



Third Time's a Charm! Join Us in Charleston in October



Views of 21st century Charleston. Clockwise from top left: Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge, 2007. Upper King Street, 2015. Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, 2020. Berlin's clothing store, King Street, 2017.

Photos by Jack Alterman. Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

Planning is in full swing for the 47th annual SJHS conference, which will be held in Charleston, South Carolina, from October 21 to 23. Hosted by the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, our 2022 conference will take place at the historic College of Charleston. The theme for this year's conference is "Southern Jews and the Atlantic World."

Once a major port in the Atlantic mercantile system, Charleston is an ideal locale for us to delve into the transatlantic history of southern Jewry. Charleston has remained at the heart of southern Jewish economic, cultural, and religious life for more than three centuries, and conference-goers will have the opportunity to participate in walking tours of Jewish Charleston, Shabbat dinner and services at the historic Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, and an evening with the treasures housed in the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College's Addlestone Library.

The conference weekend will also feature a variety of panels exploring various aspects of southern Jewish life and the Atlantic world. Proposed topics range from transatlantic Jewish mercantile, familial, and religious networks, to the transmission of architectural and artistic styles across the Atlantic, to how

southern Jews, both native- and foreign-born, negotiated the political landscape of the American South.

We are thrilled to announce that Prof. Michael R. Cohen will offer the Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter keynote lecture. Cohen is the Sizeler professor of Jewish studies and director of the Grant Center for the American Jewish Experience at Tulane University. He is the author of *Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era*, published by New York University Press in 2017. His book *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter's Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement* was published by Columbia University Press in 2012.

While last year's virtual conference allowed us to expand our reach more broadly than ever before, we are excited to come together in person this fall. We look forward not only to formal panels, tours, and events, but to those informal exchanges that make SJHS conferences such wonderful spaces for cultivating new relationships.

Information about conference registration and further programming details will be provided to members in mid-summer.



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Send editorial inquiries to
dweiner70@hotmail.com.

Send address changes to:

Barbara Tahsler
SJHS
PO Box 71601
Marietta, GA 30007-1601
barbarasjhs@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP CO-CHAIRS

Karen Franklin
917.969.9014
karenfranklin@gmail.com

Bruce Beeber
770.399.4222
drbbeber@msn.com

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Historical Society

President's Message By Jay Silverberg



The SJHS and the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (MSJE) have agreed to an alliance extending our mutually shared interest in promoting, preserving, and educating people about southern Jewish history.

MSJE's board chair Jay Tanenbaum of Atlanta, executive director Kenneth Hoffman, and former curator Anna Tucker have helped to guide discussions with me and SJHS colleagues, leading to an agreement that broadly extends to:

- Providing programs similar to those that our members have enjoyed virtually the past two years
- Seeking financial support for Society and museum initiatives
- Promoting the two organizations through the MSJE and SJHS newsletters, the Society's *Southern Jewish History* journal, and social media



MUSEUM OF THE
**SOUTHERN
JEWISH**
EXPERIENCE

The museum, occupying more than 12,000 square feet at 818 Howard Avenue in New Orleans, reveals more than 300 years of southern Jewish life using state-of-the-art interactives, audiovisuals, and displays from its 4,000-strong artifact collection.

During the museum's planning stages, several of the Society's academic members consulted on the content of the museum's exhibits and continue to offer their expertise in various roles.

Tanenbaum relayed that he was excited for the museum to collaborate with SJHS. He asserted that the museum hopes to use the history and ongoing achievements of Jews in the South to inspire people of all backgrounds as to the possibilities of how communities are built by working together.

We both are eager to build this alliance into a longer-term collaboration, the specifics of which are yet to be decided. Southern Jewish history is at the core of our work, and I hope you share my enthusiasm for how our two organizations will grow together.

This issue of the *Rambler* features MSJE's exciting collaboration with culinary historian Michael Twitty (see page 3). Details about MSJE can be found at msje.org.

We note the passing of Dolly Wax, beloved wife for 68 years of Bernie Wax, after a lengthy struggle with declining health in recent years. She leaves a legacy of devotion to Bernie, the Wax family, and SJHS. She will always be remembered for her indefatigable support of our Society, its members, new and experienced, and her constant presence at many conferences.



Bernie and Dolly Wax at the 2016 SJHS conference, Natchez. Photo courtesy of Bernie Wax.

SJHS Seeks New Treasurer

The Society is seeking a volunteer to fill the role of treasurer for the organization beginning later this year. David Meola, who has capably served as treasurer for several years, is stepping away after our annual conference in October. Our intent is for a brief transition period for David to work with his successor.

The role requires experience and/or knowledge of organizational finances to fulfill duties that include: preparation of the Society's annual budget; management of ongoing expenses; management of organizational requirements related to annual tax preparations; and assistance with managing the Society's endowment with the Richmond Jewish Foundation. Our bylaws require that the treasurer be approved by membership vote during our annual meeting.

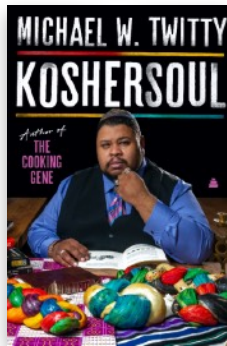
Those interested in supporting the SJHS by serving as treasurer should contact President Jay Silverberg at jbsilverberg@gmail.com.

Kosher Soul: Michael Twitty Visits the MSJE

By Anna Tucker

The Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (MSJE) in New Orleans spans 13 states and more than 300 years. With the millions of lives that fall within this scope, there are bound to be histories that are not on view at any given time. Yet, it is foundationally important that as a community, we investigate silences in our museums and collections. While *Jews of Color* are represented in the opening exhibitions at MSJE, this representation does not extend to the museum's current 4,000-piece collection.

When culinary historian and Jewish studies educator Michael Twitty visited MSJE in March, he made the first step in a long, collaborative journey that seeks to address this silence. During a public discussion offered in-person and virtually, Twitty started off by contextualizing several artifacts in the MSJE collection, including Henrietta Levine's c. 1900s cooking bowl and challah/bread doilies donated by Jewish Heritage North Carolina. He



Kippot designed by Jordan Casey, donated by Michael Twitty to the MSJE Permanent Collection. MSJE.

then discussed two artifacts that he brought with him for donation to the MSJE permanent collection: *kippot* designed with portraits of famous African American and Afro Caribbean figures, from Shirley Chisholm to James Baldwin and Audre Lorde.

Designed by artist Jordan Casey, these *kippot* are the first artifacts that represent *Jews of Color* in the MSJE collection. *Jews of Color* “might not always have this linear, step-by-step kind of story that people can identify us with,” Twitty observed. “I’ve sat at many tables. There’s a point where origin stories are not as important as

endurance stories. And that’s what those *kippot* represent.”

MSJE looks forward to working with Michael Twitty and the diverse communities that make up southern Jewry to represent these important histories in its permanent collection.

Anna Tucker is former curator at MSJE and a current SJHS board member.



An Invitation from MSJE: June 11-12 in New Orleans!

Since we first opened our doors last May, the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience has been eager to celebrate with the many people and organizations that helped make this place possible. It's taken a year (or more, depending on when you started counting!) but we are finally ready to celebrate, safely, with you in person. You can call it a Grand Opening, a Re-Opening, and a First Birthday Party all in one. The time to celebrate has arrived and we couldn't be more excited! For more information and to register, visit msje.org/celebrate.

Charleston Class Holds Southern Jewish History “Wikipedia Edit-a-thon”

Undergraduate students in Prof. Ashley Walters's Southern Jewish History class at the College of Charleston have been working hard to bring southern Jewish history to Wikipedia. Inspired by the numerous “Wikipedia Edit-a-thon” initiatives led by Gender and Sexuality Studies programs across the country, in which scholars and students alike make underrepresented individuals and stories more readily accessible to the public, Prof. Walters considered how lesser-known aspects of Jewish history might also be recovered and made more readily available on the internet through a class-wide “Wikipedia Edit-a-thon.”

Students and professional researchers alike have been shocked to discover that so many well-known southern Jewish historical figures and events are missing from Wikipedia.



Randy Feinberg (left) and Eli Evans (right) at Young Judeaea summer camp, 1952. Evans, author of *The Provincials* (see page 6), is the subject of one of the students' Edit-A-Thon projects. *Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.*

Wikipedia is a web-based, multilingual, free encyclopedia with millions of visitors every month. It is the fourth most popular website in the world. What makes Wikipedia so unique—and a fantastic resource for educators—is its collaborative nature, in which volunteer editors provide up-to-date information on any subject imaginable.

Students began their project by selecting an individual, organization, or event from southern Jewish history that interested them. Projects include Colonel Lushington's so-called “Jew Company” from the Revolutionary War; Charleston native and poet Penina Moïse; South Carolina's Carrie and Mabel Pollitzer, the lesser-known activist sisters of national women's suffrage leader Anita Pollitzer; the mysterious 1903 murder of peddler Abraham Surasky outside of Aiken, South Carolina;

continued on page 6...

Material Culture and the Atlantic Origins of Southern Jewry

By Dale Rosengarten, Barry Stiefel, Anna Tucker, and Ashley Walters

Jews in the American South have long been viewed in a regional framework. The October 2022 gathering of the SJHS in Charleston seeks to reexamine southern Jewish life through a global lens. Material culture presents an especially rich opportunity to explore the transatlantic origins of southern Jewry. Take, for example, the five artifacts below.

De Leon family *Biblia Hebraica*, Amsterdam, 1667.



Gift of I. Harby Moses. Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

The births, marriages, and deaths inscribed in this Hebrew Bible trace a common route the Sephardim followed from the Old World to the New: from Amsterdam to Jamaica's Spanish Town to New York to Charleston. The De Leons' far-flung clan, with branches in

Amsterdam, London, Hamburg, Barbados, Suriname, St. Thomas, Jamaica, and South Carolina, were part of an Atlantic commercial network expanded and strengthened by marital bonds. The union of Jacob de Leon and Hannah Hendricks, noted in the Bible on 4 October 1789, forged ties between two successful New World families.

Between 1791 and 1796 the De Leons traveled between New York, where Jacob's best customer was his father-in-law, Dutch-born Uriah Hendricks, and Kingston, Jamaica, where he introduced his brother-in-law—visiting New York commodities trader and copper entrepreneur Harmon Hendricks—to the island trade. By 1799, the De Leons had settled in Charleston. As a vendue master, or auctioneer, with a dwelling house on Tradd Street, Jacob did business on Exchange Square, purchasing copper on behalf of Hendricks and also supplying him with the products of southern agriculture—tobacco, cotton, corn, and molasses—which Hendricks, in turn, often exported to England. The slave trade, however, made Hendricks uneasy; De Leon's offer of \$70,000 in "Black Birds" (captives from the west coast of Africa) left him cold, according to Hendricks family biographer Maxwell Whiteman.

Abraham Moïse (1736–1809), artist unknown, c. 1790. Watercolor on ivory.

This miniature was among the few valuables Abraham Moïse carried with him when he escaped Saint-Domingue with his wife and four small children in 1791. Born in Strasbourg, Alsace, Moïse immigrated to the West Indies, where he established

himself in trade. On the little island of St. Eustatia he met and married Sarah, 26 years his junior, the daughter of a noted Jewish family. The slave uprising on Saint-Domingue sent them fleeing to Charleston, where they sold cloth and tea from their house on Queen Street and where Sarah gave birth to five more children, including the poet, hymnalist, and school teacher Penina (1797–1880), and Abraham (1799–1869), cofounder of the Reformed Society of Israelites.



Private Collection.

American synagogue architecture from the 18th and early 19th centuries depended on labor and skill from Africa as well as Europe. Charleston's iconic Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) is a notable case in point.

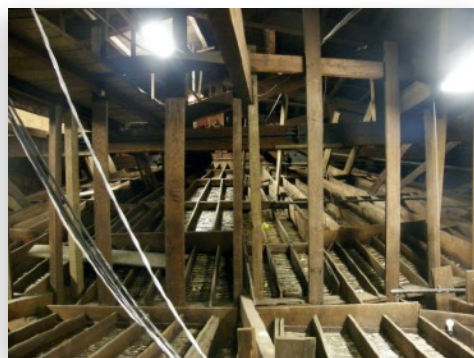
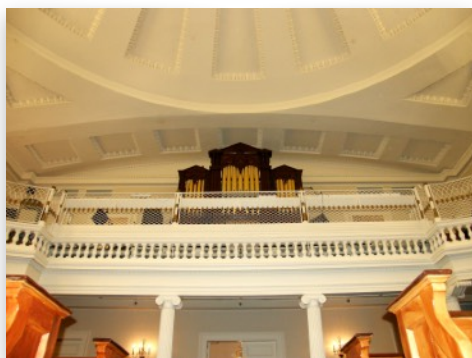
Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim's dome attic.

In September 2021, KKBE placed a long overdue memorial plaque to the enslaved African Americans who helped build the synagogue c.1840, after a devastating fire destroyed the previous structure two years earlier. Today, the synagogue is considered one of the most exemplary early-19th-century Greek Revival buildings in the U.S. While the white-painted woodwork and masonry make it difficult to see the layers of know-how that went into the building's construction, a visit to the attic tells a more complete story (see page 5 pictures).

The synagogue's congregants, including contractor David Lopez Jr., whose ancestors hailed from Iberia, and architect Cyrus L. Warner of New York, designed what we see today. In addition, the handiwork of Lopez's enslaved carpenters, who included George and Kit, is apparent in the wood framing above the coffered Roman dome that caps the sanctuary; in the plaster ceiling attached to a wooden lath connected to various supporting trusses, beams, and columns; and in the rope-and-pulley system used to lower the dome's chandelier to ground level when maintenance is needed.

The timber framing and complex woodwork illustrate that the Black and white laborers were highly skilled in the building trades, which entailed knowledge of materials, dangerous tools, geometry, trigonometry, and engineering. This synagogue was built so strongly that the magnificent dome survived the earthquake of 1886, as well as Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Thus, from the far corners of the Atlantic World, people, materials, artistic inspiration, and technical expertise converged to produce this landmark of Jewish Charleston in 1841.

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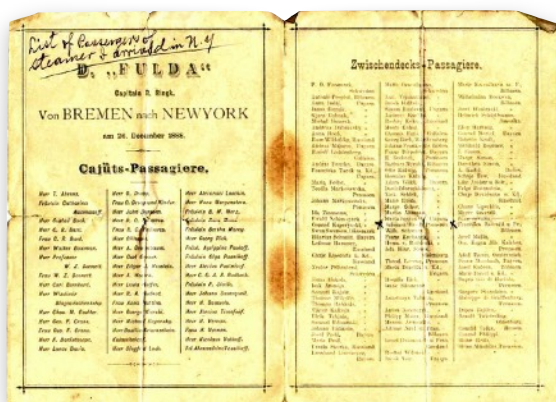
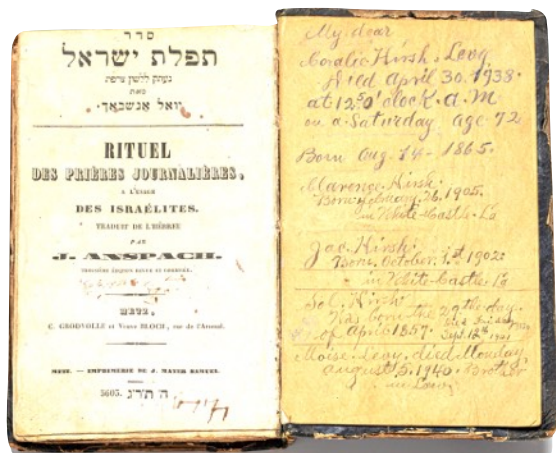


Photos by Barry Stiefel.

While study of the Jewish Atlantic typically focuses on the 18th-century heyday of Sephardic merchants, transatlantic Jewish migration continued over the following centuries as well. Artifacts from the permanent collection at the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (MSJE) illuminate these stories.

French-Hebrew prayer book, 1843, and *Fulda* passenger list, 1888.

This French-Hebrew prayer book from 1843 records the births and deaths of Coralie Levy's family as they made their way from Alsace, France, to Donaldsonville, Louisiana. The MSJE Hirsh-Levy Family Collection also contains documents from Sol Hirsh, Levy's husband, including his Declaration of Intention and this passenger list of the ship *Fulda*, which carried him across the Atlantic when he emigrated from Frankfurt, Germany, in 1888.



Gift of John Green III to the MSJE Permanent Collection.

Albert Daube in Oklahoma, c. 1938, and the Daube family's Haggadah, brought over from Germany.

Refugee Albert Daube's distant relations in Ardmore, Oklahoma, sponsored his escape from Nazi Germany in 1937. Daube later joined the U.S. Army to fight in World War II, and while stationed in the U.K., he met Pearl Jacobs. Instantly smitten, the couple married in 1945 but lived apart until Pearl moved to the U.S. in 1946 under the War Brides Act. These were not their only trips on the Atlantic. In 1948 they moved to Jamaica, where family members had established a business. They later settled in New Orleans.



Donated by the Daube Family to the MSJE Permanent Collection.



Donated by the Daube Family to the MSJE Permanent Collection.

Dale Rosengarten is founding curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston. Barry Stiefel is associate professor in the historic preservation and community planning program at the College of Charleston. Anna Tucker is former curator of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience and incoming executive director at the Framingham History Center. Ashley Walters is assistant professor of Jewish studies and director of the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston.

The Provincials and Durham, Fifty Years On

By Elliot Mamet

The year 2023 will mark 50 years since Eli Evans published *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South*. The book signified a watershed in the history of southern Jewish life, telling the story of these “provincials, the Jews of the periphery,” warts and all.

Besides shaping the field of southern Jewish history, the book also tells the Jewish history of Durham. The memorable opening chapter, “An Inconsequential Town,” recounts when Duke Tobacco Company brought in 125 Yiddish-speaking tobacco rollers from New York. These men lived in Durham’s Hayti neighborhood, on “Yiddisha Streetal.” They faced economic hardship when James Buchanan Duke acquired automated tobacco roller machines and cut his workers’ hours and pay. The Jewish tobacco rollers formed a union and went on strike—but to no avail. Most of these early Jewish Durhamites returned North. Others stayed, forming the beginning of Durham’s Jewish community.

The book goes on to explore other elements of Jewish life in Durham, such as its Hadassah movement (led by Eli’s mother Sara Nachamson Evans), the integrated lunch counter in the Evans department



Photos by Elliot Mamet.

store, and what it felt like to be a Jewish teenager attending a tent revival.

Today, roughly 12,000 Jews live in the Durham area. There are multiple synagogues, campus Jewish organizations, and a JCC. Remarkably, the city has seen two Jewish mayors, Evans’s father Emanuel J. “Mutt” Evans, who spearheaded integration, and Stephen M. Schewel, whose tenure was also marked by a passion for social justice.

Much of the physical landscape of *The Provincials* has been lost to history. A highway sits where Yiddisha Streetal (Pine Street) once was. The Evans United Department Store on Main Street is no more. Yet a few remnants of *The Provincials* remain, including the Evans house on Dacian Street, the Evans family gravesite in Durham’s Hebrew Cemetery, and a small history grove honoring the Evans family downtown. Walking by these places, one thinks of *The Provincials* and its fascinating glimpse into Durham’s Jewish life.

Elliot Mamet is a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Duke University. He can be reached at elliott.mamet@gmail.com.

Southern Jewish History “Wikipedia Edit-a-thon”

continued from page 3...

and Rabbi Burton Padoll of Charleston’s Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, who was known for his controversial advocacy of civil rights. Students have been scouring the College of Charleston’s Jewish Heritage Collection for materials to use in their entries.

One of the challenges of translating archival materials to Wikipedia is the requirement that all information cited on Wikipedia be available in a published format. This has forced

students to identify secondary materials through which they can anchor their primary source archival research. It also means that a couple of projects—original in terms of research—will not be publishable on Wikipedia at this time.

Students are in the process of writing their first drafts. Stay tuned, as we hope for these pages to go live shortly!

Andrew Feiler Presents Third Blumberg Lecture

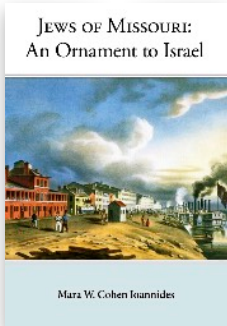
Andrew Feiler, noted Atlanta photographer and author, presented the third annual Janice Rothschild Blumberg Lecture in April, discussing his latest book, *A Better Life for Their Children: Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the 4,978 Schools that Changed America*. Feiler spoke to a live audience gathered in the historic sanctuary at The Temple in Atlanta as well as a virtual audience. He showed photos of the schools and shared stories of their history and their students, which included noted Americans such as the late Congressman John Lewis.

Photo by Jay Silverberg



NEWS AND NOTES

New Book on Jews of Missouri



The Ozarks Studies Institute, an initiative of the Missouri State University Libraries, has published *Jews of Missouri: An Ornament to Israel*, by Mara W. Cohen Ioannides. The book, written to reincorporate minorities into the history of the state, focuses on the period before World War I. It examines the history of Jews in the state within the context of American Jewish history, addressing issues ranging from

slavery to military service to intermarriage. The book also chronicles four Jewish families from across the state. An appendix lists every town in Missouri that had a Jewish presence before the first World War.

Cohen Ioannides is a faculty member of the English Department at Missouri State University. She serves as president of the Midwest Jewish Studies Association and the Ozarks Studies Association. The book is available from the Missouri State Libraries.

Contact LauraFrench@MissouriState.edu for details.

Exhibit at Beth Ahabah Museum “Highlights” Key Artifacts

The Beth Ahabah Museum & Archives in Richmond opened its newest exhibit, *Chai Lights*, earlier this spring. The exhibit features a variety of artifacts, portraits, textiles, photographs, and religious objects that recount 18 stories from the museum’s collections.

Items in the exhibit depict community celebrations, business life, religious leaders, rituals and life cycle events, the growth and demise of various congregations, and Richmond’s connections with the Holocaust.

Together, the stories represent a cross section of individuals, families, and institutions, each of which tells a larger narrative about the Jewish experience in Richmond and beyond. For more information or to schedule a visit, please call 804.353.2668.



The Cohen Company's baseball team c. 1914. The Cohen Company was a large department store that operated from 1857 to the 1930s. Their sports teams played in local recreational leagues. *Courtesy of Beth Ahabah Museum & Archives.*

Fort Worth Torah Scroll Tells a Holocaust Story

If this 225-year-old Torah could talk, it would weave a tale that winds its way from a Czech village, through the terror of the Holocaust, to its rescue and restoration in London, then across the Atlantic Ocean and the continental U.S. to a place of honor in the ark at a Reform synagogue in Fort Worth, Texas. This Holocaust scroll is a survivor.

At the Fort Worth library this past winter, members of the public got a chance to hear that story. Linda Barrett, manager of the library’s genealogy, local history and archives section, discovered the scroll on Beth-El Congregation’s website (bethelfw.org/holocaust-torah). She had been seeking a local connection to the Holocaust for a program commemorating International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27. She invited Beth-El archivist Hollace Weiner and Rabbi Emeritus

Ralph D. Mecklenburger to speak about the Torah and its journey.



Fort Worth Public Library.

The rabbi unrolled the scroll, lifted it for the audience to view, and described how Torahs are made: just as in days of old, long before the invention of the printing press and the introduction of books. Weiner, who has traveled to the Czech scroll’s original home in the village of Uhrineves, recalled the summer when a representative from that town visited Fort Worth and gazed emotionally at the Hebrew calligraphy on the parchment scroll.

Among the families in the library’s audience were high school students who were reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* in English class. Hearing the scroll’s tale of survival gave local resonance to what can otherwise seem to be a far-away and long-ago historical event.



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Please join us or renew your membership today!



Apply for an SJHS Grant!

The Grants Committee is accepting applications for the current year. We have \$10,000 available for grants ranging from \$500 to \$2,000, in the following areas of focus:

- ▶ Project completion grants: To facilitate completion of projects relevant to southern Jewish history.
- ▶ Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter Grants: To assist scholars and independent researchers with travel and other expenses related to research into southern Jewish history, including an emphasis on Florida Jewish history.
- ▶ Scott and Donna Langston Archival Grants: To support projects to preserve archival materials related to southern Jewish history.

The deadline for grants submissions is June 17. See jewishsouth.org/sjhs-grants-applications for more information.