

Birmingham Conference Explores Contentious History of Southern Jews and Civil Rights

By Deborah R. Weiner

The Southern Jewish Historical Society gathered in Birmingham, Alabama, on November 1–3 this fall as the city commemorated the 50th anniversary of the civil rights movement’s 1963 Birmingham campaign. It was a powerful setting to explore our conference theme, “Southern Jews and the Civil Rights Movement.”

The weekend kicked off Friday morning with a bus tour of Jewish Birmingham led by expert guides Julian Brook and son Larry Brook, publisher of *Southern Jewish Life* magazine. We found out that the first known Jewish resident, Henry Simm, arrived shortly after the town’s founding in 1871. We learned about the city’s Jewish retail heritage while viewing impressive downtown buildings such as the former Loveman’s department store, once the largest retail emporium in the South and a landmark for generations of shoppers who told friends and relatives to “meet me under the clock at Loveman’s.” Other highlights on this beautiful fall morning included a visit to the picturesque Jewish cemetery and a stop at Temple Beth-El, home of the largest daily minyan in Alabama.



Temple Beth-El. Photo by Samuel D. Gruber.

At noon we delved into our conference theme with a luncheon at the historic 16th Street Baptist Church, where, on September 15, 1963, four young black girls were killed in an infamous bombing carried out by white extremists. We then headed across the street to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, a museum and educational center dedicated to promoting civil and human rights worldwide. Artifacts such as

“colored” and “white” drinking fountains, audio and video clips of participants in the movement, and the opportunity to read seminal documents such as Martin Luther King’s 1963 “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” made for a moving experience and provided context for the conference sessions that followed.



A docent points the way at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. Photo by Samuel D. Gruber.

The first of those sessions occurred Friday afternoon back at the church. Judge U. W. Clemon, Karl Friedman, Stephen Grafman, and Solomon Kimerling held a spirited discussion about the reaction of local Jews to the Birmingham civil rights struggle. Professor Dan Puckett moderated and longtime civil rights leader Julian Bond provided concluding comments. Judge Clemon, who was

deeply involved in the 1963 Birmingham campaign, noted that leading up to the campaign there had been little contact between Jews and blacks in the public arena. Friedman, who at the time chaired the Birmingham Jewish Committee, bluntly recalled that Jewish leaders decided that “we would not show our face,” but worked behind the scenes to advance civil rights. Among other things, Jews provided major support for a campaign to change the city’s form of government in an effort to remove staunch segregationist Bull Connor from power. Friedman vividly recalled how he and other Birmingham Jews felt insulted by northern rabbis who swooped in to lecture them on how to act, and then swooped out to the safety of their far-off homes.

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16th Street Baptist Church. Photo by Stephen Krause.



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President's Letter

By Dale Rosengarten

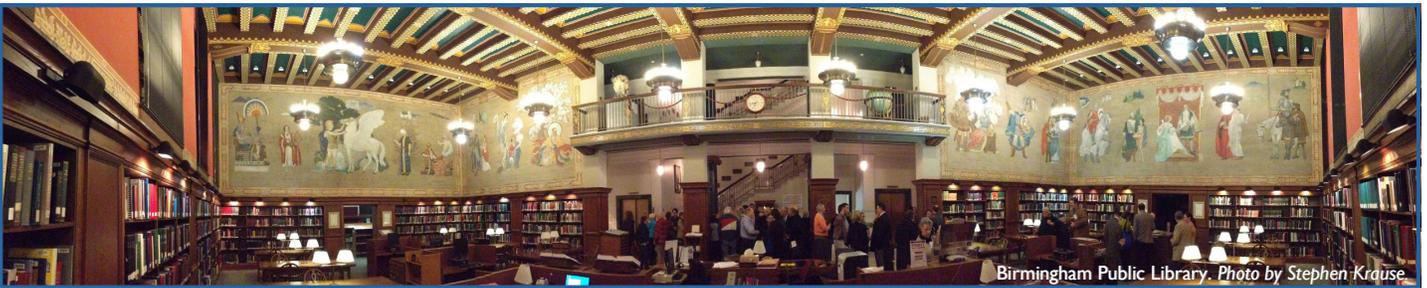


Our meeting this past November in Birmingham, Alabama, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the most intense summer of the Civil Rights Movement, was a moveable feast of places, people, and events—beautifully orchestrated and well attended. It was the fitting culmination to a year in which SJHS supported more travel, research, and archival projects than ever before. Meanwhile, we are literally watching our journal grow. It is twice as long and just as good as the first issue published 16 years ago. Founding editors Mark Bauman and Rachel Heimovics Braun have added Bryan Stone to the *Southern Jewish History* staff in the new role of Associate Managing Editor. Deb Weiner has stepped seamlessly into Bryan's former position as editor of *The Rambler*, and, beginning with the fall issue, she expanded the quarterly to eight pages. In October we had 1,051 visits to our website, with 3,175 page views. Our bibliography alone had well over 500 page views. The website now provides links to an online Speakers' Bureau with contact info for experts in a number of disciplines, including historians, archivists, genealogists, and editors.

All our publications—journal, newsletter, and website—will soon have a face-lift so that these three means of outreach will be recognized as coming from the same organization. We are in the process of redesigning our logo, mastheads, fonts, and color palette, and expect to unveil a new look early in 2014. Meanwhile, plans are underway for next year's conference in Austin, Texas. Co-chairs Hollace Ava Weiner and Bryan Stone cleared the dates with the Longhorns, scheduled the meeting for October 23–26, and are already lining up some Texas-sized events. See the Call for Proposals on page 3 for more details.

With an eye on the future, SJHS has several pressing needs. We need to tap new sources of funding to support our expanding activities and the rising number of high-caliber grant applications we receive. We need to increase our membership, especially among the younger demographic. We need to find ways to reach more people more efficiently, to make the most of email and social media, yet not lose our focus on the local and the real and the personal.

In my first year as president I came to realize that we accomplish as much as we do thanks to a remarkable committee system. Month by month, committee chairs and members—too numerous to name here—invest time, thought, and effort to make things happen. I want to personally thank each of these contributors. Every member of SJHS should know that you do not have to be on the board to serve on a committee. We welcome volunteers with open arms.



Birmingham Public Library. Photo by Stephen Krause

SJHS Awards Presented in Birmingham

At our Birmingham conference, the Sam Proctor Award for Outstanding Career Scholarship was given to Janice Rothschild Blumberg and the Saul Viener Outstanding Career Service Award was presented to Catherine Kahn, both former presidents and devoted longtime members of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. Janice has contributed to the field of southern Jewish history for more than 35 years, publishing three books and numerous articles on a variety of topics, including a history of the Temple in Atlanta, a biography of Rabbi Jacob Rothschild, and a biography of 19th-century Rabbi "Alphabet" Browne. Cathy is archivist emeritus of Touro Infirmary in New Orleans. A leader in preserving and presenting New Orleans Jewish history, Cathy has chaired many SJHS committees, hosted



Cathy Kahn and Janice Rothschild Blumberg. Photo by Frederic Kahn.

or planned several conferences, and contributed to many publications. She has assisted countless archivists and researchers with her expertise and hospitality.

Journal Award: The SJHS presented its quadrennial (2010–2013) award for the best article published in *Southern Jewish History* to Leonard Rogoff for "A Tale of Two Cities: Race, Riots, and Religion in New Bern and Wilmington, North Carolina, 1898," published in 2012. The award includes a \$500 prize. Ronald Bayor (Georgia Institute of Technology), chair Hasia Diner (New York University), and Barry Stiefel (College of Charleston) comprised the awards committee. With many outstanding articles, competition proved to be very stiff.

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A Torah and a World War II Plane Crash: The Savannah-Slany Connection

By Jane Kahn

A remarkable set of circumstances has linked Savannah's Congregation Mickve Israel and the Mighty Eighth Air Force, which originated in Savannah, to the town of Slany, a small suburb of Prague in the Czech Republic.

Mickve Israel has on permanent loan a Torah rescued during World War II from a synagogue in Slany. The Torah is one

of 1,564 saved from Jewish communities in Czechoslovakia wiped out in the Holocaust. These scrolls have been distributed around the world as part of the Czech Memorial Scrolls Trust.

Recently, members of the Mickve Israel museum committee decided to research the history of the Torah, which the congregation has been using regularly since 1968. The committee uncovered a startling coincidence: during World War II, a B-17 bomber from the Eighth Air Force crashed near the airport in Slany. The Mighty Eighth had been activated January 28, 1942, at Savannah Army Air Base—Hunter Field.

When it crashed, the B-17 was headed to Bohlen, Germany, to destroy several fuel plants. Eight airmen were killed. As a memorial, the town of Slany erected a monument incorporating the wrecked tail section of the plane, with Eighth Air Force markings, accompanied by a plaque dedicated "In memory of the



The rededication of the Slany Torah at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Chapel.
Photos courtesy of Jane Guthman Kahn.

crew of the American bomber shot down at this spot on 2 March 1945."

In recognition of this shared connection, Mickve Israel rededicated its Torah, recently repaired and kashered, at the National Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum's Chapel in Savannah during Veteran's Day Shabbat services. Mickve Israel Rabbi Robert Haas said the Mighty Eighth Chapel was

"the right place to do it, because of our connection to the Torah." Jewish War Veterans from several wars were honored from the Mighty Eighth's bima, where Rabbi Haas coordinated traditional Jewish Shabbat services with prayers used during various conflicts and the singing of patriotic and military songs.

There is no Jewish presence in Slany today. The small Jewish population that lived in the region during the 14th and 15th centuries was expelled in 1458. The community was reestablished in the 19th century and in 1865 a synagogue was built. In 1890 the Jewish population was 290; it dwindled to 85 by 1930; in 1942 the 81 remaining Jews were deported to Terezin and from there to Auschwitz. In far off Savannah, the Slany Torah helps keep their memory alive.

Jane Guthman Kahn is a freelance writer and a lifelong member of Congregation Mickve Israel.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Crossing Borders: Southern Jews in Global Contexts

39th Annual Conference of the Southern Jewish Historical Society
and Fall Board Meeting of the Texas Jewish Historical Society
Convening October 23-26, 2014
Austin, Texas



Ahavath Sholom in Fort Worth. Photo by Carolyn Cruz.

The Southern Jewish Historical Society, jointly with the Texas Jewish Historical Society, is soliciting proposals for panels, papers, and documentary films to be presented at their annual conference in Austin, Texas, October 23-26, 2014. Papers are welcome on subjects related to Jewry in the southern and border states, with preference for topics reflecting the conference theme: **Crossing Borders: Southern Jews in Global Contexts**. Of prime interest are topics focusing on ways that southern Jews and Jewish communities interact with Jewish and non-Jewish communities, issues, and institutions across international borders.

Recommended topics might include looking at immigration of Jews and other southern ethnic groups through an international lens; southern immigrants' persistent contact with Europe and *Eretz Yisrael*; international business networks in which southern Jews participated; globalizing effects of World War II, the Holocaust, and the establishment of Israel on southern Jewish communities; cultural interactions among Jews and other immigrant groups in southern states; southern Jews as literal and figurative "border crossers"; Jewish southerners as participants in the Atlantic world through contact with Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa; and ways in which southern Jews contributed to international developments in art, technology, architecture, science, education, and media.

The conference's annual book panel features authors of recently published books pertaining to southern Jewish history. If you have a relevant book slated for publication in 2014, please let us know.

Send a one-page proposal (or address questions) to Program Committee Co-Chairs Hollace Weiner (hollaceava@gmail.com) and Bryan Edward Stone (bstone@delmar.edu). **Deadline for submissions is February 15, 2014.**

Birmingham Conference Explores Contentious History of Southern Jews and Civil Rights

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The panelists heatedly debated the role of Birmingham Rabbi Milton Grafman, one of a group of local clergymen who sent a letter to Martin Luther King urging against mass demonstrations. In response, King wrote his famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” arguing that blacks could no longer wait for their rights and that drastic action was justified. Ever since, Grafman and the other signers have been dismissed as “gradualists” on the wrong side of history. Panelist Stephen Grafman defended his father, noting that Rabbi Grafman often spoke in favor of civil rights and that the clergymen’s letter had to be seen in context, while Clemon insisted that their “moderate” approach served to maintain the status quo. Birmingham native Sol Kimerling pointed out that King’s letter was written with a broader audience in mind, and that his criticism of the “gradualist” approach was really aimed at the Kennedy administration, not local clergy.

The discussion revealed the dangers and difficulties facing Jewish southerners as well as the complexity of their response to the civil rights movement. It challenged the prevailing historical view that southern Jews sat fearfully on the sidelines—but also challenged the tendency of many Jews to overstate Jewish support for civil rights. Later that evening, after services in the

sanctuary at Temple Emanu-El, keynote speaker Julian Bond offered a compelling historical overview of black-Jewish relations, taking a measured and sympathetic look at both the bonds that have united the two groups and the conflicts that have threatened their alliance.

At Saturday morning’s session on Alabama Jewish communities, Kaye Nail placed the civil rights era in broad historical perspective, revealing how a tradition of female activism dating to the founding of the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society in 1883 emboldened Birmingham Jewish women to advocate for civil rights both publicly and behind the scenes, often in opposition to male Jewish leaders. Also in this session, Susan Thomas presented the career of Leon Schwarz, a “bridge builder” who grew up in rural Alabama in the late 19th century and later became sheriff of Mobile County, mayor of Mobile, and a leader of the Mobile Jewish community. Robert Adler traced the history of Jews in Muscle Shoals, a boom-and-bust region that maintains a small Jewish community today.

In a panel on Classical Reform Judaism in the South, Anton Hieke traced the political journey of Charleston KKBE’s mid-19th-century rabbi Maurice Mayer, whose strong belief in the separation of church and state, fear of abolitionism as a Christian movement, and marriage

into a Jewish slave-owning family transformed him from a revolutionary leader in Germany to a pro-slavery advocate in the United States. Sam Gruber took us on a fascinating tour through southern synagogue architecture, showing how Reform congregations used classical building styles—first Greek, later Roman—to express ideals of democracy, universalism, dignity, and restraint.

Saturday afternoon’s panel on southern Jews and civil rights returned to the conference theme, adding nuance and detail to our understanding of a fraught period in American Jewish history. Rosalind Benjet and Harriet Gross depicted a largely silent Dallas Jewish community but focused on two notable exceptions, transplanted northerner Rabbi Levi Olan and native southerner Stanley Marcus, who had no qualms about integrating his Neiman Marcus department store as a practical, economically sound business measure. Dina Weinstein told the

story of University of Alabama student newspaper editor Melvin Meyer, whose editorial in favor of James Meredith’s admission into the University of Mississippi in 1962 touched off a maelstrom. A cross was burned on the lawn of his Jewish fraternity and at his family’s home, the university had to provide him with protection, and his father’s business

suffered. (Ironically, the editorial was actually written by another student for the paper’s editorial board, but Meyer bore the brunt of the fury.) Raymond Mohl examined the role of the American Jewish Committee’s Miami field office in successfully creating a community relations board to address racial tensions, the first in any southern city.

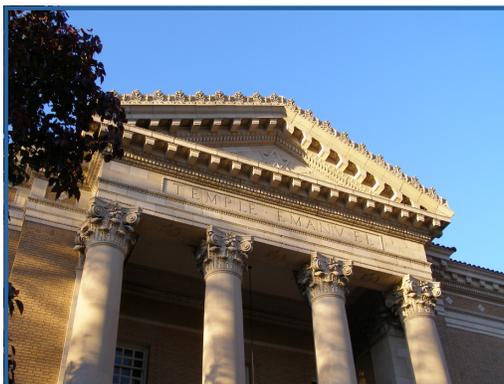
Saturday evening’s plenary session was held in the majestic old Birmingham Public Library building, which now houses rare books and manuscripts. Mark Bauman hosted a tribute to the late Rabbi Allen Krause, whose groundbreaking research on southern rabbis and civil rights is being edited for publication by Bauman and Krause’s son, Stephen. Stephen Krause and his

mother Sherri described the rabbi’s lifelong commitment to the cause of justice. One of Rabbi Krause’s interview subjects, Rabbi Irving Bloom, recalled the “fear and vulnerability” felt by Jews in Mobile, Alabama, during his tenure at Congregation Sha’arai Shomayim in the 1960s.

At Sunday’s panel on the “Charleston Diaspora,” Scott Langston and Hollace Weiner explored the importance of kinship and economic networks to the migration of Jews from southeastern states to points west (Texas) and Midwest (Cincinnati) during the mid 19th century.



Reception at the Birmingham Public Library. Photos by Samuel D. Gruber.



The classical architecture of Birmingham’s Temple Emanu-El. Photo by Samuel D. Gruber.

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Grants Committee Report

According to Phyllis Leffler, SJHS grants committee chair, the response to the society's call for grant proposals was particularly robust this year. Sixteen requests for research/travel, book completion, curatorial support, and archival support were received. The committee awarded a total of \$7,530 to 12 projects, in amounts ranging from \$230 to \$1,000.

Book completion grants to defray image reproduction and other publishing costs were awarded to: Adam Mendelsohn for his book on Jews and the clothing trade (NYU Press); Eric Goldstein and Deborah Weiner for *On Middle Ground: The Jews of Baltimore, 1765-Present* (Johns Hopkins University Press); and Bryan Stone for *Memories of Two Generations* (University of Alabama Press). Travel/research grants were awarded to: Allison Schottenstein for her dissertation on the Houston Jewish community's response to the civil rights movement; Rebecca Kobrin for her forthcoming book, *Destructive Creators: Failed Jewish Immigrant Businessmen Who Changed America*; and Dina Weinstein for article research on the 1964 civil rights movement in St. Augustine, with a focus on the 16 Reform rabbis jailed during protests.

Scott and Donna Langston Archival Grants were awarded to: Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, to digitize archival materials; University of North Carolina-Asheville, to update online finding aids and images for collections on Asheville Jewish life; Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta, to process a collection of documents, manuscripts, photographs, and oral histories documenting Jewish life in Alabama for the past 150 years; Temple B'nei Israel, Little Rock, to preserve 19th- and 20th-century synagogue records; Jay Silverberg, to translate Yiddish and Hebrew letters from the Meyer Brothers Store collection, to be deposited in Special Collections at Louisiana State University's Hill Memorial Library.

A curatorial grant was awarded to the Columbus Museum, Columbus, Georgia, to produce a gallery guide for an exhibition on the Jewish Heritage of the Lower Chattahoochee River Valley.

SJHS Journal Continues To Grow

The endowment fund for *Southern Jewish History*, the SJHS's annual scholarly journal, has recently received two donations. An anonymous gift has been made in memory of Ze'ev Itzak Braun, who passed away in Israel in November shortly before his 100th birthday. He was the father of Maitiahu ("Mati") Braun and father-in-law of Rachel Heimovics Braun. Also, an anonymous gift has been made in honor of Rabbi Dr. David Geffen's 75th birthday in November 2013. Similar tax deductible donations may be made to the journal endowment fund, the general endowment fund, or the society budget through treasurer Les Bergen.

The journal welcomed three new people to editorial positions over the past year. Former *Rambler* editor Bryan Edward Stone was named associate managing editor. He will work alongside managing editor Rachel Heimovics Braun over the next few years in preparation to assume the managing editor's position upon Rachel's retirement. Bryan is associate professor of history at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi and author of *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (2010), which won the SJHS Book Prize in 2011. He has published many articles on Texas Jewish history, including two in *SJH*: "Ride 'em, Jewboy': Kinky Friedman and the Texas Mystique" (1998) and "Edgar Goldberg and the *Texas Jewish Herald*: Changing Coverage and Blending Identity" (2004).

Phyllis Leffler recently stepped down as exhibit review editor, after suggesting the section and guiding it from its onset. Her successor is Jeremy Katz, archivist of the Breman Museum in Atlanta. Please contact him at Jrkatz@thebreman.org if you know of exhibits on southern Jewish history, or if you would like to serve as an exhibit reviewer. Adam Mendelsohn is the new website review editor. He is assistant professor of Jewish Studies at the College of Charleston and author of a forthcoming book on Jews in the clothing trade. Please contact him at mendelsohna@cofc.edu with suggestions of websites you'd like to see reviewed.

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Ernie Marcus examines documents at the library reception.
Photo by Dale Rosengarten.

In the midst of geographic mobility, political turmoil, and economic ups and downs, extended family ties provided the stability that enabled Jews to carve out a place for themselves.

Finally, our annual Sunday meet-the-authors panel offered a stimulating glimpse into recent publications in southern Jewish history. Under the skillful questioning of chair Marni Davis, authors Anton Hieke (*Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South*), Dan Puckett (*In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama's Jews, the*



Samuel D. Gruber and Hollace Weiner.

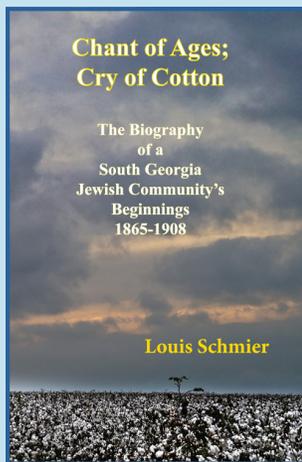
Second World War, and the Holocaust), and Barbara Bonfield (*Knesseth Israel, Over 123 Years of Orthodoxy*) discussed how they came to write their books and shared their findings with us.

Thanks to SJHS program chairs Dan Puckett and Stuart Rockoff for putting together an exceptional array of activities, and to the Birmingham Jewish Federation and Temple Emanu-El for being great hosts. On to Austin!

News and Notes

◆ **Chant of Ages: The Jews of Valdosta**

Louis Schmier announces the publication of his book, *Chant of Ages; Cry of Cotton: The Biography of a South Georgia Jewish Community's Beginnings, 1865-1908* (Snake Nation Press). A founder of SJHS and a retired professor at Valdosta State University, Schmier chronicles the Valdosta Jewish community, tracing its roots to the arrival of two Jewish Confederate veterans, Abraham Ehrlich and Benjamin Kaul, in 1866. He concludes his book in 1908 with the formal establishment of the present-day congregation.

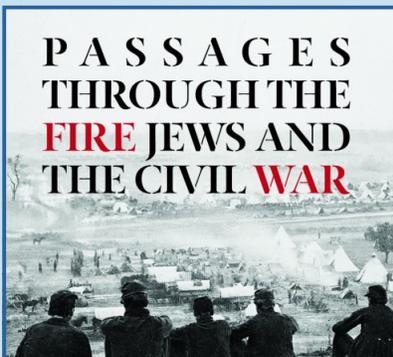


Chant of Ages offers a warm, personal tale of real people. The reader will peek over the shoulders of members of three families, Ehrlich and Engel and Marks, as they recount their hopes and dreams, insecurities and fears. They reveal their courageous, though cautious, “urge to merge” and “longing to belong” in their struggle to transform from Old World pariahs into respected New World citizens. Eventually they were not only accepted, they became revered members of Valdosta’s post-Civil War “upbuilders” and its socially prominent “new moss.”

According to Schmier, “It would be easy to say that this book is about being Jewish. Yes, the story revolves around these particular Jews. Yet in their extraordinary transformation into Jewish-Georgians, you will see a more humane Georgia, a more culturally diverse Georgia, a kinder Georgia, a more receptive Georgia, and a Georgia gentler than is usually supposed. I have merged the historian with the folklorist, and have combined the techniques of the scholar’s cold, disengaged, and critical eye with the intimate style of the storyteller. This is a book of the heart as well of the mind.” A hard copy can be purchased at carefulteaching.com. The ebook is available at Kindle, Nook, and Kobo.

◆ **Groundbreaking Exhibit on Jews in the Civil War**

The exhibition *Passages through the Fire: Jews and the Civil War* is on display at the Jewish Museum of Maryland until February 28, 2014. The exhibition focuses not only on the battlefield, but on the choices made by non-combatants throughout the conflict. It also explores how the Civil War established a framework for the full participation of Jews in American life militarily, politically, economically, and socially. Originally curated by the American Jewish Historical Society and Yeshiva University Museum, *Passages through the Fire* has been augmented by the JMM with stories and objects reflecting the experience of Jews in the border state of Maryland, a slave state



below the Mason-Dixon line that did not join the Confederacy—largely because it was occupied by federal troops.

Visitors will experience the largest number of artifacts relating to Jews and the Civil War assembled in the last 50 years. The exhibition features items from the collection of Robert D. Marcus of Fairfax, Virginia, considered the world’s most significant collection of Civil War Judaica, which has never before been exhibited on this scale. Baltimore is the only venue outside New York where the full exhibition will appear. See jewishmuseummd.org for details.

◆ **Tampa Bay History Center Hosts Schaarai Zedek Exhibition**



Courtesy of Carl Zielonka.

Tampa’s Congregation Schaarai Zedek was featured at the Tampa Bay History Center from July 1–September 30, 2013. In celebration of the congregation’s 120th anniversary, an exhibit was created from the Temple archives that highlighted the history of the synagogue, its involvement in the community, and prominent members who have influenced Tampa. Schaarai Zedek is Florida’s third oldest synagogue and the largest outside of the state’s lower east coast, with more than 1,000 families. SJHS member Carl Zielonka chaired the creation of the exhibit and was guided by Marcia Zerivitz, recently retired executive director of the Jewish Museum of Florida. It was displayed in the History Center’s “Community Case.”

◆ **An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews**

Yaakov Ariel, professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, offers a comprehensive analysis of the roots, manifestations, and consequences of evangelical interest in the Jews in his new book, *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews* (New York University Press).

It is generally accepted that Jews and evangelical Christians have little in common. Yet special alliances developed between the two groups in the 19th and 20th centuries. Evangelicals viewed Jews as both the rightful heirs of Israel and as a people who failed to recognize their true savior. Consequently, they set out to influence the course of Jewish life by attempting to evangelize Jews and facilitate their return to Palestine. Their double-edged perception caused political, cultural, and theological meeting points that have revolutionized Christian-Jewish relationships.

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St. Augustine To Commemorate Rabbis' Civil Rights Role

By Rabbi Merrill Shapiro, president of the St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society

Back in the day, the shopkeepers of St. Augustine, Florida, proudly displayed Ku Klux Klan robes in the shop windows along King Street and Avenida Menendez.

In spring 1964, the nation's "First City," St. Augustine, prepared to celebrate its 400th anniversary as the U.S. Senate debated the Civil Rights Act. With the intent of keeping civil rights on the front page, Reverend Martin Luther King decided to join with local activists in a massive campaign to end segregation in the nation's oldest city.

King knew that St. Augustine would be a challenge. So, he called upon his friend Rabbi Israel Dresner and the Central Conference of American Rabbis and said, "We need you down here with as many rabbis as you can bring with you!" Sixteen rabbis and Reform Judaism's social action director came to St. Augustine and, early on the morning of June 18, 1964, found themselves among the crowd sitting in the pews of St. Paul's AME Church. From the pulpit, Reverend King gave directions to march to the Monson Motel and Restaurant, to integrate the motel swimming pool and lunch counter.

That afternoon, the 17 Jews were arrested at the motel, taken to the St. Johns County Jail, booked, and thrown into a cell. In a letter composed by the light of the one bulb burning in the corridor outside their cell, they wrote of the reasons they had come to the seething city. "We realized that injustice in St. Augustine, as anywhere else, diminishes the humanity of each of us," they said. "We came as Jews who remember the millions of faceless people who stood quietly, watching the smoke rise from Hitler's crematoria. We came because we know that, second only to silence, the greatest danger to man is loss of faith in man's capacity to act."

The St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society has invited those who are still alive among the arrested to return and relive those fateful days half a century ago, as honored guests at our

two-day 50th anniversary commemoration of their action, the largest mass arrest of rabbis in U.S. history.

The celebration will begin with an evening forum on June 17, 2014, at Flagler College. At noon on the 18th, *Why We Went: A Joint Letter from the Rabbis Arrested in St. Augustine* will be read by the rabbis and former social action director on the site of the Monson Motel (now the Hilton Garden Inn Bayfront), followed by a luncheon in honor of those heroes. Visits to St. Paul's AME Church and the St. Johns County Jail are also planned.

The NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and St. Augustine Accord, the organization keeping the events of 50 years ago alive today, are all involved. The event is supported by grants from the Florida Humanities Council and the Stetson Kennedy Foundation.

While much has changed in St. Augustine, much has not. There are no African Americans on the police force and only one firefighter. Barriers continue to be placed in the path of people of color who wish to vote. No African Americans sit on the city commission, none on the County Board, none on the local school board. The Society invites all those to whom justice matters to join us in this Jubilee, not only to celebrate those arrested 50 years ago but to participate in a rededication to the cause so often cited by Reverend King, from the Book of Amos, 5:24, "Let Justice roll on like a river, and Righteousness like a mighty stream!"

The voices of those arrested can still be heard. "We came to stand with our brothers and in the process have learned more about ourselves

and our God. In obeying Him, we become ourselves; in following His will we fulfill ourselves. He has guided, sustained and strengthened us in a way we could not manage on our own."

Why We Went: A Joint Letter from the Rabbis Arrested in St. Augustine can be found at <http://rac.org>.



Above: Reverend Martin Luther King and Rabbi Israel Dresner.
Below: Monson Motel and Restaurant demonstration.

— continued from page 6 *An Unusual Relationship* compares evangelical-Jewish interaction to conventional historical Christian-Jewish interactions, exploring the beliefs, literary endeavors, communal structures, and political agendas that evangelicals have created in order to affect the future of the Jews. It analyses Jewish reactions to those efforts, as well as the

reactions of other groups, such as Arab Christians. It also examines the rise of communities of evangelical Jews. Viewing American-Israeli politics through a new lens, it sheds new understanding on events in the Middle East.

See nyupress.org/books/book-details.aspx?bookId=11100#.UqSjDPRDuSo for details.

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