SJHS Joint Conference with the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina • October 27-30, 2011

By Dale Rosengarten

This fall the Southern Jewish Historical Society joins up with the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina to present a weekend of scholarship, photography, film, and music on the beautiful University of South Carolina campus in Columbia. With support from USC’s Jewish Studies Program, Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, School of Music, McKissick Museum, and South Caroliniana Library, we have designed a three-day immersion in the sights, sounds, and stories of the Jewish South.

The conference will kick off on Friday, October 28th, with a bus tour to Sumter, one of South Carolina’s earliest Jewish settlements. There we will see Temple Sinai’s spectacular stained glass windows, tour the Sumter County Museum, and visit the Levi family’s historic home and garden.

On Saturday, panel sessions will convene in USC’s new Hollings Library. Researchers and writers from near and far will explore the challenging terrain tred by southern Jews. The afternoon will continue with a bus tour of the capital city led by noted Columbia historians Belinda and Richard Gergel. The excursion will end at McKissick Museum, where Bill Aron’s photo exhibition Palmetto Jew will be on view on the first and second floors. Shot in the fall of 2000, Aron’s images document a world on the brink of a new millennium, deeply rooted yet moving fast into the future.

Saturday evening attendees are invited to return to the Hollings Library for a gala reception sponsored by the law firm Nelson Mullins Riley and Scarborough LLP. Guests can take behind-the-scenes tours led by the Hollings staff and browse on their own through exhibits of archival material selected from South Carolina Political Collections, the Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, and the South Caroliniana Library at USC, and from Furman University’s Special Collections. Video clips from Carvalho’s journey, a new PBS documentary about the great 19th-century painter and photographer, Solomon Nunes Carvalho, will also be on view.

Sunday the venue switches to USC’s School of Music for the conference finale. Composer Meira Warshauer will perform original work, accompanied by cellist Robert Jesselson and mezzo-soprano Janet Hopkins. Historians Bryan Edward Stone and Jerrod Tanny will wrap up the morning by showing audio-visual evidence to answer the serious question, “What’s so funny about southern Jews?”

The full conference schedule and registration form are in this issue of the Rambler. To register online, please visit www.jhssc.org/events.

SJHS Book Prize awarded

The Southern Jewish Historical Society is pleased to announce the recipient of its award for the best book published in the field of southern Jewish History during the previous four years. Bryan Edward Stone receives the 2011 award for The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010). A revision of his University of Texas at Austin doctoral dissertation, Stone’s book uses the concept of frontier to explicate interaction between Jews and non-Jews, and how that interaction and self-perceptions shaped the multiple and changing identities of his subjects. In so doing, he challenges the New York-centered paradigm so prevalent in American Jewish history. Stone also juxtaposes images with reality across a period of four centuries as he debunks numerous myths. Dr. Stone serves as an Associate Professor of History at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Dr. Leonard Rogoff, historian of the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina, receives honorary mention for his Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). Like The Chosen Folks, Down Home is an iconoclastic study of an individual state’s Jewish history. Rogoff shows how Jews were more tolerated than accepted and acquiesced less to southern mores as much as previous historians have suggested. North Carolina Jews were cosmopolitans who cultivated culture and brought national goods and styles as business people even in small towns. Down Home is also the story of constant in and out migrations; center and peripheral Jewish communal life and identity; and the rise, decline, and rebirth of town and city life.

Columbia, S.C. — Reserve Your Hotel Room Now

Our visit to Columbia will be hosted at The Inn at USC, 1619 Pendleton Street, an elegant boutique hotel located on the historic campus of the University of South Carolina. A special conference rate is available until September 27, 2011. The special rate of $115/night (plus tax) includes breakfast, parking, and free Internet. Hotel reservations are not included in your conference registration and must be made directly with the hotel. Call The Inn at USC: 803/779-7779. Hotel information is also available at www.innatusc.com.

“Sights, Sounds, and Stories of the Jewish South” • See Conference Program, p. 3 • Registration Form, p. 6
President’s Message

After serving as president for almost a year, I have a newfound appreciation for the volunteers who make the Southern Jewish Historical Society function. Since our founding in 1976, we have had no paid staff and have relied on a host of people to keep the society going. Each year, we hold an annual conference that is organized and put together by volunteers. This year, Dale Rosengarten and Phyllis Lefler have put together the outstanding program for next month’s conference in Columbia, South Carolina while Rachel Barnett has handled all of the local arrangements. We hope that you are able to join us for what promises to be an informative and entertaining conference.

No person has worked harder for the society than Barbara Tahsler. For years, she worked for our past president Beryl Weiner, who allowed Barbara to handle many of the administrative functions of the society. Since Beryl’s recent illness and retirement, Barbara has remained dedicated to the society. She continues to be the “home address” of the SJHS, handling all of the society’s correspondence and maintaining our membership roll and mailing lists. Quite simply, the society would grind to a halt without her help. Ellen Umansky has headed up our Membership Committee for the past few years, and she has done a tremendous job in sending out reminders to our members to renew their support for the society. Corresponding Secretary Jean Roseman has handled the official correspondence and has written numerous thank you notes to those who have made financial contributions to the society. Les Bergen, our outstanding treasurer, manages the society’s money and offers sage advice whenever I seek it. In my day job at the Institute of Southern Jewish Life, we have employees who handle all of these functions, but at the SJHS, all of these people are 100% volunteer. I’m sure all of the members of the society join with me in thanking them for their dedicated service to the society.

With all of their fine work, I have been free to focus on revamping the SJHS website, one of my top priorities. I am excited to report that within a few weeks of the time you read this, our new site will have been unveiled at www.jewishsouth.org. In addition to an attractive new look beautifully illustrated by historical images of Jewish life across the South, our site now includes a comprehensive bibliography of published work in the field of southern Jewish history. Drawn from the fine bibliography first put together by Eric Goldstein and Marni Davis ten years ago, and updated by our current Garrett-Wilson Fellowship, the bibliography is categorized by geography and by subject. It will be an invaluable resource for the members of the society and anyone looking to learn about or do research on the southern Jewish experience.

Also, we have started to put back issues of our journal Southern Jewish History online. For now, articles from the first three volumes of the journal are freely accessible on our website. Articles from later volumes may be purchased for a nominal fee through our site as well. The new journal section of the website will help ensure that the outstanding articles published in the journal will be accessible and relevant to a new generation of scholars and students. I especially thank journal editor Mark Bauman and managing editor Rachel Heinovics Braun for supporting this online experiment.

The goal of the new website is to help us reach a wider audience. Indeed, another focus of my presidency is to increase the size of the society. I recently sent membership information to friends and colleagues, asking them to join the society. I even got my parents to join! (Hi Mom and Dad – I doubt anyone else has read this deep into my message!) I would like to urge each of you to think of someone you know who is interested in southern Jewish history and encourage them to join the society. This has never been easier as now they will be able to join via our website. So send them to www.jewishsouth.org and let them read about all of the fine work the society does. I am confident that they will want to support this work by becoming a member.

Mordecai Family Papers at UNC

The Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill announces additions to the Mordecai Family Papers.

Mary Miley Theobald of Richmond, Virginia, has donated sixteen items, dating from 1816 to 1917. This collection includes eleven letters, eight of them between Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, her relatives, and Anglo-Irish novelist and educator Maria Edgeworth. Among the items is a pencil sketch of “Edgeworthstown house,” dating to 1823, that Maria Edgeworth sent to Mr. Lazarus. Also included is a 67-page type transcription of correspondence between Rachel M. Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth from 1815 to 1838.

This addition supplements a 2007 donation of 50 items from Betty Blumquist Matthews of Hillsborough, North Carolina. This collection includes letters written to and by Mordecai family members, 1798-1896, as well as reminiscences, song lyrics, and fragments. Letters are chiefly to Ellen Mordecai of Raleigh, but there are also other family members represented in correspondence, including Emma Mordecai, Eliza Mordecai, Jacob Mordecai, and Rachel Mordecai Lazarus. Some letters were later annotated by Martha Mordecai. Of particular interest is Irish novelist Maria Edgeworth’s 1816 response to Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and a letter from Maria’s father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, to Rachel. The Mordecais were interested both in the Edgeworths’ approach to education and Maria Edgeworth’s unflattering treatment of Jews in at least one of her novels.

By Leonard Rogoff

The Mordecais, who settled in Warrenton, North Carolina, in 1792, were an influential family of Jewish origin. Jacob Mordecai, proprietor of a female academy, served as parnas of Beth Shalome in Richmond, and his daughter Emma Mordecai published in The Occident and Jewish Advocate. Alfred Mordecai graduated from West Point and had a distinguished military career. The correspondence between Rachel Lazarus and the Irish Edgeworths was published as The Education of the Heart: The Correspondence of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth (Chapel Hill, 1977). The family’s history has also been documented by Emily Bingham at SJHS conferences and in her book Mordecai, an Early American Family (New York, 2003). The Mordecai correspondence has proved indispensable in tracing the religious history of early American Jewry.

The Southern Historical Collection, holding 15 million items, is the primary depository of documentary material on the American South. In addition to the Mordecai Family Papers which includes some 1,900 items, the SHC holds the Alfred Mordecai and George Washington Mordecai Papers. During the 2010 Conference, SJHS members visited UNC’s Wilson Library where the SHC displayed samples from its extensive southern Jewish collections.

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Sights, Sounds, and Stories of the Jewish South
Joint Conference of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

With support from the University of South Carolina’s Jewish Studies Program, Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, School of Music, South Caroliniana Library, and McKissick Museum, and Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP

THURSDAY, October 27

Arrivals/Registration, The Inn at USC

6:30 PM
SJHS Board dinner at the home of Richard and Belinda Gergel, followed by SJHS Board meeting at The Inn at USC

FRIDAY, October 28

Arrivals/Registration

8:00 AM
Breakfast, The Inn at USC (included in room rate)

9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
DAY TRIP TO SUMTER, SOUTH CAROLINA
Buses depart 9:00 am, The Inn at USC

Temple Sinai: Tour of the sanctuary and its spectacular stained glass windows led by Elizabeth and Robert Moses • Sumter County Museum: Presentation of the museum’s Jewish collections • Home and garden tour led by Dr. Wendell and Katie Levi

6:00 PM
Dinner and Shabbat Services at Tree of Life, Rabbi Daniel Sherman

SATURDAY, October 29

8:00 AM
Breakfast, The Inn at USC (included in room rate)

PANEL SESSIONS
Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, USC Campus

9:00 AM
Tolerance and Tensions. Moderator: Ellen M. Umansky

Allen Krause, “The Hazan, the Minister, and the Merchant: A 177-Year-Old Lesson from Charleston, S.C.”

Hyman Rubin III, “South Carolina’s Jewish Republicans during Radical Reconstruction”

Marni Davis, “Allies or Adversaries? Jewish and Irish Immigrants in the New South”

Rachel R. Bergstein, “A Tale of Two Rabbis: How David Marx and Tobias Geffen Imagined Judaism in the South”

11:00 AM
The Topography of Exclusion. Moderator: Lauren L. Sklaroff


Edward S. Shapiro, “Fighting the War: Southern Jewish Chaplains and the Evolution of American Jewish Identity during World War II”

Catherine R. Eskin, “Jewish Sacred Space in a ‘City of Churches’: Temple Emanuel in Lakeland, Florida”

1:30 PM
History and Memory. Moderator: Dale Rosengarten

Joseph Butwin, “Old Countries: A Jewish Writer in the Southern Diaspora”

Ellen Solomon, “Creating Rachel Solomon: The Imaginatively Constructed Individual”

3:00 PM
CAPITAL CITY BUS TOUR led by Richard and Belinda Gergel
Big Apple, Beth Shalom’s first synagogue • Holocaust monument in Memorial Park • Hebrew Benevolent Society Cemetery

4:30 PM
OPEN HOUSE at McKissick Museum: Bill Aron’s Palmetto Jews

6:00 PM
RECEPTION, Hollings Library, USC Campus

Guided behind-the-scenes tours on the half-hour, beginning at 5:30

EXHIBITS

Papers and campaign memorabilia of Isadore Lourie, Harriet Keyserling, and Sol Blatt from South Carolina Political Collections

Judaica and rare books from Hollings Special Collections and South Caroliniana Libraries

Max Heller papers from Furman University’s Special Collections and Archives

Preview screening of selections from Carvalho’s Journey, a new PBS documentary film, presented by producer/director Steve Rivo

7:30 PM
Dinner on your own

SUNDAY, October 30

8:30 AM
Breakfast, The Inn at USC (included in room rate)

Concurrent: SJHS membership meeting and JHSSC board meeting

PANEL SESSIONS
Recital Hall, School of Music, USC Campus

10:00 AM
Sounds of the Jewish South: The Music of Composer Meira Warshauer. Moderator: Phyllis Leffler

Performance and panel with Meira Warshauer, piano; Robert Jesselson, cello; and Janet Hopkins, mezzo-soprano

11:30 AM
What’s So Funny about Southern Jews? Performance Inside and Outside the Tradition. Moderator: Eli N. Evans

Bryan E. Stone, “Havah Nagilah, Texas-Style: Christian Zionism and the Cornerstone Church”

Jarrod Tanny, “From the Borscht Belt to the B’nei Mississippi: Jewish Humor’s Encounter with the South”

12:30 PM
Lunch

Box Lunch and Adjourn
Remembering Bud Whitehill
by Janice Rothschild Blumberg

We mourn the recent death of Arthur (Bud) Whitehill, former treasurer of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and a dear friend to all who knew him. His good looks and welcoming smile will be long remembered, but even more will his dedicated service and unwavering integrity remain foremost with those of us who knew him well and worked alongside him on behalf of SJHS.

Bud was the consummate southern gentleman, both by temperament and by heredity. His interest in Jewish history grew out of generational curiosity, researching origins of his family, both sides of which settled in Georgia before the Civil War. A native of Atlanta, Bud earned a law degree from Emory University and a Purple Heart for heroic service in World War II. He and his beloved wife Helen planted new roots in Maitland, Florida, where they raised their three children, David, Ann, and Alice, and Bud pursued a successful career in the building industry, contributing to his community through his many interests, civic, environmental and historic.

Remembering Bud as a teenager camping in the mountains of North Georgia, it came as no surprise to this writer to learn that he remained an avid nature buff throughout his life. He and Helen built their home beside a lake on which he delighted taking visitors to see the countryside by boat, maneuvering expertly through the narrow channels that separated the many scenic waterways of that area. He loved animals, most of all in his later years, his cherished Ladybug, a small white bichon frise with soulful eyes and worshipful personality.

Bud also loved baseball, sometimes finding it difficult to attend the annual conference of SJHS if it interfered with the World Series. This in no way deterred him from functioning faithfully as the society’s treasurer, however. Those who served with him on the board will remember especially his diligence in this regard, for he managed the society’s finances with the watchfulness of an Eagle Scout. Fearful that we could not afford to initiate publication of a scholarly journal in 1998, he argued against it, but later—true southern gentleman that he was—rejoiced in its success and formally commended its editors for having made it so. SJHS extends its deepest sympathy to Bud’s family, especially to Helen, his wife of 64 years. He will be truly missed by all who knew him.
Scholars’ Conference: Jews, Slavery, and the Civil War
by Adam Mendelsohn

As America begins to commemorate the most brutal and divisive conflict in its history, it is tempting to find dimensions of this bitter and bloody Civil War to celebrate. By focusing solely on the heroics and sacrifices of soldiers on both sides of the field of battle, it might be possible to persuade ourselves that the war was ennobling to all who fought in it and that both causes were equally just. American Jews, no less than our neighbors, are potential victims of this tendency to interpret the war in ways that are pleasing or affirm our own identities as patriots and Jews. While we need not wallow in memories of the brutality, injustices and troubled legacy of the war, it is important that we dip our toes into this darkened stream.

At the same time, the complexity of the conflict means that many of its dimensions still require additional investigation. Recently several scholars have begun to reassess the impact of the war on ethnic and religious minorities – Irish, Germans, African-Americans, and Jews. Although historians began to write about the participation of Jews in the war less than two decades after the last shots were fired, much of this writing was driven by a polemical rather than a scholarly agenda. Even after more than a century of research on this topic, there are still large gaps in our knowledge and myths that need to be punctured. With this in mind, the Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina organized a conference in May to explore Jews, Slavery and the Civil War.

Over the course of three days, a capacity audience heard more than 25 papers delivered by senior historians, including Gary Zola, Lee Shai Weissbach and Jonathan D. Sarna, and young scholars on a broad variety of topics. In several instances these challenged accepted orthodoxies (Judah P. Benjamin’s embrace of secession, the mobility of southern and northern Jews during Reconstruction, the pro-Democratic politics of New York’s Jews during the 1860’s, and the Southern Jewish Historical Society was well represented by its stalwarts. The Southern Jewish Historical Society was well represented by its stalwarts.

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SIGHTS, SOUNDS, AND STORIES OF THE JEWISH SOUTH
The Southern Jewish Historical Society • The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina
Joint Annual Conference • Columbia, South Carolina • October 27-30, 2011

First Name_________________________ Last Name__________________________ Spouse/Friend__________________________
Address________________________________________________________________________________________________
City_________________________ State__________________________ Zip__________________________
Phone_________________________ Email____________________________________________________________________

All meals will be Kosher-style. I request meals that are: [ ] Vegetarian [ ] Strictly Kosher (Must be pre-ordered).

Name(s) on name tags________________________________________________________________________________________

I WISH TO MAKE RESERVATIONS FOR THE FOLLOWING (Fees are per person; advance reservations are mandatory):

Registration for FULL program including all meals: $150.00 per person $___________
Registration for Optional Tour to Sumter, SC: $50.00 per person $___________

Separate attendance at select events:
Saturday Events including Evening reception: $100.00 per person $___________
Saturday Evening Program only: $50.00 per person $___________
Sunday Program plus meals: $50.00 per person $___________

Conference Sub-total: $___________

JHSSC Dues
— Individual / Family Membership $26
— Individual-Family or General Joint Membership to both JHSSC and SJHS $70
— Friend $200
— Sponsor $350
— Founding Patron $1,000
— Pillar ($1,000 yearly / 5 years) $1,000
— Foundational Pillar ($2,000 yearly /5 years) $2,000

SJHS Dues
— General Member $36
— Patron / Institutional $50
— Century Club $100
— Cedar $500
— Sycamore $1,000
— Magnolia $2,500
— Student (Individual) $15

Dues Sub-total: $___________

Conference and Dues Total: $___________

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