itinerant merchants into the rural region unsettled locally prevailing economic relationships. In places where class, religion, race, and national background

mattered greatly, the fact that peddlers sold across those lines made them different and notable. The Jewish peddler in the rural South may have been the only individual to enter the homes of blacks and the homes of whites with the same goal in mind: selling goods to anyone willing to pay. So, too, Jewish peddlers who made their way around the Cape Colony made no distinction between the homes of the English farmers and those of the Boers. In a profound sense the peddlers did not see groups but rather customers.

The disruptive role played by the peddlers in part stemmed from the fact that as outsiders they could, at times, transgress conventional boundaries of etiquette. They could, in essence, claim ignorance of local rules as they sought to expand the scope of their selling. That Jewish peddlers in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century southern communities in the United States at times lodged with African American families, ate at their tables, and developed what for that time and place constituted respectful public relationships offers a case in point. Morris Wittcowsky, author of one of the best peddler life histories, asserted that he and his "brother" peddlers "were probably the first white people in the South who paid the Negro people any respect at all," and he and many others insisted on using the titles "Mr." and "Mrs." when addressing black customers.²⁵

This should not be taken to imply that Jewish peddlers challenged prevailing social relationships or power relationships. In many ways their status as outsiders and the particular nature of their commercial transactions helped retain the status quo. During the era of plantation slavery, Jewish peddlers carrying second-hand clothing, sewn (or, better, re-sewn) by Jewish tailors on New York's Chatham Street, in the "slop shops" associated with that section of the city, sold to plantation owners for the use of their slaves.²⁶

Peddlers could also break the rules because local people on farms, in mining camps, and on the fringes of cities not connected to downtown shopping districts reveled in the items the peddlers had for sale. This eager embrace of the peddler and his goods encompassed not just the poorer people and those, like African

Americans in the South, who enjoyed the fewest rights available but also those who represented the political and economic elite. The Jewish peddlers fit into existing stratified relationships in large measure because they did not fit in at all and defied the boundaries of the accepted and established order. The Jewish peddlers, because they did not have a stake in the social order, could cross lines.

Certainly at times and in most places the peddlers not only offered new goods, new standards of consumption, and cosmopolitan styles, but also invoked the ire of settled shopkeepers whom the peddlers could undersell. Local shopkeepers and farmwomen, by and large, shared religious, linguistic, and "ethnic" (for lack of a better term here) characteristics. These women who had only limited dollars, or pounds or pesos, for purchasing goods stood then between the Jewish peddlers and their non-Jewish compatriots, those storeowners who often had been drawn from the ranks of farm families and to whom they often shared family and kinship connections.

The peddler and the shopkeeper, in essence, both courted these relatively poor women, who thus gained power through their purchasing choices. The merchants of the place argued, directly and indirectly, that group loyalty demanded that the women buy from them. They pointed out that the Jewish peddler combined in one physical being foreignness, religious otherness, and an economic challenge to the local order. Yet the peddler offered credit, new goods, and direct access to those goods. Coming directly to the women's homes, showing them exactly how the curtains and the pictures would look, the peddler drew the women more intimately into the fantasies of consumption.

At times Jewish peddler/non-Jewish merchant competition led directly to anti-Jewish agitation and even violence. The presence of Jewish peddlers, at times and in various places, played itself out in local and national politics as the merchants and their representatives sought to limit the access of peddlers, defined directly or obliquely as "foreigners" or "Jews," to the privileges of the marketplace. That states like North Carolina passed laws requiring peddlers to show proof of citizenship

*"Our peaceful rural districts as they are
liable to be infested if this Russian exodus
of the persecuted Hebrews continues much longer."
The Judge, American Humor Magazine, July 8, 1882.
(Courtesy of the Antisemitic Literature Collection
American Jewish Historical Society,
New York and Newton Centre, Massachusetts.)*

before obtaining a license demonstrated one of the multiple ways in which the presence of foreign peddlers, Jews primarily, became politicized.²⁷ By 1891 enough Jewish peddlers had entered into the commercial life of Key West, Florida, to propel the city council to enact legislation that taxed immigrant peddlers at the rate of \$1,000 a head.²⁸

How much the three notorious episodes of Civil War anti-Jewish action, that perpetrated by General Ulysses S. Grant on the Jews of the Department of the Tennessee (Paducah, Kentucky) and the others in Talbotton and Thomasville, Georgia, grew out of the peddling experience deserves some consideration. In all three cases the belief that the Jews as merchants profited from wartime exigencies inflamed prejudice and led to calls that the Jews be expelled. In all three places Jews had been peddlers moving in and out of town selling to farmers in the surrounding countryside. As such, in all three places the Jews came in and out of community surveillance, and local people suffering with shortages of goods of all kinds imagined the Jews, the shadowy peddlers, to be not only treacherous but benefiting from the suffering of others.

The peddlers, those who lived in the South during the Civil War and those who lived in all the new world places throughout this long period, in one way or another disrupted local social patterns and entered into local dramas that did not concern them but which they affected. As such, the halls of city and county councils, courthouses, state legislatures, and even national assemblies became places where the merits and demerits of Jewish peddling and Jewish migration were weighed.

On a personal level, memoirs and life histories of former Jewish peddlers, regardless of which new world they went to, described in painful details the experience of being spat upon, pelted with stones, and hounded by barking dogs as locals verbally hurled anti-Jewish slurs at them. Jewish communal bodies and defense organizations at times also had to deal with the issue of the peddlers and the shadows they cast on the process of acceptance and integration.

Yet non-Jewish women, as chief customers, continued to buy from the peddlers and, in the process, challenged the power of clergy and other local elites who implored them to shun the Jew, the peddler. Likewise, Jewish peddlers persevered with their routes, returning time and again to these locales to cultivate customers and abandoning these locales only when better opportunities beckoned elsewhere or when they had amassed enough savings to open a store and relinquish life on the road.

When they settled, particularly in the towns that served the rural regions around which they had peddled, they became respected members of the community, sometimes (and with much national and regional variation) winning enough trust of the local non-Jewish populace to hold public office. But if not that, they set themselves up as modestly successful storekeepers who maintained friendly enough relations with customers, non-Jewish in the main, who bought much of what they needed from, as Stella Suberman called it, "the Jew Store."²⁹

Jewish peddlers functioned between various classes of people divided by color, religion, language, and class. Each new world in which they sold had its own deep cleavages and hierarchies. Jews fit no fixed category by which they could be understood, and they had to learn to negotiate these divides in order to sell their goods at the best price and ensure their own personal safety. In the American South color mattered more than anything, and Jews as white people could take profound advantage of that reality. Perhaps the best statement available to historians describing this has come to us from the memoir of Oscar Straus, close confidant of Theodore Roosevelt, U.S. ambassador to Turkey, and the first Jew to hold a cabinet position. Straus' father Lazarus came to the United States in 1852 from Bavaria and began his American career as a peddler in Georgia. As the son looked back on his father's life he wrote, "The itinerant merchant . . . filled a real want, and his vocation was looked upon as quite dignified. Indeed he was treated by the owners of the plantations with a spirit of equality. . . . This gave to the white visitor a status of equality that probably otherwise he would not have enjoyed to such a degree, provided only, therefore, that the peddler proved himself an honourable, upright man, who conscientiously treated his customer with fairness and made no misrepresentations regarding his wares, he was treated as an honored guest by the plantation owners, certainly a spirit of true democracy."³⁰

Straus correctly emphasized the importance of the Jewish peddlers' whiteness. By being defined by law as white, as being able to share in all of the privileges that went hand in hand with

*Lazarus Straus and his wife, Sara, in Talbotton, Georgia, 1856.
This photograph was taken four years after Lazarus arrived
in America and two years after Sara and the children
joined him in Talbotton, seat of Talbot County.
In 1852 Lazarus began as a pushcart peddler,
first in Oglethorpe, Georgia, and, then, Talbotton.
He peddled enough dry goods and "Yankee notions" that
within two years he saved enough to send for Sara and their children.
(Courtesy of the Straus Historical Society, Inc., Smithtown, New York.)*

that color, the Jewish peddler could sell to African American customers yet retain all the rights and honors that *ipso facto* accompanied whiteness. They could treat their black customers with respect but not fear that their own whiteness would be compromised. Their whiteness played a not insignificant role in making it possible for the immigrant Jewish peddler to begin

his American years in this lowly occupation and swiftly move out of it.

The Brief Road from Migratory to Sedentary

This final point on the differences between new world peddling and the pre- or non-migration peddling experience had tremendous historical significance. Jewish men who migrated to peddle (and peddled in order to migrate) did so for a relatively brief duration. Rather than being a life sentence as it had been in Europe, Jewish peddlers in their destination homes used peddling as a way to leave the occupation. They not only did not continue in it for decades, but sons did not pick up their fathers' packs or sit down behind their fathers' horses. Rather their peddling represented merely a stage in a Jewish immigrant man's life, one not passed on to subsequent generations. The actual biographies of countless peddlers in their migration destinations demonstrate the linear trajectory on and off the road. The preponderance of former peddlers among the ranks of shopkeepers, large and small, in the towns and cities of the destination countries further proved the temporary nature of new world peddling. Illustrative are the Rich brothers of Atlanta, Georgia, immigrants from Kaschau, Hungary, the first of whom came to America in 1859. By 1867 he owned one of the most significant emporia in the city reborn from the ashes of the Civil War, a symbol almost of the commercial underpinnings of the New South. Like so many other Jewish peddling families, the Riches had migrated serially, with one brother bringing over another, broadening their selling base, pooling their earnings, and settling down when they had amongst themselves saved enough to open a store.³¹

Some former peddlers did not just move up the commercial hierarchy from itinerancy to modest storekeeping, but shot up meteorically to the highest echelons of business. Henry Lehman arrived in Mobile, Alabama, in the 1840s and loaded up with the kinds of items that farm families craved. He spent only one year selling from the road until he settled in Montgomery and opened a store selling crockery, seeds, tools, dry goods, and the like. Living behind the store, he squirreled away his earnings and ended

his career as one of Alabama's and the South's most successful cotton brokers. His experience resembled that of Oscar Straus, also a Bavarian immigrant, who took his place among the legions of young Jewish men who served the rural South. Both moved from the difficult life on the road to affluence and economic influence locally, regionally, and indeed nationally.³²

The trajectory from unskilled but eager-to-learn peddler to respectable shopkeeper represented social reality. But it moved from being just fact to a powerful image in the Jews' quest for rights. Jews in the age of migration, in the many places to which they had migrated, made a point of defending themselves from negative stereotyping by showing how transitory the peddling experience had been. Just give Jews the chance to immigrate, this line of reasoning went, and they would both provide the essential services of the peddler and soon transform themselves into settled and responsible community members. This argument, like the new world peddling phenomenon, also had a global dimension. Israel Abraham offered his defense of the Jews and Jewish peddling at a time when Great Britain began debating what would in 1905 become the Aliens Act. In the United States, George Cohen, author of a 1924 book, *The Jews in the Making of America*, provided a similar way of thinking about peddlers, Jews, and Jewish mobility articulated in a decidedly American tone. In this book, published as part of the "The Racial Contribution Series" sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, Cohen intended, as did the other authors, to use history to dispel the anti-immigrant spirit that had captured the nation and which had in that same year culminated in the passage of restrictive and racially-based immigration legislation. Cohen argued that the Jews' contribution to America could not be understood without attention to their long history of migrations and commerce, with peddling not a negative but rather a heroic part of that narrative. "The result," wrote Cohen, of "the nomadic tendencies of the Jews' Bedouin ancestors still are potent forces in the make-up of the modern Jew. That restlessness which impels the race to seek newer realms and better climes imparts to it during the course of its vicissitudes an adaptability and a readiness that are useful in the life struggle. What is

so potent a factor in mental development as travel, and Israel has been the most traveled of peoples. The tribe of the 'wandering foot' to keep traveling had to develop the gift of quickness of thought, of improvisation, of ready comprehension." In Cohen's sweeping analysis then, the Jewish peddlers, despite the mundane nature of their lives, exerted a profound impact on Jewish history.³³

The South in Global Perspective

The history of every Jewish population center in the new world—the United States, Canada, England and the rest of the British Isles, South Africa, Australia, Mexico, Argentina, and elsewhere in South and Central America—cannot be disassociated from the global history of peddling. Common themes, common processes, and common concerns linked these places and made the history of any one place not all that different from the basic contours of another. These universals or commonalities connected the experience of being a Jewish peddler at the tip of the Cape of Good Hope with the experience of being a Jewish peddler in Newfoundland or the tip of Cape Horn with that of Alaska. Yet local stories of Jewish migration and Jewish peddling also deserve to be told to enrich and complicate modern Jewish history. In each place the local contours of attitudes towards consumption, allocations of power, distribution of resources, basic religious, ethnic, and racial cleavages in the society as well as ideas about foreigners shaped the ways in which Jewish peddlers as immigrants and Jewish immigrants as peddlers made their way.

From the vantage point of southern Jewish history, the focus on peddlers provides not only a way to talk about a large group of actors, the young Jewish immigrant men who traversed the roads of the South, but it helps put what has been considered to be a distinctive and idiosyncratic history into line with the broad outlines of modern Jewish history. Not an insignificant other story, southern Jewish history provides a locus to see the drama of European Jewish immigration, the impact of a particular kind of commerce, and how Jews benefited because they defied the standard categories by which societies organized themselves. Through the

experience of peddlers, southern Jewish history stops being an oddity or an anomaly. Rather when putting peddlers in the center-stage, the history of Jews in the South can stand for one of the paradigmatic modern Jewish experiences.

NOTES

¹ I. J. Schwartz, *Kentucky*, trans. Gertrude Dubrovsky (Tuscaloosa, 1990), 29–30, 32.

² Peddling itself, a phenomenon of significance well beyond Jewish history, has received some scholarly attention. Laurence Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe*, trans. Vicki Whittaker (Durham, 1996) referred only in one place to Jewish peddlers, but his book offers an important impetus in historicizing this occupation and giving it the scholarly attention it deserves. There are a few studies of Arab peddling, particularly Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale, IL, 1985).

³ Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (London, 1896), 231–232.

⁴ Nancy L. Green, ed., *Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley, 1998).

⁵ The work of Rudolf Glanz stands out as particularly noteworthy. See for example his “Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America,” *Jewish Social Studies* 7 (April, 1945); also, Lee M. Friedman, “The Problems of Nineteenth-Century American Jewish Peddlers,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 44 (September, 1954): 1–7. It is worth commenting on not only the scantiness of this body of literature but how early it appeared in the development of American Jewish history as a scholarly field. Since the field has become more professionalized and more thoroughly part of the mainstream of American historical scholarship, no one has picked up on the work of Glanz or Friedman and pursued the subject with greater conceptual sophistication.

⁶ A notable exception is Elliott Ashkenazi, *The Business of Jews in Louisiana, 1840–1875* (Tuscaloosa, 1988). Derek Penslar offers trenchant observations on Jewish historians’ discomfort with writing about Jews and business in *Shylock’s Children: Economics and Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2001).

⁷ Green, *Jewish Workers*, 234.

⁸ Quoted in Zosa Szajkowski, “Growth of the Jewish Population in France,” *Jewish Social Studies* 8 (1946): 307; David S. Landes, “The Jewish Merchant: Typology and Stereotypology in Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 9 (1974): 13; Anna Maria Orla-Bukowska, “Shtetl Communities: Another Image,” *Polin* 8 (1994): 94.

⁹ Moses Shulvass, *From East to West: The Westward Migration of Jews from Eastern Europe During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Detroit, 1971), 85.

¹⁰ Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (New York, 1973), 22.

¹¹ Walter J. Cahman, "Village and Small-Town Jews in Germany, A Typological Study," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 19 (1974): 112–114, 121; for other references see, Mordecai Kossover, "Inland Trade among Polish Jews in the 16th–17th Centuries," *YIVO Bletter* 15 (March–April, 1940): 182; one of the best sources on Alsatian Jewish peddling is Daniel Stauben, *Scenes of Jewish Life in Alsace* (London, 1979), originally published in the *Revue des deux Mondes* in the late 1850s.

¹² On non-Jewish peddlers, the key work is Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe*. Fontaine confesses, "my apologies for placing so little emphasis in this book on the merchant migration of the Jewish communities. The work involved in putting the structure of these networks in some sort of perspective vis-à-vis the home communities is beyond the proposed scope of this volume." (230, n. 14).

¹³ The book that comes closest to accomplishing this is Penslar's *Shylock's Children*.

¹⁴ For the purposes of thinking about Jewish migration and peddling from the end of the eighteenth century onward, the Netherlands, despite being continental European, functioned as a new world setting. From the beginning of the eighteenth century, German, Bohemian, and Polish Jews came to the Netherlands to hawk their goods in towns, many of which did not allow Jews to reside there. Referred to as *smous*, a somewhat pejorative term, Ashkenazic Jews invoked the ire of merchants in Leiden and a number of other cities for their ability to sell goods door-to-door at low prices. For Jewish migrant peddling in the Netherlands, see several articles in J. C. H. Blom, R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, and I. Schöffer, *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Portland, OR, 2002), 114, 117, 167, 227.

¹⁵ Jewish immigrants, male and female, also made a living as urban peddlers, selling goods on the city streets. They, however, established different relationships with their customers. They, too, have not been studied, but it would seem that their impact on both Jewish history and on the local economies where they sold would have been less significant than that of the itinerant peddlers.

¹⁶ See, for example, Bernard Goldman, ed., *Index: Michigan Jewish History, Volumes 1–39: 1960–1999* (West Bloomfield, MI, n.d.), 24; Alan S. Pine, Jean C. Hershenov, and Aaron H. Lefkowitz, *From Peddler to Suburbanite: The History of the Jews of Monmouth County, N.J.* (Deal Park, NJ, 1981).

¹⁷ Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820–1880* (Baltimore, 1992), 68.

¹⁸ Joseph Jacob, *Jewish Contributions to Civilization* (Philadelphia, 1919), 219.

¹⁹ On Jewish peddling in Ireland and the use of the term "weekly men" see Louis Hyman, *The Jews of Ireland: From Earliest Times to the Year 1910* (London, 1972), 160–166.

²⁰ Leo E. Turitz and Evelyn Turitz, *Jews in Early Mississippi* (Jackson, MS, 1983), 26.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 89; Mississippi Historical Records Survey Project, Division of Professional and Service Projects, Work Projects Administration, *Inventory of the Church and Synagogue Archives of Mississippi: Jewish Congregations and Organizations* (Jackson, MS, 1940).

²² Edward Cohen, *The Peddler's Grandson: Growing Up Jewish in Mississippi* (Jackson, 1999), 50.

²³ Louis Schmier, *Reflections of Southern Jewry: the Letters of Charles Wessolowsky, 1878–1879* (Macon, 1982), 14.

²⁴ Bernard I. Nordlinger, "About my Grandfather, Bernard Nordlinger, Confederate Soldier and Unofficial Rabbi," *The [Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington] Record* 3 (1968): 26–27.

²⁵ Quoted in Leonard Rogoff, *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa, 2001), 95; see also, Louis Schmier, "For Him the 'Schwartzers' Couldn't Do Enough: A Jewish Peddler and his Black Customers Look at Each Other," in Maurianne Adams and John Bracey, eds., *Strangers and Neighbors: Relations Between Blacks and Jews in the United States* (Amherst, 1999), 223–236.

²⁶ See Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 80.

²⁷ Rogoff, *Homelands*, 56.

²⁸ Rachel Heimovics and Marcia Zerivitz, *Florida Jewish Heritage Trail* (Tallahassee, 2000) 40.

²⁹ Stella Suberman, *The Jew Store* (Chapel Hill, 1998).

³⁰ Oscar Straus, *Under Four Administrations: From Cleveland to Taft* (Boston, 1922), 6.

³¹ Henry G. Baker, *Rich's of Atlanta: The Story of a Store since 1867* (Atlanta, 1953), 6–12.

³² Roland Flade, *The Lehmans: From Rimpar to the New World, A Family History* (Würzburg, Germany, 1999), 45.

³³ George Cohen, *The Jews in the Making of America* (Boston, 1924), 243–244.

Samuel Fleishman: Tragedy in Reconstruction-Era Florida

by

Daniel R. Weinfeld

On October 5, 1869, vigilantes seized Samuel Fleishman, a Jewish merchant who had lived in Florida for more than twenty years, escorted him out of Jackson County, and warned him never to return. A week later, Fleishman was shot along a country road about twelve miles from his home in Marianna. No one would be charged with Fleishman's murder.

Historians of Reconstruction in Florida have briefly noted the tragic story of Samuel Fleishman and have proposed various explanations for his murder. The earliest accounts focused on Fleishman having been expelled for expressing opinions "derogatory to 'white supremacy.'" Other historians referenced Fleishman's association with "carpetbagger" Republican officials and described him as encouraging blacks to avenge killings by murdering whites. Jerrill Shofner, the leading scholar of Reconstruction-era Florida, has emphasized that Fleishman was "disliked for advancing credit to Negroes."¹ These accounts have not, however, critically examined facts about Fleishman's expulsion and murder. Probing the sources raises questions concerning assumptions about Fleishman's last week of life and about the circumstances surrounding his death.

Historians have also failed to address the significance of the Fleishman story. The general consensus is that southern Jews in the nineteenth century almost universally complied with the prevailing societal mores regarding race and white hegemony, the major exception being the attention and treatment Jewish peddlers

and merchants gave to their African American clientele.² Fleishman's family life, business dealings, reaction to the Civil War, and relationships with Republican officials and the recently freed black population during Reconstruction challenge this perception. Fleishman chose not to conform to expected community behavior regarding politics and race and paid the consequences as a victim of politically motivated violence.

The Antebellum Period

Beginning in the 1820s, many Jews, often alone or with siblings, traveled in steerage from Bavaria, the Rhineland, and Alsace-Lorraine to America. Since 1813, Bavarian Jews had been subject to the *Matrikel*, mandating registration for marriage and livelihood and fixing the number of Jews who could settle in every town and village and the number who could marry. Young Bavarian Jews, oppressed by such restrictions, were drawn by the promise of liberty and economic opportunity to America.³ Samuel Fleishman, born in Bavaria in the early 1820s, joined this flow of Jewish immigrants to the United States. Filing naturalization papers in New York City on October 4, 1845, Fleishman listed his occupation as "peddler."⁴

Many German Jewish immigrants to the United States started out at the bottom of the economic ladder as itinerant peddlers.⁵ For young, unmarried men, peddling promised the most direct route to earning money.⁶ Peddlers, typically from eighteen to twenty-five years of age, obtained a small stock of dry goods, cloth, and cheap jewelry with a personal reserve of capital, or with a loan from a relative, or on credit, and set out with a pack for rural areas that they hoped were under-serviced. They learned English and appreciated the independence that peddling allowed whether they chose to wander on their own or in teams. These young men were optimistic that peddling was to be a first step leading to the establishment of retail and wholesale stores.⁷

Some peddlers found an open market for their business ambitions in the American South where they filled a useful economic niche and rarely competed economically with the established white society.⁸ Besides being appreciated for the novelty of their

visits to break the monotony of rural life, Jewish peddlers benefited from the fact that the racial bigotry and anxiety of their customers were focused on slaves and Catholics, not on the relatively few Jewish immigrants.⁹ Since the antebellum South was largely free of overt antisemitism, Jewish peddlers considered themselves accepted and even welcome.¹⁰ Many also profited from their willingness to trade with blacks. On their trips throughout the farming areas, they found customers among plantation-bound slaves.¹¹

Not long after arriving in New York City, Samuel Fleishman made his way to the small town of Quincy, seat of Gadsden County, Florida, adjacent to the Georgia border. With economic growth fueled by rapidly expanding tobacco cultivation, the county was a promising area to begin a career during the late 1840s and 1850s.¹² The 1850 Gadsden County census listed Fleishman as residing with a younger man, Philip Fleishman, presumably Samuel's brother.¹³

Still retaining frontier characteristics, Florida presented opportunity for the ambitious to rise quickly to wealth and status. The population had grown rapidly since the territory was acquired from Spain in 1821, but at the time it attained statehood in 1845, Florida still had only seventy thousand inhabitants split nearly evenly between blacks, virtually all of whom were slaves, and whites. The population doubled by 1860 but remained scattered primarily across the northern belt stretching from Pensacola in the west to Jacksonville in the east.

Eighty percent of Florida's cotton production took place in the plantation region that extended from the Suwannee River west to Gadsden County and its neighbor across the Apalachicola River, Jackson County.¹⁴ The money crop, short staple cotton, was cultivated on large plantations by "gangs" of slave laborers who outnumbered the white inhabitants.¹⁵ Entry into the elite came through investments in land and slaves and this elite controlled most of the state's wealth and dominated its politics during the antebellum period.¹⁶

Jewish settlement in Florida dated to the Spanish territorial period. Nonetheless, when the Fleishman brothers arrived, only

about fifty Jews lived in the new state. This tiny Jewish population, however, included David Levy Yulee, who served as one of Florida's initial United States Senators from statehood until 1851 and again from 1856 until secession.¹⁷ Approximately two hundred Jews migrated to Florida during the fifteen years between statehood and secession. These newcomers, mostly from the Germanic states, worked as merchants, peddlers, and farmers. Although many lived in Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and Pensacola, most resided in small towns scattered in between.¹⁸ Few records concerning these individuals survive.¹⁹

The Jews of Quincy were oriented toward the Jewish community in Bainbridge, Georgia, about twenty-five miles north.²⁰ Besides being home to a larger, more established Jewish population, Bainbridge was the terminus of the railroad to Savannah and, consequently, a link in the route traveled by the local merchants to their suppliers in New York. The few Quincy Jewish residents, all either merchants or peddlers, regularly visited Bainbridge while traveling this route.

Like many other single, young German Jewish immigrants who moved from the northeast cities to the rural Midwest and South, the Fleishman brothers likely loaded packs and peddled in the villages and farms until they settled in Quincy. Unlike fellow German-born Gadsden residents David and Jacob Strauss, and Solomon Levi, who were listed as peddlers in the 1850 census, the Fleishmans had already ascended to merchant status.

The Fleishmans likely operated a small general retail store. Southern storekeepers were integrated in the agricultural system where cash was rare and the need to extend credit to tide over the customer until the next harvest was inescapable.²¹ The merchants formed associations with mercantile firms at port cities, known as cotton factors or port merchants, whom the inland merchant supplied with cotton and, in return, received supplies bought in New York or New Orleans. While the town merchant provided credit to the farmer, he received stock also on credit from the factor in anticipation of the cotton bales the merchant would forward at harvest time. If the crop was successful, the farmer's debt to the merchant would be liquidated. If the crop failed, the debt carried

*Detail from map of Florida, published by
Asher & Adams, 1871, showing Marianna, Quincy,
Chattahoochee, Bainbridge, and their environs.
Fleishman was last seen alive walking
from Chattahoochee toward Marianna.
(Courtesy of the Special Collections Department,
Tampa Library, University of South Florida.)*

forward to the next year with interest. Similarly, the merchant was obligated to settle his open accounts with the port factor.²² In this system, immense amounts of trade took place with cash rarely changing hands. It facilitated the cotton economy but a crop failure spelled disaster for the entire community.²³

By 1853, Fleishman had purchased property in Marianna, where he made his home for most of his remaining years.²⁴ The town served as the social, economic, and political center of Jackson County where the populace gathered for “horseracing, circuses, political events and celebrations” on public holidays. High society consisted of planters, merchants, professional men,

and their families.²⁵ Although the total population numbered no more than three or four hundred, Marianna boasted several doctors and lawyers, at least two hotels and several stores attesting to its prosperity and status as the local hub.²⁶

Cotton, of course, was Jackson County's major crop. Because Marianna was situated about twenty-five miles inland from the Gulf Coast and the nearby Chipola River was not navigable, its growth was stymied by the lack of efficient transportation to market. Crops were shipped down the Apalachicola River, about twenty miles from Marianna, until the extension of the railroad from Savannah into southern Georgia in the late 1850s changed Marianna's market orientation.²⁷

Like other Southern merchants, Fleishman often traveled to New York City to replenish his supplies and avoid the middleman markup the port merchants added to goods.²⁸ During one of these trips in the mid-1850s, he found a bride. Sophia Altman, at least ten years younger than he, was born in the mid-1830s in the United States.²⁹ Her parents, Philip and Celia, were, like Fleishman, Bavarian immigrants. The Altmans had arrived in New York in the 1830s. By the time Fleishman became his son-in-law, Philip Altman was an established dry goods merchant in New York's Bowery district. Sophia's two younger brothers, Morris, born in 1837, and Benjamin, born in 1840, played significant roles in the story of the Fleishman family.

Fleishman returned with Sophia to Marianna where, during the late 1850s, his business prospered and their family grew with the births of William in 1857 and Benjamin in 1859. In addition to his store, Fleishman began operating a tavern in the Gulf Coast summer resort of St. Andrews.³⁰ In September 1859, Fleishman paid \$1,250 for a store and house on two acres of land in the hamlet of Campbellton, the center of a large plantation area eighteen miles northwest of Marianna near the Alabama border. Fleishman also acquired property deeds from other Jackson County residents from 1859 through 1861. As was customary in this cash-poor society, the deeds were probably transferred to satisfy debts owed him.³¹ Trips to New York continued and Sophia's presence on passenger lists suggests that, in addition to

purchasing provisions, visiting the Altmans was another objective of these journeys.³²

In 1860, the entire Jewish population of Gadsden and Jackson counties consisted of no more than fifteen men, women, and children. Samuel's brother, Philip, had remained behind in Quincy where his household included another Bavarian, Simon Fleishman, born in 1840. Ferdinand A. and Fannie Fleishman, their son Samuel, and another man named Benjamin Fleishman, had also established themselves as merchants in Quincy.³³ While no clear evidence exists, the household information from census records and typical family migration patterns make it reasonable to conclude that most, if not all of these Fleishmans from Bavaria, were related.³⁴

By the time Samuel and Sophia celebrated the birth of their third son, Albert, in 1861, the Civil War had begun. The events set in motion by the war led to disruption and tragedy.

The Civil War

Despite divisions among citizens over secession prior to the war, once military activity commenced in April 1861, Jackson County's young men enthusiastically mobilized, with more than five hundred serving in the Confederate army.³⁵ Their companies led by county officers fought in various theatres throughout the war.

In his study of Jewish Confederates, Robert N. Rosen states that out of a total southern Jewish population of twenty-five thousand, between two thousand and three thousand men, sons of Sephardic families that arrived more than a century earlier, as well as new immigrants from the German states served in all branches of the Confederate military.³⁶ Jews, like other southerners, were motivated to fight to "do their duty, protect their homeland, protect Southern rights and liberty and, after the war began, loyalty to comrades in arms." Ironically, many of the Jewish immigrant volunteers had fled the German states to avoid military service.³⁷ Neither Fleishman brother, however, joined the regiments organized in Jackson and Gadsden counties during the secession fervor of 1861.

Downtown Marianna, Florida, 1890.

Presumably not much had changed since Samuel Fleishman lived there.

(Courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection,

Florida State Archives, Department of State, Tallahassee, Florida.)

The initial wave of volunteers did not satisfy the Confederate military's needs, and the Richmond government soon resorted to drafting its citizens. Samuel Fleishman was too old to be subject to the first Conscription Act of April 1862 that applied to men up to the age of thirty-five. When the act was amended in September 1862 to extend the age to forty-five, the Fleishman brothers were brought within its bounds. Philip reported for service in Florida's Fifth Cavalry regiment in March 1863 and presented a substitute to serve in his place, an option available until the end of 1863.³⁸ At some point during the fall or winter of 1862-1863, Samuel decided to escape conscription by leaving the South.³⁹

Fleishman lived in an area of the Confederacy where evasion of military service was not rare. While Florida's men were being sent to fight across the South, Jefferson Davis's government viewed Florida "as a sparsely settled appendage to the

Confederacy which did not justify the use of troops when they were so sorely needed elsewhere."⁴⁰ By the summer of 1862, Florida's long coastline was defended only by small, widely dispersed garrisons, leaving it virtually defenseless against the Union navy. All the major ports were quickly destroyed, blockaded, or occupied by Union forces. Since the Confederacy's armies were not defending their own homes, some Floridians felt little incentive to risk their lives to defend the homes of other southerners.

Several factors may have contributed to Fleishman's decision to leave home, his wife, who was likely pregnant, and three small children. Certainly Fleishman's businesses would have been nearly ruined by the war. Because of the Union naval blockade, Marianna had virtually no outlet for the cotton crop on which the local economy depended. St. Andrews Bay, the summer resort where Samuel had operated the tavern, was abandoned by the Confederates and destroyed by the Union navy. Sophia's father and brothers, successful merchants in New York City, could be expected to welcome Samuel. Moreover, Sophia, with two service-age brothers in New York, did not have a deep-seated attachment to the South that would have influenced her to encourage Samuel to serve the Confederacy.⁴¹

In the anarchic environment of the Florida Panhandle, Fleishman would have experienced little difficulty reaching the Union boats along the coast for transport to Union-occupied New Orleans or Key West and then to New York. Samuel may have followed the same route as Ferdinand Fleishman who, evading service in the Confederate army, left his wife and four children in Quincy to travel to Key West, where he swore an oath of allegiance to the Union in January 1864. From Key West, Ferdinand sailed to New York.⁴²

While the trip would have been relatively simple for an adult, it certainly would have been impractical to bring a pregnant wife and three small children. Samuel's brother, Philip, who was not married, remained in Florida and his presence may have eased Samuel's decision to leave his family behind. Perhaps in anticipation of his departure, Fleishman deeded the Campbellton property to Sophia in February 1862.⁴³

Around the time Fleishman left Florida in late 1862 or early 1863, Sophia's father died and Morris Altman succeeded him as head of the family business. The growing Altman Brothers firm probably made good use of Samuel, the experienced merchant and relative. Meanwhile, Sophia gave birth to her first daughter, Lulu, and endured the deprivations that afflicted Marianna and the Confederacy.

Jackson County's economy had been destroyed by the lack of able-bodied men and the naval blockade. Acts of the Richmond government that transferred supplies from private citizens to the government at set prices and imposed new taxes created hardship. A military hospital was established in Marianna in 1863, placing further demands on the town's residents.⁴⁴ Guerilla bands composed of deserters from the Confederate army and Unionists roamed almost at will.⁴⁵ In September 1864, Union forces raided Marianna causing substantial damage, killing nine Confederates, and carrying away a number of the town's citizens as prisoners. This raid, which appears to have been needlessly destructive, left behind a legacy of bitterness and resentment.⁴⁶ Perhaps under financial duress, Sophia sold the Campbellton property to Philip in the fall of 1864 for the same \$2,500 price listed on the deed from her husband.

Aftermath of the War and the Arrival of the Freedmen's Bureau

When Fleishman returned to Marianna at war's end, he found a society disrupted economically, politically, and socially. Like the rest of the South, Marianna and Florida had undergone dramatic changes. As many as five thousand of Florida's men, out of an 1860 total white population of 77,747, had died in the war from combat or disease. Land values had declined precipitously, capital was nonexistent, goods scarce, the state government was barely functioning and of uncertain legitimacy, and most dramatically, sixty-two thousand slaves, on whom the plantation system had depended, were now free.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, the situation in Florida gave some cause for optimism. The state government that operated under the Confederacy was displaced in May 1865 by the Union army and

Quincy Main Street, 1875.
(Courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection,
Florida State Archives, Department of State, Tallahassee, Florida.)

martial law. Recognizing that the first priority was to plant crops, the army ordered planters to enter into contracts with the recently emancipated black laborers. With a successful cotton crop in 1865, the Florida economy enjoyed a revival, even though the harvest was only half the prewar level. Simultaneously, merchants increased their business operations.⁴⁸ Fleishman had returned at a propitious moment.

Soon after his return, Marianna became the residence of agents of the Freedmen's Bureau and a small garrison of black soldiers. Congress had established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (referred to by its agents as the "Bureau") in March 1865 to supervise and manage the matters mentioned in its title.⁴⁹ Bureau administrators from the Union army were assigned to each state and eventually to each county in Florida. While initially focused on ensuring fair labor contracts, the bureau provided relief and educational guidance and sought the impartial dispensation of justice by local courts. Understaffed and overwhelmed, bureau representatives quickly recognized the need to focus activities on protecting the rights of blacks from a white population intent on imposing a status on African Americans identical to slavery in all but name.

In February 1866, Captain Charles M. Hamilton assumed the post of sub-assistant commissioner for the bureau in Jackson and three nearby counties. Hamilton persuaded his boyhood neighbor and fellow veteran, William J. Purman, to resign his War Department job and come to Marianna to serve as Hamilton's assistant responsible for Jackson County.⁵⁰ Hamilton and Purman immediately began revising labor contracts that were grossly prejudicial against the usually illiterate black farm laborers. They also promoted the other main bureau goal of establishing a school system for the freed people and their children. Without official instructions, although with bureau approval, Hamilton and Purman initiated a program of lectures designed to educate the "almost helpless wards of the Government . . . on business, in their rights, on the laws of the State, and their duties and conduct under them."⁵¹

The white community quickly discerned the limits of the bureau's power and outmaneuvered the agents at nearly every turn.⁵² With the local courts refusing to seat black jurors, the judicial system became yet another powerful instrument of white domination and a tool to undermine the bureau agents and their goal of advancing the freedmen's position. Lamenting that their only means to enforce bureau directions was moral persuasion, Hamilton and Purman insisted in report after report that a troop of cavalry would do infinite good in Jackson County.⁵³

The enthusiastic approach of Hamilton and Purman to their tasks provoked deep animosity from most white citizens of Jackson County. The two men quickly found themselves isolated and ostracized. While the "better order of gentlemen" were friendly on the street, Purman complained, they would "never compromise their social standing by extending to the forlorn Agents an invitation or introduction to their homes and families."⁵⁴ He observed that the "tone of feeling" within the white community was "malignant and insulting to the extreme." Hamilton began to feel "well grounded fears" for his personal safety.⁵⁵

The agents succeeded in finding only a few white allies who were willing to express empathy publicly for their goals. Hamilton and Purman befriended Dr. John L. Finlayson, a Confederate veteran from a prominent slaveholding Marianna family. Finlayson risked the enmity of his community by providing medical service to freedmen and by teaching freedmen at the bureau school in Marianna.⁵⁶ Perhaps most scandalously of all from the point of view of the white community, Finlayson's two sisters became romantically involved with his new Yankee friends.⁵⁷ Hamilton found another sympathizer in Samuel Fleishman.

Fleishman in Reconstruction-Era Marianna

In the immediate wake of Fleishman's return, there is no evidence of resentment against him for evading Confederate military service and leaving the South during the war. On the contrary, Fleishman was readmitted to civic life and appeared on Marianna's grand jury rolls in 1866. He established a store operating under the name Altman Brothers without any great hindrance

and, for the rest of his life, identified himself as the “authorized agent” for the Altman firm.⁵⁸ Jackson County merchants, who had benefited from the cotton crop of 1865, found less success in 1866 and many failed with the dismal harvest of 1867.⁵⁹ Fleishman, however, stayed solvent through this difficult period. The Fleishman family also grew with Sophia giving birth to Carrie in 1867 and Henrietta (called Etta) in 1869.⁶⁰ Now consisting of eight members, it was likely the largest Jewish household in either Jackson or Gadsden counties during the 1860s.

Further evidence of Fleishman’s active participation in commerce is found in his frequent appearance in court as a litigant in his own name, the name of the Altman Brothers firm, on behalf of Morris Altman, and even in the name of Sophia’s deceased father, Philip Altman. A number of Marianna lawyers were kept busy with lawsuits brought both by and against Samuel Fleishman and the Altmans. Most were small claims for breach of contract and occasional garnishments. Few suits exceeded three hundred dollars in alleged damages. Surprisingly, early in 1867 Benjamin Altman brought a breach of contract action against Fleishman, initially in the amount of two thousand dollars. Fleishman did not contest this claim and Benjamin was eventually awarded \$1,073 plus costs from his older brother-in-law. The records of Jackson County’s courthouse from the late 1860s list numerous deeds to properties transferred to the Altmans probably in satisfaction of debts owed to the business.⁶¹

Fleishman courted notoriety by openly trading with and employing freed people. By seeking this business, Fleishman defied the credit system that many planters had established in league with merchants. The prominent African American journalist and civil rights activist Timothy Thomas Fortune remembered having worked as a “store boy” for Fleishman when he was a child and that Fleishman was resented for acquiring “most of the Negro trade.”⁶² This charge of trading with blacks was later raised publicly against Fleishman.

By mid-1867, Fleishman also openly associated with Charles Hamilton and became identified by both the bureau agents and the white conservatives as sympathetic to the bureau. Hamilton’s

regard is evidenced by his earnest recommendation that Fleishman be appointed Jackson County tax collector. "Mr. F. is a union man," Hamilton wrote "and has never given aid, counsel, or encouragement to the rebellion. He is a correct business and conscientious man."⁶³ For unknown reasons, Fleishman did not receive the appointment.

The somewhat neutral attitude with which Fleishman was received on his return to Marianna was subsequently supplanted by outright hostility. Together with other Republican sympathizers, Fleishman was subjected to the wrath of the white community. Finlayson, Fleishman, and other men who had taken "a firm stand in advocating the cause of Government," Hamilton observed, "are daily insulted upon the streets by such remarks as 'I smell a radical—and he stinks like a nigger'—or 'there's a republican—he's no better than a dog.'"

The harassment of Fleishman, like that of Hamilton, soon moved beyond verbal insults to vandalism. In mid-October 1867, Hamilton found that "some rebels" had entered his stables and shaved his horses' manes and tails. He discovered that Fleishman's horses had been subject to similar treatment and that two new buggies Fleishman had just received from New York were damaged "by having all the cushionings & leather cut up & disfigured." Fleishman assessed this damage at one hundred dollars.⁶⁴ Hamilton later suspected that Billy Coker, son of a leading Marianna merchant, and his group of "rowdies" were behind these acts, but he was unable to gather sufficient evidence to bring charges.⁶⁵ With prescience, Hamilton recognized that there was "no adequate protection for life and property of the friends of the Government."⁶⁶

Another example of harassment of Fleishman is found in the confusing, rambling narrative of Joseph Nelson, a young freedman. Before the U.S. House of Representatives' Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States (the "KKK Hearings") of 1871, Nelson recounted the events of Friday, October 1, 1869, that precipitated his own flight from the county. Nelson spoke about a store run by a Jew where Nelson obtained goods on credit and the storekeeper

allowed him "to go around in the store" including behind the counter.⁶⁷ Nelson told the investigators that while he was in the store, Billy Coker stormed in with a pistol in his hand. Coker approached the storekeeper, struck him over the head with the pistol, and threatened "if he said one word he would blow his damned brains out." Coker demanded that Nelson serve as a witness on behalf of Coker by stating that "the Jew had insulted him" and had drawn a gun when Coker entered the store. Coker threatened Nelson that, if he did not comply, Coker would blow Nelson's "God damned brains out." Coker then went around outside to the back of the shop where liquor was stored. As he left, Coker said to the storekeeper, "Good evening to you, God damn you; I will get you before the night is out." Nelson encountered Coker later that evening and Coker warned Nelson not to tell anyone that he had seen Coker. Coker declared that he was "going to kill that God damned rascal to-night."⁶⁸

Congressional Reconstruction Comes to Florida

With their triumph in the November 1866 midterm elections, "Radical" Republicans in Congress wrested Reconstruction policy away from Andrew Johnson. Southern white communities were stunned by the new Reconstruction laws and policies and particularly shocked by the requirement of black male suffrage. Encouraged by Andrew Johnson's example and preconditioned by their prewar states rights faith, white conservative Democrats in the region considered Congress' imposition of military control over their government and courts outrageous. The conservatives debated among themselves whether to participate in or boycott the new political system. Initially, some Jackson County whites, resigned to black suffrage, sought to win the confidence of blacks in order to advance their own interests at upcoming elections and even encouraged blacks to challenge potential Republican candidates from among the bureau agents and the white, southern-born "renegades."⁶⁹ To the dismay of the conservatives, however, the black population, which included 60 percent of those registered to vote for constitutional convention delegates in late 1867, aligned itself with the Republican Party.⁷⁰ Further feeding white fears,

*Quincy's nineteenth-century courthouse.
(Courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection,
Florida State Archives, Department of State, Tallahassee, Florida.)*

many blacks became active in secret Republican societies such as the moderate Lincoln Brotherhood and the more radical Union League.⁷¹ Bureau agent William Purman noted that the “rebels” were becoming “more desperate and reckless” as their “political fortunes are made more and more desperate by the legislation of Congress.”⁷²

Realizing that they would not gain black support, white conservatives sat out the elections for the constitutional convention. To their chagrin, William Purman was elected as a convention delegate. Twenty-seven years old and with no political experience, Purman immediately assumed a leadership role in the moderate Republican faction battling the radical Republican camp for control of the convention. After much wrangling and chicanery, the moderate Republicans drafted a new state constitution that extended equal rights to all men and guaranteed suffrage to all males over twenty-one years of age.⁷³ The new constitution was narrowly approved by a majority of Florida’s registered voters in May 1868 and representatives were elected for the state legislature and Congress. Jackson County whites were further astonished when Charles Hamilton was elected Florida’s first congressman to sit in Washington since 1861 and Purman was sent by Jackson County voters as senator to Florida’s legislature in Tallahassee. Hamilton easily won reelection for a full two-year term in December 1868 over a Democrat also from Jackson County. Manifesting the new political order, two of Jackson County’s three state legislators, including Emanuel Fortune, Timothy Thomas Fortune’s father, were black.⁷⁴ Black candidates also filled, through election or appointment, local offices such as sheriff and constable. Finlayson became county clerk, and John Quincy Dickinson, a Union army veteran who had arrived in Marianna in September 1868 to replace Purman as bureau agent, was appointed justice of the peace.⁷⁵ With this political revolution of 1868, white forbearance reached its limit.⁷⁶

The Jackson County Reign of Terror Begins

In the late 1860s, secretive, organized bands, known variously as regulators, redeemers, Young Men’s Democratic Clubs, the

Ku Klux Klan, or the Invisible Empire, employed terror to drive out or eliminate Republican activists, intimidate blacks from political expression, and seize political power for white, conservative Democrats across the South.⁷⁷ In areas where racial minorities were small and there was no real question of political dominance, little violence was involved. In places such as Jackson County where the black population was marginally larger than the white population, blood was shed freely. The Republican administration that had gained control of the political apparatus of the state in the 1868 elections was unable to stem the onslaught of violence. The very effective "Ku Klux" organization, with widespread white support, made it impossible for the government to bring perpetrators to justice.⁷⁸

The same Republican ascendancy that enabled Florida to be readmitted to the Union also enabled conservative whites to reassert their power. The attainment of almost all elected and appointed political posts in the state in the summer and fall 1868 elections by white Republicans, who had come from the North in the wake of the war, and by freedmen, galvanized white opposition.⁷⁹ Concomitantly, with regained statehood under Republican leadership, the Federal government removed most troops and diminished the role assigned to the bureau to primarily supervising education. Without Federal backing on the local level, the nascent Republican organizations were in no position to contest control of divided communities such as Jackson County. Republican officials including Finlayson, Dickinson, and Emanuel Fortune, elected officeholders like Hamilton and Purman, and supporters such as Fleishman were subjected to persecution by white vigilantes and soon feared for their lives.

The Jackson County conservatives were led by middle-class Confederate veterans from Marianna referred to sarcastically by Hamilton and Purman as "the chivalry." The acknowledged leaders were James Coker, a prominent merchant, and Colonel James McClellan, an attorney.⁸⁰ The acts of intimidation and violence were perpetrated by young Marianna men, including Coker's son, Billy, who were, in Purman's words "always full of whiskey and passion."⁸¹ Notorious hired assassins roamed the countryside and

Marianna. Many older citizens, prosperous landowners prior to the war, many of whom had remained Unionists after secession, did not participate in or approve of the conservatives' tactics yet were intimidated into silence.⁸² The regulators were determined to drive out the radicals who had stirred up blacks against their former masters and led them politically. Purman, who had replaced Hamilton as bureau agent in January 1868, was the particular target of conservative wrath.⁸³ No one, however, who openly sympathized with the Republicans, would be spared.⁸⁴

A shotgun blast on February 27, 1869, signaled the beginning of the ruthless effort to eliminate Republican leadership and to resubjugate the black population. As they walked home after 10 p.m. from a concert in the town, Purman and Finlayson were ambushed. Purman was shot through the neck and severely wounded. Finlayson was struck in the temple and killed instantly. Rumors spread that armed blacks loyal to Purman were gathering to sack the town in revenge. Purman later took credit for persuading his supporters to refrain from violence. Recovering from his wounds about five or six weeks later, he left Marianna on senate business and returned to Jackson County only once.⁸⁵ Even though the identity of the assassins was openly discussed in Marianna and testified to before Congress, no charges were brought against the gunmen.

Several murders of blacks and whites occurred in the following months. Emanuel Fortune fled with his family fearing for his life. Dickinson assumed Finlayson's county clerkship and was soon subjected to the conservatives' ire. Despite these events, quiet prevailed during the spring and summer of 1869. Litigants, including Fleishman, pursued and defended claims. The Altman Brothers firm continued to assume mortgages and receive assignment of deeds from various property holders.

Chaos Reigns

An unprecedented wave of violence swept over Jackson County in late September 1869 as murder became a regular occurrence. With Purman now avoiding Jackson County in fear for his life and Hamilton away in Washington, the regulators next

targeted Calvin Rogers, a freedman who had been elected constable. On Tuesday morning, September 28, black women, children, and men including Rogers were ambushed en route to a picnic outside Marianna. Rogers was wounded and another man and a two-year old boy were shot to death.⁸⁶

After hearing about the shooting, Dickinson, serving as justice of the peace, summoned a grand jury to investigate. A fruitless day and night were spent following tracks in the countryside. Dickinson identified a suspect in a letter he sent to Hamilton that Thursday, but the grand jury ultimately returned a verdict of "shot by unknown." This verdict, the same determination reached by the grand jury investigating the Finlayson and Purman shootings, became a familiar refrain through the coming years. The evening following the picnic shootings, two men, one white and one black, hauling cotton in the countryside were ambushed and severely wounded. Anarchy ensued.⁸⁷

A rumor spread that on the day of the picnic murders Fleishman had advised blacks gathered at his store to avenge the slayings by murdering whites. Local newspapers carried different versions of the story. The anonymous author of a letter from Jackson County claimed that "Samuel Fleishman, a German, and an old citizen of the county, it seems . . . remarked publicly in the streets of Marianna, that six citizens of the county, (naming them) should be killed in retaliation."⁸⁸ The following week in the Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, "an influential citizen in Marianna" wrote that Fleishman, "an Israelite," found in the deaths at the picnic "an opportunity of stirring up strife and animosity between the two races, and he proclaimed on the public streets that the Republicans should kill the whites or rebs wherever they found them, whether guilty or innocent, and that they should kill several of our most prominent and quiet citizens, naming T. White, Judge Bush and others; and he has told colored people if they desired to kill the rebs or burn them up they could get powder and shot from him free of cost."⁸⁹ To add further confusion, Jacksonville's *Florida Union* did not mention Fleishman, but asserted that "the colored people swore then that three of the best citizens in Marianna should be killed in retaliation."⁹⁰

Whether or not Fleishman made the inflammatory statement,⁹¹ the damage to his standing in the community was irreparable and subsequent events made his living peacefully in Marianna impossible. On Friday, October 1, the same day Nelson suggested that Billy Coker assaulted and threatened Fleishman, more blood was shed. That afternoon, the grand jury investigating the picnic murders returned its empty verdict. About 9 p.m., James Coker and James McClellan were talking on the porch of the hotel in the Marianna town square. Between them sat McClellan's teenage daughter, Maggie. Gunshots burst from the darkness. Maggie was killed and her father wounded in the arm. James McClellan claimed he recognized the voice of Constable Calvin Rogers, the intended target of the picnic ambush earlier that week, commanding "fire." Nelson, visiting friends nearby, heard the gunshots and assumed that Billy Coker had murdered the storekeeper.⁹²

Saturday morning, Dickinson found the streets patrolled by fifty to sixty armed men, including Billy Coker and his friends. When Calvin Rogers was spotted in town that morning, the "rebel yell" reverberated. Throughout the day, more armed white men arrived from across the county. Marianna was now in the hands of "drunk and desperate" young men while "the elder and better men were afraid, and mostly kept out of sight."⁹³ Dickinson vainly attempted to maintain the rule of law, calling for inquests into the mounting number of murders. On Sunday night, Dickinson wrote to Hamilton that "terror reigns" and Marianna had become "a small hell on earth."⁹⁴ Small groups of white men from town rode out that night to isolated homesteads to terrorize African American Republicans.⁹⁵

Now it was Fleishman's turn. On Monday afternoon, Fleishman was visited at home by two prominent white citizens who informed him that James Coker, William Barnes (Hamilton's Democratic opponent for Congress in 1868), and others wished to see him. Fleishman thereupon proceeded to Coker's store and awaited Barnes' appearance. When it was nearly dark, Coker told Fleishman to leave and return the next day. On Tuesday morning, Fleishman found more than twenty "persons of influence in the

County assembled" at Coker's store, including Fleishman's clerk, Wilbur Jenkins. Coker stated that this group "represented the whole community and that it was the general desire of the community that I should leave for the good of said community." Fleishman was informed that "they were confident" that if he remained, he "should be killed on account of certain expressions made by [Fleishman] (as alleged) on Tuesday last." The committee told Fleishman that if he were killed, they feared "twenty or thirty others might be killed on account of it and to save bloodshed" he should leave.⁹⁶

Fleishman replied "that my business was such that it would damage me twenty thousand dollars" to depart. He continued: "if I had committed a crime I was willing to be tried and punished for it, but that it was impossible to arrange my business to leave before January 1st 1870. That I would rather die than leave." The committee insisted that "they had no desire to take my life, but on the contrary wished to save it and to do the best thing they could for the safety of the community." Fleishman, first given two hours to make arrangements and depart, successfully argued for a reprieve until 5 p.m. and then until sundown at which time the committee "would come after me and take me away."⁹⁷

After the meeting, Fleishman sought Dickinson, "the only officer of the law, in the town that I know of." Aware that Dickinson was powerless against the regulators, Fleishman had decided to establish a record of the events that occurred that day that foreshadowed the harm that might come to him. Fleishman "solemnly protested against the outrage threatened" and dictated a statement that Dickinson composed as an affidavit Fleishman swore to and signed.⁹⁸ At 4 p.m., three hours after signing the affidavit, Fleishman returned to Dickinson and dictated a second, shorter document. Fleishman reported that around 3 p.m., James Coker came to Altman Brothers and "asked for all the Guns and Pistols I had in the store . . . for the men in defense of the town during the present excitement." Coker stated that Fleishman's property would be returned, and Coker would be responsible. Jenkins handed the key to Coker who took eight guns, eleven pistols, powder, shot and caps. Fleishman added that there were about

The second affidavit "sworn and subscribed" by Samuel Fleishman to John Q. Dickinson shortly before Fleishman's expulsion on October 5, 1869. (Courtesy of the Deanne and Arnold Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica.)

eleven thousand or twelve thousand dollars worth of goods in his store.⁹⁹

Fleishman did not meet the departure deadline. After 9 p.m., four men came to his lodging and forcefully took him about twenty-five miles to the Georgia border.¹⁰⁰ Now Fleishman began a weeklong, one hundred and fifty mile circular walk through the rural countryside and small towns of the Florida-Georgia border area with the ultimate aim of returning to his home and family despite the risk of death. Fleishman visited the places he had come to know in twenty years, first as a peddler, then as a merchant.

Fleishman arrived first in Bainbridge. The largest town in the rural area across the Georgia border from Jackson County, Bainbridge was an obvious place for Fleishman to seek food and shelter and to devise a plan of action. Fleishman had traveled to Bainbridge frequently to meet the train to Savannah en route to New York. The city also had a relatively large Jewish community and Fleishman may have hoped to find assistance from acquaintances. He was too well known, however, to travel unnoticed and encountered Louis Gamble, a Marianna merchant. Fleishman informed Gamble that he intended to go to Quincy and then back to Marianna in a few days.¹⁰¹ Gamble returned to Marianna and reported this information.

Fleishman next traveled the twenty-seven miles to his former home in Quincy, Florida, where he was certain to find his brother, Philip, or the other Fleishman men. None of them, however, appear in any of the accounts of Fleishman's last days. Fleishman soon left for Tallahassee. Perhaps as a Republican he hoped to find help from officials in the capital. On Saturday, October 9, Fleishman began the final seventy-five mile return to Marianna.¹⁰²

While Fleishman was wandering about the countryside, the swiftly spreading rumor regarding Fleishman's words grew more outrageous and inflammatory with each retelling, cementing the perception of Fleishman as a danger to the white community. The *Weekly Floridian* correspondent even held Fleishman responsible for the murder of Maggie McClellan and the wounding of her father. He was portrayed as "more dangerous to the peace of society than the midnight assassin." The paper's editors concluded that

the citizens of Marianna were justifiably incensed and "to have compassed his death then and there, though bad policy, would have been no more than he deserved."¹⁰³

The next eyewitness report of Fleishman's travels came from Chattahoochee, a Florida village along the Apalachicola River midway between Quincy and Marianna, where Fleishman visited Colonel Malachi Martin, warden of the state prison. In his testimony at the KKK Hearings two years later, Martin stated that Fleishman had asked for protection. Martin testified that he advised Fleishman not to go to Marianna, but Fleishman replied that "he was compelled to go; that all he had in the world was there; that he had a large amount out; that he had trusted the planters a great deal . . . they would gather their crop and sell it, and he would not be able to collect his money unless he was there; that his family were there; that his store and stock of goods and all his interests were there and he must go back." Martin and Fleishman then went down to the village of Chattahoochee where they asked for news from Jackson County. Communication had stopped, and no information could be obtained. They heard that "every one was afraid to go there, and no person would go except some one who supposed he would be safe, who was one of the white people who belonged to the party there . . . no one who was a republican would go." Despite this warning, Fleishman set off on foot on the remaining twenty-four miles to Marianna.¹⁰⁴

As evidenced by newspaper accounts and Dickinson's retelling of Gamble's encounter, Fleishman's travel was being monitored. According to Tallahassee's *Weekly Floridian*, with news of Fleishman's return, "fresh alarm was excited among the law-abiding citizens." He had returned "for no good purpose and would be a fire-brand in their midst."¹⁰⁵ Sympathizers in Gadsden County likely informed the Marianna regulators of Fleishman's progress as he walked from Quincy through Chattahoochee to Marianna. With sufficient notice to intercept Fleishman in the countryside, the assassin set the ambush.¹⁰⁶

Martin testified that en route from Chattahoochee to Marianna, Fleishman encountered a former employee named Sims, a white conservative, who warned Fleishman that if he

returned to Marianna he would be murdered. Sims offered Fleishman a ride in his buggy back to Chattahoochee, whereupon Fleishman insisted that he would return to Marianna. Fleishman continued his journey, and Sims, the last person to report seeing Fleishman alive, proceeded to Chattahoochee. About one-half mile from the spot where Fleishman encountered Sims, Fleishman's body was found "with several wounds."¹⁰⁷

Beyond the fact that Fleishman had been shot, the circumstances of Fleishman's murder are elusive. On Monday night, October 11, Dickinson wrote in his diary that a dead white man had been found lying in the road. The next morning, he added, he had learned that the man was Fleishman. Without citing a source, Dickinson wrote that Fleishman had been walking from Chattahoochee and identified the property where the body was found. Dickinson held an inquest and the grand jury promptly returned the familiar verdict of "killed by unknown, &c." Dickinson also reported that an armed party had set out from Marianna that same morning, and he had been warned not to retrieve Fleishman's remains. On Wednesday morning, October 13, Dickinson recorded that the body had been found.¹⁰⁸

Immediately after the murder, a strange and disturbing report came from the *Marianna Courier*. As the journal of Jackson County's opponents of Republicanism, and as a vigorous promoter of the conservative cause, the *Courier* could be depended on to report rumors, impugn the reputation of victims, and decry the assignment of political motivations to local crime.¹⁰⁹ Predictably, the *Courier* absolved Marianna's conservatives from accusations of premeditated murder of Fleishman. According to the *Courier*, "on his way to this place, on foot, [Fleishman] was overtaken by some unknown person thirteen or fourteen miles from this place and murdered and robbed." The *Courier*, in contrast with the other sources, informed its readers, "The perpetrator of this foul deed had walked in company with Mr. F. for over a mile and a half before committing the deed . . . There is no clue to his detection."¹¹⁰ The *Courier* steered its audience to the conclusion that the motive for the murder was robbery committed by someone known to Fleishman.¹¹¹

*The old Chattahoochee penitentiary, on the Apalachicola River.
Fleishman was last seen alive on the road passing the penitentiary.
This old drawing predates Fleishman's time.
(Courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection,
Florida State Archives, Department of State, Tallahassee, Florida.)*

Two months after the initial inquest, the Jackson County grand jury reconvened to consider Fleishman's affidavits. At the bottom of the second affidavit the grand jury's foreman wrote, "We the Grand Jury have examined diligently into the within, [sic] and cannot find it A Case of Kidnapping."¹¹² The criminal file concerning Fleishman was closed. The ten thousand dollar reward offered by Governor Harrison Reed for the arrest and conviction of Fleishman's murderer went unclaimed. As with almost all other murders of Republicans in Jackson County during Reconstruction,

no arrest, let alone conviction, was ever made. The *Weekly Floridian* summed up the prevailing feeling among the white community of the Florida Panhandle about Fleishman's murder. Although regretting the murder "by rash and indiscreet persons upon their own responsibility," the editor commented that "when a man goes about the country endeavoring to incite a restless element to insurrection and bloodshed," he "takes his life into his own hands."¹¹³

Aftermath

The persecution of Republican leaders and politically active blacks in Jackson County intensified after Fleishman's murder. During the summer of 1870, Congressman Hamilton and State Senator Purman visited Marianna, but were compelled to arrange an escort of leading older citizens to escape the county alive. Neither returned. With the April 1871 murder of John Q. Dickinson, "the last plank that held together the republican party" in Jackson County, the Marianna regulators had achieved their goal of seizing control of county government.¹¹⁴ By late 1871, the speaker of the Florida House of Assembly reported that the Republican Party had no power in Jackson County. The Republican governor acceded to the dictates of the Jackson County population in selecting local officials since, the governor feared, Republicans would be killed "as fast as they could be appointed."¹¹⁵

During the turmoil that began with the 1868 election season and lasted through 1871, at least 166 people, mostly black, were murdered in Jackson County. In contrast, the second most violence-plagued county in Florida during this period counted no more than twenty murders.¹¹⁶ Adjacent Gadsden County reported no political killings during this time.¹¹⁷ James Coker and James McClellan, widely acknowledged as the leaders who directed the violent and decisive campaign to retake Jackson County from the Republicans, never stood trial for the crimes committed in Marianna. Instead, Coker remained in business as a merchant and storeowner and McClellan continued his law practice, even being elected to Florida's state assembly.¹¹⁸

Sophia Fleishman and her six children left for New York soon after her husband's murder.¹¹⁹ Because the Jackson County estate and probate records do not include any material relating to the Fleishmans, it is not known whether Sophia or the Altman firm were able to recover the thousands of dollars worth of merchandise in the store at the time of Fleishman's expulsion.¹²⁰ The Altmans maintained a business presence in Marianna for a time, receiving more mortgages in December 1869, and participated in property transactions there as late as the mid-1880s. The last remaining litigation involving Fleishman, an action brought by Wilbur Jenkins, was dismissed in April 1870.¹²¹ Fleishman's burial place has not been located.

The Issue of Antisemitism

While the extent of antisemitism in the nineteenth-century South is the subject of dispute among historians, most scholars have concluded that Jews were largely accepted in southern society, particularly in contrast with the North. In fact, religious intolerance does not appear to be a significant factor in Fleishman's murder. While Fleishman's Jewish identity was frequently mentioned, the only example in print of the invocation of ethnic slurs or traditional antisemitic imagery to describe him came when the *Weekly Floridian's* correspondent explained that Fleishman's acquaintances in Marianna supposed that he ingratiated himself with black customers because "he would sell his soul to Satan for money."¹²² At most, however, negative attitudes toward Jews may have eased the process in the minds of the Marianna conservatives toward rationalizing their persecution of Fleishman. Although he had been subject to harassment for at least two years, Fleishman was expelled and murdered only after dissemination of the rumor of his incendiary statement during the chaos of October 1869.¹²³ In the perception of the regulators, Fleishman's unforgivable crime was not his Jewish identity but the alleged incitement of racial hatred and bloodshed.¹²⁴

Nor did other Jews expect an antisemitic backlash following Fleishman's murder. Whereas Fleishman's death precipitated the departure of his wife, children, and brother from Florida, other

*From the Weekly
Floridian (Tallahassee),
November 9, 1869.
The same notice also ap-
peared on November 16
and November 23.
(Courtesy of Daniel
Weinfeld.)*

Jews in the area did not feel compelled to leave.¹²⁵ Nor did Fleishman's fate forestall growth of a Jewish community in Marianna and Quincy. Just over a decade after Fleishman's murder, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations reported that approximately thirty Jews lived in Marianna and seventy-five in Quincy.¹²⁶ In 1879, Marianna elected Henry Brash mayor, reportedly the first Jew to attain such an office in Florida.

Conclusion

While Fleishman's fate does not signal an eruption of southern antisemitism, his story does challenge certain assumptions about the activities of southern Jews. Scholars have argued that the price Jews paid for social acceptance and economic opportunity was silence or even complicity with the racist conventions of southern society. In this view, such abdication of moral standards with respect to the condition of African Americans was certainly ironic for a community that had come to America, in part, to find freedom from European persecution. Fleishman's story, however, complicates this compliant depiction of southern Jewish society.

Fleishman's business relationship with the local black community, although at odds with prevailing social mores, was not exceptional. Many Jewish merchants did business with blacks and treated them with greater consideration than the white community generally.¹²⁷ Jewish peddlers had been notorious for trading with slaves before the war. Many would continue to trade with their newly freed customers after emancipation. With the coming of the Civil War, Fleishman departed from the usual story, however, by evading service in the Confederate military. Upon his return, he associated with Republican officials.¹²⁸ Fleishman had to be aware that such behavior risked incurring the wrath of the white community.

Nor were Fleishman's nonconformist behavior and his fate unique among southern Jews during Reconstruction. In October 1871, M. H. Lucy, a Jewish merchant, was murdered in Alachua County, Florida. Like Fleishman, Lucy was known for having good relations with local blacks and for receiving "a great deal of

trade" from the black community. Also like Fleishman, Lucy was accused of being a Republican, although he was not politically active.¹²⁹ A year prior to Fleishman's murder, S. Bierfield, a Russian Jewish immigrant, was murdered in Franklin, Tennessee, also under circumstances very similar to Fleishman's murder. Isaac Mayer Wise's *The Israelite*, published in Cincinnati, reported that Bierfield, a store owner in the central Tennessee town, was known as a Republican, for being friendly with blacks, employing them, and having a large number of black customers. Bierfield and his African American clerk were attacked and brutally slain by the Ku Klux Klan.¹³⁰

Fleishman, like Lucy and Bierfield, was not constrained by public mores from trading with African Americans and associating with Republican officials. This willingness to flaunt the racial and political conventions that governed conservative white society suggests that Fleishman was motivated by more than just economic opportunity in his interactions with African Americans. Refusing to serve the Confederacy, taking an unpopular political stand, treating blacks fairly and acknowledging, at least on some level higher than his white contemporaries, their rights, Fleishman defied the compliant depiction of nineteenth-century southern Jews.

The exact circumstances of Fleishman's death will always remain murky. In contrast with the accounts of historians, the various sources combine to raise questions about whether Fleishman ever called upon blacks to murder whites in revenge and even suggest he may have been the victim of baseless rumor. Nevertheless, the perception that Fleishman did make such an incendiary speech focused the ire of the white community during the anarchic week in early October 1869. Driven by a mix of motivations, perhaps even personal or economic, Fleishman's persecutors seized the convenient opportunity to rid themselves of an individual whom some had harassed before and who was an irritant to many. Thus, rather than just the story of an isolated individual, the life of Samuel Fleishman provides an example of a Jewish southerner who acted courageously, perhaps recklessly, by rising

above the standards of conventional behavior and who paid tragically for such conduct.

NOTES

¹ William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (Gainesville, FL, 1964), 576; J. Randall Stanley, *History of Jackson County*, (Jackson County, FL, 1950), 210–211; Ralph L. Peek, “Lawlessness in Florida, 1868–1871,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 40 (1961): 177, 179–181; Stanley Horn, *Invisible Empire* (New York, 1973), 268–269; Jerrill H. Shofner, *Jackson County, Florida – A History* (Jackson County, 1985), 285–286. Samuel Proctor relied on Davis and Stanley for his account of Fleishman. Samuel Proctor, “Pioneer Jewish Settlement in Florida, 1764–1900,” *Proceedings of the Conference on the Writing of Regional History of the South* (New York, 1956), 99–101.

² Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear* (Athens, GA, 2001), xv, 1.

³ Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out: German Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820–1914* (New York, 1994), 1; Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830–1914* (Philadelphia, 1984), 18.

⁴ The 1850 Census listed Fleishman as twenty-eight years old while in the 1860 Census he was described as thirty-five years old. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Gadsden County, Florida; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Jackson County, Florida.

⁵ Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York, 1967), 32.

⁶ Barkai, *Branching Out*, 46.

⁷ Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, 19–21; Barkai, *Branching Out*, 45. Barkai stresses that the peddling experience was not typical for this generation but has overshadowed other economic activity in historical association because of the well-known families that started out in peddling. Most Jews toiled in urban ghettos or operated wholesale or retail stores in towns across the country.

⁸ Thomas D. Clark, “The Post Civil-War Economy in the South,” in *Jews in the South*, ed. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson, (Baton Rouge, 1973), 166.

⁹ Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, 22; Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 9–10; Clive Webb, “Jewish Merchants and Black Customers,” *Southern Jewish History* 2 (1999): 58; Louis Schmier, “Jews and Gentiles in a South Georgia Town,” in *Jews of the South*, ed. Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier with Malcolm Stern (Macon, GA, 1984), 3. For southern bigotry toward Catholics, see Stephen J. Whitfield, “Jews and Other Southerners,” in *Turn to the South*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville, 1979), 86.

¹⁰ Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC, 2000), 31; Clark, “Post Civil-War Economy,” 166.

¹¹ Barkai, *Branching Out*, 63; Bertram W. Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789-1865," in *Jews in the South*, 103-104. See also Webb, "Jewish Merchants and Black Customers," 62.

¹² David S. Avant, *Illustrated Index, J. Randall Stanley's History of Gadsden County* (Tallahassee, 1985), 58-59. In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Quincy became home to a number of prominent Jewish large leaf shade tobacco growers. Rachel B. Heimovics and Marcia Zerivitz, *The Florida Jewish Heritage Trail* (Tallahassee, 2000), 6.

¹³ While the 1850 United States Census lists Philip as twenty years old, the 1860 United States Census and his 1901 New York City death certificate state that he was born in 1828. Seventh Census, 1850, Gadsden County; Eighth Census, 1860, Gadsden County.

¹⁴ Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables, 1971), 182. Significant cotton cultivation also expanded into pockets of north-central Florida.

¹⁵ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 66.

¹⁶ Tebeau, *History*, 184.

¹⁷ Yulee was born into a Sephardic family and became nationally known as an advocate of southern states rights. Yulee helped bring statehood to Florida by serving as a delegate to the state constitutional convention in 1838 and then as territorial delegate to Congress from 1841 to 1845. He did not actively participate in the Confederacy and instead devoted the rest of his life to promoting railroad ventures. Chris Monaco, "A Sugar Utopia on the Florida Frontier: Moses Elias Levy's Pilgrimage Plantation," *Southern Jewish History*, 5 (2002): 103-140; and Heimovics and Zerivitz, *Florida Jewish Heritage Trail*, 10; Leon Huhner, "David L. Yulee, Florida's First Senator," in *Jews in the South*, 52-79.

¹⁸ Samuel Proctor, "Foreword" to *Index to Florida Jewish History in the American Israelite 1854-1900*, by Yael Herbsman (Gainesville, FL, 1992), ix.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* Even in towns, the Jewish population was miniscule. H. Loewenthal of Macon, Georgia, visited Tallahassee as a *mohel* and reported finding fifteen Jews out of a total population of about 3,500. *The Israelite*, December 21, 1860, 198.

²⁰ Gladys Friedman Paulin, "Jewish Genealogical Research in Florida," *Avotaynu* 16 (fall 2000): 9. The Jews of Quincy buried their dead in Bainbridge, Georgia, until consecrating their own cemetery in the 1930s.

²¹ Clark, "Post Civil-War Economy," 161-162.

²² Shofner, *Jackson County*, 69-70.

²³ *Ibid.*, 128-129.

²⁴ Glen Nobles, *Pioneers of Jackson County* (Jackson County, 2000).

²⁵ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 162-163.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 185, 188-190; U.S. Congress Joint Select Committee on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, [commonly referred to as the Ku Klux Klan Hearings] 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., 1872, House Report 22, v. 13, 283 (hereafter cited as U.S. House Report No. 22.)

²⁷ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 136-137.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁹ The 1860 U.S. Census recorded Sophia as being twenty-five years old while the 1880 U.S. Census listed her birth year as 1838. Eighth Census, 1860, Jackson County; Tenth Census, 1880, New York, New York.

³⁰ Marlene Womack, "Out of the Past: Founders envisioned St. Andrews a bustling seaport," [Panama City, FL] *News Herald*, July 12, 1991, 5B. In 1927 St. Andrews was annexed by Panama City.

³¹ Jackson County Property Records, microfilm, Florida State Archives. Records of County Clerk's Office, Jackson County Courthouse, Marianna, Florida. In 1860, H. Loewenthal mentioned finding "Israelites" in, among other places, Campbellton, but does not list names. *The Israelite*, December 21, 1860, 198.

³² Passenger manifests from *New York Times* show that on February 17, 1858, "P. M. Fleishman, S. Fleishman and lady" arrived from Savannah. On July 16, 1858, "Mrs. S. Fleishman and child" and "F. A. Fleishman" sailed for Savannah. On September 13, 1858, "Saml. Fleishman and servant" left New York for Savannah.

³³ H. Loewenthal, in his capacity as *mohel*, called upon the family of Ferdinand Fleishman. Loewenthal wrote that he had "never met with a more liberal set of men and women than I found in those I there became acquainted with." *The Israelite*, December 21, 1860, 198. Ferdinand had married Fannie Davis, presumably a sister of S. M. Davis of Quincy, in Gadsden County, in November 1859.

³⁴ Between 1850 and 1860, the Strauss brothers and Solomon Levi had disappeared from Gadsden but were replaced by Isaac M. R. Rosenthal, age forty-two, described as a merchant from Prussia, and S. M. Davis, age twenty-two, a clerk from Hessia. Seventh Census, 1850, Gadsden County; Eighth Census, 1860, Gadsden County. In neighboring Jackson County, Samuel and his family were joined by German-born Simon Straus, a watchmaker, and two German-born salesmen, Samuel Hofheimer and Edward Opperheimer. Eighth Census, 1860, Jackson County.

³⁵ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 235.

³⁶ Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 162. The Confederacy mobilized between 75 and 85 percent of the available white male population of draft age. Thousands more participated in vital agricultural and industrial work or were exempt from service because of physical disabilities. Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 28, 34.

³⁷ Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 49, 50.

³⁸ Philip enlisted with Company B of the Fifth Florida Cavalry in Quincy on March 10, 1863, and was discharged the same day after substituting A. D. McDonald. David W. Hartman and David Coles, comps., *Biographical Rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers 1861-1865*, IV (Wilmington, NC, 1995), 1628, 1630. Simon Fleishman, who was living with Philip in 1860, enlisted in Company B of the Sixth Florida Infantry as a private in March 1862. Benjamin A. Fleishman, also of Quincy, enlisted as a private in the same company in June 1862. Both Simon and Benjamin were cited for distinguished service. Simon was captured at Missionary Ridge in November 1863 and was confined in the Union prison at Rock Island, Illinois, until he swore an oath of allegiance in June 1865. Benjamin Fleishman was wounded at Chickamauga, Georgia, in September 1863 and was captured at

Nashville in December 1864. Benjamin was confined in the Union prison at Camp Chase, Ohio, until he was released after swearing allegiance in May 1865. *Ibid.*, II, 592; Civil War Service Records. Although not appearing in the *Biographical Rosters*, Ferdinand Fleishman enlisted in Company C of the 6th Infantry Regiment and provided a substitute. National Park Service, Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System, <http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss> (accessed by D. Weinfeld on July 15, 2005).

³⁹ Charles M. Hamilton wrote that Fleishman had left the South to escape conscription. C. M. Hamilton to A. H. Jackson, May 31, 1867; Records of the Assistant Commissioner and Subordinate field offices for the State of Florida, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (BRF&AL) 1865-1872 (microform), Department of Special Collections, Smathers Library, University of Florida, Gainesville.

⁴⁰ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 225.

⁴¹ For a description of how Jewish mothers and sisters encouraged their husbands and brothers to fight for the Confederacy, see Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 50.

⁴² Ferdinand Fleishman's life ended tragically. From New York, he went to Cincinnati. In July 1864, the twenty-eight year old's body was found in his boarding house with a bullet hole in his head and a pistol in his hand. He had left a note for an acquaintance instructing him to find \$31 in his pants pocket and to inform his wife, Fannie. *The Israelite* reported that Ferdinand "was suffering from a depression of spirit, induced partly by the expected arrival of his wife and four children from Quincey [*sic*], Florida, where he resided and owned considerable property, and partly by his cold reception on his arrival in New York, by those whose duty and pleasure it should have been to give him succor and extend him the warm hand of friendship in this his hour of adversity." *The Israelite*, July 22, 1864, 22.

⁴³ Hyman Herzberg, a young Georgia merchant, paid for a substitute and twice made the arduous, dangerous journey by land across the picket lines to the North. In 1863 on his second trip, he brought his wife and child along to stay with his parents in Philadelphia. Jacob Rader Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews 1775-1865*, III (New York, 1974), 120-121, 125-132.

⁴⁴ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 230, 236.

⁴⁵ Jerrill H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (Gainesville, FL, 1974), 2.

⁴⁶ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 246.

⁴⁷ Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 19, 25. In addition to the fifteen thousand Floridians who served in the Confederate army, about twelve hundred whites and one thousand blacks served in the Union forces.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 25, 29.

⁴⁹ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction* (New York, 1990), 68-69.

⁵⁰ Hamilton, a Pennsylvania native, had been wounded and captured by the Confederates at Fredericksburg. Robert B. Hamilton, Jr., "Hamiltons of Pine Creek, Pennsylvania." Typescript in possession of the Lycoming County (Pennsylvania) Historical Society.

⁵¹ Hamilton to J. L. McHenry, April 30, 1866, Records, Florida, BRF&AL. In February 1867, Purman wrote that in the previous ten months he had delivered forty-six public speeches to freedmen. W. J. Purman to E. C. Woodruff, February 28, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL.

⁵² After Hamilton established the practice of written labor contracts, the planters, in league with local merchants, undermined this gain by extending credit to the freedmen and encouraging them to overdraw their accounts. Hamilton to Jackson, August 31, 1867; Hamilton to Jackson, September 30, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL.

⁵³ Hamilton to Jackson March 31, 1867; Hamilton to Jackson, July 31, 1867; Hamilton to Jackson December 31, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL.

⁵⁴ Purman to Woodruff, February 28, 1867; Hamilton to Jackson, May 31, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL. Both men observed that this hostile attitude toward them was principally due to unforgiving "female influence."

⁵⁵ Hamilton to C. Munde, June 24, 1866, Records, Florida, BRF&AL. During a meeting at Campbellton, a hotbed of rebel sentiment that the agents referred to as "Camp Hell-ton," Hamilton believed he had narrowly escaped an attempt on his life. Purman to Jackson, September 9, 1867; Hamilton to Jackson, July 31, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL.

⁵⁶ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 266-267. After Florida was reconstituted as a state in 1868, Finlayson, who had received various bureau appointments, substituted as acting bureau agent when Purman was away on leave.

⁵⁷ Hamilton had married Martha M. Finlayson in 1869 shortly after her brother's murder. Charles M. Hamilton, Pension File, National Archives. Purman married Martha's sister, Leodora, in 1871. Purman to Jessie Hamilton Garverich, December 15, 1927, in Hamilton, "Hamiltons of Pine Creek, Pennsylvania."

⁵⁸ John Q. Dickinson, Affidavit of Samuel Fleishman, Deanne and Arnold Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica. The New York City Directories of 1868-1869 and 1869-1870 listed Samuel Fleischman [sic], first under "drygoods" and then "merchant," with a business address at the Altman store at 39 Third Avenue. The latter directory listed a residential address for Fleishman at the home of his widowed mother-in-law, Celia, at 252 East Tenth Street.

⁵⁹ Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 128.

⁶⁰ Tenth Census, 1880, New York, New York.

⁶¹ Records of County Clerk's Office, Jackson County Courthouse, Marianna, Florida. Early in 1867, Samuel even assigned a property deed to his mother-in-law.

⁶² Timothy Thomas Fortune, *New York Age*, August 21, 1913. Fortune's memory was confused since he actually referred to "the Benjamin Fleishmans." While Benjamin Fleishman of Quincy did have business in Marianna and served briefly as Jackson County treasurer, there is no evidence that he had a store in Marianna during the time that the Fortunes lived there. Fortune may have remembered the name of Samuel's son, Benjamin, who was about the same age as Fortune. Emanuel Fortune was closely aligned with Hamilton and Purman, and Timothy would benefit from Purman's patronage early in his career. William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark, Eminent, Progressive and Rising* (Cleveland, 1887), 786. See

also, U.S. House Report, No. 22, 94. Fortune, in the view of historian Arnold Shankman, never forgot Fleishman and "throughout his lifetime he displayed considerable sympathy for the Jews . . . strongly condemned anti-Semitism and urged blacks to imitate the thrift, sobriety and patience of the Jews." Arnold Shankman, introduction to Jessie Fortune, "Among the Children of the East Side Jews (1905)," *Jewish Currents* 29 (February 1975). After mentioning Fleishman in his column, Fortune wrote that the Jews "have been from the first, and still are, very helpful to the colored people, especially in the farming districts, and have helped and are helping thousands of colored farmers to 'get by' from crop to crop." *New York Age*, August 21, 1913.

⁶³ Hamilton to Jackson, May 31, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL.

⁶⁴ Hamilton to Jackson, October 31, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL.

⁶⁵ Hamilton to Jackson, December 31, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL.

⁶⁶ Hamilton to Jackson, July 31, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL.

⁶⁷ When specifically asked if the storekeeper's name was "Fleischman," [sic] Nelson initially responded negatively. Later, however, he stated that he did not remember the man's name. The description of the store, the events following, and the casual relationship between the Jewish storekeeper and the young freedman, however, strongly suggest that Nelson could not be speaking about anyone else. It remains difficult, however, to reconcile Nelson's detailed account of the incident at the store with his response when asked if the "Jew" he referred to was "Fleischman." Nelson said "No sir; he had been killed there; I saw the blood on the road where they had killed him." Nelson's testimony about Fleishman's body, however, lacks credibility when considering that Nelson fled Jackson County a week before Fleishman's murder. U.S. House Report No. 22, 137.

⁶⁸ U.S. House Report No. 22, 137-138. Nelson was later asked whether any harm was done to the proprietor of the store. He answered that nothing was "done to him that year; they went into the store and took what they wanted." *Ibid.*, 140. Nelson almost certainly departed from Jackson County before the committee's meeting with Fleishman and his subsequent expulsion. John Q. Dickinson, "Memoranda of Occurrences relating to the assassinations in Jackson County September 28th 1869 & following," Kaplan Collection.

⁶⁹ Hamilton to Jackson, March 31, 1867; Purman to Jackson, October 1, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL.

⁷⁰ Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 164, 168; Ralph L. Peek, "Military Reconstruction and the Growth of Anti-Negro Sentiment in Florida, 1867," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 47 (1969): 386-387.

⁷¹ Peek, "Military Reconstruction," 383, 386.

⁷² Purman to Jackson, July 31, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL.

⁷³ Although the moderate Republican faction depended on black voters, it hoped to gain white conservative support by organizing the state's political structure in a manner designed to prevent blacks from gaining unfettered control of state government. The constitution drafted by the moderates granted enormous power to the governor including the appointment of nearly all county officials. The moderates were also more lenient than

the radicals in restoring suffrage to former rebels. The moderates' voter districting plan watered down the power of the large, mostly black, plantation belt counties in relation to the rest of the state. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 185. Ultimately, the moderates' attempts to win conservative support failed. Shofner, *Jackson County*, 274. The moderate faction, however, did continue to attract considerable black support and consequently triumphed in the 1868 elections described below.

⁷⁴ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 273.

⁷⁵ John Quincy Dickinson of Benson, Vermont, graduated from Middlebury College and worked as a political reporter for Vermont newspapers until he volunteered for the war. At the close of the war he remained in west Florida and obtained the bureau appointment to replace Purman. Dickinson's impeccable character and likable personality impressed nearly all he met and he even gained the grudging respect of many of the conservative Democrats, although he was constantly baited and subjected to death threats.

⁷⁶ Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 227.

⁷⁷ Ibid.; Ralph L. Peek, "Aftermath of Military Reconstruction, 1868-1869," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 43 (1964): 131-132. The Young Men's Democratic Clubs operating in Florida were commonly regarded as being equivalent to the Ku Klux Klan. Stanley Horn described Jackson County as "a veritable hotbed of Ku Kluxism." Horn, *Invisible Empire*, 266, 268.

⁷⁸ Peek, "Lawlessness in Florida, 1868-1871," 165. William Purman explained how the "Ku-Klux" would "combine to prevent the arrest of any man; they will spirit him away or protect and conceal him and make it dangerous for officers of the law to attempt to arrest him . . . but the men get away, or it they do stand trial, as they have done . . . and any one of these men is on the jury, he will hang the jury, and you cannot convict any of them." U.S. House Report No. 22, 153.

⁷⁹ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 280; Jerrill H. Shofner, "Custom, Law and History: The Enduring Influence of Florida's Black Code," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 55 (January 1977): 284-285; Peek, "Aftermath of Military Reconstruction," 125-128.

⁸⁰ Purman stated that Coker was considered the "generalissimo of Ku-Klux" in Jackson County. Purman also described McClellan as "a man of bad eminence as an agitator and instigator." U.S. House Report No. 22, 150. They were "secret leaders in all these lawless movements, instigators, at least . . ." Ibid., 147. Hamilton to Jackson, July 31, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL. New York newspapers carried identical reports regarding the outbreak of "mob violence" in Jackson County in which Coker was characterized as "leader of the mob" and "a wealthy and influential man." [New York] *Daily Tribune*, October 23, 1869, 2; [New York] *Evening Post* October 22, 1869, 4. Henry Reed of Marianna identified James Coker as a leader. U.S. House Report No. 22, 112-113. Nelson claimed that James Coker directed the violence from his store. Ibid., 144. Col. Malachi Martin also described Coker as financially supporting the suspected assailant of Finlayson and Purman. Ibid., 191.

⁸¹ Purman to Jackson, July 31, 1867, Records, Florida, BRF&AL. Reed identified Billy Coker as responsible for specific murders. U.S. House Report No. 22, 112-113.

⁸² U.S. House Report No. 22, 147.

⁸³ Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 567.

⁸⁴ Emanuel Fortune stated that the conservatives spoke of a northern-born Republican as a "damned yankee, who came here to rule us" and a southern-born Republican as a "damned scalawag . . . a traitor to his country and his race." U.S. House Report No. 22, 100.

⁸⁵ U.S. House Report No. 22, 144. According to Davis, the attempted assassination of Purman was "planned deliberately and carefully even down to minor details" and Finlayson was not the intended target. Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 567.

⁸⁶ Almost all information about the events that ensued comes from the testimony taken by the U.S. House of Representatives during the Ku Klux Klan Hearings. This investigation convened in Florida in November 1871. While the primary focus of the inquiry was to verify the existence of the KKK, the questioners devoted substantial time to the incidents in Jackson, the most violent and bloody county in Florida. Committee witnesses were primarily northern-born Republicans and freedmen. None of the Jackson County conservatives were called to testify although a few Democrats from neighboring counties did speak. Testifying more than two years after the events, many recollections were confused. Prominent figures, including Purman and Fortune, who had left prior to fall 1869, merely repeated secondhand reports from friends and associates. Invaluably, however, Marcellus Stearns of Quincy, speaker of Florida's House of Assembly and future governor, presented the committee with John Q. Dickinson's diary from September 28 through October 29, 1869, found with Dickinson's possessions after his murder. Stearns also delivered two affidavits handwritten by Dickinson and signed by Fleishman that had been found with Dickinson's effects. These documents appeared in the printed edition of the committee report. U.S. House Report No. 22, 78, 290.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁸⁸ [Bainbridge] *Southern Sun*, October 14, 1869, 2.

⁸⁹ [Tallahassee] *Weekly Floridian*, October 19, 1869, 2.

⁹⁰ [Jacksonville] *Florida Union*, October 14, 1869, 1. The *Florida Union* refers to Fleishman as a "Frenchman."

⁹¹ Whether Fleishman said anything like the incendiary statement attributed to him is questionable. There are no accounts or testimony by witnesses to Fleishman's supposed statement. In his affidavit dictated to Dickinson, Fleishman described the expressions attributed to him as "alleged." Col. Malachi Martin, a former Union officer serving as warden of the state prison in Chattahoochee, testified at the KKK Hearings in late 1871 that Fleishman admitted that he had been "greatly excited" after the picnic murders and "had no doubt that he did use this language: 'If the colored people are to be murdered in this way, for every black man that is murdered there should be three white people killed.'" Martin testified that Fleishman said, "he [Fleishman] made use of that expression in the street; they alleged that he did so." U.S. House Report No. 22, 190, 194. Anonymous correspondents sent local newspapers second-hand accounts, that vary in their details and the outrageous-

ness of the statement alleged. Dickinson's diary and private letters to Hamilton, the only detailed narratives by someone verifiably present in Marianna during the events, do not refer to a statement by Fleishman. Although spending time with Fleishman on the afternoon of October 5 while writing Fleishman's affidavits, Dickinson did not mention any news related to Fleishman in his diary entry that evening. Of the five blacks interviewed at the KKK Hearings who had lived in Jackson County in 1869, only two mentioned Fleishman in their testimony and neither recounted any statement by Fleishman. Dickinson, *Fleishman Affidavits*, Kaplan Collection; U.S. House Report No. 22, 82.

⁹² Dickinson Memoranda, Kaplan Collection; Dickinson to Hamilton, October 3, 1869, U.S. House Report No. 22, 78, 290, 137.

⁹³ Dickinson Memoranda, Kaplan Collection.

⁹⁴ Dickinson to Hamilton, October 3, 1869, in U.S. House Report No. 22, 290.

⁹⁵ Dickinson Memoranda, Kaplan Collection.

⁹⁶ Dickinson, *Fleishman Affidavits*, Kaplan Collection.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* Shofner wrote that Fleishman "spoke back from the grave" through his affidavits. Shofner, *Jackson County*, 285.

⁹⁹ Earlier accounts of the Fleishman episode have de-emphasized the second affidavit, most likely because in the transcribed version contained in House Report No. 22, Fleishman reported that the seizure of the arms had taken place on Sunday, two days earlier. Ralph Peek, for example, considered the seizure of arms from Fleishman's store during the weekend as evidence of rising tensions in the town. Peek, "Lawlessness in Florida," 179. The mystery as to why Fleishman would return to Dickinson to swear out a second affidavit relating to an event that happened two days earlier is solved by examination of the original affidavit manuscript. According to the manuscript, Coker came to Fleishman's store to take away the weapons at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, two hours after Fleishman dictated the first affidavit. The Sunday date contained in House Report No. 22 is a transcription error. The author thanks Arnold Kaplan for providing copies of the original manuscripts of the Dickinson Memoranda and the two Fleishman Affidavits.

¹⁰⁰ Dickinson to Hamilton, October 7, 1869, in U.S. House Report No. 22, 291. *Florida Union*, October 14, 1869, 2. The editor of *Weekly Floridian* and its Marianna correspondent commended the town's citizens for choosing to expel Fleishman by escorting him out of the state for his own protection, rather than killing him outright. *Weekly Floridian*, October 19, 1869, 2.

¹⁰¹ Dickinson Memoranda, Kaplan Collection. *Southern Sun* does not mention Fleishman's visit to the town in its brief and hostile account of his flight and murder.

¹⁰² The conservative Bainbridge newspaper's anonymous correspondent from Jackson County stated that Fleishman said he was going to Tallahassee to have troops ordered to Marianna. *Southern Sun*, October 14, 1869. *Weekly Floridian*, however, which reported Fleishman's departure from that city, and which was also conservative and antagonistic to

Fleishman and Republicans, did not mention a troop request. *Weekly Floridian*, October 19, 1869, 2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ U.S. House Report No. 22, 189–190.

¹⁰⁵ *Weekly Floridian*, October 19, 1869, 2. Not all Marianna citizens, however, may have been hostile to Fleishman. Jacksonville's Republican newspaper, *Florida Union*, remarked that "the more respectable portion of the citizens of Marianna deprecated the actions of the mob and offered to protect the tradesman if he would remain." *Florida Union*, October 14, 1869, 2.

¹⁰⁶ The *Southern Sun* correspondent reported that Fleishman "was fired upon by some unknown party and instantly killed" without citing a source. *Southern Sun*, October 14, 1869, 2.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. House Report No. 22, 190.

¹⁰⁸ Dickinson Memoranda, Kaplan Collection. Another conflict appears between Dickinson's manuscript Memoranda in the Kaplan Collection and the transcription contained in House Report No. 22. In the entry for October 13, the manuscript states "Fleishman found" while the transcription states "Fleishman buried." Peek relies on the transcription when writing that Fleishman's funeral was on Wednesday. Peek, "Lawlessness in Florida," 181.

¹⁰⁹ After the assassination attempt on Purman, rumors spread that Purman had admitted that the motivation for the shooting was personal, not political. Purman vigorously denied having made this statement and insisted that the ambush was a political attack. Shofner, *Jackson County*, 281; U.S. House Report No. 22, 155. After Dickinson's assassination, McClellan, among others, stated that Dickinson had been shot by a black man whose wife and Dickinson had been involved. U.S. House Report No. 22, 216. All Republicans, black and white, who testified, angrily refuted this claim.

¹¹⁰ [Marianna] *Courier*, quoted in [Pensacola] *West Floridian Commercial*, October 12, 1869. Unlike the other sources, the *Courier* placed Fleishman's murder on Saturday. This report was printed in the Pensacola newspaper on October 12, the day that Dickinson, in Marianna, confirmed that the dead man found had been identified as Fleishman. The *Courier* printed this information and telegraphed it to Pensacola within twenty-four hours of the murder.

¹¹¹ Some guesses can be hazarded about the identity of Fleishman's murderer. In his diary entry on the Saturday prior to Fleishman's death, Dickinson observed that Billy Coker had disappeared. After a grand jury determination had implicated Coker and two associates in the murder of three members of a black family earlier in the week, the men were suspected to have fled the county. While the next Sunday and Monday were quiet in Marianna, Fleishman was murdered on one of these days. Alternatively, the ambush could have been set by one of the gunmen employed by the Marianna regulators who were connected to the attack on Purman and Finlayson.

¹¹² Dickinson, Fleishman Affidavits, Kaplan Collection. Because of the absence of public space, the grand jury rented James Coker's store for its meeting. Shofner, *Jackson County*, 298.

¹¹³ *Weekly Floridian*, October 19, 1869. Governor Reed's proclamation offering a ten thousand dollar reward for the arrest and conviction of the murderers of the picnic victims, Fleishman, Maggie McClellan, and John Finlayson appeared in the *Weekly Floridian* on three successive weeks beginning November 9, 1869.

¹¹⁴ U.S. House Report No. 22, 155.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 89. Because of divisions in the Florida Republican party, Hamilton failed to be renominated for Congress in 1870. Hamilton's friends, however, ensured that he received federal appointments as postmaster in Jacksonville and then customs collector in Key West. In 1873, Hamilton resigned his post because of deteriorating health and returned to the central Pennsylvania town of his birth. He died in October 1875 at the age of 34. Hamilton, "Hamiltons of Pine Creek, Pennsylvania," United States Government Printing Office, *Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774-1961* (Washington, DC, 1961), 996. Though he avoided Marianna, Purman remained very active in Florida state politics, serving two terms as congressman from March 1873 through March 1877. *New York Times*, August 15, 1928. With the effective end of the Republican Party in Florida and throughout the South after the 1876 election, Purman left for Pennsylvania before settling in Washington D.C.

¹¹⁶ Shofner, *Jackson County*, 293. Davis calculated the total number of murders in Jackson County at 175. Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 582.

¹¹⁷ Avant, *Illustrated Index*, 111.

¹¹⁸ In the mid-1880s, both men served as delegates from Jackson County to a statewide constitutional convention that, among other initiatives, introduced the poll tax to Florida. Shofner, *Jackson County*, 328-329.

¹¹⁹ The family moved in with Sophia's mother on East 49th Street, just one block east of Philip M. Fleishman's new residence. Sophia and five of her children continued to live together for at least thirty more years, eventually moving to a midtown Manhattan townhouse. Tenth Census, 1880, New York, New York; Eleventh Census, 1890, New York, New York. Sophia, who never remarried, died in New York City in 1904. During the late nineteenth century, Sophia's youngest brother, Benjamin Altman, amassed a fortune through his department store B. Altman & Co. Altman's will revealed his attachment to Sophia's family. Three Fleishman children (Benjamin, Carrie, and Albert) had passed away sometime prior to Altman's death in 1913. For many years Altman had been quietly subsidizing the care of Sophia and Samuel's daughter, Henrietta Fleishman Fried, who had been committed to a sanitarium since the death of her only child in 1901. In the will, Etta and her older brother William, were each left \$50,000 in trust. The remaining Fleishman child, Mrs. Lulu Heymann, was her uncle's favorite relative and attended upon Altman at his death. Lulu received \$200,000 in trust, by far the largest bequest to an individual, and her uncle's household possessions and personal effects. *New York Times*, October 8, 1913. Last Will and Testament of Benjamin Altman, May 2, 1912, the Altman Foundation, New York, New York. Etta passed away in 1917 and William, who had worked as a jeweler and lived his last decade in a Manhattan hotel, died in 1922. Lulu survived her five siblings and had one child, Charles, Jr., who was the only known Fleishman grandchild at the time of Altman's death. *New York Times*, December 11, 1922. Altman's fame dominated the identity of the

Fleishman family. When an 1893 newspaper society item mentioned that "Misses Etta and Lulu Fleishman" had gone to Lakewood, New Jersey, for a few weeks, they were referred to as "nieces of Benjamin Altman, the dry goods merchant." *New York Times*, February 7, 1893. When Charles, Jr.'s son, William, was born in 1927, *New York Times* birth announcement referred to the baby as the great grand nephew of Benjamin Altman. *New York Times*, May 22, 1927. Charles, Jr., eventually became a Protestant minister and moved to Hendersonville, North Carolina, where he founded the First Congregational Church.

¹²⁰ This absence of probate or estate information in the Jackson County files is puzzling. The records are meticulously kept and include, for example, detailed records related to the disposition of John Q. Dickinson's property following his murder.

¹²¹ Jackson County Property Records, microfilm, Florida State Archives; Records of County Clerk's Office, Jackson County Courthouse, Marianna, Florida.

¹²² *Weekly Floridian*, October, 19, 1869. Of course antisemitism was not unknown. Robert Hilton, Florida's representative to the Confederate Congress, blamed Jews for high prices and fluctuations in the value of Confederate currency. Hilton deplored Jews whom he saw as flocking "as vultures to every point of gain." He also recommended that they "should be dragged into military services." Frederic Cople Jaher, *A Scapegoat in the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), 197.

¹²³ The "influential citizen in Marianna" writing anonymously to the *Weekly Floridian* informed the paper's readers that Fleishman had "deserted to the North, leaving his family in the county until after the surrender." *Weekly Floridian*, October 19, 1869. The *Florida Union* described Fleishman's business as "chiefly among the colored people." The *Weekly Floridian's* correspondent claimed that Fleishman had abandoned the Democrats and had "identified himself with the Radical party for the purpose of getting the trade of the colored people." *Weekly Floridian*, October 19, 1869. *Florida Union*, October 14, 1869.

¹²⁴ After the Dickinson murder, Tallahassee's Republican newspaper remembered Fleishman and Finlayson as fellow Republican martyrs. *Tallahassee Sentinel*, April 15, 1871.

¹²⁵ Most of the Fleishmans of Marianna and Quincy left Florida by the end of the 1870s. Philip had departed for New York around the time of his brother's murder and died there in 1901 at the age of seventy-three. Ferdinand's widow, Fannie, married a Prussian immigrant in Gadsden County. Widowed again, Fannie lived in Brooklyn in 1880 with ten children. Benjamin died in the mid-1870s. Only Simon Fleishman remained in Florida. He became a prominent Quincy businessman with his own building on the town's main square. Avant, *Illustrated Index*, 126-127. In 1907, Simon applied for a Florida pension for his service in the Confederate army.

¹²⁶ Herbsman, *Index*, xii. *The Israelite*, inconsistently, had reported in September 1871 only one Jewish family in Quincy and none in Marianna.

¹²⁷ Arnold Shankman, "Friend or Foe: Southern Blacks View the Jew, 1880-1935," in *Turn to the South*, 107, 109.

¹²⁸ Fleishman's story contrasts starkly with his contemporaries Morris Dzialynski of Jacksonville, Florida, and Abraham Ehrlich and Bernard Kaul of Valdosta, Georgia. A Jewish immigrant and merchant, Dzialynski served with distinction in the Confederate army

and became active in the Democratic Party after the war, including being elected mayor of Jacksonville. Canter Brown, Jr., "Phillip and Morris Dzialynski: Jewish Contributors to the Rebuilding of the South," *American Jewish Archives* (fall/winter 1992): 530. Ehrlich and Kaul, also both Confederate veterans, were well received in Valdosta where they settled with their families immediately after the war. Schmier, "Jews and Gentiles in a South Georgia Town," 4.

¹²⁹ Lucy was identified as Jewish at the KKK Hearings by Lemuel Wilson, a white Republican from Florida, who stated that his niece was married to Lucy. In a scene reminiscent of Fleishman's encounter with Billy Coker described by Nelson, Lucy's murderer, a white man with a "very wanton" and murderous reputation, had evidently used some petty pretext related to his account at Lucy's store as an excuse to shoot him. Wilson contended that Lucy had been murdered for being a Republican and for associating with blacks. U.S. House Report No. 22, 197, 199-200. The local press, however, only reported that the murder arose from a business dispute. *Gainesville Era*, October 14, 1871, quoted in *Weekly Floridian*, October 17, 1871.

¹³⁰ Unlike Fleishman's death, Bierfield's murder was reported in the national press. A letter published in a Nashville newspaper justified Bierfield's murder by claiming that he had encouraged blacks in the revenge murder of a white man who had participated in an earlier lynching. The local bureau agent concluded, however, that this accusation against Bierfield was false. As with Fleishman's murder, no arrests were ever made in connection with Bierfield's killing. Morris U. Shappes, ed., *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States 1654-1875*, 3rd ed., (New York, 1971), 515-517, 717-718.

Anti-Jewish Violence in the New South

by

Patrick Q. Mason

Jews in the New South found themselves in an ambivalent position. On one hand, they hailed the South as a land of freedom and opportunity, far better than eastern Europe's pogroms or even the urban North's slum conditions. For the most part they were a welcome segment of society, some families tracing their southern roots back to colonial days and most having loyally supported the Confederacy. Most European Jews had little or no experience with agriculture but had substantial background as middlemen in the exchange of goods. The latter prepared them to fill an important niche selling goods and extending credit to white and black southern farmers. As a result, they rose with the New South economy even as they nurtured it. Embracing the opportunities afforded them in their new homeland and conscientious not to stick out or give offense, Jews made cultural and religious adaptation a virtual article of faith, and thus they not only became good Americans but also acculturated to specific regional mores and customs. As Jews made efforts to be good southerners, for the most part their Protestant neighbors, particularly in urban settings and in the middle and upper classes, received them as such.¹

Nonetheless, Jews did not entirely escape antisemitic discrimination and even violence in the New South. There clearly existed a pervasive, low-level antisemitism in southern culture that periodically became exacerbated by xenophobia, nativism, and economic downturns. Thus, when southerners needed a scapegoat, they were able to draw on the usually latent symbols

and attitudes of traditional antisemitism, including the images of the merciless Christ-killer and the avaricious Shylock. These images were most famously employed by Tom Watson during his days of demagoguery, but the very fact that his vitriolic rhetoric resonated so well with a certain segment of the southern populace suggests that the antisemitic themes he employed were neither new nor foreign to his listeners. Of course, southerners scapegoated Jews for their troubles much less frequently than they did African Americans, so much so that the comparison is hardly apt. Jews also experienced far less overt prejudice and violence than they did in Europe and overall were subject to less vigilantism than Latter-day Saints in the late nineteenth-century South. Regardless of their comparative good fortunes, however, the threat of losing their tolerated and even integrated status constantly hung over their heads and occasionally became real. The South was a region renowned for its penchant for violence related to its culture of honor, and the New South was described by historian C. Vann Woodward as "one of the most violent communities of comparable size in all Christendom."² Therefore, when southern Jews acculturated to southern customs so as to blend in with the majority, it was done partly out of a desire to be accepted but also out of real fear of the consequences of rejection, which sometimes translated into bloodshed. The anti-Jewish violence that did occur typically took the form of robbery, murder, or forcible expulsion.

What should not be done is to view the southern Jewish experience through a dualistic lens, supposing either that the South was a virtual garden spot of tolerance or a den of bigotry fueled by religious fanaticism. An absolute argument for southern toleration would slight the numerous cases of violence that actually did include a significant component of antisemitism, but assertions of a virulent antisemitism pervading the South would similarly obscure the generally friendly relations that marked most Jewish-gentile interactions in the region. Although he would not argue that antisemitism was necessarily the dominant motif of southern history, Leonard Dinnerstein represents the more pessimistic view of Jewish-gentile relations, blaming widespread southern antisemitism on the narrowness of "Protestant fundamentalist faith."³

Howard Rabinowitz conversely argues for the tolerant South. Although he acknowledges episodic moments of prejudice and violence, he suggests that the South may have been "the least anti-Semitic region in the nation," and certainly "no worse than the norm."⁴

As will be demonstrated, there were in fact a greater number of cases of anti-Jewish violence than Rabinowitz considered, which raises questions about whether his estimation was perhaps overly sanguine. Although the violence documented was more occasional and sporadic than in either the African American or Mormon cases, taken as a composite it does darken the fairly optimistic portrayal that Rabinowitz provides. Arguably although a relatively high degree of acceptance and tolerance typically characterized the daily interactions of most southern Jews with their Christian neighbors, discrimination and violence were realities that they could not ignore, nor should historians. Therefore, in order to fully appreciate the complexity of the southern Jewish experience, we must seek to understand not only its broadly congenial contours but also its darker underside of violent rejection.

Most violence that Jews received was related to their roles as peddlers and merchants in the postbellum southern economy. In most cases, peddlers were robbed and sometimes killed, whereas storeowners were either robbed or intimidated and expelled from town. The violence frequently took on an antisemitic character, but more often than not, Jews' assailants primarily targeted them not because of their religious identity per se, but rather because they had cash in their pockets, wares in their carts, or credit extended to hopelessly indebted farmers. This conflict displayed a distinct class component, as "respectable citizens" of the New South frequently condemned anti-Jewish violence performed by disgruntled farmers or simple ruffians. Economic grievances thus typically provided the trigger for violent acts that were then often aggravated or rationalized by appeals to antisemitic images and prejudices. Other than brief and localized stretches, however, there was nothing that approached a systematic and extended antisemitic campaign in the South even during the era of the Leo Frank lynching in 1915 and

the concomitant rise of the second Ku Klux Klan, which marked the low point of southern Jewish-gentile relations.

This essay will proceed with a case study of one particularly brutal incident of anti-Jewish violence, the vicious murder of Jewish peddler Abram Surasky in rural South Carolina. The themes introduced in the Surasky case will be further developed as more than two dozen other instances of violence against Jews in the New South are considered. These episodes do not comprise all the anti-Jewish violence that occurred in this period or even constitute an entirely representative sample. The research and analysis that follow are substantially weighted toward particularly grievous acts (especially murders) that were more likely to receive newspaper coverage and are much thinner on lesser acts of violence that often were unreported. There are unquestionably many cases (perhaps an equal or greater number) that have not been discovered. Thus, while this analysis is based on the largest collection of cases hitherto assembled, other scholars will surely build on these insights as they find and consider other examples.

The Murder of Abram Surasky

Late in the morning of July 28, 1903, Abram Surasky stopped at the home of Lee and Dora Green, situated in the rural woods outside Aiken, South Carolina.⁵ The Greens' home was part of Surasky's regular circuit as he guided his horse-drawn wagon around the area peddling goods. Indeed, virtually everyone in the neighborhood knew Surasky, as most of them were his clients, and he enjoyed an "excellent reputation" in the county.⁶ The thirty-year old Jewish peddler, who had recently emigrated from the Polish shtetl of Knyshin, had packed his cart the day before to make his usual rounds. Surasky's purpose when he visited the Greens, as with many of his customers, was twofold: to sell goods and to collect debts on merchandise previously purchased on credit. He was one of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Jewish peddlers who rattled through the southern countryside and who played a crucial but often underappreciated role in the economy of the New South, bringing manufactured goods and, in a sense, modernity, into the maze-like back roads of rural Dixie.⁷

*Abram Surasky, shortly after his arrival in America.
(Courtesy of Surasky's grandson, Jerry Cohen, of Glen Cove, New York.)*

When Surasky's cart stopped in front of the Green homestead, he found only Dora at home. This was perhaps a relief for the peddler, because her husband Lee was known to be a rough and dangerous character, and the matter of collecting a debt might be easier with him absent. So Surasky, whose peddling represented the sole support of his two daughters after the death of his wife, ambled up the front steps to conduct business with Dora Green. She invited him in, but they had not been talking long when Lee arrived. According to what he told George Horsey a week later, Green immediately recognized the peddler's cart, and upon not seeing Surasky, assumed that its owner was inside with his wife. Green burst through the front door, where he later testified he caught Surasky holding his wife's hand. Enraged, he "did not multiply any word with him at all," but immediately shot the peddler. (It is unclear whether Green had his gun with him when he came in the house, or whether he grabbed one that was kept inside.) Surasky, wounded but not downed, ran out the back door and rounded the house with the obvious intention of getting his cart and fleeing. But the enraged Green was not to be cheated of his prey. He burst through the front door, put another shell in his gun, and intercepted Surasky as he came around the corner of the house, shooting him a second time. Surasky stumbled through the front door and begged Dora to intervene with her husband, but he was greeted only with a third shot from Lee's gun. Mustering all his strength, the peddler staggered back outside and fell to his hands and knees. Green followed him and then spied an axe nearby. Surasky apparently saw the same thing and begged, "Mr. Green don't kill me: I have got two little motherless children." Past the point of mercy, Green snarled back, "Goddamn you and your motherless children. I am going to kill you." As he said this, he raised the axe and swung it down on the peddler's skull with all his force. He finished the horrid deed with several more swings, and, by the time he was finished, Surasky's face and body were "hacked horribly," and one of his arms was almost completely severed.⁸

As gruesome as it is, this version of the story was the one that Lee Green wanted people to hear; indeed, it was the story he

unashamedly told George Horsey just a week after the murder and on which Horsey later based his affidavit. In fact, Green never denied committing the murder. Even when he was on the run from law enforcement officials who had come to arrest him several days after the incident, he bragged to Luther Cordon, who found him hiding at the edge of the woods, that he had killed Surasky.⁹ Green wanted to portray the murder as a crime of passion after he happened on the peddler attempting to seduce his wife. Like any good nineteenth-century husband, he then flew into a rage and killed the seducer, his better nature clouded by his loyal and loving instinct to protect his innocent and helpless wife. In this scenario, not only would Green have been justified in killing Surasky, but he would have been held at greater fault had he not protected his wife's (and by extension his own) honor. So rather than attempting any real cover-up—his feeble attempt to hide the body and the cart in the woods was soon betrayed by the circling buzzards—Green was happy to share the story. To provide support, Green's lawyer proffered the testimony of two other women who swore that "the peddler' tried to rape them." Although there is no corroborating proof of these claims, they may have helped win the day for Green's defense, since the jury returned a verdict of not guilty.¹⁰

Green's story was more convenient than it was true. While the basic skeleton of the narrative—that he had come home to find Surasky with his wife and then killed him—remained intact, the motives behind Green's actions shifted significantly in light of additional testimony provided at the trial, although it apparently had little effect on the jury. According to the lengthy statement of Mary Drayton, supported by sworn depositions of several others, Green was less a noble defender of family honor and southern womanhood than he was a violent, dangerous, and even antisemitic criminal. Drayton, an African American neighbor who occasionally worked for the Greens, testified that Lee and Dora Green came to her home about four o'clock on the afternoon of the murder. Reassuring her that the gun Lee held in his hands was not intended for her, as he had "done too much damn shooting" already, he demanded that she come to his home immediately and

scour the floors. When Drayton expressed hesitation at the strange request, she said that Green admitted that he had killed the "damn peddler" and that he wanted her to stay with his wife and for them to clean the blood off the floors while he found someone to help him dispose of the body. He then related the sequence of that morning's events. According to Drayton, Green told her that as he arrived home, Surasky came out the front door and helped with Green's horse. Just as the peddler turned to go back into the house, presumably to continue his business transaction, Green shot him in the back. At first Surasky ran into the house, but then turned toward Green and cried out, "Oh, Mr. Green what have I done to you? Don't shoot me; I will give you all I have got." Green callously replied, "Stand back, you son of a bitch, don't come on me," and shot him a second time. When Surasky dropped to his elbows and knees, Green "put the muzzle of the gun to his head and shot him again and then he took the axe and knocked him in the head twice."¹¹

The most significant addition of Drayton's testimony is not the details of the murder itself, but rather her account of what happened before and after the shooting, which seriously undercut Green's later story that it was a crime of passion against his wife's seducer. As to motive, Drayton revealed that Green had long held a grudge against Jewish peddlers in general, and Surasky in particular. Some three weeks before the murder, Drayton testified, Green had told her husband "that he intended to kill him [Surasky]." In addition, she noted that part of the reason she considered Green a "dangerous man" was because he had bragged in her presence "about shooting at Levy," another Jewish peddler in the area, just "to make him drop his bundle."¹² That Surasky's murder was premeditated to a certain degree and that it grew at least partly out of a prejudice against Jews was backed up by other depositions. David T. Parker made a sworn statement that George Toole, who was originally accused of the murder along with Green but was never tried, had told him that Green said, "the pedlars took all of his wife's change and that he was tired of them and that he was going to kill ever damned Jew pedlar that came around and get shed of them." Parker further

"A Verdict of Not Guilty."

Detail from the acquittal of Lee Green.

Aiken County, Court of General Sessions,

Indictment, Bundle 164 (1904), Lee Green (L 02048, Box 102).

*(Courtesy of the South Carolina Department
of Archives and History, Columbia.)*

testified that after Toole found the dead body in the woods, Green came to his house and confessed triumphantly, "I have done what I said I was going to, I have killed that damned pedlar."¹³ Further building the case against Green, H. B. Heath testified that while visiting his home a month or two before Surasky's murder, Green had declared that he had recently shot at Levy (the same peddler Drayton mentioned) "to scare him," and that "the first thing some of them Jew peddlers knew he was going to kill some of them, that he wouldn't have them a deviling around him."¹⁴ These witnesses' statements raise serious doubts about Green's story and make a compelling case that the crime was not motivated by chivalrous protection of womanly virtue.

On their own the testimonies of Parker and Heath do not necessarily incriminate Green. It is conceivable, after all, that even

following the series of threats and the Levy shooting, he could have legitimately discovered Surasky making advances on his wife, which could have justified the killing in the eyes of a nineteenth-century jury. However, Drayton's deposition shatters this possibility as well and therefore belies Green's narrative. Drayton testified that while she was at the Greens' home the night of the murder, Lee Green bemoaned his situation to Arthur House, another neighbor who had come to the house but refused to help dispose of Surasky's body. "Arthur," Green asked, "what will I do now; how will I get out?" House replied, whether seriously or flippantly is not clear, "I don't know unless you tell it that you came up on this man committing rape on your wife." The light seemed to go on in Green's head, and he immediately concocted a plan. He forced his wife, House, and Drayton to swear that they would stick to this story of attempted rape.¹⁵ Although Drayton reneged on her pledge, the other conspirators, particularly the Greens, promoted the story as the primary defense. In fact, Lee Green was scheduled for trial in October 1903, but Dora had given birth at the beginning of the month and was bedridden. Not only was Dora the sole eyewitness to the murder, but the defense rested on her testimony that Surasky was guilty of "criminal assault with the intention to commit a felony upon her" and that her husband was simply defending her from the peddler's sexual advances. This led the judge to grant the defense's request for a continuance until the court's next session.¹⁶ Although transcripts of Dora Green's testimony have not survived, it can be inferred by the trial's outcome that she stuck to the prearranged story and provided an emotional performance capable of persuading the jury to deliver a not guilty verdict. The significant evidence and testimonies portraying Lee Green as a violent antisemite wilted in the face of a wife's trumped-up declaration of her husband's loyalty, fidelity, and honor.

Abram Surasky's murder was in part made possible because he was a solitary peddler walking the country roads of the South. Such Jewish peddlers were highly vulnerable figures. They usually began as recent immigrants who spoke little or no English and who had few established personal connections in the vicinity. In

addition, the goods in their carts and the money in their pockets made them attractive targets. In the cash-poor economy of the rural South, local peddlers and merchants were usually among the few people who had currency at hand. Beyond that, their account books offered written testimony to the chronic indebtedness that plagued individual southern farmers especially during bad years. So when Lee Green not only murdered Surasky but then stole his money and ripped the page recording his debt out of the peddler's account book,¹⁷ he was lashing out at Surasky as a Jew, as his direct creditor, and as the most immediate (and vulnerable) symbol of the economic system that frustrated many southern farmers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

What differentiated Abram Surasky from many other Jewish peddlers in the South was that he was not an isolated and marginalized figure in the community. Morgan Halley described Surasky to be "as nice a man as I ever saw" who "always behaved himself as a gentleman" on his periodic visits. "Everybody, white and colored in the neighborhood," Halley concluded, "spoke in the highest terms of him."¹⁸ Beyond his reputation and business relationships, however, Surasky was tied into the Aiken community through respected family and religious connections. The Surasky family had been integrated into Aiken society for over a decade since Abram's older brother B. M. (Benedict Morris) had traveled to the South as a peddler shortly after 1890 and subsequently opened a store. He prospered enough to pay for the immigration of his wife, children, and three of his four brothers including Abram. Over time the Suraskys became something of an Aiken institution, with B. M. serving on the city council for a decade and his wife, Sarah, actively involved in civic affairs.¹⁹ In addition to his family ties, Abram Surasky was connected to Aiken's fledgling Jewish community. When his body was discovered two days after the murder, men were immediately sent to town "to let the Jews know it," a token of the recognition of and respect for the small Jewish community in the area.²⁰ Moreover, several weeks after the incident, one of the county newspapers and "several prominent citizens and leading ministers" pressed the sheriff to work diligently to apprehend Green, who had gone into

hiding.²¹ Clearly, Surasky was a known figure who was part of a respected and included segment of Aiken society, and his death was not swept under the rug or deemed to be of minor consequence simply because he was an immigrant Jewish peddler.

The experience of Abram Surasky and his extended family thus illustrates the many tensions facing Jews in the South. While the South represented a land of opportunity where Jews could flourish and become integrated into communities, their immutable Jewishness meant they could never become true insiders. Antisemitism usually remained dormant, but, particularly for poor and frustrated farmers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jewish creditors became personal representatives of the economic system that held them paralyzed, and they grasped at prejudices that helped them make sense of their world, lashing out in violence against anyone they could blame. Unless one believes Green's story of attempted rape, Surasky's only offense on the day of the murder was to fulfill a stereotype and be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Precisely because they knew that such acts of violence could occur at any time, and because they did not want their new homeland to go the way of eastern Europe, southern Jews did all they could to minimize the likelihood of antisemitic violence by adapting themselves to southern culture and making sincere efforts to become southerners. Their acculturation was thus a byproduct of their simultaneous fear of violence and desire for acceptance.

Four Models of Southern Anti-Jewish Violence

Four cases, all of which occurred in the span of a few months in the spring and summer of 1887, aptly illustrate the range of antisemitic violence that occurred in the South in the fifty years following the end of the Civil War.²²

1. In the northeastern Louisiana parish of West Carroll, longstanding resentment against Simon Witkowski, "the leading merchant and richest man in the parish," finally turned into violence in early spring 1887, resulting in the death of one unidentified man and the driving of Witkowski from the area. As reported in the *American Hebrew*, "It was stated that Witkowski

*Grave of Abram Surasky in Magnolia Cemetery, Augusta, Georgia.
The stone was dedicated by family members on November 14, 1993.
For approximately ninety years, Surasky's grave was unmarked and
forgotten, until relatives of Surasky began researching his life.
(Courtesy of Surasky's grandson, Jerry Cohen, of Glen Cove, New York.)*

had ground down those who were indebted to him, and had pursued a very hard policy in dealing with them."²³

2. Shortly after the Witkowski incident, 170 miles downriver in Avoyelles Parish, a store owned by two Jewish merchants, Kahn and Bauer, was attacked by a mob of "wild young men." The store had been "doing a fine business," which engendered some local jealousy. Directing their violence against property and not persons, the assailants riddled the store and surrounding fence with bullets. The following day, Kahn and Bauer were given notices of what the mob had done to their store, along with a warning that they must leave the area or be killed. Additional proclamations were posted by the mob in a number of public

places “declaring that the people of Avoyelles—as they styled themselves—wanted no more Jews among them, and therefore advised all Jews to leave the county by April, under penalty of death.” To the vigilantes’ surprise, the local populace, for whom they presumed to speak, was aroused not in their favor but rather in support of the Jews. The parish’s two newspapers called for the mob’s apprehension and punishment, a mass meeting was held to the same effect, and the governor was persuaded to offer a large reward for their conviction.²⁴

3. On the night of July 20, 1887, Jacob Simon’s store in Breaux Bridge, in south-central Louisiana, was broken into by “a number of negroes.” The merchant was choked to death, after which his attackers robbed the store and “made away with the booty.” Simon, a fifty-seven-year-old bachelor, had moved to Breaux Bridge from Cincinnati, where his family lived, sixteen years earlier and was “the only Israelite in that town.” When his brother and nephew came to retrieve the body, they had to travel to Lafayette, which had the nearest Jewish burial ground, to inter him.²⁵

4. The same day as Simon’s death, Solomon Dreeben, a peddler working out of Dallas, was murdered near Wylie, in northeast Texas. The crime appears to have been a simple robbery, as money and clothing were discovered missing from the dead man’s valise. Dreeben left behind a wife and two teenage children, whom he had supported by peddling.²⁶

Most of the violence leveled against Jews in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century South followed the patterns represented by these four cases. To begin, most cases had an economic component. Many were linked with robbery, as in the Solomon Dreeben and Jacob Simon cases, and not unlike the Abram Surasky murder detailed earlier.²⁷ As mentioned previously, Jewish merchants and peddlers were vulnerable and attractive targets for thieves and other desperate men. For every assaulted or murdered peddler, there were surely at least an equal number who narrowly escaped harm, like B. M. Surasky (Abram’s older brother), who, according to the recollection of his daughter, “overheard the family with whom he found refuge for the night plotting to make away with him,” but made his flight

before they could carry out their plan.²⁸ Jews in small towns could be targeted as well. Although Simon had been a resident of his town for sixteen years and owned his own store, thus achieving a certain degree of stability and acceptance, the fact that he had no established kinship or religious networks nearby increased his susceptibility to violence. Most southern Jews were not completely separated from family or coreligionists as Simon was, but there were only a few cities throughout the South that had a large enough mass of Jews to provide reasonable insulation from the possibility of violent attack, although, as the Leo Frank case would prove, even a sizeable Jewish population did not guarantee security. For the most part, however, postbellum anti-Jewish violence occurred in the rural and small-town South, rather than in urban areas. This parallels broader patterns in southern violence, but also suggests the relatively greater vulnerability of peddlers and small-town merchants.²⁹

Southern Jews were not targets of violence only when they dealt from a position of relative weakness. As the Witkowski and Kahn and Bauer examples demonstrate, there were many instances in which the economic strength of Jewish merchants led to resentment among their competitors or other local residents (often their debtors). In fact, in these cases when Jews held an economic position of power, antisemitism became most explicit and virulent. These incidents also displayed a greater tendency to inspire mob violence. Jewish proprietors were culpable in their enemies' eyes not only as individual transgressors, but also as visible agents of a largely invisible and impersonal system of economic injustice and oppression. Thus, it was not just Simon Witkowski's individual business practices that drew the mob's ire, but his personification of the image of the greedy and manipulative Jewish Shylock, who lined his pockets by stealing from honest farmers and workers who were left in a spiraling cycle of indebtedness and poverty. Violence fueled by prejudicial and conspiratorial images thus failed to differentiate between individual merchants, against whom indebted customers may have had a legitimate complaint, and the remainder of the Jewish population, which was guilty of nothing more than filling an antisemitic stereotype.

The least complicated and usually least explicitly antisemitic violent episodes against southern Jews were the robbery cases in which itinerant peddlers also became murder victims. In April 1870, the mangled remains of Samuel Friedman's body were found under a tree trunk on the banks of the Duck River two miles outside Williamsport, Tennessee. Friedman, a well-known peddler in the region, was a native of "Russia Poland," but had resided in America for several years and was a Confederate veteran. Although his body was in a fairly advanced state of decomposition when searchers found it, they were able to ascertain that Friedman had been shot in the back of the head, through one leg near his knee, and near the bottom of the spine and that his throat had been cut. Because Friedman's goods were missing from the murder scene, it was concluded that the primary motivation behind the murder was robbery.³⁰ Twenty years later, in December 1890, Morris Brown disappeared near Fairmount, in central Louisiana. After several organized searches failed to turn up anything, a ten-year-old boy came forward with information. According to his testimony, Brown had stayed at the house of Jack Chambers, and, just as he left the house in the morning, Chambers came from behind and struck the peddler in the back of his head with an axe, put the body in a sack, and carried him off. Brown's body was later found in a seven-foot-deep hole under a large tree; thrown on top of his corpse were his coat, hat, boots, and valise, with "a portion of [the] goods that had cost him his life." The murdered peddler had been in the country for only three months, having come from Russia at the solicitation of his older brother. His earnings were to have allowed his wife and child to eventually join him in America.³¹ Five years later and sixty miles south, another "brutal, dastardly and atrocious murder was committed," this time against Jewish peddlers Israel Tucker and Charles Bernstein. The two men were traveling along the Calcasieu River in their mule-drawn wagon when they were suddenly besieged by a volley of rifle shots. Tucker was immediately killed and Bernstein severely wounded. Hardly strangers to their victims, the murderers, James and Aaron Johnson, were among the peddlers' regular patrons. Indeed, the day of the attack Aaron was wearing a red

shirt that he had bought from the peddlers the previous Saturday, and when the shooting had begun, Bernstein pleaded, "Aaron, don't shoot at me." Although the newspapers explained that "robbery was the sole and only motive for the commission of this heinous crime" and that the "whole affair was concocted . . . for the purpose of getting the peddlers' money and goods," it was also a personal grudge that led to the shooting. Aaron Johnston had told others that he "wanted to shoot the --- peddler . . . for accusing him of trying to steal a suit of clothes." Following the usual pattern, Tucker and Bernstein both had young families dependent on them for support.³²

Robbery-murders such as these clearly fall more in the category of violent crime than hate crime, since the victims' Jewish identity seemed to have been incidental rather than causal. Even in the last example in which revenge joined theft as the motivation, there is no indication from contemporary accounts that Tucker and Bernstein were targeted because they were Jews. In sum, all of these instances clearly demonstrate the vulnerability of Jewish peddlers to criminal behavior, but do little to suggest a widespread violent antisemitism pervading the rural South.

These violent robberies were the exception to the general rule of cordial treatment that Jewish peddlers received. In all of these cases law enforcement officials acted quickly to locate and apprehend the perpetrators, newspapers roundly condemned the actions of what were portrayed as an isolated handful of violent individuals, and a number of citizens, particularly many community elites, publicly denounced the murders. In the Friedman case, "both Jew and Gentile joined in offering of their condolence" to his widow, and the local citizenry "determined that nothing short of full measured justice should be meted out upon the heads of the criminals."³³ Certainly these Jewish peddlers were not pariahs or outcasts. Even so, such violent incidents must have made other Jews in the vicinity at least somewhat uneasy about the security of their place in southern communities.

Far more venomous and intimidating than isolated and sporadic robberies and murders were the occasional spates of

organized agrarian violence against southern Jewish storeowners. Most of this violence occurred in the late 1880s and early 1890s when conditions for small farmers in the South became increasingly hopeless and drove them to desperation.³⁴ Several historians have connected this general discontent among southern farmers in the period with a growing antisemitism that eventually exploded into violence. Leonard Dinnerstein argues that beginning in the late 1870s, some of the victims of the South's agricultural depression "began to identify Jews as sources of their woes. . . . Farmers especially disliked Jews, the 'detested middlemen' who did not work with their hands or till the soil, and whom they associated with wealthy bankers who had allegedly forced the demonetization of silver."³⁵ This sentiment intensified in proportion to the deterioration of the southern agricultural condition over the next two decades. Although farmers' discontent was not exclusively vented against Jewish merchants, uncomplimentary references to Jews appeared more frequently in southern newspapers,³⁶ and more and more, "Jews, Jewish Shylocks, Jewish money and Jewish mortgage holders were blamed for all the troubles besetting the nation," including those particular to the South.³⁷ It is important to make distinctions, as historians John Higham and David Gerber do, between the "rural and small town anti-Semitic propagandists, most from the South, Midwest, and Great Plains," and the "agrarian political radicals of the 1890s such as the Populists, who were not particularly drawn to anti-Semitism."³⁸ It was these "rural and small town anti-Semitic propagandists" who initiated the most extensive campaign of violence against Jews that the South had ever seen.

Early Saturday afternoon, October 25, 1889, a "large party of armed men" rode into the northeastern Louisiana city of Delhi, not far from where Simon Witkowski had been violently driven from town two years previous. The mob fired their pistols into the showcases and front windows of the Jewish-owned mercantile establishments in the town, discharging about fifty shots into T. Hirsch's storefront window, smashing S. Blum & Co., and sending bricks through the windows of Karpe, Weil & Co. Threatening the Jewish storeowners and "putting them in terror for their lives,"

the rioters "ordered them to leave the place" within the next twelve to fifteen hours, then rode away as fast as they had come. The townspeople, who were "friendly" to the Jewish merchants, expressed a "general regret" over the incident, and their disapproval of the mob's activities probably protected the merchants from further harm, at least in terms of making empty the threats of expulsion. Although the attackers were not publicly identified in the newspapers, their identities must have been known since it was immediately ascertained that the motivation behind the violence was that the merchants held mortgages on the land of many small farmers in the area, and that "certain debtors in the neighborhood were banded together, to run their creditors away."³⁹

The public outcry was swift and determined in its denunciation of the violence, if not in wholehearted sympathy for the victims. One of the earliest local reports wryly noted, "This is certainly a new way to clear off old debts." Although taking a jab at "certain merchants" for charging high prices and then demanding collection of debts arising from late mortgage payments, the newspaper's opinion was decidedly pro-business, if not necessarily pro-Jewish. The editor wrote, "If a man agrees to pay a hundred, or a thousand per cent . . . he should be made to stand up to his contract."⁴⁰ A week after the "riotous acts" occurred, a mass meeting, "one of the largest and most respectable ever held in Delhi," was assembled. The unanimously accepted resolutions denounced the violent attacks as being performed "maliciously, wantonly and without just cause of provocation." They stated that such behavior, "if left unrebuked," would "disparage and disgrace" the community "in the opinion of all honest and honorable people." The citizens then asserted their unflinching support of the rule of law, advising everyone to take matters of perceived injustice to the courts, rather than taking the law into their own hands "so as to regulate society to their own views" and disrupting the "peace and christian [*sic*] sentiment of our community." The local newspaper printed the resolutions in full and applauded the actions taken by the assembly to show that the townspeople were as committed to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as the inalienable right of the citizen" as much as those in any other

place in the Union.⁴¹ Public statements condemning the violence were also made by the Delhi Farmers' Union (that some observers originally suggested had sanctioned the violence as part of its activism in support of farmers and in opposition to merchants) and by the residents of Charlieville, thirty-five miles away.⁴²

Despite the general antipathy toward extralegal violence exhibited by the majority of "respectable" citizens of northeastern Louisiana, mob violence struck again near the Mississippi River town of Lake Providence, fifty miles northeast of Delhi. In mid-November, a store owned by Jews in Tompkins Bend was riddled with some fifty rifle shots in the middle of night. A sign was also left, reading: "No Jews after the 1st of January. A Delhi warning of fire and lead will make you leave." Another store, Bernard & Bloch, was also targeted with approximately fifty-five rifle shots, and twenty shots were fired into the home of one of the store's proprietors, Gus Bernard, one bullet narrowly passing over the bed where his family lay in fear.⁴³ This attack, especially coming on the heels of the "Delhi outrage," is interesting on several accounts. First, it was imitative of the Delhi episode, raising the question of whether some of the same people may have been involved. Second, it was more explicitly antisemitic, overtly identifying "Jews" in general, and not just individual storeowners, as the target. Finally, the violence became personal when it targeted one of the merchants and his family rather than just a store. In the wake of the attacks, the people of East Carroll Parish denounced the "wanton" and "flagrant" assault on the Jewish merchants in their midst.⁴⁴ However, the purpose of the terrorist violence was at least partly fulfilled when some of the Jewish merchants who had been targets of the mob decided to give up their businesses and leave the area.⁴⁵

Things seem to have settled down somewhat after the Lake Providence shootings, but only briefly. As the 1890s dawned and the agricultural condition of the South reached its lowest point leading up to the depression of 1893, rising costs, falling prices, the crop lien system, high railroad rates, an inelastic currency system, and a perpetual cycle of debt led farmers in the Deep South to lash out in desperation. The region of western Mississippi and

northeastern Louisiana had a long tradition of violence illustrated in part by the incidents related above. It was agricultural depression, however, that provided the proximate cause for *Whitecapping*, a dirt farmer movement that espoused an antisemitic and racist ideology and used violence against black tenant farmers and Jewish merchants to achieve its aims. Convinced that they were the victims of a vast Jewish conspiracy, hundreds of poor farmers in southwestern Mississippi formed secret clubs late in 1891 that became known as *Whitecap societies*.⁴⁶ One of their main platforms, published in a number of local newspapers, was that area merchants including several Jews should not allow blacks to tenant farm their land because the cheaper labor made it virtually impossible for white farmers to compete. For instance, the central club of Lawrence County complained, "The accursed Jews and others own two thirds of our land. They control and half bind the Negro laborers who partly subsist by thefts from the white farmers; thereby controlling prices of Southern produce." As a solution to the problem, the club proposed to "control negro laborers by mild means, if possible; by coercion if necessary," and "to control Jews and Gentile land speculators, and, if necessary, force them to abandon our country and confiscate their lands for the benefit of the white farmers."⁴⁷

That the vigilantes targeted a Jewish-black alliance, even if it was overstated, revealed one of the key ways that Jews did not entirely adopt white southern customs and beliefs. Indeed, race relations was a significant arena of social life in which southern Jews diverged from prevailing trends in the Jim Crow South. Most Jews, especially in commercial trades took a pragmatic approach to dealing with African Americans, viewing them primarily as customers and employees and therefore not obsessing about the color of their skin.⁴⁸ This clearly placed Jews outside of the mainstream white South, a position that was exacerbated by lingering questions about whether or not Jews were white.⁴⁹ Although they were generally accepted as at least being not-black, their relatively progressive racial stance sometimes led to violence. One example of this came in Reconstruction-era Tennessee, where in 1868 S. A. Barfield, a young Russian Jew operating a dry-goods store, was

murdered along with one of his African American employees by the Ku Klux Klan. Barfield had run afoul of the Klan because of his Radical Republican political allegiances, his ardent support of racial equality, and such simple gestures as hiring and socializing with freedmen.⁵⁰ Apparently the Jewish merchants in Mississippi and Louisiana had adopted a similar approach toward African Americans on an economic, if not a political level, and that in part made them targets for Whitecap violence. Of course, the Whitecaps' violent solution did not truly address the deep structural roots of late-nineteenth-century economic inequalities that plagued the South, but together Jewish merchants and black tenant farmers represented convenient scapegoats and eliminating them would benefit local white farmers in the short run.

Propelled by an ideology of victimization and retribution, Whitecap violence erupted in the election season of 1892. African American tenants on lands owned by Jewish merchants were driven from their homes to which notices were affixed declaring: "This Jew place is not for sale or rent, but will be used hereafter as pasture." Numerous blacks were beaten, whipped, and even killed, and scores of tenant homes were burned to the ground.⁵¹ One of the major targets of the Whitecaps was H. Miller, a Jewish merchant in Pike County who had built a flourishing business over several decades. Miller had obtained four hundred small farms in the area mostly through mortgage foreclosures. He was doubly despised because he rented his land to black laborers and had acquired wealth based on the misfortunes of white farmers who defaulted on their mortgages. During the last two months of 1892, Whitecaps burned twenty-seven homes on Miller-owned land, and through damage and abandonment, Miller estimated his losses at \$30,000. Fearful for his life, he hired an armed guard to watch his home at night "to prevent it being burned over his head," and in February 1893 sold his business and moved to New Orleans.⁵²

Many local officials and businessmen decried the Whitecap violence because of fears of lawlessness and negative effects on the area's economy. Even the governor intervened, issuing a proc-

lamation condemning the movement and offering a \$100 reward for each offender apprehended and convicted. Nevertheless, the violence continued into 1893 and ended only after a concerted effort by law enforcement officials.⁵³ Although individual Jews were typically not targets of direct violence, several were given notices to leave town, and many Jewish merchants and landholders suffered considerable economic losses because of the attacks against their black tenants and their properties. In one case, farmers even threatened lawyers who represented Jews in court.⁵⁴ Jews were by no means the only victims of the Whitecaps, but the threats and violence against them revealed not only the standard agrarian tensions of the period but also rising antisemitic sentiments among many rural southerners.

A common feature in many of these anti-Jewish incidents was the alliance of "respectable" citizens with the Jewish victims rather than with the vigilante mobs who assaulted them. While vigilantes typically claimed to speak for the interests of the entire community, it became clear that there were in fact significant divisions among southern communities in their attitudes toward both extralegal violence and certain outsider groups, in this case Jews. This distinction typically fell along class lines. Southern elites were hardly adverse to the principle of vigilantism, as business, civic, religious, and government leaders not only supported but also participated in and sometimes led mobs against African American and Mormon offenders. Community leaders shared the widespread belief that citizens had the right to use violence to defend honor and preserve the social order. However, they were also afraid that if left unchecked, vigilantism would devolve into mob rule and thus threaten the law and order it initially intended to protect. Accordingly, elites advocated social violence as a surgical instrument to be used in certain situations rather than a blunt weapon to be applied indiscriminately. They therefore encouraged some forms of vigilantism as necessary and good while condemning others as excessive and dangerous.⁵⁵

Jews generally had the support of community elites because even if they were not fully accepted as cultural insiders, their mercantile interests allied them with the southern middle class. As

upwardly mobile Jews sought respectability in southern society, they did so not by seeking common cause with poor farmers but by building relationships with more influential southerners. In their geographic location in towns and cities, economic location in entrepreneurial and commercial interests, and social location as the aspiring middle class, Jews naturally gravitated toward the business elements of the New South which in turn showed an affinity toward them.⁵⁶ The violence against Jewish merchants and storeowners reified their class position, both by reinforcing their sometimes antagonistic relationship with poor farmers and by strengthening bonds with middle- and upper-class southerners who repeatedly demonstrated solidarity with the victims of class-based vigilantism. To be sure, these class lines were not sharply drawn, as many southern Jews had friendly relations with neighbors and customers from across the economic and racial spectrum, and southern elites consistently barred Jews from certain parts of high society.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, anti-Jewish violence exposed deep tensions within southern society not only between Jewish merchants and poor farmers but also between the mercantile and agrarian classes more broadly. In the next section, antisemitism will be considered in both its ideological and religious forms, which, combined with economic-based prejudice, served to further legitimize acts of violence against Jews.

Toward an Understanding of American Antisemitism

Economic hardship, class antagonism, and populist protest were the immediate causes of the agrarian violence that racked the Deep South in the late 1880s and early 1890s. However, the anti-Jewish element of that violence can only be fully understood when put into the larger context of intensifying antisemitism throughout the United States and Europe during the same era. Especially in America, as Michael Dobkowski notes, for the most part "the kinds of accusations that anti-Semites and others leveled against Jews remained relatively constant. . . . The big changes were not so much intellectual or conceptual, but emotional and a matter of degree."⁵⁸ Unlike scholars including Oscar Handlin and Richard Hofstadter, who connected the rise of rural American an-

tisemitism to agrarian protest movements and especially the Populists, Dobkowski demonstrates that "there were many misconceptions and falsehoods, including conspiracy theories, circulating in America well before the 1890s that had nothing to do with the agrarian protest or social claustrophobia."⁵⁹ From 1865 to 1915, longstanding prejudices and stereotypes were simply given new expression and found resonance with a new set of social, cultural, and economic circumstances.

Antisemitic attitudes in American culture were rooted in complex religious and economic sources. Leonard Dinnerstein unequivocally argues that "Christian viewpoints underlie all American antisemitism. No matter what other factors or forces may have been in play at any given time the basis for prejudice toward Jews in the United States . . . must be Christian teachings."⁶⁰ While compelling in its boldness, Dinnerstein's thesis must be nuanced by a fuller representation of how Christians viewed Jews. Jews became both indirect and direct victims of nineteenth-century American Protestant triumphalism in a number of ways including laws upholding the Christian Sabbath as the national day of rest; Bible readings, recitations of the Lord's Prayer, and the singing of Protestant hymns in public schools; explicit Christian references in official government language and proclamations; missionary drives to convert or, in the words of some evangelicals, "reclaim" Jews to Christianity; and general disdain among Protestant ministers and intellectuals for Judaism as a viable and respectable religious system in its own right (rather than as a precursor to Protestant Christianity).⁶¹ In addition, Jews were often depicted in unflattering terms in religious sermons and popular novels throughout the nineteenth century.⁶² Jews were both unforgivable Christ-killers and the chosen people of God who had providentially survived centuries of persecution.⁶³

Although some Jewish sources pointed to the majority of southerners' Christian faith as "the root of popular prejudice,"⁶⁴ when southern Jewish-Christian interactions are viewed as a whole, it is difficult to argue for a substantial religiously based antisemitism during the 1800s. Many southern evangelicals saw Jews as part of the great unsaved mass of humanity that needed

conversion, but relatively few Jews recalled specific attempts to convert them personally.⁶⁵ Jews were rare enough in the region that many people, especially in rural areas, saw meeting a Jew as something of a novelty or special event. David Steinheimer related that on his first day as a peddler, fresh off the boat from Bavaria and knowing almost no English, a family took him in for the night. He recalled: "After supper I was the hero of the farm house . . . they wanted to know all about me and my country as well as my religion, when I told them I was a Jew, they were astonished, they thought a Jew had horns."⁶⁶ As "people of the Old Testament," Jews were considered religious authorities by many southerners who loved to talk religion. One North Carolina peddler recalled how his customers insisted "that I stay overnight and discuss the Bible with them." A Jewish pawnshop owner in Durham spent hours discussing passages from the Bible with customers. Another peddler remembered a poor farm family who turned their home into a kind of boarding house for Jewish peddlers: "They reminded the Jews of their religious duties, loved to hear Yiddish spoken, and carefully separated pork from the eggs that they fed them."⁶⁷ In addition, the rabbis in Reform temples across the South were often invited to give sermons in Christian churches and Bible classes. As Eli Evans notes, "To rock-ribbed Baptists they seemed the very embodiment of the prophets themselves."⁶⁸

Although many of these relationships were patronizing and Jews were treated at least somewhat condescendingly, most southerners saw Jews and Judaism as a curiosity, something like a great-uncle who was endearingly odd but nonetheless part of the family, and not as some kind of demonic anti-Christian threat. This is not to say that religious prejudice did not feed southern antisemitism. However, it should be emphasized that the pervasiveness of evangelical Protestantism did not deterministically lead to conscious antisemitic feelings among southern Christians, and strains of religious philosemitism were juxtaposed with classic images of Jews as Christ-killers.

The second major source of antisemitism in the late nineteenth century was a wide array of negative stereotypes of Jews as

greedy, unproductive Shylocks. Like religious prejudices, however, these images were also complicated. Michael Dobkowski aptly describes this duality of virtues and vices that Jews inspired based on economic stereotypes:

On the positive side, the Jew commonly symbolized an admirable keenness and resourcefulness in business. In this sense, his economic energy seemed very much in the tradition of Yankee America. . . . In another mood, however, keenness might mean cunning; enterprise might shade into greed. Along with encomiums of the Jew as a model of commercial skill went frequent references to avaricious Shylocks.⁶⁹

Dobkowski further observes that the image of the Jew featured in the pages of the nationally circulated magazine *Puck* from 1885 to 1905 was "the inveterate materialist who strives his entire life for pecuniary advantage, receives his greatest satisfaction from a particularly profitable business transaction, and looks out upon the world with cash-register eyes riveted to the possibilities of a quick profit."⁷⁰

Most of these images were churned out of popular presses in northern urban centers where Jews had a much larger numerical presence than in the South, but the stereotypical representations still resonated strongly with many southerners. Even New South boosters who were energetic advocates of commercial enterprise were not entirely comfortable with the merits of a class of creditors who earned money based on economic concentration and who made profits, it seemed, based on the hard work of others.⁷¹ Despairing farmers throughout the Midwest and South, searching for an explanation for the never-ending cycles of debt and failure they suffered, often summoned up images of "the Jew" as merciless creditor, the Wall Street banker, or the international financier; in other words, "the epitome of the exploitative moneyed interests."⁷² Individuals who believed they had been shortchanged on business transactions with Jewish lenders or merchants similarly reverted to stereotypes to make sense of the situation. For instance, Philip Pitts complained in his diary that he had received only forty-three of the fifty pounds of meat he had ordered from

"Ernst Bros." He then remarked, "No Jew that I ever met with, was honest. My Bible tells me 'A false ballance [*sic*] is an abomination to the Lord' - These Jews then must be an abomination to the Lord."⁷³

Such antisemitic attitudes were not unique to the South nor did they originate there. However, as they became more pervasive in the popular imagination throughout western Europe and America in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, antisemitic images were perpetuated and advanced by southern demagogues such as Tom Watson and by local vigilante groups such as the Whitecaps.⁷⁴ While the mass of southerners were generally neither more nor less antisemitic than other Americans in the period, the depressed agricultural and financial condition of the postbellum South allowed for scapegoat images of the Jew to be exploited by willing parties and then given a southern flavor as expressed in anti-Jewish vigilante violence.

In Comparative Perspective

The antisemitic violence that racked rural Louisiana and Mississippi in the late 1880s and early 1890s struck a chord with Jews around the country. Due to his proximity in New Orleans, Reform rabbi Max Heller felt compelled to make public comment about the tragedies. His response to the violence in Delhi, Lake Providence, and western Mississippi is intriguing, even surprising. Rather than issuing blanket condemnations of southern antisemitism, Heller assumed an ambiguous pose. He argued that the charge of "Antisemite" had been bandied about too lightly, and that most Christian and Jewish commentators demonstrated "utter misunderstanding" about what the term really meant. Jewish circles in northern cities exaggerated the antisemitic content of the violence, Heller argued, as he differentiated between the true "Jew-hatred" of Germany and eastern Europe and the "lawless rowdyism" that Jews occasionally fell victim to in the South. A culture of vigilantism was not the same as epidemic antisemitism, and he assured his readers "how little these troubles mean as

Rabbi Max Heller.

*In reacting against anti-Jewish violence in the South,
Heller strongly urged conciliation between Jew and non-Jew.*

(Courtesy of Temple Sinai, New Orleans.)

regards the general feeling in Louisiana towards the Jews." Heller's scrapbook for the period includes clippings from various newspapers describing antisemitic atrocities in Russia occurring at the same time as the anti-Jewish violence in northern Louisiana, clearly trying to show by comparison how well Jews in America and particularly in the South really had it. When the southern press denounced the antisemitic violence, Heller extolled the "perfect harmony prevailing between Jew and Gentile" in the region.⁷⁵ Perhaps Heller was overly sanguine about the situation of Jews in the South, but he was certainly right when he asserted that their treatment far excelled that of Jews in Russia or African Americans in the South.

While America's "Protestant century" was certainly not a structurally or culturally inviting place for non-Protestants, not all religious outsiders fared the same. Antisemitism undeniably operated throughout the nineteenth century, providing a rationale for antagonism and occasional violence, but it was eclipsed as a cultural force by anti-Catholicism until approximately the First World War.⁷⁶ Southern Catholics were subject to the same prejudices and discrimination as were their coreligionists around the country. One southern Methodist minister typically warned that the goal of Catholicism in America was to "throttle Republicanism, bruise freedom, crush Protestantism, control the press, shape legislation, direct our institutions, manipulate our national wealth, and enthrone the pope in our midst."⁷⁷ Despite the widespread anti-Catholic sentiment throughout the region, however, Catholics were subject to relatively little violence largely because they congregated in insular enclaves in southern cities. Paradoxically, it was precisely because many southern Jews chose not to ghettoize themselves that they were assaulted more frequently. Indeed, it was their intimate interactions with southerners particularly in rural areas and small towns which opened them up for violence, whether because of their vulnerability as in the case of peddlers or their relative economic strength as in the case of merchants and other creditors. Thus, while Jews generally enjoyed more congenial relationships with their Protestant neighbors on a daily basis and were more integrated into the institutions of

southern society, they were also the victims of more violence in the postbellum period than were Catholics.⁷⁸

Both Jews and Catholics fared extremely well in the South compared to Mormons. While episodes of anti-Jewish violence numbered in the dozens, there were hundreds of cases of anti-Mormon violence throughout the region primarily in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This is particularly striking because of the marked disparity in the relative populations of the two groups. According to the 1890 census, there were 1384 Latter-day Saints (LDS) in the South, plus approximately 120 itinerant missionaries. By contrast, the South reportedly housed 21,896 Jews.⁷⁹ Even if the undercounting of violent episodes is more severe for Jews than for Mormons, the contrast is still astonishing, suggesting the remarkable virulence of anti-Mormon sentiment particularly in the 1880s when the national anti-polygamy campaign was at full pitch, and southerners' unique willingness to actuate their antagonistic feelings with vigilantism. Mormon converts were occasionally marked for chastisement, but LDS missionaries became special targets for southern ire. Seen as religious carpetbaggers, Mormon elders were perceived as religious and sexually aggressive outsiders who threatened traditional beliefs, disrupted family relationships, and drained southern communities of precious white labor. The stereotyped Mormon missionary became an object of fear and scorn throughout the South, as he was accused of breaking up families and seducing young women to join him in his polygamous harem in the Mountain West. Hounded by vigilantes and unprotected by government and law enforcement officials, Latter-day Saints in the South were whipped, kidnapped, forcibly expelled from towns and homes, and in a few instances murdered. Secular and religious publications alike called for the removal of Mormons from the region and threatened dire consequences when they remained. In sum, although Jews were often victims of harassment and violence, even more so than their Catholic neighbors, their reception in the South was considerably more hospitable than that of the Mormons, who were assailed on every level of southern, and indeed American, society.⁸⁰

Rabbi Heller's reaction to the anti-Jewish violence in Mississippi and Louisiana illustrates that complexity of the southern Jewish experience in the half century after Appomattox. On one hand, Jews were victims of repeated, if sporadic and localized, aggression and violence, resulting in several murders and the destruction of many thousands of dollars of property. On the other hand, most southern Jews made ready peace with their dual identities as southerners and Jews and lived undisturbed as relatively well-integrated members of their communities. The real story is therefore one of complexity and paradox, not singular and exclusivist explanations. Accepting the complexity of the situation not only prevents us from trivializing the suffering of the many Jews who did indeed suffer violence or discrimination at the hands of southern antisemites, but it also stops short of demonizing southern gentiles or evangelical Christians as a whole. In fact, tolerance of Jews in the South and violence against them were not competing, but rather complementary and parallel processes. The palette of antisemitic images and stereotypes which had existed for hundreds of years in religious sermons and popular art and literature was readily available for those who chose to paint their world with them. And certainly the agricultural depressions and societal instability of the late nineteenth-century South provided ample opportunity for would-be antisemites to act out their prejudices and for others to turn to Jews as convenient scapegoats. This combination of antisemitism and violence would reach its peak in the 1915 lynching of Leo Frank. Although the Frank case was of a markedly different character than most of these earlier episodes due to its urban setting, the sexual paranoia it revealed, and the virulent antisemitism it sparked, when put in its broader historical context, it can be interpreted as the climax or culmination of decades of southern anti-Jewish violence.⁸¹

Violent antisemitism in the postbellum South could have been much worse, as the Mormon and African American examples prove. One of the key factors differentiating southern Jews from other groups was their unique social and economic location, which led them to build relationships with the southern middle class, moving them away from the fringes of society and closer to

the cultural center. Although sometimes it was Jews' very success at integration and upward mobility that fueled new hostility, particularly from marginalized poor farmers, in most times and places southern Jews were adept at being southern enough that their Jewishness was deemed by their neighbors to be either irrelevant or merely curious. While overt antisemitism and violence would never be dominant themes in the nineteenth-century southern Jewish experience like they were in Europe at the same time, they were persistent enough to constitute essential elements of Jewish-gentile relations in the New South. That southern anti-Jewish violence was scattered and unpredictable suggested that there was no formula invariably resulting in conflict, and no single set of indicators to predict when and where violence would occur. The episodic nature of the violence thus proved that no amount of integration and acculturation could guarantee Jews complete immunity from the capricious whims of southern vigilantism, particularly when vigilantes drew upon the antisemitic images and attitudes that existed but usually lay dormant in southern culture. In the end, Jews' integration in communities across the South did in fact reflect a wide degree of acceptance. However, the omnipresent threat and occasional reality of anti-Jewish violence in the New South demonstrated the precarious and limited nature of that acceptance.

NOTES

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¹ On the role of Jews in the economy, see Stephen J. Whitfield, "Commercial Passions: The Southern Jew as Businessman," *American Jewish History* 71 (March 1982): 342–357. On the development of Reform Judaism in America and particularly in the South, see Alan Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture, 1840–1930* (Hanover, NH, 1994); Gary Phillip Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788–1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual* (Tuscaloosa, 1994); James W. Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993); Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988); and Leon A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820–1870* (Hanover, NH, 1976).

² C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge, 1971), 158–159. In agreement with Woodward, Edward L. Ayers writes that the New South was "a notoriously violent place," with homicide rates easily the highest in the country and among the highest in the world." Edward L. Ayers, *Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York, 1992), 155; see also Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th-Century American South* (New York, 1984). On southern violence and the culture of honor, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s–1890s* (Chapel Hill, 2001); Kenneth Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, 1996); Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Boulder, 1996); Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, esp. chap. 1; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982); Bruce D. Dickson, *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin, TX, 1979); Sheldon Hackney, "Southern Violence," *American Historical Review* 74 (February 1969): 906–925. The best source on American violence, particularly in its vigilante manifestations, remains Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York, 1975); see also Hugh Graham Davis and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives – A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence*, June 1969 (Washington, DC, 1969).

³ Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York, 1994), 176; see chap. 9. See also Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Antisemitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York, 1987), esp. chap. 4–5.

⁴ Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Nativism, Bigotry, and Anti-Semitism in the South," *American Jewish History* 77 (March 1988): 446–447.

⁵ Surasky's first name was spelled both Abram and Abraham by contemporaries. Here Abram is used since it is the spelling preferred in most (including family) sources. One family member reported that among his branch, Surasky was called Avreml, a Yiddish diminutive of Abraham. See also the memoir by Surasky's niece, Mina S. Tropp, "Memoirs: Mostly about a South Carolina Childhood," *Jewish Currents* 34 [1980]: 13. Also confusing is the day that Surasky visited the Greens' home and was murdered. Most sources agree that it was July 28, which would have been a Tuesday. However, witnesses variously identify the day as a Wednesday or Friday, somewhat clouding the actual chronology.

⁶ "The Assassinations in Aiken," *Beaufort Gazette*, August 13, 1903.

⁷ The literature on Jewish peddlers in the South is relatively small and is virtually all the work of Louis Schmier. See Schmier, "Hello! Peddler Man! Hello!" in *Ethnic Minorities in Gulf Coast Society*, ed. Jerrill H. Shofner and Linda V. Ellsworth (Pensacola, 1979), 75-88; "'For Him the 'Schwartzers' Couldn't Do Enough': A Jewish Peddler and his Black Customers Look at Each Other," *American Jewish History* 73 (September 1983): 39-55; "The Man from Gehau," *Atlanta Historical Journal* 23 (fall 1979): 91-106; and "The First Jews of Valdosta," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 62 (spring 1978): 32-49.

Other than Schmier's work, the scholarship on peddlers focuses almost exclusively on antebellum peddlers in the North and the West. See David Jaffee, "Peddlers of Progress and the Transformation of the Rural North, 1760-1860," *Journal of American History* 78 (September 1991): 511-535; Henry L. Feingold, *Zion in America: The Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 1974), 73-78; and Rudolf Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," *Jewish Social Studies* 7 (April 1945): 119-136. In her keynote address at the 2004 conference of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, Hasia Diner spoke about the importance of peddlers and peddling as engines of Jewish immigration and economic development. Diner, "Wandering Jews, Peddlers, Immigrants, and the Exploration of New Worlds," Southern Jewish Historical Society annual meeting, Charleston, S.C., October 2004. [Ed. note: a revised version of Diner's paper appears as the first article in this journal.] All of these authors agree that Jewish peddlers were important players in the rural economy. Jaffee most explicitly argues that by bringing consumer goods to rural homes, peddlers also integrated themselves into a market culture and to a certain degree introduced themselves to modernity. Many of Jaffee's observations about peddlers in the antebellum North also ring true for the postbellum South, raising questions not only about the different chronologies of the introduction of the market to each section, but also about the ambivalences inherent when a culture embraces a market economy. Stephen J. Whitfield briefly makes this point for southern peddlers, writing that "their peddler's packs and sample cases helped cultivate a taste for the products of the modern world. . . . In helping to make the South more modern, more like the rest of the United States, Jewish businessmen altered the moral climate which all Southerners breathed." Whitfield, "Commercial Passions," 356.

Edward Ayers discusses the importance of small-town merchants and stores in integrating the South into the modernizing national economy after the Civil War. However, he omits any mention of Jews. See Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, chap. 4. While Jews were a tiny minority of the population throughout the South, they were disproportionately represented in commercial trades; see Whitfield, "Commercial Passions."

⁸ This account relies primarily on two sources: "Gruesome Murder in Aiken," *Charleston News and Courier*, August 2, 1903; and especially the sworn affidavit of George H. Horsey, February 18, 1904, Aiken County Indictments, Bundle 164, June 1904, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia (hereafter cited as ACI). Original reports were that the murder was carried out by Lee Green and George Toole, but Green was the only one charged and tried. There was some disagreement about whether Green shot Surasky

two or three times. Regardless, the doctor who inspected Surasky's body found his upper back "well sprinkled with shot." He declared the cause of death to be either the "large wounds" in his flesh near his shoulder and collarbone or the "blow on head," all from the axe. Testimony of Dr. W. S. Eubanks, August 1903, ACI.

⁹ Luther Cordon affidavit, February 17, 1904, ACI.

¹⁰ Note, dated June 15, 1904, on back of testimony of Morgan Halley and his wife, February 18, 1904, ACI; verdict issued on June 25, 1904, ACI. According to the "unwritten law" of nineteenth-century legal culture, still prominent after the turn of the twentieth century, "if a man found his wife in the arms of another man and he killed the other man on the spot, he would never be convicted of murder. His exemption was part of a complex of self-defense rights, at one with his right to shoot a burglar or a malicious trespasser, to repel, violently if necessary, someone who had invaded his property (although, like other property holds acting in self-defense, the man might be convicted of manslaughter). His exemption was part of the privileged identity of a husband. . . . This was the unwritten law." Hendrik Hartog, "Lawyering, Husbands' Rights, and 'the Unwritten Law' in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 84 (June 1997): 67-96 (quote from 67-68).

In promoting his story of Surasky making sexual advances on his wife, Lee Green may have been drawing upon rumors and fears about Jewish sexuality. However, the available evidence supports a historical rather than a psychosexual reading of this event. Green's rape narrative was more as a convenient rationale for his own violent behavior fabricated after the fact, than a manifestation of cultural beliefs about Jews' alleged sexual deviance. Although they were sometimes constructed as hypersexual, more frequently Jews were seen as deviant or feminized, and often homosexual. Green's defense that Surasky was a seducer or rapist (the line becomes blurry in his telling) is therefore more akin to southern fears of black "beasts" or Mormon seducers than antisemitic narratives of Jewish sexual deviance. On ideas about Jewish sexuality, see Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York, 1991); and Jeffrey Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson, MS, 2000), esp. chap. 3.

¹¹ Mary Drayton affidavit, February 24, 1904, ACI, 1-4.

¹² Drayton affidavit, 3, 8.

¹³ David T. Parker statement, undated, ACI.

¹⁴ H. B. Heath affidavit, February 18, 1904, ACI.

¹⁵ Drayton affidavit, 7. Arthur House swore that while at the Greens' home the night of the murder, he had asked Dora Green "what was the trouble between [her husband] and the pedlar." She replied that "the pedlar had been bothering me," but did not give any details. House does not mention suggesting to Green that he fabricate the rape story, nor being sworn to abide by it. Arthur House affidavit, February 17, 1904, ACI.

¹⁶ Request for continuance of trial, October 19, 1903, ACI; Order continuing case, October 21, 1903, ACI.

¹⁷ According to David Parker's affidavit, Green confessed to George Toole that after he killed Surasky, "I taken his account book, tore out my account and then taken the book and

his hat and dug a hole by a stump in the cotton patch and buried them just back of the house." In her affidavit, Mary Drayton testified that Green owed Surasky fifteen dollars, and stole \$3.05 from his dead body, which he later complained did not even "pay me for my trouble."

¹⁸ Morgan Halley testimony, February 18, 1904, ACI.

¹⁹ For biographical information on the Surasky family and their place in the Aiken community, see Surasky family file, College of Charleston Special Collections. Sources in the file include a typed Surasky family history (author unknown, May 1978); Arnold Shankman, ed., "Jewish Life in Aiken, S.C.: Childhood Memories of Esther Surasky Pinck," *SJHS Newsletter* (March 1982): 2-3; and various local newspaper articles. Shortly after Abram's murder, the Surasky family was tangentially involved in Happyville, one of several agricultural utopian colonies founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Arnold Shankman, "Happyville: The Forgotten Colony," *American Jewish Archives* 30 (April 1978): 3-19; Marcia Savin, "Happyville: A Kibbutz Grows in Aiken," *Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina* 9 (2004): 3-5.

²⁰ Burrel Holley affidavit, February 18, 1904, ACI. Two of Lee Green's uncles, Robert and James Green, were among this particular group that discovered the body. (It was actually "discovered" at several different times by multiple people in the days after the murder.) James wanted to bury the body quietly and thus "settle up the question," but Robert and the others insisted that the incident be made known, both to the local Jews and the larger populace.

²¹ "The Sheriff of Aiken," *Beaufort Gazette*, September 17, 1903.

²² Nothing in particular suggests why there was this unusual spike of anti-Jewish violence in 1887. Other than chronological proximity, these four cases are unconnected. However, based on my research there seems to have been more southern anti-Jewish violence in the years 1887-1893 than at any other time, with most of the episodes being rooted in farmers' grievances related to poor agricultural and economic conditions. See Patrick Q. Mason, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Mob: Violence against Religious Outsiders in the U.S. South, 1865-1910" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2005) esp. chap. 5.

²³ "Anti-Semites in Louisiana," *American Hebrew*, April 1, 1887.

²⁴ *Ibid*; "The Louisiana Outrage," *American Israelite*, June 17, 1887.

²⁵ "Domestic News," *American Hebrew*, August 5, 1887.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, August 12, 1887.

²⁷ Other victims of robbery-murders included Jacob Kriss (Baton Rouge), Samuel Goldberg (Washington, LA) and Max Lubelsky (Charleston, SC). On Kriss, see Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," 128-129. On Goldberg, see "Horrible Murder," *St. Landry* [Opelousas, LA] *Clarion*, December 1, 1900; and "Murdered and Robbed," *Opelousas Courier*, December 1, 1900. On Lubelsky, see Daniel J. Crooks Jr., *The Trial of Daniel Duncan: As Told in the Days of Porgy and Bess* (Charleston, 1999).

²⁸ Shankman, "Jewish Life in Aiken," 2.

²⁹ For the most part, New South cities were relatively tame bastions of law and order compared to rural areas where law enforcement was less present, more informal, and thus more given to vigilantism. Most southern violence occurred in small towns and the countryside, making these areas more threatening to Jews' personal safety. See W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* (Urbana, IL, 1993), 159; Gilles Vandal, *Rethinking Southern Violence: Homicides in Post-Civil War Louisiana, 1866–1884* (Columbus, OH, 2000), 25; Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882–1930* (Urbana, IL, 1995).

³⁰ "Friedman's Body Found," *Columbia [TN] Herald*, April 8, 1870; "What They Are Saying Against Us," *ibid.*, April 15, 1870; "Terrible Development of the Friedman Mystery," *The [San Francisco] Hebrew*, April 29, 1870; "The Murdered Peddler," [New York] *Jewish Messenger*, April 29, 1870.

³¹ "An Awful Murder," [Alexandria, LA] *Weekly Town Talk*, January 24, 1891; "A Diabolical Deed," *ibid.*, January 31, 1891.

³² "A Brutal, Dastardly and Atrocious Murder for Purpose of Robbery," [Alexandria] *Louisiana Democrat*, June 3, 1896; "Horrible Murder at Oakdale," *Weekly Town Talk*, June 6, 1896; "Aaron and James Johnson Confess," *Louisiana Democrat*, June 10, 1896; "Shooting of the Jew Peddlers," *Weekly Town Talk*, June 13, 1896.

³³ "The Murdered Peddler," *Jewish Messenger*, April 29, 1870.

³⁴ C. Vann Woodward's account of the period is worth recounting as background: "The annual defeat of the crop market and the tax collector, the weekly defeat of the town market and mounting debt, and the small, gnawing, daily defeats of crumbling barn and fence, encroaching sagebrush and erosion, and one's children growing up in illiteracy—all added up to frustration. The experience bred a spirit of desperation and defiance in these people. 'The basest fraud on earth is agriculture,' wrote a Mississippi farmer, and then he said the most blasphemous thing ever spoken by one of Jefferson's 'chosen people of God'—'No wonder Cain killed his brother. He was a tiller of the ground.'" Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 188.

³⁵ Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 49.

³⁶ See Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769–1976: Shabbat in Shockoe* (Charlottesville, 1979), 247.

³⁷ Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*, 91.

³⁸ David A. Gerber, "Anti-Semitism and Jewish-Gentile Relations in American Historiography and the American Past," in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. David A. Gerber (Urbana, IL, 1986), 30; see also John Higham, *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York, 1975), 123–124. The standard source defending the Populists against charges of widespread antisemitism is Walter Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists: Kansas, Populism, and Nativism* (Chicago, 1963).

³⁹ "Mobbing Merchants," *American Israelite*, October 31, 1889; "Trouble in Delhi," *Richland [Rayville, LA] Beacon*, November 2, 1889; "The Delhi Trouble," *Richland Beacon*, November 2, 1889. Coverage of the incident was also provided in the [Jackson, MS] *Clarion-Ledger*, October 31, 1889. C. Vann Woodward asserted that the Delhi incident was "not

indicative of widespread antisemitism, for there seems to have been very little." (*Origins of the New South*, 188 n. 42). Given the other episodes of antisemitic violence in the region during the late 1880s and 1890s, it seems that Woodward's estimation was somewhat optimistic.

⁴⁰ "The Delhi Trouble," *Richland Beacon*, November 2, 1889.

⁴¹ "Mass Meeting at Delhi," and "The Outrage Denounced," *ibid.*, November 9, 1889.

⁴² "Delhi Farmers' Union, No. 306," *ibid.*, November 16, 1889; "The Delhi Outrage," *ibid.*, December 14, 1889.

⁴³ "The Louisiana Outrages," *American Israelite*, November 21, 1889.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, "Notes," December 5, 1889.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, January 23, 1890.

⁴⁶ William F. Holmes, "Whitecapping: Anti-Semitism in the Populist Era," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 63 (March 1974): 245-247. Although the Whitecaps did not always wear costumes and only sometimes rode disguised, their name may have been a nod to the similarities between them and Reconstruction terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and Knights of the White Camellia, who typically wore white hoods or caps. Richard Maxwell Brown argues that "white capping seems to have been an important link between the first and second Ku Klux Klans. White Cap methods, in regard to punishment and costume, seem to have been influenced by the first Klan" (*Strain of Violence*, 25).

⁴⁷ Quoted in Holmes, "Whitecapping," 248.

⁴⁸ Howard Rabinowitz notes that "comparing Southern Jewish attitudes with those of their Gentile contemporaries and Northern Jews, they end up somewhere in the middle, that is, more liberal than Gentile white southerners but less so than Northern Jews." Rabinowitz, "Nativism, Bigotry, and Anti-Semitism," 449. See also Louis Schmier, "Jews and Gentiles in a South Georgia Town," in *Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Jewish Historical Society*, ed. Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier with Malcolm Stern (Macon, GA, 1984), 12; Schmier, "'For Him the 'Schwartzers' Couldn't Do Enough,'" Whitfield, "Commercial Passions," 353. Recent works on black-Jewish relations in the South include Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*; and Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2001).

⁴⁹ On Jews' racial identity and how southerners constructed ideas about Jews' race vis-à-vis African Americans, see Leonard Rogoff, "Is the Jew White? The Racial Place of the Southern Jew," *American Jewish History* 85 (September 1997): 195-230.

⁵⁰ See Morris U. Schappes, ed., *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1971), 515-517; also see "Murderous Outrage at Franklin, Williamson County, Tenn.," *New York Times*, August 17, 1868.

⁵¹ Holmes, "Whitecapping," 249.

⁵² "A Just Charge," [Natchez] *Daily Democrat*, January 20, 1893. Holmes lists the man's name as H. Hiller ("Whitecapping," 249).

⁵³ Beginning in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, an internal discussion took place (albeit an often tepid one) over the merits of the mob violence that plagued the South. Frequently led by government officials and business leaders, anti-lynching

campaigns sprang up across the region, although they emerged at different times and advanced at different paces. While most of these discussions centered on racial violence, condemnations of anti-Jewish violence fell under the same rubric. For a comparative account of the anti-lynching movements in Georgia and Virginia, see Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, chap. 6–8. For women’s involvement in anti-lynching, see Patricia Ann Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880–1930* (Chapel Hill, 2001); Mary Jane Brown, *Eradicating This Evil: Women in the American Anti-Lynching Movement, 1892–1940* (New York, 2000); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching*, rev. ed. (New York, 1993); Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892–1900*, ed. with an Introduction by Jacqueline Jones Royster (Boston, 1997).

⁵⁴ See Holmes, “Whitecapping,” 251, 259. Notice of this violence against Jews reached the highest levels of the nation’s government. U.S. Senator Donelson Caffery from Louisiana, after hearing about the expulsion of Jews from one town, asked in a letter to a friend, “What is the matter with the itinerant Jews in Franklin, that they were the subjects of extradition, not of a legal but of an actual kind?” Typescript letter from Donelson Caffery, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC, to Harry [no last name], November 23, 1893, from letter file book, v. 6, 105, Caffery (Donelson and Family) Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.

⁵⁵ In his extensive research on lynching in the New South, Fitzhugh Brundage finds ample support that many southern mobs during this time were led by “the best citizens” of the community. For instance, he documents mobs led by, respectively, a former judge and prominent local politician, a railroad auditor, a manager of the local ice company, an accountant, the manager of a local hotel, and the president of an insurance company. See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 38. Richard Brown also asserts that vigilante movements were often led by the “social and economic elite of an area,” including politicians, judges and law enforcement officials, wealthy businessmen, and prominent writers. *Strain of Violence*, 120. Other elites led the anti-lynching movement (see n. 53).

⁵⁶ For instance, Steven Hertzberg shows how Jews’ role as merchants brought prosperity and fostered civic-mindedness, which helped them integrate into Atlanta society. *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 155–156.

⁵⁷ As Wendy Lowe Besmann explains, “the genteel brand of social anti-Semitism kept Jews out of exclusive clubs, led to restrictive covenants against Jews in many neighborhoods, and produced quota systems in universities and professions.” *A Separate Circle: Jewish Life in Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville, 2001), 51. David Gerber argues that this pattern of social exclusion in the South was “no worse than elsewhere” in nineteenth-century America. “Anti-Semitism and Jewish-Gentile Relations,” 27.

⁵⁸ Michael N. Dobkowski, *The Tarnished Dream: The Basis of American Anti-Semitism* (Westport, CT, 1979), 236.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6; see also Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists*, and Higham, *Send These to Me*, chap. 7. For the opposing point of view in which Populists are more forcefully linked with

antisemitism, see Oscar Handlin, "How U.S. Anti-Semitism Really Began: Its Grass-Roots Source in the 90's," *Commentary* 11 (June 1951): 541-548; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: from Bryan to FDR* (New York, 1956), 78-80; Victor C. Ferkiss, "Populist Influences on American Fascism," *Western Political Quarterly* 10 (June 1957): 350-373.

⁶⁰ Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, ix.

⁶¹ See Benny Kraut, "Jewish Survival in Protestant America," in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana, IL, 1998), 40-41.

⁶² Robert Rockaway and Arnon Gutfeld, "Demonic Images of the Jew in the Nineteenth Century United States," *American Jewish History* 89 (December 2001): 355-381, see esp. 356, 375.

⁶³ Joseph Proskauer, who grew up in late nineteenth-century Mobile, Alabama, was beaten up in high school for being a "Christ killer." Other Jewish boys in the South shared similar experiences. See Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*, 89.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Rockaway and Gutfeld, "Demonic Images of the Jew," 366.

⁶⁵ Leonard Rogoff, *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa, 2001), 88. Attempts at conversion, however, were common enough so that Jewish leaders sometimes became impatient and struck back. For instance, Rabbi Louis Weiss wrote an apologetic work expressly designed to defend Judaism in a southern climate in which "some missionaries and some fanatics hurl at us the imputation that we are blind and stubborn for not believing in Christ." Weiss, *Some Burning Questions Pertaining to the Messiahship of Jesus - Why the Jews do not Accept Him*, rev. and enl. (n.p., 1900), 5, in Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville.

⁶⁶ David Steinheimer life sketch, date unknown, 2, in David Steinheimer Family Papers 1869-1952, William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta, GA.

⁶⁷ Rogoff, *Homelands*, 85-86.

⁶⁸ Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* rev. ed (New York, 1997), 49. On the important role that rabbis played as liaisons between their Jewish congregation and the larger community, see 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, 1979), 21-32. A good anecdotal example of this is in Besmann, *A Separate Circle*, 51-52.

⁶⁹ Dobkowski, *Tarnished Dream*, 79.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 103-104; Higham, *Send These to Me*, 180-181. On New South commercialism and boosterism, see Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York, 1970); Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, esp. chap. 3; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, chap. 5-6.

⁷² Louise A. Mayo, *The Ambivalent Image: Nineteenth-Century America's Perception of the Jew* (Rutherford, NJ, 1988), 128.

⁷³ Philip H. Pitts Diary, Alabama, typescript, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2 (1882-1884), 44. In another example of a personal reaction to Jewish business practices, Donelson Caffery complained of his indebtedness on his

sugarcane plantation: "I pay the Jews in the neighborhood of 20% when I ought to pay 6%. The business won't stand the interest." Letter from Donelson Caffery, Bethia Plantation, Teche P.O., Louisiana, to his child (Don?), December 14, 1901, (letter file book, v. 4, 159), Caffery Papers, LSU.

⁷⁴ On the application of generally held antisemitic stereotypes to specific rural and southern crises in the late nineteenth century, see Rockaway and Gutfeld, "Demonic Images," 379; Kraut, "Jewish Survival," 42; and Dobkowski, *Tarnished Dream*, 176–177, 235–237. The standard biography of Tom Watson remains C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York, 1938); see esp. chap. 23.

⁷⁵ Bobbie Malone, *Rabbi Max Heller: Reformer, Zionist, Southerner, 1860–1929* (Tuscaloosa, 1997), 47–48.

⁷⁶ See Ronald H. Bayor, "Klans, Coughlinites and Aryan Nations: Patterns of American Anti-Semitism in the Twentieth Century," *American Jewish History* 76 (December 1986): 181–196; also see Nathan C. Belth, *A Promise to Keep: A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1979), 22–23.

⁷⁷ Rev. L. L. Pickett, *The Danger Signal; or, A Shot at the Foe* (Nashville, 1891), 275. Catholics and Mormons were often attacked for what were seen as their anti-republican, and thus anti-American, elements; see David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," in *From Homicide to Slavery: Studies in American Culture* (New York, 1986), 137–154; Mark W. Cannon, "The Crusades Against the Masons, Catholics, and Mormons: Separate Waves of a Common Current," *Brigham Young University Studies* 3 (winter 1961): 23–40. For the personal anti-Catholic railings of a Baptist preacher in the heavily Catholic city of New Orleans, see the Robert Lewis Bolton Papers, Southern Historical Collection. For a comparison of antisemitism and anti-Catholicism in the 1890s and more broadly, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992). The most recent treatment is Peter R. D'Agostino, *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism* (Chapel Hill, 2004).

⁷⁸ The Catholic case is complicated somewhat by Italian Americans and Mexican Americans, who were victimized by a series of lynchings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The most prominent of these cases was the New Orleans lynching of eleven Sicilians in 1891, but there were also lynchings in Tallulah, Louisiana, and Irwin and Vicksburg, Mississippi. Scholars who have analyzed these lynchings have found them to be of an entirely ethnic/racial nature. I am inclined to agree with this interpretation, although I would note that their Catholicism was part of what made Italians and Mexicans so alien and dangerous in the southern (Anglo-Saxon Protestant) mind. In addition, the Mexican lynchings were more of a southwestern than southern phenomenon. For a sampling of the literature on anti-Italian lynchings, see Peter Vellon, "A Darker Past: The Development of Italian American Racial Consciousness, 1886–1920," (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 2003); Richard Gambino, *Vendetta: The True Story of the Largest Lynching in U.S. History* (Toronto, 1998); Edward F. Haas, "Guns, Goats, and Italians: The Tallulah Lynching of 1899," *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal* 13 (spring 1982): 45–58; Barbara

Botein, "The Hennessy Case: An Episode in Anti-Italian Nativism," *Louisiana History* 20 (summer 1979): 261–279. On anti-Mexican lynchings, see William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, "Muerto por Unos Desconocidos (Killed by Persons Unknown): Mob Violence against Blacks and Mexicans," in *Beyond Black & White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the U.S. South and Southwest*, ed. Stephanie Cole and Alison M. Parker (College Station, TX, 2004), 35–74; William D. Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture: Violence and Vigilantism in Central Texas, 1836–1916* (Urbana, IL, 2004), esp. chap. 1.

⁷⁹ Church membership statistics are drawn from *Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890. Part II* (Washington, DC, 1894); see also Henry K. Carroll, *The Religious Forces of the United States: Enumerated, Classified, and Described on the Basis of the Government Census of 1890* (New York, 1893), 169, 173.

⁸⁰ For a full treatment of anti-Mormon violence in the postbellum South, see Mason, "Sinners in the Hands," chap. 3–4; see also William W. Hatch, *There Is No Law: A History of Mormon Civil Relations in the Southern States, 1865–1905* (New York, 1968). The best book on the anti-polygamy campaign in Congress and the courts is Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, 2002).

⁸¹ See Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York, 2003); Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York, 1968); Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*, chap. 6; Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*.

The “Typical Home Kid Overachievers”: Instilling a Success Ethic in the Jewish Children’s Home of New Orleans

by

Wendy Besmann

In June 1935, six-year-old Jimmy Whitehead and his siblings entered the Jewish Children’s Home of New Orleans (called the Home since it first opened as the Jewish Orphan’s Home in 1855.) Their mother had died and their merchant seaman father was unable to care for them. When their father died soon after, young Whitehead and his two half-sisters and two half-brothers, Lucille, Marguerite, Cecil, and Charles, were among the few true orphans in the institution. Most wards had at least one living parent, and many of these children entered or left the Home as their family situations changed. For Whitehead, the Home was the only source of shelter and emotional support for most of his childhood. Yet during that time, he thought of his surroundings as a “fancy boarding school” that offered him far more privileges than an average child experienced while growing up during the Depression. Between 1935 and the closure of the Home in 1946, Whitehead was housed in a leafy, elegant neighborhood, educated at one of the city’s best college-preparatory schools, mentored in the evenings and at summer camp by medical students from nearby universities, provided with excellent health care at the famous Touro Infirmary, and given religious training at a temple attended by some of the city’s most affluent Jewish families. He excelled socially and academically, becoming president of the school’s Jewish fraternity. Later he became associate professor and head law librarian at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. “I’m not atypical,” he says, “I’m just one of the ordinary

kids from the Home, given the best education and support from the Jewish community.”¹

The way a society treats dependent children is a good measure of its social values. If a rigid class structure confines those children to a lower economic status, they may be firmly channeled toward habits of good citizenship, hard work, and obedience to authority. If the system is more fluid, the children may be taught the very same qualities as a means of promoting upward mobility. From the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, the American Jewish community placed great value on individual attainments and reserved high honors for the businessmen, industrial giants, and professionals who also maintained a commitment to their fellow Jews.

In pursuit of these and other cultural goals, the southern Jewish community's ongoing investment in the Home yielded significant returns. The wards of the Home, instilled with a Jewish success ethic that was backed by strong emotional and financial support, became remarkable high achievers who repaid their benefactors with a willingness to support Jewish community institutions. This article will use examples of discipline, educational opportunities, leisure activities, and mentorship at various points in the institution's history to illustrate the development of the Home as an incubator for successful Jewish adults.

The history of the Home can be divided into three eras that reflect the evolution in American and Jewish American ideas about child welfare, as well as the ongoing leadership provided by patrons in southern Jewish communities. From its establishment in 1855 through approximately 1880, the primary goal of the institution was to feed, clothe, and shelter young children from the devastating effects of disease and poverty. During these years, the Home attained a sound financial footing through the support of the New Orleans Jewish community and gradually became an institution staffed by trained professionals. With the influx of eastern European Jews in the 1880s, the Home followed a national trend toward Americanizing children by separating them from their immigrant families. Behind the locked gates, a strict regime of discipline was used to inculcate middle-class values. Yet during

this period the lay leadership of the Home helped its wards develop even higher aspirations by establishing a top-quality private school that enrolled children from the city's most affluent families. Also during this time, the involvement of B'nai B'rith District Seven ensured that Jewish communities from throughout the southern region had a stake in the institution's survival. During the years after World War I through the institution's closure in 1946, the Home followed the nationwide Progressive Movement in child welfare by changing its rules and physical plant to create a more homelike environment. However, in some instances the institution rejected changes that did not seem to improve upon its already positive results. The evidence shows that the Home's combination of response to national trends and adaptation to unique local circumstances played an integral part in helping wards to become well-rounded, successful adults in different ways in each of the three periods.

The First Era: Saving Their Own

By 1844, New Orleans Jews had already chartered a Hebrew Benevolent Society to provide for a cemetery and make provision for the sick and indigent.² As elsewhere, this relief primarily included the informal collection and dispersal of funds. The existence of a Ladies Auxiliary (established in New Orleans in 1847) often signaled that affluent, civic-minded society women were creating a more organized effort to help the needy.³ In New Orleans, the effort was spurred by major epidemics that afflicted the city until the rise of modern hygienic practices. The New Orleans yellow fever epidemics of 1853 and 1855 were especially disastrous. According to the Home's historian, Joseph Magner, "On November 25, 1854, the Hebrew Benevolent Society held a mass meeting of the Jews of New Orleans. Its purpose was the creation of a separate organization for the support of the widow and orphan."⁴ Out of that meeting came the Association for the Relief of Jewish Widows and Orphans. Although other Jewish-sponsored societies for the relief of widows and orphans were established earlier (most notably in Charleston, South Carolina) the New Orleans endeavor was the first residential facility

for such use and thus the first Jewish orphan's home in North America.⁵

The traditions of *tzedekah* and community self-help are so deeply rooted in Jewish culture that even the most secular New Orleans businessmen would have been likely to respond.⁶ Early efforts at Jewish communal life in America occurred during the colonial era and congregations often provided *bikhor kholim*. This typically took the form of financial help that covered the traditional Jewish communal responsibilities of providing religious education for male children and dowries for orphaned girls of marriageable age.⁷

On March 14, 1855, a charter was granted to the Association for the Relief of Jewish Widows and Orphans, an organization overseen by seventeen incorporators who were among New Orleans' most prominent Jewish merchants. The project was brought to fruition with a speed that modern Jewish professional organizations might envy. By June 20, the contract was in place for a building at the corner of Jackson Avenue and Chippewa Street, costing the princely sum of \$10,700. The Home's cornerstone was laid in August, its new building was dedicated the following January, and on February 1, 1856, a widow and her five children were admitted together with seven other children.

Support from outside the Jewish community was generous. On April 6, 1856, the Louisiana legislature appropriated six thousand dollars to relieve the Home of its remaining indebtedness. Other donations came from gentile merchants who conducted business with the Jewish community.⁸

Before the Home was established, Jewish widows, orphans, and disabled or aged seamen were housed together in the Touro Infirmary of New Orleans. When the infirmary could not handle the influx of cases and the Home was established, more widows and orphans began to arrive. The ravages of the Civil War and repeated yellow fever epidemics helped to swell the population to more than one hundred, putting strain on the aging structure at Jackson and Chippewa. The postwar Jewish merchants of New Orleans seemed astonishingly able and willing to underwrite this expansion. In 1865, association president George Jonas reported to

The Widows and Orphans Home.

Opened in 1856, it stood at corner of Jackson Avenue at Chippewa Street.

*From the History of the Jews of Louisiana, published in 1905
by the Jewish Historical Publishing Company of Louisiana.)*

(Courtesy of Catherine C. Kahn, New Orleans.)

the board that finances were in excellent shape and that "This is a very satisfactory and remarkable result, at a time when so many of our brethren have had to seek new homes from the utter prostration of business."⁹

At this point, another shift occurred that was characteristic of Jewish charitable institutions during the late nineteenth century. Previously, the internal affairs of an orphanage were customarily left to the wives and daughters of prominent Jewish men, or to female employees, often known as matrons. The rise of social work as a profession prompted many Jewish institutions to hire male supervisors to oversee the work of matrons.¹⁰ Notes historian Timothy Hacsí, "Jewish orphan asylums were strikingly male dominated in their management. The Hebrew Orphan Asylum Society of Brooklyn was typical . . . women did not play the same

crucial role that they so often played in Protestant and Catholic institutions. . . . The one woman who did carry some power was the matron, who had been hired along with her husband, the superintendent."¹¹ The Home followed this trend in 1868, when Michael Heymann was elected superintendent, Hebrew teacher, and assistant secretary to the board, and his wife Marion came along as matron.¹²

In 1887 the Home moved to 5342 St. Charles Avenue, where it remained until its closure almost six decades later. It also was determined that discipline at the Home was incompatible with the presence of elderly widows. At the 1890 annual meeting the association decided to enter into a cooperative agreement with Touro to construct a building to house the women. From that point on, the Home was exclusively for children. The building, an imposing structure that dominated that part of the street, was constructed in a square that enclosed a large courtyard for sports and other outdoor activities. At the same meeting an auxiliary association of former residents was formed. This was the first sign that positive feelings on the part of Home children were strong enough to give them an ongoing interest in the institution. The Alumni Association remained a backbone of the Home for many decades, and its members often contributed short pieces to the school newspaper or were cited in its alumni column as examples of successful graduates. Today alumni of the Home and their relatives contribute financially or serve on the board of directors of the Home's direct descendent, the Jewish Children's Regional Service.¹³

The institution was located in a lovely and affluent part of the city where many Jews resided. This location would prove fortuitous for its wards because it placed the Home in plain view of those in the Jewish community who were in a position to help or spread the word to co-religionists in other southern states. These same families were also more likely to want these children to be all-American boys and girls who shed honor on the local Jewish community in the eyes of the Christian majority. As historian Scott Langston notes, the New Orleans Jewish community actually solidified its own ethnic identity through genteel interaction

The second Jewish Children's Home.

Opened in 1887 at 5342 St. Charles Avenue, the orphanage remained there until the Home was closed for good in 1946.

(Courtesy of the Jewish Children's Regional Service, New Orleans.)

between rabbis and ministers who sought mutual respect between separate but equal circles of worship. Isaac Leucht, a New Orleans rabbi who was central in the early organization of the Home, proclaimed that his co-religionists must "prove to the world we are definitely willing to solve the Jewish question."¹⁴

Isidore Newman School: Education for Upward Mobility

During the nineteenth century, wards of the Home attended an in-house school. Although its educational quality is uncertain, the school did boast two boys from the Home who were awarded scholarships to the National Farm School in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, and graduated from that postsecondary institution with

highest honors. One of the boys, Harry Rich, was hired by then Secretary of Agriculture Woodrow Wilson.¹⁵ Mississippi native Edgar Goldberg, who lived in the Home between 1884 and 1890, created what is today the oldest Jewish newspaper in Texas, the *Jewish Herald*.¹⁶

Many orphan asylums in New Orleans had their own schools because there was insufficient space in city classrooms. When the system expanded in 1890, many asylums saved money by sending children to public schools.¹⁷ By contrast, the Home's board of directors began discussing the creation of a private, off-site school for its wards in 1889 and hired a consultant to prepare plans for the school two years hence. The project got under way in 1902 when Isidore Newman, a wealthy merchant who had immigrated to America in 1853, donated funds for construction of the school and purchase of equipment. The 1902 resolution creating the school mandated that it was to be located in a separate building and open to children of all creeds who lived outside the Home. The Isidore Newman Manual Training School, located a few blocks from the Home, opened on October 3, 1904, with an enrollment of 102 wards of the Home. Jewish and gentile children from the outside community soon outnumbered the Home children. At the 1907 annual meeting, President Gabe Kahn announced the surprising growth of the school population, adding that an annex had been built to accommodate three hundred more pupils and extra space would soon be needed. Home students numbered less than one third of the total. Also in 1907, the practice of Home children wearing uniforms in school was abolished in order to allow them to blend more easily with others.¹⁸

The original name, Isidore Newman Manual Training School, reflected a cutting-edge notion that all children should be taught practical, hands-on skills as well as academic knowledge. Classes such as home economics and woodworking were included in the curriculum as well as literature, mathematics, and languages. Ruldolph Reeder, superintendent of cottage homes and school for the Orphan Asylum Society of the City of New York during this era, explained the philosophy: "Our problem, then, is how to develop industrial and economic power in each child. The girl who

Rabbi Isaac L. Leucht.

*Rabbi Leucht, of Touro Synagogue, New Orleans, was an advocate
for children and a leader in the early organization of the Home.*

He also served on the Louisiana State Board of Education.

(Courtesy of Touro Infirmary Archives, New Orleans.)

can describe in oral or written form a beautiful dress she has seen has some ability, that which the school imparts; but the girl who made the dress has the power which carries with it independence and self-reliance."¹⁹ Newman School was proudly dubbed "Manual" and its football jerseys were emblazoned with the letter "M."

For several decades, Manual Training remained a prestigious moniker, although the school itself changed to stress more academic subjects for its brightest pupils in order to better compete with the top preparatory academies. The tide finally turned in 1931, just after Manual's school newspaper won first place in a national contest sponsored by Columbia University, and the school became the first Louisiana academy to be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The school was renamed Isidore Newman School and today continues to provide one of the city's most competitive college preparatory programs.

B'nai B'rith District Seven: Backbone of Regional Commitment

Beginning in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, B'nai B'rith District Seven's role in building the stature of the Home cannot be overstated. As the primary Jewish men's lodge in North America, the International Order of B'nai B'rith wielded enormous financial muscle and maintained broad contacts in every state.²⁰ District Seven was the regional body for the lodges in seven southern states (excluding a few urban areas). Yet up to this time it had been channeling the resources of its members into the much larger Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum (CJOA.)

The wooing of District Seven was prompted by the gradual expansion of the Home beyond its metropolitan New Orleans population base. According to Magner, the "number of inmates in the Home from the country districts showed such a vast preponderance over those from the city, [that it was] necessary to secure wider cooperation, and it was felt that the IOBB was the best possible agency to secure that result."²¹ The Home's Diamond Jubilee souvenir booklet records that the Home became a B'nai B'rith institution in 1876, but the fraternal district still channeled some of its funds to CJOA.²²

The patronage of B'nai B'rith encouraged Jews beyond New Orleans to contribute. The 1901 *Annual Report* meticulously notes four columns of donations, from a box of eggs sent by B. Shoas of Fayette, Mississippi, to dolls from Miss Fannie Riegler of Vicksburg, Mississippi, and fourteen pairs of undergarments from the Social and Sewing Club of Houston, Texas.²³

It was not until 1908 that District Seven formally withdrew its financial support from CJOA and committed those resources to the Home. B'nai B'rith gained the authority to place thirteen members on the Home's board. Eventually, the Home policy changed so that all children accepted into the institution except those from New Orleans had to pass the scrutiny of B'nai B'rith District Seven board members.²⁴ In 1913, the Home also joined the Jewish Charitable and Educational Federation of New Orleans, successor to the old Hebrew Benevolent Association, thus extending its interaction with the growing social services network of the local community.²⁵

District Seven not only provided financial resources and exercised veto power over some admissions, but also began identifying candidates from smaller towns in the region. Correspondence between personnel at the Home and businessmen associated with B'nai B'rith illustrates the close personal involvement of various members. In one case, a series of letters on business letterhead relates the story of Robert C., who was badly abused by his stepmother. Robert's stepmother beat him and threw him out of the house for days without food or shelter. The father was so complicit in this abuse that he had already been summoned before the parish judge for a reprimand. The case came to the notice of a B'nai B'rith Lodge in Vicksburg. At issue in the correspondence was Robert C.'s mental state, since the Home could not undertake care of an emotionally unstable child. The businessmen involved took it upon themselves to investigate the matter thoroughly, report to the Home, and ensure his eventual acceptance.²⁶ Also, Robert was twelve years old, above the maximum age at which children were usually admitted. The proprietor of Louis Leach & Sons ("The Store of Styles") intervened on his behalf, while the Jewish Children's Educational Fund (JCEF)

cooperated in expediting this case.²⁷ Robert was admitted and remained in the Home until reaching adulthood. Robert C.'s case was followed by the Home when he applied for a scholarship at Louisiana State University and later when he attended vocational school and settled into a career.²⁸

Another aspect of cooperation between lodge and Home involved the policy of only accepting Jewish wards. Both organizations took some pains to establish the matrilineal descent (the traditional definition of a Jew) of all the children it served. In the case of Louis and James C., a widowed father sought admittance of his two young sons. Correspondence between Home personnel and the JCEF relates in detail the interviews done with the father, the two children, older children, a neighbor, and even the rabbi who allegedly circumcised the boys. Eventually, the two candidates were not accepted since evidence of matrilineal descent proved inconclusive, and the rabbi had no record or memory of their circumcisions.²⁹ However in a later case of a farmer whose children were found to be not Jewish, B'nai B'rith District Seven compassionately loaned the man twenty-eight dollars until his crop came in.³⁰

The Second Era: Producing Middle-Class Jews

Beginning in the 1880s, the Home began to accept more children from rural areas and small towns because of the settlement patterns of the eastern European Jews who became its primary clients. In order to reduce population on the Atlantic seaboard, migration of these Jews to southern rural areas was encouraged by formal efforts, such as the Galveston Plan that was executed through the combined efforts of the Industrial Removal Office in the United States and the Jewish Territorial Organization in Great Britain. This program attempted the systematic diversion of Jews from New York to the port of Galveston to encourage settlement in smaller communities away from the northeast. Wholesalers such as the Baltimore Bargain House also encouraged peddlers to reach southern towns in which many later established stores.³¹

Although immigrants spread throughout the southern states, New Orleans soon boasted the largest Jewish population in the

Home Boys (top) and Girls Calisthenics, c. 1890.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Children's Regional Service, New Orleans.)

*Typing class (top) and Boy's Carpentry Shop, Newman School, c. 1905.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Children's Regional Service, New Orleans.)*

*Home Hebrew Class (top) and Dining Room, c. 1890.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Children's Regional Service, New Orleans.)*

region.³² In fact, *The Jewish South*, a newspaper published for a few years during this period, moved its operations from Atlanta to New Orleans because closer proximity to its largest readership cut production costs.³³

Jewish orphanages of this era tried to Americanize children by cutting them off from what some regarded as the polluting influences of Old World ideas. According to the view of child welfare administrators, hard work and strict discipline would provide a sound moral foundation and inculcate the values needed to succeed. As historian Gary Pollster observes of this perspective, "For the good of the nation, for the good of the native Jews, and for their own good they needed to be changed. . . . [They] had to adopt middle-class attitudes and behavior. They had to relinquish their Yiddish cultural beliefs, their Yiddish language, and their religious Orthodoxy and adopt Reform Judaism and American culture."³⁴

At the Home as in most Jewish institutions, this led to a rigid, military-like environment intended to inculcate discipline, self reliance, and respect for one's superiors. Judge Louis Yarrut, who lived at the Home from 1906 to 1909, recalled, "In military fashion we marched to meals and sat at long tables. We marched to every undertaking. We slept in long dormitories with the cots lined up in endless array."³⁵

That the vast majority of Jewish immigration consisted of family groupings may have propelled the Home's rapid growth. Females composed an estimated 45 percent of Jewish immigrants of this era. Presumably most of these women were married or soon would be. The high rates of death from disease and work accidents among large numbers of poor immigrants produced many poor widows unable to care for their children.³⁶ As previously noted, the vast majority of "orphans" had at least one living parent. The parent or guardian placed the child in the institution because of poverty, illness, or other hardships. This was true in Jewish and gentile orphanages throughout the country. Such children were generally known as half-orphans until the term fell out of use and was replaced by inmates or, later, wards.

A Boy's Life: Sam Pulitzer's Story

For Jewish families that fell behind in the struggle for prosperity, orphanages often became a primary line of defense. Parents were forced to give up their children until they could afford to keep them. Sam Pulitzer, who later owned the self-proclaimed "world's largest neckwear company," was committed to the Home in a way common to the period from the 1880s until the massive flow of immigration stopped in the 1920s. After his father's business in a tiny Louisiana farming community failed, Pulitzer's dad brought his thirteen-member family to New Orleans in search of work. No jobs could be found, and the father disappeared and was assumed dead. Pulitzer's impoverished mother surrendered her three young sons to the Home, while keeping a daughter who was too young to be separated from her mother, two sons who held low-paying jobs, and an older daughter who worked alongside her mother to help support the family. (The father eventually turned up, having faked his own death to avoid creditors.)

The experience of Sam Pulitzer, chronicled in his autobiography *Dreams Can Come True*, provides a vivid picture of life in the Home between 1912 and 1918. The Home reached its peak population of 171 children during Pulitzer's residency.³⁷ He described his first experience of the Home in this way:

"Good morning, Mrs. Pulitzer," said the old lady who opened the door. "We can take the children from here." We watched as Mama and Mena boarded the streetcar. It pulled on down the street and Mama was gone. . . . For two days we saw no one but stout, austere ladies in white uniforms. We were in the orphanage infirmary for observation; they had to make sure we were healthy enough to mingle with the other kids.

Once out of isolation and installed in the big dormitory for boys, Pulitzer found himself in a small city of children run as tightly as a military camp.

In the dorm and throughout the orphanage we all had our assigned jobs to do, and we started from the moment the matron rang her brass bell at 5:30 every morning. Some swept the sidewalks, some raked the yard, some worked in the garden, and

some mopped the floors. We were each responsible for making our own bed, tidying up around our lockers, and everything had to be done by 6:30 a.m. in time for inspection.

With us lined up at the foot of our beds, the superintendent with his starched white shirt and shiny black shoes would pass in review. We would all stand tall and straight, trying not to move, trying not to attract attention, for if his eyes rested on you for more than a second, you knew something was wrong. The more he looked at you, the more you slumped and wished you could crawl right through the cracks in the wooden floor. I will never forget his name—Mr. Volmer—or his face. He would get real close and just scuff the tops of your shoes with his, an indication that they were not clean enough. If your hair needed cutting, he announced it to everyone, telling them that you had bangs and curls like a girl, and better report to the barber before the day was out. Actually, he was a very kind man, but a firm disciplinarian, and every boy knew that he had better toe the line.

Use of older children as monitors to enforce rules was a common practice and sometimes produced abuses.³⁸ The Home's version included a roving band called "The Seven Soap Scrubbers."

Those boys were the menace and fear of our early years. Appointed by the superintendent to discipline the younger boys who broke minor rules, they came for you at any time of the day or night. You never knew when you were going to be singled out and dragged to the showers. They would rough you up some, then take a bar of soap, rub it all over your teeth, and shove it in your mouth. We Pulitzer boys rarely broke the rules!³⁹

Pulitzer's residence in the Home occurred as the second phase of its history waned and its leadership began to consider, if not implement, the new progressive ideas. In 1909, Superintendent Chester Teller instituted the Golden City plan, which board president Joseph Kohn described as a "self-government plan with its rewards and punishments depending upon conduct, decreed by the members themselves, thus encouraging correct standards and at the same time illustrating the actual workings of a municipality, so that children get a real understanding of the community

Home Boys in Class, probably at Newman School, c. 1905 (top).
A "Golden City Family," c. 1910.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Children's Regional Service, New Orleans.)

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the Golden City, c. 1910 (top).
"Our Big Brothers," c. 1910.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Children's Regional Service, New Orleans.)

Boy Scouts, Home Troop, c. 1915 (top).
Newman School Boy's Band, c. 1905.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Children's Regional Service, New Orleans.)

life they are ultimately to enter."⁴⁰ Home children still marched to school in formation, although they now wore street clothes rather than asylum uniforms. All children received music lessons, and the piccolo-playing Pulitzer marched with the school band in the city's annual Mardi Gras parade. In 1918, his final year of residence, courses such as business English, and commercial arithmetic were added so that students might have access to entry-level office jobs.⁴¹ Pulitzer reports his excitement at taking carpentry shop and learning to work in a garden, all skills that children might have learned in any asylum, although not necessarily in the company of an overwhelming population of affluent children.

By establishing the Newman Manual Training School instead of sending children out to public schools, the Home's directors and management seemed to have put extraordinary emphasis on preparing the children to blend into a successful environment. Pulitzer recalls that he became a close school friend of his classmates Dede and Red Newman, who were grandsons of the wealthy founder and were driven to school each day in a chauffeured limousine.

In 1918 the Home was still a closed environment. Pulitzer attended the institutional synagogue and joined clubs inside the asylum, a practice that had become popular in the late nineteenth century as social welfare commentators emphasized the role of play in children's lives.⁴² He rarely left the grounds of the asylum except to attend school, and the weekly allowance each child received had to be spent in the institutional store. This was probably meant to be a lesson in middle-class money management, and, indeed, Pulitzer hoarded his candy purchases in order to make them last a whole week. Another use for the money was practical if unsanctioned. He and several others would pool their spare change and boost the tallest, strongest boy over the brick fence. This boy's job was to run two blocks to Spaul's Sandwich Shop, buy a huge sandwich for ten cents and climb back over the wall to share it with the others.

Food at the Home was scarce, even before America's entry into World War I brought rationing to the outer world. The

superintendent's birthday was a rare chance for a big outdoor picnic with huge watermelons. In general, beans grown in orphanage gardens were the staple food. Meals were as regimented as other aspects of asylum life. Each child was assigned a seat at a long rectangular table where a Big Brother or Big Sister, age twelve or thirteen, would spoon out the portions. Showing up late meant missing a meal.⁴³

The unvarying routine of work and school was punctuated by organized sports such as baseball and basketball. "Sports were the lifeblood of our daily activity, and we developed muscles early," Pulitzer comments. The owner of the Pelican baseball team occasionally took the boys to play in Pelican Park, a thrilling experience for Pulitzer. Unfortunately, he left the Home just prior to the 1919 establishment of Bay St. Louis, a summer camp created by JCEF. The camp offered two weeks of rugged camping, play, and sports for the boys, followed by two weeks for the girls. For almost three decades, Bay St. Louis camp served as the Home children's most eagerly anticipated experience.

In Pulitzer's day, group activities were mandatory, and "there was no going off alone to brood or feel sorry for yourself," Pulitzer says. The Big Brothers or Big Sisters were expected to look after younger children, and, in fact, Pulitzer became so attached to his Big Brother, Max Tobias, that he stayed in contact with him for sixty years. However, when a child became truly overwhelmed by homesickness or other sadness, a teacher always seemed to notice but did not indulge. Recalled Pulitzer, "They talked to us like adults, reasoning through our problems, giving us alternatives, and pointing out the bright side of the situation. I learned to be very self-sufficient."⁴⁴

Although many institutions tried to reinforce middle-class values during this period, there is some evidence that Jewish orphanages as a group were more dedicated to promoting the careers of their most talented charges. Child welfare expert Ludwig Bernstein commented in 1906 that "Jewish institutions have a higher conception of their educational aims for their wards than some non-Jewish institutions."⁴⁵ The Home's expectations were probably at the highest end of the spectrum.⁴⁶ For the most part,

Jewish children were not being trained to be house servants or factory workers, but rather given the means to become genteel entrepreneurs, independent crafts workers, clerks, and other respectable members of the bourgeoisie. In his 1918 *President's Annual Report*, Joseph Kohn stated, "Modern sanitary and refining living conditions, healthful development, exercises in self-government and club practices; moral religious training; practical insight into family life by the Big Brother and Big Sister method; above all a liberal education in a good school—have lifted the orphan child into a loftier sphere and have awakened in him new aspirations, created new hopes for a higher and better life."⁴⁷

The Third Era: The Home as Family

The sealed-off institution described by Pulitzer was coming under increasing fire within the child welfare community. During the late Victorian era the emergence of psychology and social work, which identified a child's developmental needs, gradually led to the consensus that institutional life often made children less fit to enter society. As early as 1899, the National Conference of Charities and Corrections declared subsidized and foster care to be the preferred methods of caring for dependent children. In January 1909 the seminal White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children recommended that homes not be broken up for reasons of poverty but only because of immorality or lack of sufficient care.⁴⁸ During the next three decades, the social welfare movement gradually encouraged the closure of orphanages and the substitution of a new system.

At the beginning of this debate, a number of prominent Jewish institutions argued for the superiority of their own homelike surroundings as opposed to the harsh conditions experienced by some children in foster care. As late as 1909, Superintendent Fleischman of the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia observed, "We, too, believe that poverty alone should not disrupt the family circle, but unfortunately poverty and vice are close neighbors and a mother's devotion is no invulnerable shield against a bad environment."⁴⁹ As Hacsí notes, a number of Jewish institutions also resisted the growth of the popular "cottage system" in which

children were placed in a cluster of small detached houses, each overseen by a houseparent, on land usually located in open or rural areas. In a joint statement at the National Conference of Jewish Charities in 1909, the committee for dependent children used a generous dash of circular reasoning when it stated that the cottage plan was no doubt best, but since no Jewish asylums had attempted such a plan, it stands to reason that "Jewish institutions have never been institutions, but homes, and most worthily have Jewish ideals been fostered and prepared by them."⁵⁰ In 1910, of 117 cottage-based institutions that operated, none were Jewish. The Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia, the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York, and CJOA all endorsed the cottage plan within a decade of the 1909 conference but only CJOA ever built such a facility.⁵¹

As new ideas about non-institutional care became rooted in child welfare philosophy, most Jewish agencies joined the stampede. Atlanta's Grand District Lodge of B'nai B'rith established the Hebrew Orphans' Home of Atlanta in 1889 but, as early as 1910, began to house children in private homes or to subsidize fatherless youngsters so their mothers could delay returning to work.⁵² By contrast, the board of the Home adhered to a firm position on the superiority of institutional care and stayed with that position until after World War II. In the period 1929 to 1940, institutionalized populations governed by twenty-two other Jewish childcare agencies dropped every year. The Home population of sixty-five children remained steady between 1930 and 1942, when outplacement cut the population to thirty-one at the time of the Home's closure. However, this method was rejected heartily in the 1920s and 1930s, when the communal embrace of New Orleans Jews in the town's best neighborhood was considered to be the most efficacious environment for those unable to live with natural parents. Taking the Home's children away from their lovely surroundings and the advantages of Newman School did not seem advantageous to their futures.

By the time Leon Volmer, the kind but firm disciplinarian so vividly recalled by Sam Pulitzer, retired in 1925, the Home and its forward-looking board were well on the way to incorporating

other progressive practices. In 1922, the Home attracted as its field director the renowned Edward Lashman, former superintendent of CJOA, who claimed a solid gold reputation for moving Jewish institutions into the Progressive Era and finding the money to make it happen.⁵³ The recruitment of Lashman and his elevation to superintendent in 1926 is a good example of the way in which the Home moved in tandem with nationwide trends but also kept to its own road.⁵⁴ Lashman's first priority was to raise the Home's profile among southern Jews in order to increase the base of fundraising for projects such as a new nursery wing. (One letter written in 1928 tells the appealing story of "Little Sadie" who lived in the Home since age two and had just graduated from nursing school. The letter ends with a gentle reminder to send an annual pledge of seventeen dollars.)⁵⁵

By the following year, the Home's thirty thousand dollar deficit had been erased and another twenty-five thousand dollars had been raised to improve the infirmary. Ongoing efforts to raise money from regional supporters and successful alumni allowed management to upgrade the physical environment in ways that reflected current theories of child development without sacrificing the institution itself. It certainly helped that the Home had already put in new facilities and eliminated its deficit on the cusp of the Depression when its supporters had far less cash to contribute.

In essence, Lashman and the board aimed to produce the best possible cottage and foster care systems under the roof of one cavernous forty-year-old structure. The atmosphere was made as much like a family home as possible. Long rows of dining tables were replaced with scattered round tables at which children sat in family-style groupings. Siblings of different sexes could eat together daily. In 1924, reflecting new sensitivities as well as the fact that most of its wards had at least one living parent, the institutional name was changed from Jewish Orphans Home to Jewish Children's Home.⁵⁶

Children were given a level of freedom roughly approximating a good foster home. The custom of numbering each child was discontinued, along with the institutional store and scout troops. Children purchased items in neighborhood shops and were

encouraged to join outside scout troops or other clubs. The large dormitories were subdivided into small, private rooms.⁵⁷ The Home's synagogue was closed, and the children were sent to up-scale congregations nearby.

Tedious annual reports were replaced with the monthly *Golden City Messenger*, a combination student newspaper and fundraising organ. In its pages, a former Home child marveled at the changes. "Gone are the pitiful little uniforms, the close-cropped hair, the marching like culprits to and from school with their little tin lunch buckets. Gone is the experience of an orphan."⁵⁸ After another fundraising campaign, a nursery wing was added. Rose Meadows, who came to the Home at eighteen months old, says her first memory is of waking up and being taken out of her white crib by one of the nannies. "We had so much loving from them."⁵⁹

After Lashman's sudden death in 1929, Assistant Superintendent Harry L. Ginsburg assumed that position and held it until the Home closed in 1946. Under the management of Uncle Harry, as he was called, the community supplied so many of the children's needs that the Depression affected them far less than it did the average child. Downtown merchants supplied free clothing, while food from local groceries was plentiful. A staff dietician planned the meals and local doctors and dentists provided excellent health care.⁶⁰ As the Home moved toward the end of its history, a smaller group of children received the mixture of responsibilities, education, and activities that alumni of that time directly credit with their own success.

Pulitzer's view of work and discipline at the Home contrasts sharply with the description given by alumni of the 1930s and 1940s. Before the Progressive Era and the invention of many labor-saving devices, a large population of children was useful in the day-to-day maintenance of the facility. Administrators also saw this work and the harsh disciplinary rules as a means of keeping the children out of trouble. However, during the last decades of the Home, the population was smaller and the tasks were aimed at sharing communal responsibilities as in any family. The value of labor was taught, but only as an addendum to hard work

*Superintendent Edward Lashman (left) and his successor, Harry L. Ginsburg.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Children's Regional Service, New Orleans.)*

during the school day. "At 12 and above the children were given chores to do," says Rose Meadows. "For cooking duty, you came home from school, changed clothes, and the cook would tell you what she needed – preparing vegetables, shelling black-eyed peas, peeling shrimp, etc. . . . At an older age, we learned to hand wash and iron clothes. The next year we had new dresses and the school clothes became yard clothes."⁶¹

Jennie Schneider adds, "All the while, [there was] a carefully structured day; older children often helped the younger ones. Every resident had rotating communal tasks such as office duty, serving as kitchen and dining room helpers, etc. Simple and basic pleasures. Simple and basic responsibilities."⁶²

The rules were strict, but they contrasted sharply with the lock-down era described by Pulitzer. Whitehead recalls, "Teenagers will talk over the telephone! However, no telephone was made available to the Home kids; I used to lift the screen and crawl through a window to use one of the phones in an administrator's office after hours. He figured it out, I believe, for he always left the window unlocked."⁶³ Tacitly, the administrator seemed to accept that socializing with friends at school did more to inculcate middle-class values than the rigid adherence to discipline used twenty years before.

Some of the Home kids still felt different from the wealthy children at Newman school. "These children had unlimited clothes allowed to them," says Albert Fox, "while I was limited to three sets—yard, school and Sunday school, and had to keep them all in a small locker."⁶⁴ Yet many students at Newman saw those differences from another angle. "I sort of envied them," says Elise Silverman Blumenfeld, who attended Newman in the mid-1940s. "They had all these children their own age to play with."⁶⁵ Newman graduate Catherine C. Kahn, daughter of a prominent lawyer, adds simply, "We didn't pity them. We looked up to them"⁶⁶ During her years at Newman, she dated Whitehead, who was president of the Jewish fraternity Tau Beta Phi. His friend Morris Skalka, another Home resident, was president of the school honor society and captain of the football team.⁶⁷ "Socially, we Home kids were completely accepted in the community," says Whitehead. "The Newman experience was one of the finest educations available to anyone in the whole world; second to none."⁶⁸

Music was an integral part of life at Newman and the Home, as it had been for decades. Every child received musical training at school, while the most gifted were tutored privately at the Home. A ward's performance was a family affair. "When somebody had a recital everybody went," says Rose Meadows.⁶⁹ Area organizations provided access to free athletic and cultural events by hiring Home children as ushers. Pat Samuels, who lived at the Home from 1928 to 1942, remembers vividly the day that the New York Philharmonic visited the Newman School.⁷⁰

Outdoor spaces at the Home were filled with places to play and socialize. "The building was organized as a square formed by a two story boys dormitory on one side, a two story girls dorm on the opposite side, a one story dining hall in the back where families ate breakfast, lunch and supper; and a two story front which held an infirmary, and office space for administrators," recalls Whitehead. "A large, rectangle inner courtyard [was] filled with gardens, a fish pond made by the Home kids, volleyball court, badminton court, swings, climbing bars for younger kids, parallel bars for older ones; plus a large backyard with baseball diamond, and swimming pool."

The indoor spaces were simple but comfortable. Two or three wards shared a bedroom that included lockers for their personal possessions. Each area had tables for doing homework or playing board games. There were radios for listening to shows such as "The Lone Ranger" and "Your Hit Parade."⁷¹ Jennie Ogden Schneider remembers "roller skating with our peers around-and-around the cement sidewalk under the porches . . . creative play-time in the pavilion where we wrote and acted out skits. [There were] bats in the attic which further jostled our creativity for who-can-top-this ghost stories."⁷²

Contact with siblings, friendships with peers, and bonding with the group were actively encouraged. Siblings could sit together at family-style tables. Friendships were forged that lasted through lifetimes. "We lived in dormitories together, walked to school together, played together," says Carol Hart, "I'm still in touch with some of those friends in places such as Houston and Oklahoma City."⁷³

Alumni of the Home have especially warm memories of going to summer camp. Children from the Home attended Bay St. Louis after it opened in 1919, but in the 1930s a coed group spent six weeks at the camp along with Jewish children from around the area. A summer at camp emphasized sports, rugged outdoor activities, and social gatherings that built teamwork. As befits a camp that served New Orleans children, food was nothing but the best. "We'd go crabbing all day long with big buckets and then have crab boils at night," says Whitehead's half-sister Lucille

Gilberstadt. "There was hot cocoa around the fire and milk that came off the train frozen and loaves of wonderful French bread brought in from the city."⁷⁴ Pictures show Home children posing in fashionable 1930s bathing suits.⁷⁵ "Summer camp was wonderful," says Gilberstadt. "The boys were in tents, and there was a big Victorian house with a wraparound screened porch where all the girls slept." She adds, "The last thing my brother [Charlie] said before he died was 'Bay St. Louis.'"⁷⁶

As the Home population declined, Ginsburg and the board showed willingness to be flexible about the special needs of parents. At first, the divorced working mother of Jennie Ogden Schneider and her twin sister Sarah Ogden Sweet paid a small weekly fee to have her children picked up from school, fed dinner, and brought home to sleep. During the war, the two Ogden girls became residents of the Home while their mother worked as an army nurse.⁷⁷ A man named Max E. contracted in 1920 to pay the Home the then considerable sum of twenty-five dollars per month for the maintenance of his children.⁷⁸ In another case, Ralph C. was given temporary shelter in the Home because his divorced mother (a former ward herself) was having an operation. The father was not willing to undertake care of the child, but contributed twenty-five dollars per month to his upkeep.⁷⁹ One woman whose children were to enter the Home left a bequest of three thousand dollars.⁸⁰ Apparently this was her way of protecting her children's future and compensating the Home.

Most parents who paid money to place their children in the Home did so because they could not be physically present for the children or could not create a home-like environment by means of hired care. In this sense, the Home assumed some of the aspects of a highly subsidized Jewish boarding school to which parents entrusted their children because they would be more likely to thrive at the Home than elsewhere.

Another picture during this period comes from a 1942 survey of the Home by the Child Welfare League for the Council of Jewish Federation and Welfare Funds. The report contains an exhaustive description of the physical plant as well as a statistical comparison with other Jewish children's homes

nationwide. One finding was that nearly three-quarters of referrals to the Home came from B'nai B'rith lodges in outlying cities.

The report employed intelligence testing as one measure of the Home quality. "The present population shows some shifting away from the average toward both the borderline and the superior groups. Proportionally, the Home now has more children of borderline intelligence and both superior and very superior intelligence than in 1933." Home kids were actually getting smarter according to these measures.⁸¹ The reason for this is unknown, but it could be that the children of 1942, many of whom had entered the Home as small children and had their entire education at Newman, had a verbal and cultural background that allowed them to do well on this type of test. In any case, the scores were a bellwether of the success these children so often achieved in later life.

During the 1920s, creation of a Big Brother and Big Sister program (which assumed the name of the very different peer-mentoring program used in the pre-Progressive Era) was yet another effort to put Home children together with affluent New Orleans Jews. With luck the children could absorb that aura of success and perhaps gain valuable contacts. The results varied according to the child and the family. Morris Skalka, who lived in the Home from 1936 to 1944, remembers that his involvement with the program was limited to the occasional dinner in the family home.⁸² Jimmy Whitehead formed a closer relationship with Solis Seifert and his wife Helen, whom he remembers with gratitude. "He stood up with me at my wedding and paid for the pre-wedding reception. I would never ask for such a thing—he just did it."⁸³

Jewish and non-Jewish staff provided role models. Medical students from nearby Tulane often exchanged room and board for supervising after-school activities and sleeping in the building. Teachers-in-training and social work students were often present. "I'm still in touch with Janice Rubin, who helped me with homework and encouraged me," says Carol Hart. Rubin was the daughter of a prominent lawyer and a student at Newcomb

College. Hart observes, "The Home helped these students by giving them room and board during the Depression. They put us to bed and helped us with homework."⁸⁴

The mostly African American household staff, almost always addressed by their first names in the common practice of that time, was also on hand to nurture and support. The late Ralph Beerman, who lived in the Home from 1924 to 1942, recalled a cook named Lottie who slipped him extra cookies and broke down in tears when he and his brother stopped in for a visit during World War II. "I still see a picture of that response," he said. "She was like a surrogate mother to us."⁸⁵

Helen Gold Haymon, who was a toddler when she entered the Home, remembers a nanny named Henrietta whom everyone called Mamie. "Even on her days off she would take me on the streetcar with her home to her people," Haymon recalled at a Newman School class reunion in 2004. "She was the only mother I've ever known."⁸⁶ Jimmy Whitehead and Morris Skalka still have fond memories of going fishing at summer camp with the Home's beloved groundskeeper.⁸⁷

Partly because staff included an increasing number of non-Jews, religious observance at the Home could vary. In one example, Morris Skalka explains that Home children usually went back for lunch as other students did, but on rainy days lunches were sent over so the Home children wouldn't have to get wet. "It was Passover, so they gave us ham on matzo," he chuckles.⁸⁸

The true mettle of the Home as a vehicle for upward mobility was shown in its guidance and financial backing for wards who wanted to pursue higher education. By the 1920s, children at the Home were increasingly urged to pursue higher education degrees in part because Newman School had become a college preparatory institution that attracted both academically gifted students and New Orleans' social elite. Some were helped by jobs or direct aid provided by the Home. Helen Gold Haymon lived in the Home until she left for college at Louisiana State University in 1935. Four years later, she returned to the Home as a resident counselor while studying for her master's degree at nearby Tulane University.⁸⁹

When Lucille Gilberstadt entered Louisiana State University, five other Home kids, a substantial portion of those graduating from its population of sixty-five, attended the same college. "The Home had a loan program for education. Later, you would repay in some form dollar for dollar or with a contribution." She borrowed \$200 from the program. Together with a \$30 per month stipend from an uncle in New Orleans, she could afford college expenses and even sorority membership. "I was on my own, but I went back to people at the Home for a feeling of caring, comfort, being secure."⁹⁰ When Gilberstadt needed lodging during her graduate studies in social work at Tulane, the Home gave her both a regular job as nighttime counselor and a summer job as a camp counselor at Bay St. Louis. "They were concerned about you. They wanted to know what was going on." She adds, "Uncle Harry had a feeling you would find your way. . . . When I was getting married, I went to Uncle Harry. He said, 'Are you asking me for advice or telling me?' I said I was telling him, and he said, 'Well, then—congratulations.'"⁹¹ Gilberstadt married a clinical psychologist and worked for twenty-four years as a social worker.

Home children were encouraged to be aware of what was going on in the world they would enter as independent adults. Carol Hart remembers that Uncle Harry invited him to his home on Wednesdays to hear the radio program, "Town Meeting of the Air." Hart says, "That's where I got a feeling for current events." Hart later worked his way through college and law school as a sportswriter and eventually became assistant district attorney for New Orleans.⁹²

In 1940, Ginsburg hired Inge Friedlander, a German refugee who first ran the girls' side of the Home and ultimately took over more of its overall management as the health of the superintendent declined. The population of the Home had shrunk to thirty-one wards. At one point, a fundraising brochure made the group look much larger because some of the children's faces were cut and pasted on the cover photo more than once. When Ginsburg died in 1946, plans were already in place to close the Home and replace it with the Jewish Children's Regional Service, a social agency that provides financial and practical support to families

all over the South. Most of the remaining children were sent to relatives or other foster homes; a few went to CJOA. Whitehead spent his last years of high school living with his grown sister Marguerite.⁹³

While the new JCRS operated with little staff and no building, the facility was sold to the Jewish Federation of New Orleans for use as a community center. It served this purpose for more than a decade before it was torn down and replaced by a modern structure. When most of the Jewish community had moved away from the city, JCRS moved to an office in suburban Metairie, Louisiana.

Over a period of ninety-one years, the Jewish Children's Home of New Orleans evolved from a nineteenth-century asylum for the victims of poverty and disease into the disciplinary force that Americanized wards before World War I and finally into a progressive environment that sought to be an institutional version of the best possible family. In each era, the Home's leadership clearly sought to give its children the goal of career success and the tools to reach it.

Surviving wards interviewed by this and other authors praise the institution for teaching them teamwork, persistence, and high aspirations. In high school, according to Catherine C. Kahn, students such as Whitehead were known as "Typical Home Kid Overachievers."⁹⁴ Later they went on to be lawyers, social workers, psychologists, teachers, and other professionals.

Agrees Pat Samuels, "All of us were successful. We knew the value of saving. We knew the value of helping others. It was the best thing that ever happened to us."⁹⁵ Jennie Ogden Schneider adds that the Home was "an institution at the vanguard of social welfare with clear direction, positive expectations and concrete objectives in the interest of its young charges. . . . There is a Jewish saying that our successes are directly related to standing on the shoulders of those who preceded us. My own personal successes have come from standing on some very broad shoulders, including those of my mentors at JCH. I am indebted to them"⁹⁶

 NOTES

¹ James Whitehead, written interview, July 24, 2004, in possession of author.

² Souvenir booklet for the Home's Diamond Jubilee (n.p., 1930), 29 (hereafter cited as Diamond Jubilee Booklet).

³ Diamond Jubilee Booklet, 29. Such was also the case in the Jewish community of Knoxville, Tennessee, in part because the individual society ladies had tired of having those individuals and their representatives applying to them for direct aid. It was simply too much to have a parade of indigents on their doorsteps. Emily Strasburger, *Beth El Temple 80th Anniversary Pageant* (Knoxville, TN, February 15, 1947.)

⁴ Joseph Magner, *The Story of the Jewish Orphans Home of New Orleans* (New Orleans, 1914), 1.

⁵ The Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia was founded during the same year.

⁶ Exodus 22:21–23: "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise—for if they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry—My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." The Holy Scriptures: According to the Masoretic Text (Philadelphia, 1948.)

⁷ Reena Sigman Friedman, *These Are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the United States* (Hanover, NH, 1994), 6.

⁸ Magner, *Jewish Orphans Home*, 1–2. The state legislature gave this appropriation before the passage of laws mandating state support of destitute children, which began to appear in other parts of the country in the latter part of the century. See also Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 4.

⁹ Magner, *Jewish Orphans Home*, 5.

¹⁰ In the early 1890s, the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society of New York, previously led by a Board of Lady Managers, turned over administrative power to Samuel Levy, a young lawyer who soon relegated the ladies to "honorary directresses." Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 13.

¹¹ Timothy Hacsí, *Second Home: Orphans and Poor Children in America* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 86.

¹² Magner, *Jewish Orphans Home*, 10. Mark Bauman notes with regard to another contemporaneous southern orphanage, the Hebrew Orphans' Home of Atlanta: "The movement toward professionalism was part of the larger thrust toward 'scientific charity.'" See Bauman, "The Transformation of Jewish Social Services in Atlanta, 1928–1948," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 53 (2001): 104, n. 3.

¹³ Magner, *Jewish Orphans Home*, 10.

¹⁴ Scott Langston, "Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans," *Southern Jewish History* 3 (2000): 111.

¹⁵ Jewish Children's Regional Service, *The JCRS Story: 150 Years of Service to Children* (film script) (Metairie, LA, 2005) part 6.75 (hereafter cited as *150 Years of Service*.)

¹⁶ Bryan Edward Stone, "Edward Goldberg and the *Texas Jewish Herald*: Changing Coverage and Blended Identity," *Southern Jewish History* 7 (2004): 76, 78.

¹⁷ Hacsí, *Second Home*, 191.

¹⁸ Diamond Jubilee Booklet, 24.

¹⁹ Rudolph R. Reeder, *How Two Hundred Children Live and Learn* (1909), 77.

²⁰ On the political status of this international men's organization see Deborah Dash Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany, NY, 1981).

²¹ Magner, *Jewish Orphans Home*, 6.

²² Diamond Jubilee Booklet, 29

²³ *Annual Report of the Association for the Relief of Jewish Widows and Orphans*, (New Orleans, 1901) Jewish Children's Regional Service Archive, Metairie, LA (hereafter cited as JCRS Archive.)

²⁴ Diamond Jubilee Booklet, 29.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁶ Letters from B'nai B'rith admissions committee to social worker for JCEF, Tulane Special Collections, Collection 80, Box 11 (hereafter cited as TSC).

²⁷ Correspondence from Louis Leach & Sons to JCEF, 1927, TSC 80:11.

²⁸ Correspondence between Jewish Children's Home [JCH] director and B'nai B'rith District Seven president, TSC 80:11.

²⁹ The case was considered between May and July 1931. Correspondence from executive director Harry Ginsburg in 1931 originally questioned the boy's ethnic origin, so a letter was sent to Rabbi David Goldberg of New Orleans for a certified copy of a *brit milah*. He had no record and could not remember the event. The case eventually went to the Committee on Admissions and Discharges of B'nai B'rith District Seven, which refused admission. TSC, 80:16. It seems unlikely that this process was marred by ethnic elitism, as B'nai B'rith and the Home shared a clearly-defined mission to aid the Jewish population.

³⁰ JCEF correspondence, 1931, TSC 80:11.

³¹ Rachel A. Wise, "Guide to the Records of the Jewish Immigrant Information Bureau (Galveston, Texas)." Galveston immigration plan records, 1901-1920, American Jewish Historical Society (1999).

³² Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), appendix.

³³ Suzanne R. White, "Much Good in Small Places: A Study of *The Jewish South, 1878-1881*" (undergraduate honors thesis, University of Tennessee, 1982); Janice Rothschild Blumberg, "Rabbi Alphabet Browne: The Atlanta Years," *Southern Jewish History* 5 (2002): 1-42.

³⁴ Gary Pollster, *Inside Looking Out: The Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum* (Detroit, 1990), 74.

³⁵ *A Century of Progress*, a booklet commemorating the Home's 100th anniversary, as quoted in Anne Rochell Konigsmark, *Isidore Newman School: 100 Years* (New Orleans, 2004), 32.

³⁶ Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York, 1991), 223.

³⁷ According to JCRS Archive, this peak number was reached in 1917. See also *150 Years of Service*, part 8.

³⁸ Hacsí, *Second Home*, 158.

³⁹ Sam Pulitzer with Larry Stuart, *Dreams Can Come True: The Inspiring Story of Samuel C. Pulitzer* (New Orleans, 1989).

⁴⁰ Joseph Kohn, *President's Annual Report, 1918* (hereafter cited as Kohn's Report), JCRS Archive.

⁴¹ Konigsmark, *Newman School*, 32.

⁴² One Jewish superintendent in New York reported proudly that more than 90 percent of the asylum's children belonged to asylum clubs. Hacsí, *Second Home*, 197.

⁴³ Pulitzer with Stuart, *Dreams Can Come True*, 8, 9

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-13.

⁴⁵ Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 52.

⁴⁶ For comparisons with other Jewish orphanages of this era, see Michael Aaronsohn, *Broken Lights* (Cincinnati, 1946), a memoir of growing up in the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of Baltimore; Nurith Zmora, "A Rediscovery of the Asylum: The Hebrew Orphan Asylum [Baltimore] through the lives of its first fifty orphans," *American Jewish History* 77 (1988): 452-475; Brad Trevathan, "The Hebrew Orphan Home of Atlanta" (honors thesis, Emory University, 1982).

⁴⁷ Kohn's Report, 1918

⁴⁸ Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 56-57.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁵⁰ Hacsí, *Second Home*, 170.

⁵¹ Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 70.

⁵² Bauman, "Emergence of Jewish Social Service Agencies," 489.

⁵³ Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 118.

⁵⁴ Diamond Jubilee booklet, 20.

⁵⁵ Lashman claimed that the Home had a population of 153 children. Superintendent E. Lashman to Mr. and Mrs. L. Lipsitz, TSC, 80, 11. Numbers vary in other sources although it is clear that the Home's population was well over one hundred at a time when other institutions were being reduced or eliminated.

⁵⁶ Diamond Jubilee booklet.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁸ *Golden City Messenger*, (1929) 42, JCRS Archive.

⁵⁹ Rose Meadows, oral interview conducted by Alan Stein, March 19, 2004, Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, Utica, MS (hereafter cited as ISJL.)

⁶⁰ *150 Years of Service*.

⁶¹ Meadows interview.

⁶² Jennie Ogden Schneider speech before Jewish Children's Regional Service panel, March 19, 1995, 3, in possession of Jennie Ogden Schneider.

⁶³ Whitehead interview.

⁶⁴ Albert Fox, oral interview conducted by Alan Stein, March 19, 2004, ISJL.

⁶⁵ Konigsmark, *Newman School*, 34.

⁶⁶ Catherine C. Kahn, oral interview conducted by author, July 1–2, 2004, in author's possession.

⁶⁷ Whitehead interview.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Meadows interview.

⁷⁰ Pat Samuels, oral interview conducted by Alan Stein, March 19, 2004, ISJL.

⁷¹ Whitehead interview.

⁷² Schneider speech, 2.

⁷³ Carol Hart, oral interview conducted by author, December 6, 2004, in author's possession.

⁷⁴ Lucille Gilberstadt, oral interview conducted by author, August 10, 2004, in author's possession.

⁷⁵ Jewish Children's Regional Service, Annual Regional Board Meeting booklet, January 13, 2002. JCRS Archive.

⁷⁶ Gilberstadt interview.

⁷⁷ TSC, 80:11, 16.

⁷⁸ Letter from JCEF social worker to Harry Ginsburg, TSC, 80:11.

⁷⁹ Letter from JCEF lawyer to Harry Ginsburg, TSC, 80:11.

⁸⁰ Letter from JCEF lawyer to Harry Ginsburg, TSC, 80:11.

⁸¹ *Report of the Survey of the Jewish Children's Home of New Orleans, Louisiana, made under arrangements with Child Welfare League and Council of Jewish Federations* (New York, 1942).

⁸² Morris Skalka, oral interview conducted by author, August 2, 2004, in author's possession.

⁸³ Whitehead interview.

⁸⁴ Hart interview.

⁸⁵ "Former orphanage residents reunite," [New Orleans] *Times Picayune*, March 19, 2004.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Skalka interview. See also Whitehead interview.

⁸⁸ Skalka interview.

⁸⁹ *150 Years of Service*, part 7.

⁹⁰ Gilberstadt interview.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Hart interview.

⁹³ Whitehead interview.

⁹⁴ Kahn interview.

⁹⁵ Samuels interview.

⁹⁶ Schneider speech, 5.

Macey Kronsberg:
Institution Builder of Conservative Judaism
in Charleston, S.C., and the Southeast

by

Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein

Afternoon and evening thunderstorms on July 16, 1947, left the city of Charleston, South Carolina, rain soaked. Nearby Sullivan's Island, where many of the city's residents summered, did not escape the heavy downpour either. In spite of the inclement weather, a group of men and women, most of whom were members of Orthodox congregation Brith Sholom, gathered at the beach home of Moses and Florence Mendelsohn for a meeting convened by Macey Kronsberg to discuss "furthering the Conservative Judaism movement in Charleston."¹

Across the United States, young people in similar communities met to start synagogues, fueling the dramatic growth of new congregations in the decades following World War II. In concert with an increased interest in Judaism, this expansion reflected the acculturation and suburbanization of numerous second-generation Jews. Many also felt a heightened sense of responsibility to maintain Judaism as the mantle of Jewish culture and leadership shifted to the United States with the destruction of much of European Jewry in the Holocaust. The second-generation children of immigrants who were coming of age looked to synthesize their new sense of being fully American with their old sense of a traditional Jewish religious upbringing. They wanted a Judaism consonant with their current lifestyle; one in which they could fit in with their non-Jewish neighbors. Although Reform and even Orthodox Judaism gained new

affiliates, the Conservative movement grew most rapidly in this period.²

Jack Wertheimer, historian of Conservative Judaism, has noted that the decisive factor in the establishment of a Conservative congregation was often the initiative of key individuals. It was, he says, "the determination and forcefulness of a few strong-willed and wealthy laymen who convinced others of the need to modernize a traditional synagogue or establish a new congregation that would better serve the needs of the community." At the same time, rabbis played critical roles in helping to "transform their congregants' vague impulse for change into specific new programs," and fostering "institutional allegiance to the national bodies of the Conservative movement."³ Such was the case in Charleston.

Macey Kronsberg and his brothers, along with the Steinberg and Lesser families and others, initiated efforts in the 1940s to modernize their Orthodox congregation. They engaged a rabbi ordained by the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) in the hopes that he would lead the congregants in modifying worship and in making other changes that would benefit the entire family, a central focus of Conservative Judaism. When they were unsuccessful in achieving the desired modifications, these families founded a Conservative congregation.

Conservative Judaism Takes Root in the United States

Conservative Judaism, whose leaders perceived the movement as deriving from the "positive-historical" school of Rabbi Zacharias Frankel in nineteenth-century Europe, took root in the United States with the establishment of JTS in 1886. The leadership's goal was to "conserve" tradition in response to what it believed was the radicalization of American Reform Judaism, embodied in that movement's Pittsburgh Platform of the previous year. JTS was reorganized in 1902 and invited Rabbi Solomon Schechter of Cambridge, England, to serve as president. Under his guidance, Conservatism began a period of expansion, especially appealing to eastern European immigrants and their Americanized children. Yet he and others were reluctant to start a separate

The four Kronsberg brothers, c. 1930.

*Macey is top left. Clockwise from Macey are Milton, Meyer, and Edward.
(Courtesy of Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein.)*

movement. These people thought of themselves as preserving traditional Judaism and working with the Orthodox community.⁴

The tri-fold institutional framework of Conservative Judaism that they nonetheless established in New York City consisted of JTS, the Rabbinical Assembly (RA), and the United Synagogue consortium of congregations. The movement espoused a middle-of-the-road message, a part of which emphasized adapting traditional Jewish worship with accommodations to modern American practices. Innovations that attracted younger Jews included late Friday evening services, English responsive readings, mixed seating during religious services, greater participation of women in

the synagogue, youth programming, and emphasis on modern educational methods.⁵

Many Conservative rabbis and laymen were involved in Zionist activities at the same time that they were creating institutions to sustain American Jewry. These individuals were drawn to Zionism, a modern movement that also began at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe partly in response to antisemitism and the rise of nationalism. Its followers worked for the building of the ancient homeland of Palestine for Jews. As Samuel Halperin observes, "The American Zionist movement derived its most unanimously enthusiastic and dedicated supporters from the ranks of Conservative Judaism."⁶

During the interwar era, it was difficult to distinguish between modern Orthodox and Conservative congregations in their religious practices. For example, mixed seating for men and women during services was sometimes found in sanctuaries of both. Some congregations offered worshipers both separate seating and mixed pews. In one case, Chizuk Amuno Congregation in Baltimore, Maryland, one of the twenty-two founding members of the Conservative United Synagogue of America (USA) in 1913, did not vote to have mixed seating until 1947. Even then, a few rows in the sanctuary remained for separate seating.⁷

In their quest to accommodate this changing religious landscape of acculturation, some Orthodox congregations engaged rabbis ordained by JTS, many of whom had an Orthodox upbringing, had attended yeshivot, and were native-born English speakers. These were important qualities to have in reaching out to the young people in increasingly Americanized communities. A number of congregations whose rabbis were JTS graduates gradually moved from membership in the Orthodox Union to affiliation with the Conservative USA.⁸

The migration of Americans from city centers to outlying areas that occurred following the Second World War included Jewish families. A housing shortage spurred the creation of developments in the suburbs. Government-assisted mortgages, coupled with increasing affluence and the growth of the highway system helped newly married men and women move to tract

developments and purchase automobiles for traveling to and from work and the city. For many Jews, this suburban lifestyle conveyed a sense of belonging in America. Another way in which the sense manifested itself was in the new congregations Jewish families formed and the new synagogues they erected, alongside the churches of their Protestant and Catholic neighbors.⁹

This article is an exploration of these changes and how they led to the emergence of Conservative Judaism in the Jewish community of Charleston during the 1940s. The experiences of Macey (1911–2001) and Adele Jules Kronsberg (1909–2002), who resided in Charleston from 1936 until 1950 and were important figures in these developments and in the establishment of the Southeastern Region of the USA, provide a glimpse into the processes of Americanization, suburbanization, religious transformation, and institution building.¹⁰ This essay examines their attempts to achieve a balance between maintaining their Jewish identity and acculturating into the larger American culture.

Shifting Loyalties in Charleston's Jewish Community

Mirroring other Jewish communities, Charleston's congregations experienced transformations as the community matured, its members adapted to the surrounding American culture, and newcomers arrived in the city in successive generations. These transformations led to frequent congregational splits and mergers. The eventual acculturation of immigrants may have minimized religious differences, but the continued small size of the community has also limited the ability of its religious institutions to sustain extensive diversity.

Jewish merchants and traders founded Kahal Kadosh (K. K.) Beth Elohim, the fourth synagogue established in America, in Charleston in 1749. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Charleston was the premier port in the country and was home to the largest Jewish population. The metropolis had not only provided the "port Jews" with economic opportunity, but had offered them religious tolerance as well. According to historian James Hagg, "From the first arrival of Jews in Charleston, they had adopted the ways of life of the other inhabitants, including, on the

part of some, the modification of their religious practice and beliefs."¹¹ The promise of America and its commitment to religious liberty in a free society became deeply rooted in Charleston, as did the processes of adjustment and change.

In the 1820s, young, American-born members of Beth Elohim agitated for modifications in synagogue practices. They believed, for example, that changes in the services including the addition of a Sabbath sermon and shorter ceremonies would enhance decorum, attract more members, and, most important, preserve Jewish life and Judaism in America. Unable to win concessions from the elders of K. K. Beth Elohim, the "Reformed Society of Israelites for Promoting True Principles of Judaism According to Its Purity and Spirit" worshiped together as a separate group until the late 1830s. In doing so, Gary Zola, biographer of Isaac Harby, a reformed society leader, notes, "Harby and his colleagues were the first in American Jewish history to grapple with the clash of values they confronted as Jews living in an open society."¹²

Gustav Poznanski, Beth Elohim's minister starting in 1840, permitted the installation of an organ in the congregation's new sanctuary, rebuilt after a fire destroyed the original building in 1838. This signaled the beginning of permanent reforms and the return of the dissidents as their society declined and dispersed. At the dedication of the building, Poznanski proclaimed, "This country is our Palestine, this city our Jerusalem, this house of God our temple."¹³ For these Jews, Charleston was their Zion, America their promised land. A century after its founding, the traditional synagogue had become the first Reform congregation in the United States.

Unwilling to accept the changes, the traditionalists broke away and organized Shearith Israel, which also followed the Sephardic rite. There were not enough members to support both congregations, however, and they merged after the Civil War.¹⁴

In 1852, under the leadership of Polish-born Rabbi Hirsch Zvi Margolis Levy, more than two dozen Yiddish-speaking Polish and German immigrants organized Brith Sholom as an Orthodox synagogue and the first Ashkenazic congregation in South Carolina. A breakaway of more observant Jews

formed Shari Emouna in 1886. Eleven years later, its members folded their congregation and rejoined Brith Sholom. Historian Jeffrey Gurock argues that there were too few Jews in Charleston to maintain multiple religious institutions and that, as the immigrants became more Americanized, they too became less observant.¹⁵

Brith Sholom, called the Polish synagogue because of the background of its founders, grew to over two hundred members as more Jews from eastern Europe came to the city in the early twentieth century. A split in the congregation occurred once more in 1911, when a group of about sixty men, most of them originally from the Polish town of Kaluszyn, formed Beth Israel. Its constituency, like that of Shari Emouna earlier, may have considered itself more pious than those who worshiped at Brith Sholom and who were likely earlier, more acculturated residents.¹⁶ Although membership increased, Beth Israel could not afford a spiritual leader. Congregants finally turned to Brith Sholom in 1933 and sought the help of Benjamin Axelman, its rabbi since 1927, to officiate at their lifecycle events and in the Jewish education of the school children.¹⁷

In the period between the world wars, Charleston's three synagogues maintained auxiliaries that aided educational, social, and religious programs. Community-wide organizations included the Hebrew Benevolent Society (1784), Hebrew Orphan Society (1801), local chapters of B'nai B'rith (1867), the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) (1897), the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) (1906), and Hadassah (1921). The Jewish Community Center, begun in the 1920s, also crossed denominational boundaries. The organizations provided venues for synagogue members to meet in a nonreligious setting, mix socially, and expand their horizons. They provided additional opportunities for community members to develop leadership skills. As a reflection of their acculturation, the Jews of Charleston also participated in an array of civic groups.¹⁸

In addition to increased acculturation, economic, demographic, and political changes had an impact on Jews throughout the country and in Charleston.

Economy and War Reshape Charleston and Its Jewish Community

The economic downturn and stagnation in the years following the 1929 Depression affected Charleston and its Jews, especially those engaged in retail trade. Some younger members of the Orthodox congregations, to the dismay of their immigrant parents, even began to open their stores for business on the Sabbath.¹⁹ Although the Depression was on the wane by the mid-thirties, it was the entry of the United States into World War II and mobilization that refueled America's economy.

In 1937, the U. S. Census of Religious Bodies estimated Charleston's Jewish population to be about twenty-five hundred. Then war brought increased work at Charleston's navy yard and port. By 1944, the greater metropolitan area grew to about 157,000 people. The upturn in the economy and the jobs created, coupled with the arrival of Jewish service personnel stationed in the area, temporarily expanded the Jewish community too. The city continued to prosper and grow in the post-war era. While some soldiers never came back from the war, others returned, married local women, and created families. However, the 1948 census taken by the Jewish Community Center enumerated fewer than two thousand Jews clustered in 589 family units. The Jewish population decrease may have been due to the fact that younger, more acculturated Jews tended to have smaller families. Charleston's Jewish population then ranked 132nd in size, or just .004 percent of the Jews in the United States.²⁰

Kronsberg Family Background

It was during this period in the 1930s and 1940s that the Kronsberg family grew and deepened its involvement in the religious, business, social, and cultural life of Charleston. When Macey and Adele Kronsberg arrived in 1936, they quickly immersed themselves in the community. Macey's upbringing in a traditional Conservative congregation and his forceful leadership led him to agitate for change at Orthodox Brith Sholom, change that eventually led to the establishment of a new Conservative congregation.

*Seaman Macey Kronsberg during World War II.
(Courtesy of Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein.)*

Macey's parents, Abraham and Lena Kronsberg, eastern European immigrants who arrived in the United States in the 1880s, later met and were married in 1901 in Portsmouth, Virginia. Their oldest son, Edward, was born there in 1903. The Kronsbergs moved to Tilghman Island on the eastern shore of Maryland to become the proprietors of a general store and the island's only Jewish family. There Lena gave birth to three other sons, Meyer, Milton, and the youngest, Macey, who was born on August 11, 1911.

When Abraham died unexpectedly at the end of 1918, his widow moved with her children to east Baltimore to be near relatives. The family became involved in Conservative Judaism and Zionism when they joined Chizuk Amuno, which as previously noted, was a pioneer Conservative congregation. Beth El in Norfolk, Virginia, was the only other Conservative congregation in the region. The Conservative movement was slowly getting established in the South. Macey attended the Hebrew school of Chizuk Amuno, worshipped regularly, and had his bar mitzvah there.²¹

At fifteen, Edward moved to Charleston, South Carolina, where he worked in the clothing store of his uncle, Joseph Bluestein. In 1926, the young man started his own retail enterprise, Edward's 5¢-10¢ and \$1.00 Store. Meyer and Milton joined him in the business. Over the next half century, the store grew into a chain of thirty-one variety stores in South Carolina and two in Georgia. The Kronsberg family sold the business in 1977 to Kuhn Brothers of Tennessee. Edward married native Charlestonian Hattie Barshay, daughter of eastern European immigrants. Like his father-in-law Emanuel Barshay who served as president of Brith Sholom in 1924-1925, Edward would serve as president in 1939-1940 and again in 1945-1946. In addition to his extensive involvement in Jewish organizations, Edward Kronsberg was also a major participant in every segment of community life during the more than sixty years that he lived in the city. His strong civic leadership demonstrated that one could maintain a Jewish identity and also earn acceptance and respect from non-Jews. His activism also laid the roots for further involvement by the rest of the family in the business and religious life of the city. Hattie, Edward's wife, was on the board of directors of the Florence Crittenden Home. Milton, the third brother, became president of the Jewish Community Center. His wife, Frederica (Freddie), was also active in Jewish organizations.²²

Until he moved to Charleston and entered the family business, Macey Kronsberg lived in Baltimore and continued his interests in Conservative Judaism and Zionism. These early encounters later led him to the forefront of change in major movements in the Jewish community, and he became a principal

player in the founding of several Jewish organizations including the local American Zionist Emergency Committee (AZEC), Conservative Synagogue Emanu-El, and the Southeastern Region of the USA.

In 1933, Macey graduated from the Johns Hopkins University. At the Associated Jewish Charities he found employment as a social worker and met Adele Jules, his future wife. Born August 6, 1909, Adele was a native Baltimorean, whose maternal ancestors had come to the United States by the 1850s. She grew up in a family that was active in the Reform Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. The couple eloped on September 19, 1935, and were wed by Morris Goodblatt, rabbi of Conservative Congregation Beth Am Israel in Philadelphia.²³ The marriage lasted over sixty-five years.²⁴

Soon after Macey's arrival in Charleston in 1936, Adele drove down to join him. Pregnant with the first of their three daughters, she brought her mother-in-law, Lena Kronsberg, to live with them.²⁵ The young couple joined Brith Sholom where the other brothers were already members and quickly became involved in numerous civic groups and in local, regional, and national Jewish communal affairs.

In addition to his interest in the Orthodox synagogue, Macey was active in ZOA, AZEC, Masons (he became master of the Friendship Lodge in 1948), Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, Retail Merchants Association, and Red Cross.²⁶ He developed skills in these organizations and, as an officer in some of them, was able to provide leadership and vision.

Adele, a well-organized, tireless worker, crackerjack stenographer, typist and secretary, was involved in Jewish causes all of her life, most often alongside her husband. When she arrived in Charleston, her efforts focused on Brith Sholom, its Daughters of Israel sisterhood, the Sunday schools of Brith Sholom and Beth Elohim, the Milk Committee, SOS (Supplies for Overseas), Hadasah, and the NCJW. In 1948, Senior Hadassah appointed her to the Bicentennial Advisory Council, a community-wide effort to plan for the two hundredth anniversary of the Charleston Jewish community to be celebrated in 1950.²⁷ Like Macey, Adele enjoyed

opportunities to broaden her interaction with members of the Jewish and non-Jewish communities and to develop leadership qualities through communal activism. This demonstrated that the young couple and others like them could successfully be both modern Americans and committed Jews simultaneously.

Boundaries between the elite members of Reform Beth Elohim, who were involved in the NCJW, and eastern European Jewish women, who belonged primarily to the Orthodox congregations, may have already loosened in Charleston due to the fact that many of the first generation women had already acculturated by the 1930s and were needed by the NCJW section in its efforts to help refugees. When Adele arrived, three women, one from an Orthodox synagogue and two from the Reform congregation, called on her at home and invited her to join both the local section of the NCJW and the Reform sisterhood. The former may have been especially eager for Adele, as a member of the active Kronsberg family, and as an individual who had grown up in a Reform congregation, to join its organization. In 1941, Adele and Claire Givner were sent as delegates from the Charleston section to the NCJW's Southern Interstate Conference in Tampa, Florida. This was the first time Adele had attended a conference in an official capacity. She reported to the Charleston section, "I have gained much in experience, much in knowledge and information beyond the workings of the individual sections, and much in pleasant contacts, acquaintances and friendships."²⁸

From 1943 to 1945, Adele served two terms as president of the Charleston section of NCJW. She traveled to other conferences including the national convention held in Chicago in 1943. Under her leadership, the local section sought to educate its members through programs that, for example, focused on women in national defense and on the legislative process. Knowledgeable women, NCJW leaders believed, would be better able to make informed decisions as Americans and as Jews. During Adele's presidency, the chapter participated in relief and welfare activities with the Charleston Federation of Women's Clubs and became a member of the newly formed Charleston Welfare Council.²⁹ In 1943, Governor Olin D. Johnston appointed Adele to the South

Carolina State War Fund. In 1947, she was elected to the National Council of the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee as a regional participant in its activities.³⁰ Her involvement in multiple Jewish organizations signaled that all Jewish women, regardless of their synagogue affiliation, could work together for the betterment of the Jewish community. Invitations to join and participate in general organizations indicated the acceptance of Jewish women into the larger sphere of Charleston society.

As they increasingly fit in with their welcoming surroundings, the Kronsbergs and others in the Jewish community began to seek a Judaism that fit with their new lifestyle. They wanted to maintain a traditional Jewish upbringing for their children at the same time that they wanted to modernize aspects of the worship service. These young adults also wanted to include women more fully in synagogue life, just as women were more fully participating in other spheres within the population at large. As active lay leaders in Brith Sholom, they sought new rabbinic leadership that could help them extend democratic principles into the synagogue.

Religious Adjustments and Rabbinic Alterations

American-born Rabbi Benjamin Axelman was twenty-three years old when he assumed the pulpit of Brith Sholom in 1927. His youthfulness probably appealed to the younger, more acculturated generation. It was also financially advantageous to engage a newly ordained rabbi rather than someone experienced who earned a more substantial salary. Axelman had been ordained the year before by the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), affiliated with Yeshiva College in New York. RIETS was developing into a mainstream Orthodox institution that could provide Americanized Orthodox congregations with the modern rabbis they were seeking.³¹

In Charleston, Axelman worked energetically in several areas. He created a joint Hebrew school for children of Brith Sholom and Beth Israel, started a successful junior congregation, and led a popular young adult study group. It seemed, however, that the synagogue leadership did not sufficiently appreciate his efforts.

For many years, the *hazan-shokhet* received higher compensation than the rabbi. In 1939, the board of trustees refused to grant Axelman the life contract he sought. Things came to a head in 1943 when the board denied his request for a more generous salary.³²

According to historian Jeffrey Gurock, the congregants decided against retaining Axelman. Even Axelman's supporters were unhappy about sharing his rabbinic services with Beth Israel and their children in the Hebrew School. Nonetheless a special meeting was called and the congregation overwhelmingly reversed the first vote. Consequently, the congregation offered the rabbi a short-term contract with a small monetary increase. The situation was untenable for the rabbi, and he resigned from Brith Sholom in August 1943. He assumed the pulpit of Orthodox Congregation Petach Tikvah in Baltimore, serving as its spiritual leader from 1943 to 1976.³³

Even prior to Axelman's resignation, the religious viewpoints of new leaders and younger members were changing and they looked for ways to bring people back to the synagogue. They were concerned about the poor attendance at services, the lack of engagement of congregants in Jewish life and observance, the lessening of youth involvement in the congregation, and the low quality of religious instruction in the Hebrew school. In 1940, President Edward Kronsberg called for the rabbi to introduce late Friday evening services following the regular sundown service that inaugurated the Sabbath. While this was already a practice of many Conservative and even some Orthodox synagogues elsewhere, it had not been tried in Charleston, although it is unknown whether Axelman had considered the additional service.³⁴

With Axelman's departure, Brith Sholom established a "Rabbi Committee" to find his replacement. Could a new spiritual leader bring about changes in synagogue practices advocated by some congregants even as the congregation remained Orthodox? Nationally, without clear boundaries for mixed seating and late Friday night services, which would later separate the denominations, and with RIETS still attempting to become a mainstream organization, congregations like Brith

*Macey Kronsberg with his two older daughters,
Rachel Rose (left) and Peggy Rebecca, December 1944.
(Courtesy of Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein.)*

Sholom remained within the Orthodox orbit but recruited rabbis from the Conservative JTS.

Macey Kronsberg, one of the younger and newer congregants, became chair of the rabbi's search committee, which appears to have had only one other member, Isadore Lesser, who was also in the retail business.³⁵ Macey immediately sent letters to the placement committees of Orthodox seminaries Yeshivath Torah Vodaath and Mesivta and the Rabbinical Seminary of New York, both in Brooklyn and both more traditional than RIETS, and the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago, Illinois, as well as to JTS. Graduates of the Chicago college were known to accept pulpits in congregations with mixed seating.³⁶ Perhaps these Orthodox seminaries were contacted in order to demonstrate to the members of Brith Sholom that the search committee was casting its net widely for candidates.

Just a few days after Axelman's resignation, Rabbi Emanuel Marcus, director of the Jewish Community Service Bureau of RIETS and Yeshiva College, wrote to Brith Sholom stating that Axelman had informed his alma mater that he was leaving Charleston. "Yeshiva" he stated, ". . . is ready and anxious to help you select a fitting successor."³⁷ But by early September, the congregation had not yet invited a candidate from RIETS to Charleston for an interview. Dr. Samuel Belkin, president of Yeshiva, sent a telegram personally urging that Brith Sholom interview one of its graduates before making a final selection.³⁸

In June, prior to becoming chair of the Rabbi Committee, Macey met with Rabbi Moshe Davis, registrar of JTS, in New York City. At that time, he may have inquired about rabbis who were available and about procedures for engaging a JTS rabbi, indicating at least his own interest in placing a Conservative rabbi in Brith Sholom. When he officially contacted JTS on behalf of the congregation in early August, it presented a special opportunity for the seminary and the United Synagogue to pull an Orthodox congregation in the South into the fold of Conservative Judaism. According to historian David Starr, Solomon Schechter, president of JTS until his death in 1915, had failed to reach out to southern congregations during his tenure.³⁹

The letters from Macey to Moshe Davis and to the seminary's placement committee provide insight into the selection of a JTS graduate for Brith Sholom over a rabbi ordained by one of the Orthodox yeshivot. To Davis, Macey wrote, "We have been instructed to communicate with other Yeshivas but you know my own personal inclination is toward a Seminary man. I believe our committee sufficiently liberal to be persuaded but cannot be positive. . . . Not only am I keen for our own sakes, but, for the Southeast as well. . . . If the Seminary is to properly disseminate its philosophy of the Jewish Way of Life, it seems to me that it is high time we have one of its Rabbis in this area. . . . I am not only thinking of the present but of the post war South as well. . . . When the war is over, many of the industries in this region . . . will all continue to operate and definitely establish the southeast as the last frontier in America to be exploited . . . many more of our coreligionists will infiltrate in and carry on their commercial livelihood . . . I believe Charleston would . . . be a logical city to welcome the first Seminary Rabbi since it is located on the periphery of this [postwar industrial frontier] region."⁴⁰

Macey's letter to the JTS placement committee provided background on the congregation and the city's Jewish population of five hundred families, which was augmented by "an additional influx of at least one hundred families among war workers and members of the armed forces." Macey admitted that the rabbi, congregation, and Hebrew school leaders had been unhappy with Axelman's splitting time among so many groups and that "he could not do justice to the several tasks that confronted him." Brith Sholom needed a rabbi who would devote himself exclusively to the congregation and to supervise rather than teach in the school. The ideal candidate, he continued, "must be primarily a 'loyal adherent' to orthodoxy but can have a liberal approach to American Jewish problems. . . . [T]he type of Rabbi we shall need will be a man endowed with initiative and organizational capacities." Adolph Coblenz, the rabbi of Conservative Chizuk Amuno Congregation in Baltimore, where Macey belonged until he moved to Charleston, may have served as a role model for him in the search for a replacement for Axelman. His activism in

Zionist activities beyond Charleston provided Macey with opportunities to meet other Conservative Jews and rabbis from around the country. He also recognized that the rabbi selected had to be very traditional in order to be accepted by that faction of the membership. But he mentioned to the placement committee that the congregation was interested in late Friday evening services, "in order to re-attract our members and seat-holders to Shul more often." Finally, he expressed the hope that the candidate "shall be blessed with a wife who is endowed with charm and skill and can aid him in his work with the congregation and community."⁴¹

The Rabbi Committee did not invite for an interview any candidates who had been ordained by Orthodox seminaries. The only candidate brought down for a weekend was Solomon D. Goldfarb, a JTS graduate. Macey and Lesser had been introduced to Goldfarb and his wife Sophia ("Tuppy") by Rabbi Elias Margolis, chairman of the JTS placement committee, during a trip to New York, and the two men were impressed. The congregants selected him to replace Axelman. Goldfarb was born in Sokolow, Austria, in 1902, and brought to the United States at age two, so that by adulthood, he was clearly Americanized. In addition to studying at the Orthodox RIETS, Goldfarb received a teacher's license from the Tarbut School for Teachers in New York and a Bachelor of Science from New York University in 1929. He was ordained by JTS in 1932 and, three years later, studied at the Hebrew University and at Merkaz ha-Rav in Palestine, the yeshiva founded there by Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Ashkenazic chief rabbi of modern Israel.⁴²

Goldfarb had served in pulpits in Westwood, New Jersey, and in Spring Valley, Albany, and Brooklyn, New York. In Albany, he was president of the Zionist district and, with his wife, had engaged in interfaith work. Goldfarb's knowledge of modern written and spoken Hebrew and his involvement with Zionism most likely resonated deeply with those congregants including Macey, who were active in the Charleston ZOA district.⁴³ For those ready to institute changes at Brith Sholom that would modernize traditional Judaism so that it would fit into their American

*Macey and Adele Kronsberg
with their youngest daughter, Sandra Judith, 1949.
(Courtesy of Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein.)*

way of life, Goldfarb's affiliation with Conservative Judaism was of paramount importance.

In his introduction of Goldfarb when he came to be interviewed, Macey told the congregation that everyone owed a debt to the founders of JTS, which trained rabbis "who would adapt themselves and their people to the American Jewish scene." Because of them, he said, "*today* [emphasis in original] the Seminary is pre-eminently qualified to carry on Jewish tradition and civilization in America after the life line to Europe is now irretrievably destroyed." He noted that there were more than three hundred ordained rabbis "imbued with the philosophy of the Seminary which has consistently sought since its inception to rationalize our American civilization with a living and dynamic Judaism, which has seen the rebirth of Eretz Yisroel as a Gan Aden and the resurrection of the Hebrew tongue as more than a *lashon kodesh*."⁴⁴

The congregation offered the rabbi a salary of \$5,000 per year, substantially more than Axelman had received. Goldfarb and his wife, Tuppy, returned to Charleston right before the High Holidays. In his letter of welcome to the new rabbi, Macey began, "It is the fruition of an idea for a seminary man cherished many years and I keenly look forward to associating myself with you in building up the Jewish life in our community. . . . [T]he Steinberg family is equally thrilled . . . Mr. Lesser is also very pleased."⁴⁵ Relying on Macey Kronsberg's papers and the brief congregation minutes, it is unclear whether or not there was a consensus for engaging a JTS man as the next rabbinic leader for Brith Sholom. For Macey, however, the choice was right.

Enthusiastic about Goldfarb's election and eager for the rabbi to make changes that he hoped would bring many people to the synagogue, Macey offered the rabbi several suggestions, although Goldfarb's annual reports to the congregation do not indicate that he implemented them. For the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services Macey wrote that announcing page numbers, advising the congregation when to stand, when to sit, and when to read responsively or silently would be helpful. "By enabling the

congregation to have this detailed explanation of the prayers good decorum could be maintained among the women and intelligent following of the service be practiced." Macey also requested a prayer for the men in the armed services with a recitation of their names. He even suggested sermon topics including prayer, penitence, charity, and their meaning for the first day of Rosh Hashanah, and "All Israel" and plans for the betterment of the synagogue, the community, and beyond for the second day, with a limit on delivering each talk to about thirty or forty minutes!⁴⁶

During his tenure at Brith Sholom, Goldfarb instituted late Friday evening services after the early Kabbalat Shabbat service, began a monthly congregational bulletin called *The Messenger*, brought the Daughters of Israel into the congregation as its sisterhood, organized Shabbat services for the children of the community, and with his wife, tried to keep the synagogue's Talmud Torah going in spite of teacher turnover. Community-wide, he was invited to speak about Judaism on WCSC and WMTA, the local radio stations, participated in chaplaincy work, and became a leader in the local chapters of the ZOA and AZEC.⁴⁷

AZEC had been created to coordinate Zionist activity in the United States after the British White Paper limited Jewish immigration to Palestine in 1939. After it was reorganized into a lobby, its activities increased, especially between the end of World War II and the establishment of the state of Israel. Individual Jews worked at a local level to garner America's support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.⁴⁸

As head of the Charleston AZEC, Goldfarb brought South Carolina's Governor Olin D. Johnston to speak at Brith Sholom on Friday evening, March 31, 1944. Before five hundred people, the governor "made an urgent plea for an open door policy in Palestine." According to the article written by Macey for *The Messenger*, the Governor looked forward to the day "when the Jewish homeland shall again be Palestine, and when the Jews will have an opportunity of having their own nation and their own flag."⁴⁹

While Goldfarb continued his community activism, he was interested in making additional modifications in congregational worship. In September 1944, he told the board that a new building was necessary to add women's seating. Louis Lesser, a member since his arrival in Charleston eight years earlier, wrote a formal letter of complaint to Brith Sholom the following year. "I for one am not going to stand for it any longer," he said about the cramped and hot upstairs section of the synagogue where the women sat during High Holiday services. A new, air-conditioned building "run conservatively," he believed, was what was needed. "This is 1945, not 1845, and if conservatism is good enough for such cities like Charlotte, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Washington, Richmond, and New York," he concluded, "it ought to be good for Charleston."⁵⁰ In June 1946, the issue of space rose again, when the minutes of the board stated that there was a lack of seating for women for the High Holidays. The overcrowding was the result of growth. The April 1947 congregational minutes had recorded a membership gain, mostly of families, from 258 to 289 in one year.⁵¹

However, as the end of his contract neared, Goldfarb realized that he would not be able to move forward with changes that would satisfy the more liberal members of the congregation. He resigned in February 1947 and secured a pulpit starting April 1 as rabbi of the Conservative Temple Israel in Long Beach, New York. Like his predecessor Rabbi Axelman, this was a position he held for the rest of his rabbinical career.⁵²

In Charleston, neither rabbi had been able to please all of Brith Sholom's constituencies. In Axelman's case, the liberal elements pressed their rabbi to modernize worship practices. In the case of Goldfarb, the traditionalists prevented attempts by the rabbi and his followers to innovate, even though they were not necessarily observant themselves. That Goldfarb and Axelman each remained in their next pulpits until retirement points to the fact that they were capable and respected rabbis. It also signified that the religious philosophy, seminary allegiance, and initiatives of the rabbis were compatible with the members of later congregations as they

*Governor Olin D. Johnston (center) posing with
Macey Kronsberg (left) and Rabbi Solomon Goldfarb.
Governor Johnston gave a pro-Zionist speech at Brith Sholom in 1946.
(Courtesy of Peggy Pearlstein Kronsberg.)*

had been with Kronsberg and like-minded members of Brith Sholom.

A Conservative Synagogue Grows In Charleston

In 1956, Goldfarb looked back on his years at Brith Sholom. To Milton Kronsberg he wrote that a decade earlier he had not been able to initiate certain changes in the synagogue. "Reverence for the past deteriorated into distrust of the vitality of Judaism," he said. "On all sides," he continued, "[a] handful of old guards preserved the status quo. I still shudder at the refrain that met the most moderate innovation: 'WE NEVER DID IT THAT WAY'." [Emphasis in original.] To Edward Kronsberg, the former two-term president of the congregation, Goldfarb said that "I came to Brith-Shalom not with the intention of dismembering it. . . . I intended to build an outstanding and influential Traditional

Congregation." He noted that he used the word Traditional and not Conservative, "because I do not go in for labels. It is the behavior of the congregants and their best interests that matter most."⁵³

Goldfarb also acknowledged the struggle Edward Kronsberg had in trying to maintain loyalty to Brith Sholom, where he had been a part for a quarter century, and Goldfarb recognized the desires of some members to make changes in synagogue practices. He wrote, "You served it [Brith Sholom] with means, might and marrow for many years. I respect your loyalty to it, and appreciate the conflict that went on within you during 'the war of states.'"⁵⁴

The Orthodox faction within the congregation stood its ground and refused to accept accommodations to modernize worship by either Goldfarb or his supporters. The conflict escalated to new heights as both sides campaigned for their positions. Some congregants, like Edward Kronsberg, struggled with the decision, torn by family ties, devotion to the synagogue, and the desire to bring about changes from within that could attract and keep the loyalty of a younger generation of Jews.

Rabbi Hyman A. Rabinowitz of Sioux City, Iowa, was brought to Charleston for an interview to be Goldfarb's successor. Like Goldfarb, he had studied at RIETS before graduation and was ordained by JTS. Simultaneously, Rabinowitz's backers moved to alter the wording of the congregation's constitution so that it would uphold "Traditional" rather than "Orthodox" ritual. In addition, the group circulated a petition signed by forty-five members declaring that future rabbis at Brith Sholom should be graduates of JTS or recognized by its rabbinical school.⁵⁵

Macey Kronsberg reported to Goldfarb that his group continued to advocate for Conservative Judaism at Brith Sholom. A second parlor meeting, similar to one held while Goldfarb was still in Charleston, took place at the home of Dr. Matthew Steinberg. Rabbi Joel Geffen, whose father was Tobias Geffen of Atlanta's Shearith Israel, spoke about JTS and Conservative Judaism. He also conducted services at the synagogue. "I think he ably presented the Conservative viewpoint as the son of an orthodox rabbi," Macey wrote. "[A]s a Conservative Jew," he continued, "I

have no right to be an officer in an orthodox [*sic*] Shul. However, I have volunteered my services to be the first president of the first Conservative Shul." Macey also expressed his unhappiness with the situation at Brith Sholom since Goldfarb had taken another pulpit. "If you do not have an able Seminary successor," he wrote to Goldfarb, "I am doubtful if I will stay on here . . . I have plunged deeply into Zionist work but that is not enough."⁵⁶

Determined to prevent Conservative Judaism from coming to Brith Sholom, longtime member Sam Berlin offered an alternative. He sent telegrams to his supporters and proposed a fresh platform of Orthodoxy. Among the items on his list was a new or remodeled synagogue on the present site that would permit women to be seated on elevated sides of the same floor of the sanctuary as men. He proposed a uniform prayer book with English translation and the introduction of English responsive readings. Finally, he suggested continuing the late Friday evening services initiated during Goldfarb's tenure.⁵⁷

Berlin's campaign met with success. At a special meeting on July 13, 1947, after intense lobbying by both elements including a petition signed by 119 members seeking changes, the congregation voted 100 to 74 in favor of remaining Orthodox by not changing the constitution and by not engaging another JTS rabbi rather than continuing on the track of eventual Conservative affiliation. Some petitioners evidently were convinced that the changes Berlin put forth went far enough and, although they had signed the petition, changed their minds when the vote was taken. Nevertheless, ten officers and trustees immediately resigned their positions. A new board was selected and Sam Berlin became the new president.⁵⁸

If Goldfarb and the advocates for change at Brith Sholom had moved more slowly in pressing for changes and had space been adequate, would the congregation have affiliated eventually with Conservative Judaism? Other congregations in the South did follow national models in this direction. Under the leadership of Abraham J. Mesch, an Orthodox rabbi who had been ordained in Palestine by Chief Rabbi Abraham I. Kook, Congregation Beth El in Birmingham, Alabama, could not decide whether it was "a

progressive Orthodox congregation or a traditional Conservative synagogue." But it then affiliated with the Conservative USA as early as 1944.⁵⁹ Mesch's colleague and friend, Rabbi Harry H. Epstein, also ordained as an Orthodox rabbi, led Congregation Ahavath Achim in Atlanta, Georgia, into membership in the Conservative USA in 1952.⁶⁰ But those determined to keep Orthodoxy at Brith Sholom realized that they needed to make some modifications to worship. When the changes did not go far enough, a second and determined segment of the laity at Brith Sholom left and created a new congregation. Thus the Charleston congregations illustrate a variation in the pattern of change.

As noted at the beginning of this essay, Macey Kronsberg convened a meeting on July 16 of people interested in forming a new Conservative congregation. The average age of the twenty-one men who attended the meeting was forty-two years and almost all were native-born Americans. In general, they were a decade younger than the officers and trustees of Brith Sholom and probably more eager for change. The average age of those men, who were in office when the Orthodox congregation engaged its next rabbi, was fifty-one years, while ten of the thirteen men were native born.⁶¹ Some who came to the initial meeting on July 16 had families with older children and were concerned about providing them with a religious education since they would no longer be attending the Sunday and Hebrew schools at Brith Sholom. Many of the young couples founding Conservative congregations around the nation in emerging suburbs had little experience in running a synagogue. This certainly was not the case with this group that included five past presidents and officers of the parent congregation. Several members of Brith Sholom were already moving to the northwest section of Charleston, where the new Conservative congregation soon found land for a building.

At the initial meeting, Macey urged those gathered not to indulge in "recrimination, malice, or bitterness because of the failure to pass the amendments to Brith Sholom Constitution making it Conservative." He continued, "Conservative Jews are dignified," and those who wanted change had tried to amend the constitution

“by democratic means.” In addition, it was in the best interests of the group to retain interest and membership in Brith Sholom for the ties they had to other members and for the services of a *shokhet* and *mohel*. Macey stated that “each must determine if he was prepared to make the step toward Conservatism and willing to assume a share in it, financially and otherwise.”⁶²

The “overwhelming opinion of those in attendance,” Macey wrote in the minutes which he had reconstructed from notes, “was in favor of carrying out this program to organize a Conservative Synagogue before the High Holydays.” In the discussion that followed, “several persons felt that one did not tear up deep family roots in a synagogue without making a last final effort to affect a reconciliation of conflicting views. Others present felt it was hopeless to change people whose convictions were so strong to keep Brith Sholom Orthodox.” The discussion also brought out the fact that Brith Sholom had formed ninety years earlier because of disagreement with Beth Elohim and that, twenty-odd years before, Beth Israel had formed as an offshoot because of disagreement among members of Brith Sholom. “Thus the formation of a Conservative Synagogue would be following a precedent previously established.”⁶³

While Hyman Rephan, a former president of Brith Sholom (1937–1938) and owner of a dairy, and Alex Karesh, who owned a shoe store, supported the plans, they also suggested that a committee present a written statement to Brith Sholom so that the synagogue would be officially advised of the impending movement to form a new congregation. Rephan, Matthew Steinberg, and Nathan Goldberg were asked to constitute this committee. The proposed letter sent to the trustees of Brith Sholom stated, “In view of the large number of members who feel that Conservatism must be provided if attachment to Judaism is not to lessen more as time passes, we wish to resubmit this proposed objective to you with the hope that you may desire to reconsider your former action before steps are concluded for an independent Conservative Synagogue.” Finally, people in the group expressed the sentiment that young people were anxious to find a happy medium between Orthodox and Reform Judaism. As a result of the vote on the

previous Sunday, some of those young people “were prepared to join the Reformed [*sic*] ranks if no provision was made for dignified and Traditional services.”⁶⁴

At a meeting on August 19 at the summer home of Moses and Retha Sharnoff, the group, which called itself the Committee for [*sic*] Conservative Synagogue, decided on the name Synagogue Emanu-El. At a meeting the following evening at the summer home of Edward and Dora Fleishman, Irving Steinberg reported that at a joint meeting between a group of leaders from Synagogue Emanu-El and another from Brith Sholom, the latter declined to engage a Conservative rabbi or to allow mixed seating. Unable to move Brith Sholom toward Conservative Judaism, the group elected officers and a board of trustees.⁶⁵

As the new president, Macey worked with Rabbi Bernard Segal, Director of the Commission on Rabbinic Placement at JTS, to engage a full-time rabbi and a temporary cantor for the fledgling congregation. Isadore Lesser served as the co-chair of this “rabbi committee,” the same position he had held alongside Macey in 1943 when Brith Sholom sought a new spiritual leader.

Segal suggested that Emanu-El engage a rabbi just for the High Holidays.⁶⁶ But Macey and other members were eager to secure a permanent spiritual leader. With a fully operational school in a building with adequate space, the synagogue could draw additional members from Brith Sholom and deter others from joining the Reform Beth Elohim. “Our group,” Macey wrote to Segal, “has five past presidents of Congregation Brith Shalom [*sic*] actively working to our objectives. These men . . . are fully aware of the mechanics of operation of a synagogue and this ‘know-how’ possibly may qualify us to choose a full time Rabbi at once. . . . Our program envisages bold and positive action and, if we do not get thoroughly organized for the entire season as well as the High Holydays, our strength may decline.” Macey expressed his concern that if there were too many rabbinic candidates “coming and going” the congregation would flounder. Not only did parents need a Hebrew and a Sunday school, but also there were some children who were already of bar mitzvah age. “I believe

our situation is different from that of other newly formed Conservative synagogues and we may have to act accordingly," Macey stated.⁶⁷

He wrote to Segal in another letter: "As a loyal believer in 'Seminary Judaism', even before I became a member of the United Synagogue National Board [1946], I am keenly anxious to have that type of Judaism firmly implanted in Charleston with a successful Rabbi and Conservative Congregation. This is . . . important for the development of the Seminary's program in the South as it will lay down the pattern in this area for the creation of other Conservative synagogues."⁶⁸

Simultaneously, Macey was dedicated to getting the congregation well established while working to make Conservative Judaism a strong force in the South. The creation of a new region in the movement's constellation of affiliates would also strengthen Conservative Judaism nationally. On July 27, Macey wrote to Rabbi Albert I. Gordon, executive director of the USA, "As you know there are Seminary Rabbis in Augusta, Macon, Jacksonville, Savannah, and Nashville, which would be the nucleus for a regional group. If we are successful in forming a Conservative Synagogue here in Charleston four states could be represented."⁶⁹ Macey conceived of reaching out to congregations with JTS rabbis in the cities he noted that had not affiliated with the Conservative movement, to unaffiliated congregations without JTS rabbis, and to congregations already affiliated within the movement.

The first priority was to engage a rabbi from JTS. Rabbi Benjamin Englander was invited to come to Charleston where he spoke at a public meeting at the Francis Marion Hotel on August 10. Although there was discussion about the possibility of offering the position to him, the board of trustees decided to interview other candidates. Rabbi Lewis A. Weintraub was invited to speak on August 27 at the Jewish Community Center. On August 31, he was selected to be Emanu-El's first rabbi.⁷⁰

Born in Poland in 1928, Weintraub grew up in Montreal, Canada. A graduate of Yeshiva College, he obtained ordination

from JTS in 1944. He enrolled in Yeshiva because there was no equivalent of a Jewish college in Canada and because it was then the only one of its kind in the United States. Always attracted to the rabbinate, Weintraub decided that if he were an Orthodox rabbi he would not be able to "tell a Jew who had to support his family, and work on shabbes that he was a sinner." In the meantime, he had heard about Dr. Mordecai Kaplan, a renowned JTS professor, and was attracted to him and "by what the Seminary stood for in general, a modern, traditional Judaism that was responsive to the needs of the American environment." Completing an accelerated program at JTS begun during World War II to provide rabbis for the armed forces, Weintraub enlisted as a chaplain in the Canadian military. He was discharged in 1946 and served for a year as assistant rabbi at the Conservative Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol congregation in Denver, Colorado, before coming to Charleston.⁷¹ Macey wrote to the Goldfarbs, "Our Rabbi is a fine, young man (29), single . . . and very talented. . . . He is right wing Conservative, clean cut, and very personable. He preached well and was favorably received. So under Rabbi Weintraub I believe we shall go far."⁷²

At the same time that they sought a full-time rabbi and other synagogue personnel, Emanu-El's leaders discovered a lot for sale on Gordon Street in the northwest section of the city where young families in need of more living space were moving. In correspondence with Rabbi Goldfarb, both Macey and Adele described the move of a number of Jews to that part of Charleston. They, too, purchased a home that fall that was located close to the synagogue site. As Adele wrote to the Goldfarbs, "Macey still insists on walking on Friday night and Saturday, leaving us no choice but to move up to the Northwest Section."⁷³

In his 1955 interpretation of Conservative Judaism in America, Marshall Sklare noted that rapid mobility, then a reflection of post WWII prosperity that led to the move to the suburbs, was a group phenomenon among Jews that resulted in a high level of acculturation. The Jews in Charleston who founded Emanu-El, similar to others like them around the country, were ready to move physically from their Orthodox synagogue as well as

*Synagogue Emanu-El's first home,
a former U.S. army air force chapel.
(Courtesy of Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein.)*

spiritually from its institutional rigidity. In the new residential neighborhood where they found homes, they established a congregation that would help them maintain their Jewish identity, but one that also made accommodations to their heightened sense of being fully American.⁷⁴

A few days after the first meeting of the new congregation, fifteen members who were also veterans of World War II sent a letter to Major General Luther D. Miller, chief of chaplains of the U.S. Army, inquiring about purchasing a surplus army chapel. Based on the percentage of Jews serving in the military, twelve chapels had been set aside for purchase by Jewish congregations. At the time that Emanu-El received approval, only five congregations had been allocated chapels by the War Assets Administration. South Carolina Senator Olin D. Johnson's help had also been solicited.⁷⁵

On September 23, 1947, a chapel from the air force base in Florence, South Carolina, was purchased for \$1,220. Included in

the sale were the benches, pulpits, ark, lighting and heating system. The chapel was able to accommodate 350 people for services. In eight weeks, the chapel was dismantled, moved one hundred miles in sections, and re-erected. Emanu-El leaders had it reconfigured to make space for offices, classrooms, and a kitchen. Macey noted in his letter to Ralph Jacobson, president of Congregation Beth El in Maplewood, New Jersey, who may have been inquiring about obtaining a surplus army chapel, "Although we have not received the final bill from the contractor, we expect the actual cost . . . will be \$20,000. We could not build today the same building and equip it for twice this amount so we feel we made a good purchase."⁷⁶

With its newly purchased chapel not yet ready, Synagogue Emanu-El held High Holiday services at the Jewish Community Center. Regardless of the inability to reconcile with Brith Sholom, the Orthodox congregation lent Emanu-El two torahs while Beth Israel lent a menorah for the services.⁷⁷

The new congregation applied for membership in the USA, placing it firmly within the Conservative movement.⁷⁸ Using a model constitution sent from the United Synagogue by Rabbi Albert I. Gordon, executive director, Synagogue Emanu-El's constitution was approved at a meeting on March 3, 1948. Louis Shimel, who had chaired the committee that revised Brith Sholom's constitution in 1945, chaired the committee that created Emanu-El's constitution.⁷⁹

The object of the congregation, according to the constitution, "shall be to establish and maintain a synagogue and such additional religious, social and recreational activities as will strengthen Conservative Judaism." The section under membership stated that, "Any Israelite, by birth or conversion, man or woman, twenty-one years of age, of good character shall be eligible for membership."⁸⁰ Significantly, women were permitted to join as members in their own right, to vote, to hold office, and to sit with men in the sanctuary during services. At Orthodox Brith Sholom, these options were not available to women. As early as 1931, however, women could hold office at Reform Beth Elohim.⁸¹

Macey Kronsberg's report at the meeting held May 6, 1948, only ten months after the formation of the congregation, captures the achievements and challenges of Emanu-El's inaugural year as a Conservative synagogue. The congregation had engaged Rabbi Lewis A. Weintraub, Cantor Jacob Renzer, and Ms. Yaffa Bebergal, from Palestine, as full-time staff. It acquired property on Gordon Street, moved an army chapel to the premises, made renovations, and landscaped the area. A sisterhood was established, which affiliated immediately with the national Women's League for Conservative Judaism. Under the leadership of Anita Steinberg, whose husband Leon was a former president of Brith Sholom, it undertook the creation of a Sunday school starting in October as its main project. During the first year, Adele Kronsberg served as supervisor for the eighty children enrolled. The congregation developed a Hebrew School the following month that met initially at members' homes, offered adult education classes, invited prominent leaders of Conservative Judaism to address and educate the community, launched the *Emanu-Light*, the congregational bulletin, and acquired two torah scrolls.⁸²

Macey remarked, "We have demonstrated that Conservative Judaism is a dynamic Judaism and makes its followers happy in our faith. The mixed pews, the facing of Rabbi and Cantor to Congregation, uniform prayer book, English responsive readings, and adjustment of prayers to time available for services, all within the framework of traditional Judaism have given us dignified and meaningful worship, appealing to young and old alike. . . . [W]e have tried to show that we can live happily and proudly as Jews and as Americans at the same time"⁸³

For Macey, the founding of a Conservative congregation in Charleston confirmed that the modernization of synagogue worship would appeal to many people in the Jewish community. It presented Jews with a viable way to maintain Jewish identity even as they continued to acculturate in their surroundings. The synagogue offered a daily minyan, which boasted a nucleus of devoted members, yet the minyan required "consideration." Macey urged those present at the meeting to be prepared "to devote one week at least per year to supplement attendance by our 'regulars.'"

Sometimes Sabbath services also suffered from poor attendance. The president expressed hope that in the future both a junior congregation and a group of bar mitzvah age boys would come to services on a regular basis. "Mothers will encourage their children to participate in these services," he remarked, "if they will accompany their children to the Synagogue," creating a "whole generation of young people who will want to attend Sabbath services and will have a full knowledge and appreciation of those services."⁸⁴

An additional source of concern was the need for a cemetery. None of the other three congregations would sell a portion of their properties to Emanu-El. In 1948, Leon Steinberg picked up the option on land in Maryville, an area of Charleston across the Ashley River, on the day the option was scheduled to expire. He and his wife, Anita, donated to Emanu-El a portion of that property, which, incidentally, adjoined the Brith Sholom cemetery.⁸⁵

Macey concluded his report by pledging his "best efforts for the welfare of our Synagogue and Conservative Judaism in this community and the entire Southeast. May we continue to go forward with God's blessing, and may we soon see in our day the establishment of a democratic Jewish State in Palestine."⁸⁶

Macey's role in the emergence of Conservative Judaism in Charleston and the southeastern region of the United States paralleled his involvement in strengthening Zionism on local, regional, and national levels as well. When he arrived in Charleston in 1936, he immediately became active in the local ZOA chapter and continued until April 1944, when he was drafted into the U.S. Navy. Macey served stateside until his discharge in March 1946. During this period, his zeal for Zionism grew stronger.⁸⁷ He began to think about visiting Palestine after the war, finding employment, and living there with his family. On July 28, 1946, Macey and fellow Charleston Zionist and Brith Sholom member, Max Kline, left for Palestine on a converted troopship.⁸⁸ Among the nine hundred shipboard passengers were many Zionists. "Foremost among these," Macey wrote to his wife, "was Dr. Benjamin Schwadran who became my guide and teacher on the trip." A native of Jerusalem, Schwadran was Director of Research for AZEC. When

Macey returned to the United States, he shared his experiences with the Charleston community in a talk before five hundred people. He plunged "with great zeal" into the activities of AZEC as local chair and maintained frequent contact with Schwadran. Macey expanded his role as a Zionist leader when he became a vice president of the Southeastern Region of the ZOA for South Carolina in 1947.⁸⁹

Conclusion

In the postwar period in the United States, American Jews identified strongly with Judaism, at a time when Judaism seemed to have achieved status as a major religion alongside Protestantism and Catholicism. These Jews joined new congregations and created the largest expansion in synagogue building in American Jewish history. Between 1945 and 1965, more congregations affiliated with the Conservative movement than with the Reform and Orthodox movements. The success of Conservative Judaism was, according to historian Jonathan Sarna, due to the movement's "middle-of-the-road message," which was "in touch with the times," as America itself moved to the center.⁹⁰ Charleston's Emanu-El both benefited from and exemplified this revival in American Judaism, one in which Conservative Judaism gained major ground.

Emanu-El's roots sank deeply into Charleston's soil after its establishment in 1947. Membership continued to grow as the congregation became an integral part of the Jewish and the general community. The congregation also fostered the growth of the Conservative movement in the South. On April 12, 1948, at a meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, Emanu-El joined with three other Conservative congregations to found the Southeastern Region of the United Synagogue of America. The organization grew with the addition of affiliates that were spread over more than a half dozen states. Macey was elected the region's first president. He also served as a national vice president of the USA, having been first appointed in 1946. This was recognition of his personal leadership abilities and of the importance of the region for the expansion of Conservative Judaism in the United States.⁹¹

In 1950, Macey traveled to Israel again, unsuccessfully looking for employment. On his return, he consulted with Benjamin Schwadran, whom he had met on his first trip to Palestine. He decided to leave Charleston in order to pursue a graduate degree in business administration in preparation for possible aliya.⁹² Today, first, second, and third generation descendents of Macey and Adele Kronsberg belong to Synagogue Emanu-El. Macey's commitment to Conservative Judaism continued for more than a quarter of a century after leaving Charleston. In 1975, Macey and Adele retired and moved to Israel. They followed thousands of American Jews who made aliya in the period following the 1967 Six Day War. There, after participation in the founding of a Masorti congregation in East Talpiot, a suburb of Jerusalem, Macey eventually moved religiously to the right and embraced Orthodox Judaism. Additional research is needed to determine how much his personal actions foreshadowed or mirrored developments in the American Jewish community.

The involvement of Macey and Adele Kronsberg and their families in Jewish life in other communities in both America and Israel in the next half century also falls outside the parameters of this essay. However, the experience and skills they acquired through their activism during these years served them well in the leadership roles they assumed in Jewish communal organizations in other areas.

As in other Jewish communities across the United States, the prosperity and growth that came to Charleston in the postwar period enabled the congregations to modernize their physical structures in order to make them more functional and attractive to young and future members. Rabbi Allan Tarshish succeeded Rabbi Jacob Raisin (1878–1945) at Beth Elohim in 1947. Some members of the temple, in protest against Tarshish's earlier affiliation with the American Council for Judaism, joined Emanu-El. The new congregation offered them a viable alternative to Reform affiliation. In 1948, Beth Elohim began to enlarge its structure, partly to retain its members but also to coincide with the 1950 bicentennial celebration of the congregation's founding.⁹³ In 1948, Orthodox Beth Israel dedicated its new building, the first

air-conditioned synagogue in Charleston. Brith Sholom remodeled its quarters and brought women down from the balcony to sit separately on the side of the sanctuary. Together with other changes such as late Friday night services and added English prayers, this Orthodox congregation hoped to keep members from defecting to Emanu-El.⁹⁴

More significantly, in February 1948, Brith Sholom engaged Gilbert Klaperman, a selection handpicked by Yeshiva University, to be its new spiritual leader in a move that went beyond retaining Orthodoxy at Brith Sholom. Macey noted in a letter to Rabbi Albert I. Gordon, that he was satisfied that Yeshiva had specially selected Klaperman "to stop Conservatism not only in Charleston but in the Southeast as well." He continued, "By now I think you will notice I always think in terms of the state or the region when I discuss our movement."⁹⁵ Like Emanu-El's Weintraub, Klaperman was twenty-nine and a veteran of the Canadian army when he arrived in Charleston. He was careful to steer clear of antagonizing the non-Sabbath observers of Brith Sholom, many of whom retained their ties to the congregation for family reasons or out of loyalty to the institution. Klaperman also argued for women's membership, began his own version of late Friday evening services, and with his wife, Libby, hosted a Young People's League in their home to attract newly married couples and young single people. The two Orthodox congregations cooperated once again in a joint Hebrew school that opened in 1948. This time, the school was free to all, enrolling about one hundred children. However, those who founded Emanu-El had also been the financial backbone of Brith Sholom. Jeffrey Gurock noted that Klaperman soon realized that "the future vitality of his synagogue required that all Orthodox-leaning elements in Charleston unite." But it would not be until 1956, six years after Klaperman's departure, that Beth Israel and Brith Sholom would put aside their differences and merge.⁹⁶

Nearly two hundred years after Charleston's colonial-era "port Jews" attempted to reform Judaism in an effort to bring their young people back to the synagogue, a group of men and women established Conservative Synagogue Emanu-El. They, too,

sought to keep young Jews involved in Jewish life by Americanizing traditional Judaism. The changes that occurred more than a half century ago in Charleston's synagogues, including the formation of a new congregation, again attest to the ongoing diversity of American Judaism and its continuing contributions to the pluralistic nature of religious life in this country.

NOTES

¹ [Charleston, SC] *News and Courier*, July 17, 1947; Minutes, July 16, 1947, Emanu-El folder, Macey and Adele Jules Kronsberg Papers (all other folders are from this collection), in the author's possession. Present were Moses and Florence Mendelsohn, Irving and Florence Steinberg, Nathan and Lenora Goldberg, Irving and Yetta Levkoff, Charles and Mary Schiff, Harry and Dorothy Mendelsohn, Leon and Anita Steinberg, Macey and Adele Kronsberg, Milton Banov, Hyman Rephan, Alex Karesh, Isadore Lesser, Louis Shimel, Hyman Meddin, Edward Kronsberg, Manuel Barshay, Leon Bluestein, William Ackerman, M. Dumas, George Bogin, Matthew Steinberg, and visitors Max Poliakoff of Greenville, and Janet Bluestein (Marcus) Goldstein of Wilmington, NC. Macey Kronsberg noted, "These minutes have been reconstructed from notes since no secretary was appointed and an effort has been made to give as faithful a recording of the proceedings as possible under the circumstances."

² Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, 2004), 274–275, 284; Jeffrey S. Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective* (Hoboken, NJ, 1996), 299–312.

³ Jack Wertheimer, "The Conservative Synagogue," in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Cambridge, England, 1987), 117.

⁴ On Conservative Judaism see Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia, 1965); Pamela S. Nadell, *Conservative Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook* (New York, 1988); Herbert Rosenblum, *Conservative Judaism: A Contemporary History* (New York, 1983); Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (Glencoe, IL, [1955]); and Jack Wertheimer, ed., *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary*, 2 vols. (New York, 1997).

⁵ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 285–287.

⁶ Samuel Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism* (Detroit, 1961), 101, quoted in Naomi Cohen, "'Diaspora plus Palestine, Religion plus Nationalism,' The Seminary and Zionism, 1902–1948," Wertheimer, *Tradition Renewed*, II, 115. Cohen notes that "Zionism in the synagogue filled an ideological void in Conservative Judaism," 136. See also, Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy*, 7–33.

⁷ Edward Fleischer, letter to membership [of Chizuk Amuno], January 13, 1947, Emanuel folder; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 241–242. See also Jan Bernhardt Schein, *On Three Pillars: The History of Chizuk Amuno Congregation, 1871–1996* (Baltimore, 2000). The list of twenty-two founding congregations appears in Abraham J. Karp, *A History of the United Synagogue of America, 1913–1963* (New York, 1964). On contemporary Orthodox and Conservative Judaism in America, see also Jeffrey S. Gurock, “The Orthodox Synagogue,” in Wertheimer, *The American Synagogue*, 61–63; Wertheimer, “The Conservative Synagogue,” in Wertheimer, *The American Synagogue*, 115; Jeffrey S. Gurock, *From Fluidity to Rigidity: The Religious Worlds of Conservative and Orthodox Jews in Twentieth Century America* (lecture reprinted as booklet) (Ann Arbor, 1988), 21; Jeffrey S. Gurock, “Resistors and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886–1983,” *American Jewish Archives* 35 (November, 1983): 100–187.

⁸ Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston* (Charleston, SC, 2004), 26, n. 28; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 231–237.

⁹ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 283–284. For the concept of the “port Jew” see David Sorkin, “The Port Jew: Notes Toward a Social Type,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50 (spring 1999): 86–97.

¹⁰ Obituary, “Macey Kronsberg, 89,” *Washington Jewish Week*, February 1, 2001, 46; obituary, “Adele Jules Kronsberg, 92,” *Washington Jewish Week*, January 24, 2002, 38; obituary, “Kronsberg, Adele,” *The [Charleston, SC] Post and Courier*, January 23, 2002, 5B.

¹¹ James Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993); Theodore Rosengarten and Dale Rosengarten, eds., *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life* (Columbia, SC, 2002), 275; Charles Resnikoff, *The Jews of Charleston: A History of an American Jewish Community* (Philadelphia, 1950), 19.

¹² Gary P. Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788–1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual* (Tuscaloosa, 1994), 174; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 58–60.

¹³ [Charleston, SC] *Courier*, March 20, 1841, quoted in Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 236; David Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, rev. ed. (New York, 1931), 334, quoted in Henry L. Feingold, *Zion in America: The Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present*, rev. ed. (New York, 1981), 99.

¹⁴ Rosengarten and Rosengarten, *A Portion of the People*, 99.

¹⁵ Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 1–7, 12–13; Rosengarten and Rosengarten, *A Portion of the People*, 166.

¹⁶ Resnikoff, *Jews of Charleston*, 188–189, 229–230; Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 14–18; Lewis A. Weintraub interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten and Michael Samuel Grossman, January 26, 1997, 9, Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston, SC (hereafter cited as JHC); Rosengarten and Rosengarten, *A Portion of the People*, 158. The records of the Kalushiner Society (1947–1970) are at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati; Henry Yaschik, *From Kaluszyn to Charleston: the Yaschik Family in Poland, Argentina, and South Carolina* (Charleston, SC, 1990).

¹⁷ Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 17–18.

¹⁸ Resnikoff, *Jews of Charleston*, 312–314, notes 58–65.

¹⁹ Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 24–25, 26, and n. 24.

²⁰ Resnikoff, *Jews of Charleston*, 174, 186–189; Rosengarten and Rosengarten, *A Portion of the People*, 179; Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585–1984* (Lanham, MD, 1990), 204.

²¹ Macey Kronsberg, undated talk [1979?], 1, hereafter cited as Kronsberg [1979?]

²² “Charleston’s Industrious Goodwill Builder,” *The Southern Israelite*, July 20, 1956, 35. A picture of Edward Kronsberg appears on the cover. “Edward Kronsberg Is Man Who Saw Dream Come True,” *The News and Courier*, September 16, 1959, 1C; *The News and Courier*, February 12, 1985, 14A; “Hospital Honors Kronsberg,” *The News and Courier-The Evening Post*, July 11, 1982, 1–2, all in Edward Kronsberg folder; Resnikoff, *Jews of Charleston*, n. 62, 314. On the Kronsberg family and Jewish life in Charleston, see also interviews with William Ackerman, Avram Kronsberg, and Frederica Kronsberg, all in JHC. Others in Charleston related to the Kronsbergs include the Bluestein, Horowitz, and Mendelsohn families.

²³ “Goodblatt, Morris Solomon (1901–1978),” in Nadell, *Conservative Judaism in America*, 210–212.

²⁴ Macey died on January 16, 2001; Adele died on January 17, 2002.

²⁵ Rachel Rose was born in 1937, Peggy Rebecca in 1942, and Sandra Judith in 1949.

²⁶ Minutes, Board of Directors, May 24, 1949, Masonic Lodge folder; Chamber of Commerce folder.

²⁷ [Charleston, SC] *Center Talk* September 25, 1946. The SOS was an emergency campaign to assist survivors of the Holocaust sponsored by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in cooperation with sixteen national Jewish organizations. The Daughters of Israel, a local organization of Orthodox Jewish women, was founded by Lena Brickman in 1910. At the suggestion of Solomon D. Goldfarb, rabbi of Brith Sholom, the group became an auxiliary to the congregation in 1945. “Daughters of Israel Sisterhood-Brith Shalom [sic] Congregation, Annual Report-Sunday School, May 22, 1947,” Adele Kronsberg folder; Thomas J. Tobias, chairman, Bicentennial Planning Committee to Adele Jules Kronsberg, February 18, 1948, *ibid.*; Resnikoff, *Jews of Charleston*, 222.

²⁸ “Charleston-Fourteen Years,” n.d., 2, Adele Kronsberg folder; “Report of Delegate to Fifteenth Annual Convention of the Southern Interstate Conference, National Council of Jewish Women, Tampa, Florida – November 9, 1941,” 1, National Council of Jewish Women folder.

²⁹ [NCJW, Charleston, SC] *Council Bulletin*, February 1942; see for example, “President’s Report, Charleston section, National Council of Jewish Women, 1943–1944, May 1, 1944,” “Report of Delegates from Charleston Section to the Seventeenth Triennial Convention of the National Council of Jewish Women, November 7–11, 1943,” “President’s Report, Charleston Section, National Council of Jewish Women, 1944–1945, May 7, 1945,” and “Report to City Federation of Women’s Clubs, Charleston, S.C. of Charleston Section, National Council of Jewish Women, May 16, 1945,” all in National Council of Jewish Women folder.

³⁰ Olin D. Johnston to Adele Kronsberg, May 19, 1943, Adele Kronsberg folder; Moses A. Leavitt to Adele Kronsberg, January 16, 1947.

³¹ Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 26.

³² *Ibid.*, 30.

³³ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁵ Minutes, Brith Sholom, May 6 and August 4, 1943, JHC; Macey Kronsberg, "Remarks on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of Synagogue Emanu-El," December 15, 1972, Synagogue Emanu-El folder.

³⁶ Committee for Rabbi folder. There is no copy of a letter that might have been sent to the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary from which Rabbi Axelman had received ordination.

³⁷ Emanuel Marcus to Max Turteltaub, August 12, 1943, Committee for Rabbi folder.

³⁸ Emanuel Marcus telegram to Macey Kronsberg, September 11, 1943, Committee for Rabbi folder.

³⁹ The congregation may have briefly sustained membership in the USA. Upon submission of a statement of dues from that organization, "the secretary was instructed to notify them that some few years back we had notified them of our discontinuance of paid membership," minutes, Brith Sholom, February 7, 1937, 47. David Starr, "Solomon Schechter and the Conservative Movement in the South," a paper presented at the joint conference of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, Charleston, S.C., October 30, 2004.

⁴⁰ Macey Kronsberg to Moshe Davis, August 5, 1943, Committee for Rabbi folder. Macey's information about the lack of JTS graduates in the South came from Adelbert Freedman, executive director, Southeastern Region of the ZOA. See Zionist Organization of America Records, 1937-1985, Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives and Genealogical Center, William Bremen Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta, GA.

⁴¹ Macey Kronsberg to Moshe Davis, August 5, 1943, Committee for Rabbi folder.

⁴² For more on Goldfarb see Committee for Rabbi folder and Rabbi Goldfarb folder; also Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 35-38; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Kook (Kuk), Abraham Isaac." Macey Kronsberg to Elias Margolis, September 5, 1943, Committee for Rabbi folder.

⁴³ Solomon D. Goldfarb, curriculum vitae, Committee for Rabbi folder; Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 35-38. In later years, in addition to two volumes of his English sermons that were published (a common practice among American rabbis) Goldfarb also published three books of sermons in Hebrew. The Goldfarbs and the Kronsbergs remained lifelong friends even after both families departed Charleston.

⁴⁴ Macey Kronsberg, untitled speech, n.d., Committee for Rabbi folder.

⁴⁵ Macey Kronsberg to Solomon Goldfarb, September 16, 1943, Committee for Rabbi folder. Members of the Steinberg family owned a scrap metal business.

⁴⁶ Macey Kronsberg to Solomon Goldfarb, September 16, 1943, Committee for Rabbi folder.

⁴⁷ Solomon Goldfarb, "Brief Report," April 23, 1944, and "Rabbi's Annual Report," April 28, 1946, Brith Shalom [sic] folder.

⁴⁸ Doreen Bierbrier, "The American Zionist Emergency Council: An Analysis of a Pressure Group," Jeffrey S. Gurock, ed., *American Zionism: Mission and Politics* (New York, 1998), 395-397, 413, 414. AZEC was originally the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs.

⁴⁹ *The [Charleston, SC] Messenger*, April 6, 1944, Brith Shalom-Emanu-El Petition folder.

⁵⁰ Louis Lesser to Brith Shalom, September 20, 1945, reproduced in Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 34.

⁵¹ Minutes, Brith Shalom, November 23, 1944, 277; January 7, 1945, 279; June 2, 1946, 305; April 27, 1947, 323.

⁵² Minutes, Brith Shalom, February 23, 1947, 315; Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 37-38.

⁵³ Solomon Goldfarb to Milton Kronsberg, September 17, 1956, and Solomon Goldfarb to Edward Kronsberg, September 17, 1956, both in Rabbi Goldfarb folder. The letters were written because the brothers had each sent Goldfarb the dedication booklet occasioned by the merger of Brith Shalom and Beth Israel. On the merger, see Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 48-58.

⁵⁴ Solomon Goldfarb to Edward Kronsberg, September 17, 1956, Rabbi Goldfarb folder.

⁵⁵ On these documents see Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 38-44, and 101, n. 44.

⁵⁶ Macey Kronsberg to Solomon Goldfarb, April 17, 1947, Rabbi Goldfarb folder.

⁵⁷ Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 40-41; letter from Sam Berlin to members of Brith Shalom, July 11, 1947, Rabbi Goldfarb folder.

⁵⁸ Minutes, Brith Shalom, July 13, 1947, 327; Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 42.

⁵⁹ Marc H. Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie: The Birmingham Experience* (University, AL, 1974), 163-164.

⁶⁰ Mark K. Bauman, *Harry H. Epstein and the Rabbinate as Conduit for Change* (Rutherford, NJ, 1994), 53-57.

⁶¹ Minutes, July 16, 1947, Emanu-El folder. The attendees at the July 16th meeting are listed in n. 1. Ages of both groups were compiled by checking the names against the Social Security Death Index. The list of officers and trustees of Brith Shalom appeared in *Installation of Rabbi Gilbert Klaperman Program, Brith Shalom Congregation, February 15, 1948*, Brith Shalom folder.

⁶² Minutes, July 16, 1947, Emanu-El folder.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, August 19, 1947, and August 20, 1947.

⁶⁶ Bernard Segal to Macey Kronsberg, July 22, 1947, Emanu-El Minutes folder.

⁶⁷ Macey Kronsberg to Bernard Segal, July 24, 1947, Brith Shalom-Emanu-El Petition folder.

⁶⁸ Macey Kronsberg to Bernard Segal, July 14, 1947, Emanu-El Minutes folder; Macey Kronsberg to Samuel Rothstein, June 22, 1946, (for Macey's invitation to become a national board member of USA), United Synagogue, S.E. Regional Convention folder.

⁶⁹ Macey Kronsberg to Albert I. Gordon, July 27, 1947, Brith Shalom-Emanu-El Petition folder.

⁷⁰ Minutes, August 24, 1947, Emanu-El Minutes folder; *Emanu-Light*, September 15, 1947, Synagogue Emanu-El folder.

⁷¹ Lewis A. Weintraub interview; "Brief History of Synagogue Emanu-El," and "Rabbi Lewis A. Weintraub," Synagogue Emanu-El folder.

⁷² Macey Kronsberg to Rabbi and Mrs. Goldfarb, September 17, 1947, Rabbi Goldfarb folder. In 1951, Weintraub married Charlestonian Fanny Goldberg. After serving as Emanu-El's rabbi for seven years, he moved with his family to Silver Spring, Maryland to be rabbi of Temple Israel, a pulpit he served until his retirement. The need for a more intense Jewish education for their children prompted the move. Lewis A. Weintraub interview. As with the Goldfarbs, Macey and Adele Kronsberg maintained a lifelong friendship with this rabbinic couple.

⁷³ Adele Kronsberg to Rabbi and Mrs. Goldfarb, November 6, 1947, Rabbi Goldfarb folder. Adele and Macey mention the following members of the new Synagogue Emanu-El who either purchased or were looking to purchase homes in 1947: Meyer Horowitz, Melvin Lesser, Bill Ackerman, Lou Tannenbaum, Gus Pearlman, and Milton Kronsberg.

⁷⁴ Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism*, 27–28, 73.

⁷⁵ Macey Kronsberg to Major General Luther D. Miller, July 21, 1947, and September 1, 1947; Macey Kronsberg to Olin D. Johnston, August 25, 1947; Macey Kronsberg to Ralph H. Jacobson, December 25, 1947; Macey Kronsberg to Solomon and Tuppy Goldfarb, August 10, 1947, Synagogue Emanu-El Correspondence folder. The veterans who signed the letter to Major General Luther D. Miller on July 21st were Macey Kronsberg, William Ackerman, Irving Levkoff, I. D. Karesh, Melvin Jacobs, David Feinstein, Manuel Natelson, David Goldberg, Melvin Lesser, Louis Toporek, Joe Dumas, H. Fechter, Jack Kirshtein, Leon Bluestein, and Charles Schiff.

⁷⁶ Macey Kronsberg to Ralph H. Jacobson, December 25, 1947, Synagogue Emanu-El Correspondence folder; "A Brief History of Synagogue Emanu-El," Synagogue Emanu-El folder.

⁷⁷ Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 42; Resnikoff, *Jews of Charleston*, 218.

⁷⁸ "Synagogue Emanu-El Joins The United Synagogue of America," *Emanu-Light*, September 15, 1947, Synagogue Emanu-El folder.

⁷⁹ "Constitution and By-Laws of Brith Sholom Congregation of Charleston, S.C." (1945), Brith Sholom folder; "Constitution and By-Laws of Synagogue Emanu-El," "Notes from the Fifth Gathering of Steering Committee for a Conservative Synagogue," August 19, 1947, both Synagogue Emanu-El folder.

⁸⁰ "Constitution and By-Laws of Synagogue Emanu-El, Synagogue Emanu-El folder.

⁸¹ Resnikoff, *Jews of Charleston*, 320–321, n. 94.

⁸² "Annual Report of Macey Kronsberg, President, Synagogue Emanu-El First Annual Meeting, May 6, 1948" (hereafter cited as Annual Report of Macey Kronsberg); Minutes, Officers and Board of Trustees, Emanu-El, January 4 and February 1, 1948; *Emanu-Light*, September 15, 1947, all Synagogue Emanu-El folder; "Remarks on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of Synagogue Emanu-El," Synagogue Emanu-El 25th Anniversary folder.

⁸³ "Annual Report of Macey Kronsberg"

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Photocopy of Certificate, "Honorable Discharge from the United States Navy," and "Notice of Separation from U.S. Naval Service," both in JWV folder; Photograph of "Seaman Macey Kronsberg" appears with a list of "Jewish Soldiers in the Armed Services," in *American Jewish Times*, Yom Kippur, October 1944, 13 and Macey Kronsberg to Adele Kronsberg, January 11, 1946, both in Navy folder.

⁸⁸ Kronsberg [1979], 2–3.

⁸⁹ Macey Kronsberg to Adele Kronsberg, July 31, 1946, Palestine trip folder; untitled speech, October 8, 1946, Palestine trip folder; Macey Kronsberg to Harry L. Shapiro, executive director, AZEC, May 22, 1947, AZEC folder.

⁹⁰ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 279, 284.

⁹¹ "Annual Report of Macey Kronsberg, President, Southeast Region, The United Synagogue of America, Presented at Second Annual Convention-Miami Beach, FLA—May 15, [1949]," United Synagogue S.E. Regional Convention folder.

⁹² Kronsberg [1979?]. Macey and Adele lived in Florida from 1950 to 1953, where Macey earned his M.B.A. They lived in New York from 1954 to 1975. In 1975, they moved to Israel. They returned to the U.S. in 1986 to live in Rockville, Maryland, near all three daughters. On aliya to Israel and the dynamic growth of Orthodoxy see Chaim I. Waxman, *American Aliya: Portrait of an Innovative Migration Movement* (Detroit, 1989).

⁹³ Resnikoff, *Jews of Charleston*, 214, 219.

⁹⁴ Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 48–58.

⁹⁵ Macey Kronsberg to Albert I. Gordon, October 31, 1948, United Synagogue S.E. Region folder; Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 44.

⁹⁶ Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, 43, 48, 51; Resnikoff, *Jews of Charleston*, 222. For the most up-to-date information on Jewish congregational life in Charleston, see Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston*.

NECROLOGY

Samuel Proctor (1919-2005)

by

Chris Monaco

Dr. Samuel Proctor, a founding member and former president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, passed away in July after a long illness. Sam—as many lovingly called him—was a passionate advocate of southern Jewish history and his numerous contributions to the field have enriched and inspired us all.

Born in Jacksonville, Florida, Sam Proctor was the eldest son of parents with humble eastern European Jewish origins. During his teenage years Sam worked full time while attending night school in order to receive his high school diploma. He arrived as an undergraduate at the University of Florida in 1937, one of only 3,200 students. The move to Gainesville suited him well for he eventually earned three degrees, including a Ph.D. in 1958, and served on the faculty for fifty years. UF's outstanding Oral History Program, Judaica Library, and Center for Jewish Studies all owe their existence to Proctor's initiatives. He was the author or editor of six books, served as general editor of a groundbreaking twenty-five volume series for the Florida Bicentennial Commission, and became a pioneer in the oral history field, personally conducting over 3,300 interviews. During his thirty-one year tenure as editor of the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Sam greatly enhanced the journal's scholarly reputation. He served as history curator at the Florida Museum of Natural History and was the official historian of the University of Florida. Among his many accomplishments he considered teaching paramount. Numbering

in the thousands, many of Sam's former students, like Florida's U.S. Senator Bob Graham, kept in close touch through the years.

Beginning in 1949 Proctor began a long association with the American Jewish Historical Society and became a member of its academic advisory board. He concluded, however, that the organization "has been focused over the years, and continues to be focused, on the area from the New England states through New York and Baltimore," so he joined others in forming a regional society that dealt with the unique contributions of the southern Jewish experience. In 1976 the Southern Jewish Historical Society, dormant since the 1950s, was revived and Sam became closely involved with its formal reestablishment. According to longtime SJHS member and fellow founder Bernard Wax, Sam was "generous with his time, knowledge and expertise, and endowed with a marvelous sense of humor, he helped us 'incubate' and develop. He was involved in so many facets offering guidance and advice that all the early progress of the SJHS was intimately involved with, if not attributed, to him."

Proctor co-edited with Louis Schmier and with the assistance of Malcolm Stern, *Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Jewish Historical Society* (Macon, GA, 1984) an invaluable scholarly resource. In 1987 and 1988 Sam served as SJHS president. On a personal level Sam always looked forward to attending the annual society conferences with wife Bessie. "The papers that are given are usually very excellent papers by reputable scholars," he proudly asserted a few years ago. Equally important to him, however, was the feeling of camaraderie and fellowship.

Clearly Sam Proctor succeeded on many levels: humanist and scholar, esteemed teacher, friend, and colleague. His legacy is one that balanced the rigors of intellectual life with a selfless and considerate heart. Dr. Mark I. Greenberg, Sam's last graduate student, has called his late mentor, "the most gentle, caring, sweet, and giving person I have known." Good friend Bernie Wax characterized Sam as "a true *mensch* in every sense of that word." He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Book Reviews

Stein Mart: An American Story of Roots, Family, and Building a Greater Dream. By David J. Ginzl. Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2004. 162 pages.

Stein Mart, the Greenville, Mississippi, clothing store that grew into a multimillion dollar designer-discount chain, adapted its name from another southern upstart—Wal-Mart. In the jargon of the times, “mart” meant “markdowns,” and the Stein family business was not only *au courant*, but in the forefront of retailing trends. From Sam Stein, the Delta peddler, to grandson Jay Stein, the CEO, the Stein Mart story exemplifies the challenges faced by a family-run enterprise expanding to keep pace with America’s business and consumer culture.

Historian David J. Ginzl’s centennial history of Stein Mart is both a business primer and biography. It illuminates the transition from a mom-and-pop shop where the family members dip into the register for petty cash into a publicly traded company accountable to Wall Street. Billed as “an American story of roots, family, and building a greater dream,” this five-chapter book places the development of Stein Mart within larger business trends, such as the rise of discount stores and the decline of department stores. It also dissects entrepreneurial styles, from the Horatio Alger personalities of one generation to the professional business schooling of the next.

Ginzl, a teacher and banking consultant, seeks to write an objective narrative, rich with regional context and multiple family viewpoints. He sees the store’s evolution as a success story infused with the values of extended family. While the volume is well written and balanced, this is a commissioned institutional history with minimal interpretation. To his credit, Ginzl does not shy away from chronicling negative Wall Street analyses, sibling

rivalries, and father-son tensions. Faced with inevitable family conflicts, Ginzl strikes a dispassionate stance, exploring participants' viewpoints and biases. He augments his analysis with references to memoirs of other southerners, among them Eli N. Evans, who wrote the book's foreword, and David L. Cohn, one of Greenville's native sons.

Ginzl approaches his subject chronologically, emphasizing key personalities, such as grandfather Sam Stein; his children Jake, Joe, Sadie, and Bernard; and Jake's only child, Jay. Through oral histories and financial records, he examines the backgrounds and track records of key managers recruited since the 1980s. He profiles the original Boutique Ladies—socialite saleswomen who helped transform Stein Mart into a magnet for upscale shoppers. The author presents each personality profile against the backdrop of the ups and downs of the economy, both regionally and nationally. He also meshes the chronology of the store with historical events such as the World Wars, New Deal agricultural programs, the Civil Rights movement, and the mergers-and-acquisitions climate of the 1980s.

The Stein Mart story begins with Russian soldier Sam Stein (1882–1933) who flees to the United States in 1904. Initially, he works as a courier for a New York cousin in the coat industry but later relocates to Memphis where he peddles costume jewelry. During business trips down the Mississippi River, he is drawn to Greenville, where Hebrew Union Congregation is constructing a new temple. Sam Stein finds his niche there, opening a shop with merchandise prices lower than that of other Jewish storekeepers. This sets the pattern for the next two generations.

On the eve of Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidential inauguration, Sam Stein unexpectedly dies. His oldest sons, then twenty-two and twenty-one years old, take over. Although inexperienced at business, the brothers were high school football heroes. The town rallies behind them. After sitting *shiva* for seven days, Jake places a full-page ad in the *Delta-Democrat Times* announcing an "administrator's sale" (27). The ad signals an aggressive change in style. Sam Stein was a low-key entrepreneur. Jake Stein (1911–1989) is the opposite, reveling in promotions, come-ons, and

events that draw crowds. Jake is also an intuitive, hands-on merchant who keeps inventory in his head and a markdown pen in his hand.

World War II alters the family dynamics. Jake, discharged as a second lieutenant from the U.S. Army, can no longer boss around his kid brother, Bernie, who achieved the rank of captain. The siblings divide their business into two commercial entities – Sam Stein’s and Stein’s Outlet Store (forerunner of Stein Mart). Both shops operate within a family partnership and split net profits. Jake continues as the discounter who shops for closeouts, overruns, and irregulars. He builds a rapport with retailing representatives in New York. In Greenville, he expands into ever-larger storefronts.

At the height of Jake Stein’s expansion in the summer of 1965, civil rights marchers target his business – unfairly, Ginzl argues. According to the *Delta-Democrat Times*, Stein Mart was “a leader not a laggard” in hiring African Americans and selling to a mixed clientele (60). Jake Stein had also played a “critical” role during a “heated meeting” at Hebrew Union Congregation over whether or not the city’s Jews would endorse the White Citizens’ Council (50). They did not. The Civil Rights Movement contributes to the exodus of young Jews from the Delta. During the initial years of public school integration, many children head out of state for schooling, including Jay Stein, who goes to Jacksonville, Florida, from 1961 to 1963, where he attends a private high school. After that, he enrolls in New York University’s business school and completes internships at Saks Fifth Avenue and Fruit of the Loom. Jay is the only one of Sam Stein’s ten grandchildren who cares to return to the Greenville family business. He is so eager to work alongside his father that he leaves school before completing his degree.

From 1967 to 1984, Jake and Jay endure an uneasy partnership as they wage a father-son tug-of-war. Jay argues for inventory controls and annual audits. He urges his father to dissolve the inequitable partnership with his brothers. He pushes for upscale, brand name merchandise, “to sell steak at hamburger prices” (69). Father and son squabble on the sales floor. Despite

these disputes, Ginzl stresses that Jay seeks “affirmation from a father he respected” (71). The father is both adversary and mentor. Together, Jake and Jay attend trade shows. From his dad, Jay learns negotiating strategies. He bonds with his father’s longtime friends in the manufacturing sector. He learns about promotion and the art of orchestrating a shopping event. When, in 1977, Jay convinces his father to give him leeway to open a second Stein Mart in Memphis, Jake thinks his son is doomed to failure. The rest is contemporary consumer history – 150 Stein Mart stores by 1995 and 260 by 2004. Even so, Jake winces one season as he signs a \$1 million line of credit for fall merchandise.

From peddling in 1904 to initial public offerings in 1992, the *Stein Mart* story adds to the narrative being told by a growing number of scholarly works on southern Jewish business, including Bernard Rapoport and Don Carleton’s *Being Rapoport: Capitalist with a Conscience* (2002) and Harold M. Hyman’s *Oleander Odyssey: The Kempners of Galveston, Texas, 1854–1980s* (1990). The Stein Mart book provides an excellent model for future work in this area by grounding its story in business history without downplaying its subjects’ Jewish connections in Russia, in Greenville, and in retailing. The Stein Mart centennial journey also includes an insightful bibliographical essay, forty-one photos, and reproductions of thirteen Stein Mart ads and promotions. These contribute to the value of this history, which has roots in the South and branches throughout the country.

Hollace Ava Weiner

Fort Worth, Texas

Orthodoxy in Charleston: Brith Sholom Beth Israel and American Jewish History. By Jeffrey S. Gurock. Charleston, South Carolina: College of Charleston Library in association with Brith Sholom Beth Israel, 2004. 119 pages.

In *Orthodoxy in Charleston*, noted historian of American Jewry Jeffrey Gurock turns his attention to Brith Sholom Beth Israel Congregation (BSBI) of Charleston, South Carolina. The result is a study that illuminates how one Orthodox congregation has surmounted the ongoing challenges to Orthodoxy that the American environment has presented through the decades.

Gurock's intent is to explore how national trends in American Judaism have played out at the local level. He describes seven phases in the congregation's history and analyzes how these phases "fit into the larger saga of American Jewish life between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries" (xiv). Confining his source material largely to the records of the congregation supplemented by memoirs of some key leaders, Gurock keeps the study narrowly focused on institutional history, rarely straying beyond the goings-on within the congregation to consider broader topics regarding the Orthodox Jewish community. Yet this slim volume makes two notable contributions. First, it adds to our knowledge of Orthodoxy in the South, a topic that has been under examined until fairly recently. Second, Gurock's analysis of how BSBI has exemplified national trends in American Judaism offers a welcome antidote to the tendency toward southern exceptionalism that often guides discussions of southern Jewry, as it does southern history in general. The study reminds us that the day-to-day issues that Orthodox Jewish congregations have dealt with in the South have been the same as elsewhere: factions based on old country origin or degree of Americanization, the need to negotiate change, difficulties in finding suitable religious leadership, and the impact of suburbanization and mobility.

By examining the history of BSBI, Gurock provides us with an institutional chronicle of Charleston's "other" Jews: the ones who did not attend its famed Reform congregation, Beth Elohim. We learn first about the original Orthodox Brith Sholom congregation, founded in the 1850s by Jews from Lithuania and (Gurock surmises) Prussian Poland. A national Jewish publication's 1860 reference to Charleston's "Polish congregation," Gurock points out, offers evidence of the diversity of nineteenth-century American Jewry and confounds the facile periodization of American

Jewish history into a mid-nineteenth century “German” era and an “East European” era typically seen as starting in the 1880s. We also learn about other congregations whose histories intertwined with that of Brith Sholom: Beth Israel, a congregation of later-arriving eastern Europeans that eventually merged with Brith Sholom after many decades; Emanu-El, a Conservative congregation that split off from Brith Sholom in the 1940s; and Minyan House, a suburban branch formed in the 1960s. Clearly, there was more going on in Charleston than Reform innovation.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of Gurock’s story is his description of the ongoing battle between Yeshiva University and the Jewish Theological Seminary for the hearts and minds of traditional-oriented Jews. From the 1920s to 1940s, the two seminaries vied to place rabbis in traditional congregations across the nation. For those of us accustomed to reading about Hebrew Union College’s influence on congregations in the American hinterlands, Gurock’s discussion of this battle—and how it was fought in Charleston—adds a new dimension to the relationship between southern congregations and the national infrastructure of American Judaism.

However, the study’s main strength is also its main flaw. While keeping his eye on the national context, Gurock provides virtually no local context. Brith Sholom, with its strong personalities and its infighting over such issues as Sabbath observance and mixed seating, could be anywhere in America; there is nothing that roots the story to a particular place. This is the natural result of Gurock’s choice of source material; he would have had to reach beyond congregational records to find out what influence, if any, Charleston had on BSBI and its members. Gurock does not really give us a profile of Charleston Jewry, or even of the Orthodox Jewish community, aside from a general explanation of the waves of immigrants who settled there. We learn about some of BSBI’s leaders, but we get only the briefest sketches of the Orthodox rank and file. It would have been particularly interesting to learn something about the congregation’s second and third generation Jews. Why and how, within the Charleston environment, did they make the decision to keep BSBI in the Orthodox fold?

Without rooting the study in a particular place, Gurock's description of the congregation's struggle to uphold Orthodoxy falls a bit flat, simply becoming a story of one faction winning out over another. In order to be impressed by BSBI's ability to maintain traditional Judaism, we need to know something about local conditions and the challenges congregation members may have faced. We need to know what, if anything, made Charleston's Jews different from their counterparts in small cities across the country in order to comprehend the significance of their embodiment of national trends. Perhaps place had no bearing on the congregation, but since the subject is not pursued, we are left to wonder. Jews in many small cities were unable to hold onto an Orthodox shul at all, and given that Charleston had not only an early Reform congregation but *the* early Reform congregation, it seems an oversight not to consider what bearing the city and its storied Jewish community had on the Orthodox Jews of BSBI.

Although a broader local view would have enhanced this book, Gurock does fulfill his stated aim, made explicit in the book's subtitle, to explore the links between BSBI and the national scene. In pursuing this goal, he offers a saga of American Orthodoxy as evidenced by one congregation's march through time. His study reminds us of the diversity of southern Jewry, past and present (a day school in Charleston founded in the 1950s—who knew?) and deepens our understanding of the connections that have existed between the local and national scene.

Deborah R. Weiner

Jewish Museum of Maryland

White Girl: A Story of School Desegregation. By Clara Silverstein. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2004. 149 pages.

Clara Silverstein's wistful and evocative memoir of her schooldays recounts the experience of school integration as a racial, religious, and regional outsider in Richmond in the early

1970s. Clara was a transplanted northerner in a southern city, a white student in a racially tense and overwhelmingly black public school, and a lone Jewish girl among Christian classmates. Drawing on her childhood diaries, Silverstein chronicles the day-to-day difficulties of being a subject in what was an ambitious experiment in social transformation. Her memoir reveals the pain and confusion of a time when her mother's idealism conflicted with her own desire for the "familiar script of playing school sports or watching games, achieving a class rank, and attending school with the same group from kindergarten through high school" (145-146).

The awkwardness and discomfort of Clara's teenage years were compounded by concurrent personal and social crises. Her stable family life in Chicago ended in 1968 with the sudden death of her father. Reeling from this tragedy, Clara's mother, Ann Silverstein, returned to her hometown of Richmond, uprooting her two young daughters from an integrated neighborhood in Chicago to a city still grappling with court mandated desegregation. Clara's school years in Richmond coincided with early efforts to fully integrate the city's public schools. Although by the late 1960s legal barriers to desegregation had disappeared, the freedom of choice plan adopted by the Richmond School Board in effect preserved the racial status quo in the classroom. In response to a lawsuit filed by the NAACP, in 1970 the U.S. District Court charged the city with implementing measures to end the de facto segregation of the public school system. The School Board complied half-heartedly, reassigning teachers and introducing busing to ensure that each school reflected the racial balance of 30 percent white and 70 percent black, but canceling after-school activities that would entail interracial social mixing.

The enrollment of white children in Richmond's public school system dropped precipitously in 1971 and continued to decline throughout the decade. While many white parents moved to the suburbs or opted to send their children to private schools, Ann Silverstein chose to keep both of her daughters in the troubled public system. Clara was among a small group of white students assigned and bused to predominantly black schools with

the intention of redressing the racial imbalance. The memoir describes in painful detail her fraught teenage years, made even more difficult by the racial tensions in her middle and high school—the resentment of many of her black peers, exclusion because of her skin color, petty humiliations, and the “glares, elbows in my side, and occasional outstretched foot trying to trip me” in the corridors (55). Silverstein faults the school administrators and her teachers for avoiding topics that involved racial controversy and failing to address the psychological barriers that perpetuated social segregation in the school room. She also grapples with the role and responsibility of her mother, who had idealistic (and financial) motives for keeping her unhappy daughter in public school but was “oblivious to its emotional consequences” (145).

Although her prose is occasionally cloying and her use of imagined dialogue sometimes stilted, Silverstein has written an engaging account of her unhappy childhood. Moreover, her intensely personal reflections on this troubled time serve as an important addition to the existing literature. While the civil rights era, particularly the period of massive resistance, has been the subject of considerable popular and scholarly focus, the later period of adjustment and adaptation to desegregation has received much less attention. Articles on the response of Richmond’s Jewish community to civil rights questions—for example, the work of Murray Friedman, and Adele and David Bernstein—have generally followed this pattern. Silverstein reminds us of the difficulties and disruption of dramatic social transformation on the individual level. None would dispute the social and moral advances brought by the civil rights movement, but as this poignant memoir reveals, “being in the vanguard of social change can be a lonely, not a heroic, place for a child” (145).

Adam Mendelsohn
Brandeis University

Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History. By Lee Shai Weissbach. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. 448 pages.

Like a peddler exploring new territories, Lee Shai Weissbach has been trekking the Jewish byways of small-town America. In a series of articles he has purveyed new ways of looking at American Jewry. With the publication of *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History*, Weissbach, a professor of history at the University of Louisville, has collected his merchandise and opened a store.

In his research on small-town Jews, Weissbach has contributed significantly to our understanding of American Jewish community development. He has been innovative in his uses of census data, and his quantitative approach has provided a balance, and often a corrective, to the folkloric approach often taken to small-town studies. His insights into mobility and population turnover have raised questions about the character of Jewish communities. Importantly, he has demonstrated the role of eastern European immigrants in sustaining small-town Jewish life, contesting the stereotype that it was German and Reform. Those of us who have benefited from his research have awaited this book with anticipation.

As with virtually every study of small-town Jewry, Weissbach begins with a justification. Statistically, he concedes, Jews are an urban people. In 1878, 71 percent of American Jews lived in cities with more than one thousand Jews, a figure that rose to 92 percent a half century later. But a large number of communities counted less than one thousand, and they have been less studied. Small towns provide insight into what is often regarded as the "authentic America," those mythic rural communities that are the nation's "heart and soul" (5-6).

What exactly is small-town Jewry? For the Union of American Hebrew Congregations the criterion was one temple and fewer than 150 families. Howard Epstein, in his anthology *Jews in Small Towns: Legends and Legacies*, looked at places with general populations under 25,000. Weissbach takes a far more nuanced approach: "Specifically, this study focuses on the communities of

those 490 urban places in the United States with reported Jewish populations of at least 100 but fewer than 1,000 individuals in 1927" (28).

Why these criteria? First, Weissbach contends that a minimum of one hundred Jews are needed to sustain communal life. Of 151 towns with fifty to one hundred Jews in 1927, about one half had congregations. By contrast, of the 490 towns with one hundred to one thousand Jews, nearly 90 percent had at least one congregation. The 1919 *American Jewish Year Book* used one thousand as a dividing line between small and primary communities.

Why 1927? In that year the Bureau of Jewish Statistics undertook a city-by-city Jewish census. More importantly for Weissbach, it represents the pinnacle of what he labels the "'classic' era of small-town Jewish life" (7). Small-town America itself was most salient from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. These were also critical years for American Jewry. Mass migration had ended, and Jews were developing communities. The small town's influence persisted until soon after World War II.

Jewish settlement follows economic opportunity. Communities form along transportation networks. By 1910, 480 of the 490 communities were on rail lines. Although communities might begin with single men, often peddlers, they typically consist of families who arrive in a chain migration as pioneers draw relatives and *landsleit*. The size of a Jewish community correlates strongly with the size of its general population, and its vitality follows the trajectory of the local economy. Jewish communities in oil and mining towns rose and fell with boom and bust. The small-town story is not one of "stability and continuity but rather one of fluidity and change" (71).

In arguing that small-town Jewry has a distinct character that generalizes across the country, Weissbach challenges many assumptions that underlie claims of distinctly regional Jewish identities. Such claims are especially true of the South and the West. Weissbach cites Mark Bauman in arguing that "regional variations in the American Jewish experience can easily be exaggerated." He is not dogmatic on this point. Weissbach sees "a

certain amount of truth" behind the generalization that "small-town Jewish life was the norm" in the South and the West (69). In 1927, for example, North Carolina had thirteen communities with more than one hundred Jews but none over one thousand; on the other hand, Georgia and Louisiana more closely resemble the national Jewish settlement pattern of metropolitan areas and outlying small towns. In the South, too, Jews were distinguished by their closer contact with African Americans, who were often their customers.

Weissbach shows that many characteristics often regarded as typically southern are typically small town. Small-town Jews found opportunity to be self-employed and independent. Jewish retailers, wholesalers, livestock dealers, and skilled artisans in small towns were middle class, in contrast to their working-class peers in the city. More so than urban Jews, they united across ethnic and religious lines. In a small town Jews could not be anonymous, and they were ambassadors to gentiles. They participated in civic societies and won political office, but they were discomfited by a latent antisemitism that excluded them from country clubs. They preferred their own social circles.

The "vast majority" of interwar, small-town Jewish communities arose with the eastern European Jewish migration (244). Prior to their arrival, only 11 percent of the triple-digit Jewish communities of 1927 had one hundred or more Jews. Even in those communities, German Jews had often moved on. The eastern Europeans came largely for the same reasons as the German Jews before them, and they entered similar retail trades. Their pervasive influence can be seen in the ethnic cohesion, the *Yiddishkeit*, that marked small-town Jewish life. The Germans looked warily at the eastern Europeans, who in turn spurned the German's assimilationism. Zionism, he notes, differentiated the two communities. By the 1920s, with acculturation and the rise of the native born, eastern European Jews, too, integrated into their host societies.

Typically, but not always, the first act of religious organization was the creation of a cemetery or benevolent society, followed by a congregation. By 1878, 83 percent of the triple-digit Jewish

communities had congregations. By the twentieth century, nearly all had turned toward Reform, an evolution marked by conflicts between liberals and traditionalists. Weissbach notes, as have other observers, that small-town congregations were willing to compromise and accommodate. Thus, a single congregation was typical of small towns. The pattern of religious liberalizing that Weissbach describes—laxity toward *kashrut* or the *mikvah*, for example—follows American Jewish trends, although the process may have worked more slowly in small towns. He also regards small town Jewish communities as distinctive in the difficulty they had in hiring rabbis.

What is the fate of small-town Jewry? By the early 1980s, Weissbach notes, 10 percent of his 490 communities had grown into significant towns with Jewish populations over one thousand. Jewish growth today is into the Sunbelt South, Southwest, and West. Rural towns have seen their college-aged youth migrate to metropolitan areas, a trend that accelerated as the past century ended. By 1991, 62 percent of the 490 triple-digit communities of 1927 had disappeared from the *American Jewish Year Book* listings (some because they had merged with other communities or into metropolitan areas). New communities, led by mobile professionals, were forming in expanding post-industrial towns, retirement centers, and college towns. “The fate of America’s smaller Jewish communities,” Weissbach concludes, “has mirrored the fate of small-town America” (311).

The book concludes with summarizing chapters on “Reading the Manuscript Census” and a “Bibliographic Essay” as well as appendices with invaluable statistical charts. Weissbach has done inestimable service in building quantitative foundations for many assumptions about small-town Jews, and his comparative approach is sorely needed in a field where the singular community study is more the norm. He has also demonstrated that suburban communities were unique and should not be subsumed into metropolitan areas.

Formidable and exhaustive, the book nonetheless invites debate. Is the choice of the 490 triple-digit communities of 1927 sufficiently encompassing of the small-town Jewish experience?

Do not places with fewer Jews have something to tell us? And what of regional differences? Cannot it still be argued that southern Jews encountered a distinctive racial and religious environment? And where data is lacking, as in the case of intermarriage, are anecdotes, often cited to the point of surfeit, sufficient? It is a tribute to Weissbach that he impresses not just for what he has accomplished but also for the further reflection that he inspires. *Jewish Life in Small Town America* will be a touchstone for all subsequent studies in the field.

Leonard Rogoff

Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina

Glossary

Aliya ~ literally, going up; moving from the Diaspora to Israel

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

Bar mitzvah ~ traditional coming-of-age ritual for Jewish males usually reaching age thirteen

Bikhor kholim (also **bikur holim**) ~ visitation and relief of the sick and indigent

Brit milah ~ ritual circumcision performed on males eight days old; based on biblical mark of covenant

Eretz Yisroel ~ Land of Israel, the Holy Land, historical Palestine

Gan Aden ~ Garden of Eden

Hazan ~ cantor, leads chants and prayers during religious services

High Holidays ~ Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; the two most important holidays on the Jewish calendar

Kabbalat Shabbat ~ literally: reception of the Sabbath; the beginning of the Sabbath in general and specifically the preliminary Friday evening service which welcomes the Sabbath

Kashrut ~ kosher laws; Jewish laws governing food

Lashon kodesh (also **lashon-ha kodesh**) ~ the Holy Language, Hebrew

Landsleit ~ people from the same hometown in Europe

Masorti ~ Hebrew term used for Conservative Judaism especially in Israel

Matzo ~ unleavened bread eaten primarily during Passover

Mensch ~ upright, honorable, decent human being

Métier ~ craft or trade

Mikvah ~ ritual bath

Minyan ~ quorum of ten men (now sometimes women) required by tradition to conduct religious services

Mohel ~ person who performs ritual circumcision

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

Shabbat (also **shabbes**) ~ Jewish Sabbath; Friday night to Saturday night at the appearance of the first stars

Shiva ~ traditional seven days of mourning after a death

Shokhet ~ ritual/kosher butcher

Shtetl ~ small town or village in eastern Europe associated with Jewish residence

Shul ~ synagogue

Torah ~ **Five** Books of Moses; first five books of the Bible

Tzedekah ~ righteous giving; charity

Yeshivot (also **yeshivas**) ~ plural of **yeshiva**, schools for Jewish learning, rabbinical seminaries

Yiddishkeit ~ Yiddish culture

Note on Authors

Wendy Lowe Besmann is the author of *A Separate Circle: Jewish Life in Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville, TN, 2000). Her articles have appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*, *Esquire*, *SELF*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Working Woman*, *The New York Times*, and *USA Today*, among other national publications. She contributed a chapter on Jewish history to the recent anthology *Knoxville Bound* (Knoxville, TN, 2005) and serves as Archivist of the Archives of the Jewish Community of Knoxville and East Tennessee. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences at San Francisco State University and was awarded the Milton D. Green Award at Hastings College of Law.

Hasia Diner is the Paul and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at New York University and Director of the Goldstein-Goren Center for American Jewish History. She is the author of numerous books on various aspects of American Jewish history, American women's history, and American immigration history. Most recently she published *The Jews of the United States: 1654-2000* (Berkeley, CA, 2005).

Patrick Q. Mason is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana. He received his Ph.D. in history from Notre Dame (2005), M.A. degrees in history and international peace studies from Notre Dame (both in 2003), and a B.A. in history from Brigham Young University (1999). His research interests and specialties include American religious history, African American history, and ethnic and religious violence. His dissertation, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Mob: Violence against Religious Outsiders in the U.S. South, 1865-1910," analyzes and compares the experiences of Jews, Mormons, and black Christians in the South. He recently won an award for his article, "The Possibilities of Mormon Peacebuilding," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37 (Spring 2004): 12-45.

Adam Mendelsohn is a doctoral candidate in American Jewish history at Brandeis University. His current research focuses on the contacts between the Jewish communities of America, England and the British Caribbean in the mid-nineteenth century. He has published an article in *Southern Jewish History* (v. 6, 2003) and has a forthcoming article on Jewish historical writing about the Civil War in *American Jewish History*.

Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein is the Area Specialist in the Hebraic Section of the Library of Congress. She received a B.A. from Queens College of the City University of New York, an M.S. from Southern Connecticut State College, an M.A. from Baltimore Hebrew University, and a Ph.D. from George Washington University. Her doctoral dissertation focused on the Jewish Chautauqua Society. Recent publications include "Suggested Readings in American Jewish History," in *From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America* (Washington, DC, 2004) and "Dr. Sallyann Sack: Roots," *Lifestyles Magazine* (Winter 2004). Current research interests include further exploration of Zionism and Conservative Judaism in the Southeast region of the United States. She is the daughter of Macey and Adele Kronsberg.

Leonard Rogoff is research historian for the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina. He is the author of *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa, 2002) and editor of *The Rambler*, the newsletter of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. He is currently engaged in research and design of the forthcoming multimedia project, "Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina."

Deborah R. Weiner serves as Research Historian and Family History Coordinator at the Jewish Museum of Maryland in Baltimore. Her forthcoming book, *Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History*, will be published by the University of Illinois Press in 2006. The book explores nine small Jewish communities in the coal mining regions of Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia. Her work has also been published in scholarly journals and general audience publications such as *American Jewish Archives Journal*, *Southern Jewish History*, *Journal of Appalachian Studies*,

Encyclopedia of Appalachia, *West Virginia Encyclopedia*, and the essay collection *Transnational West Virginia: Ethnic Communities and Economic Change, 1840-1940*. She earned her Ph.D. in history from West Virginia University in 2002.

Hollace Ava Weiner, an independent scholar, is co-editing a forthcoming anthology on the Jews of Texas that will be part of the Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture, and Life. Weiner, who last year received a master's degree in history from the University of Texas at Arlington, is archivist of Fort Worth's Beth-El Congregation and wrote the temple's centennial history. She lives one mile from a Stein Mart store.

Daniel Weinfeld graduated from Harvard College, where he concentrated in American history and received a law degree from NYU School of Law. He is an attorney in New York City specializing in contract and transactional law.

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