

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY



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Cover Picture: Sol Bear's wine factory, Wilmington, North Carolina. Bear and other German Jews who settled in nineteenth-century Wilmington are discussed on pages 1 to 43. (Courtesy of New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, NC.)

Jews at the Cape Fear Coast: A Portrait of Jewish Wilmington, NC, 1860–1880

by

Anton Hieke*

The years from 1860 to 1880 for Jewish Wilmington were formative. From a city, then the largest settlement in North Carolina, with a modest population of about sixty Jews in 1860, it developed into a thriving Jewish community of over two hundred people twenty years later. Constituted predominantly by immigrants from German Bavaria, ties already knotted in Europe marked the community. In 1867, Wilmington Hebrew Congregation became the first congregation established in the state. However, only a year later it was dissolved; the hazan, who officiated in the absence of an ordained rabbi, was sent away and the furniture of his residence auctioned off. It was apparently not the lack of interest of the Jewish citizens that caused Wilmington Hebrew Congregation to fail. Indeed, another congregation, Temple of Israel, was established only four years later that remains active today. While discussing possible reasons for the failure of the first congregation, this essay explores the layers of identity of Wilmington Jewry during the twenty years between 1860 and 1880: Jewish, southern/American, and Deutsch/German.

The Beginnings: Early Jewish Wilmington until 1860

Wilmington, the seat of New Hanover County, is located at the Cape Fear River near the North Carolina coast. Its first known

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Jewish residents, Aaron Lazarus and Aaron Riviera, came from Charleston, South Carolina, at the turn of the nineteenth century. Although the number of Jews grew steadily during the first half of the 1800s, it did not exceed twenty individuals by 1849, all of whom were native born.¹ These Jews had to adapt their Jewish identity because of the nature of life in a small Jewish community and their failure to establish a congregation until after the Civil War. Thus, some Jews attended services at St. James Episcopal Church without officially converting or abandoning their ancestral faith.² But, as Jacob Mordecai, one of the most prominent Jews in early nineteenth-century North Carolina, suggested in a literary criticism, “the modes of faith and forms of worship are immaterial; all equally acceptable [to God].”³

Nonetheless, the tolerance apparently stopped at conversion. When Gershon Lazarus, son of Aaron and grandson of Jacob Mordecai, was baptized in 1823 against his father’s will, Aaron Lazarus sent a stern letter to the Anglican bishop in Virginia, Richard C. Moore, denouncing the ceremony performed at St. James. He wrote

[I will] not conceal from you that it is my fervent hope that he will after mature reflection and thorough investigation return to what *I* [emphasis here and below in original] believe to be the true faith, and become from principle what he was first, from accident. . . . Acts of precipitancy too often lead to pangs of remorse, which as I conceive, is its peculiarity the duty of a teacher of religion to regard against. *I*, sir, though firm in my own faith do respect that of others and would not if it were in my power . . . to disturb it.⁴

Following an agreement between Lazarus and the reverend who had conducted the conversion, Gershon travelled to Richmond to study Jewish and Christian writings with Jacob Mordecai, who had become a traditionalist leader of Richmond Congregation Beth Shalome, and Bishop Moore to determine the correctness of his (Gershon’s) decision. This incident reflects the difficulties Jews met in areas with few coreligionists in order to retain their Jewish association. Most of Jacob Mordecai’s descendants in Wilmington and comparable small towns converted to

Christianity either out of conviction or as means of marrying Christian social peers.⁵

At home, Jewish Wilmingtonians observed the Jewish Sabbath, and laymen officiated during the High Holy Days in private homes within the city limits. Some residents most likely attended services in synagogues in larger communities such as Richmond, Virginia, or Charleston, South Carolina.⁶ As a result of their small numbers, affiliations with out-of-town synagogues, and the disruptions caused by the Civil War, Wilmington's Jewry failed to form a congregation until 1867. Another reason might be found in a division within Wilmington's Jewry along lines of origin and class that prevented unity. Sephardic Mordecai family members, for example, chose intermarriage or Jewish spinsterhood rather than considering German Jewish or Polish Jewish newcomers to North Carolina for marriage partners.

To retain a pious life according to Jewish law was a challenge for those who desired to do so. The supply of kosher meat, for instance, was not introduced to the city until 1876.⁷ Also, the first permanent mohel appears in records five years earlier.⁸ For early Jewish Wilmingtonians, the burial situation was especially problematic. The remains of deceased Jews had to be transferred to Jewish cemeteries as far away as Charleston, Richmond, Norfolk, or even New York for interment at great expense.⁹ No Jewish burial ground existed in the entire state of North Carolina, whose Jewish population had numbered about four hundred individuals as early as 1826.¹⁰ In 1852, a *chevra kadisha* was founded in Wilmington under the name True Brothers. It was the first organization in the state with the explicit goal of establishing a Jewish cemetery. The growth of the Jewish community through the immigration of Central European Jews in the 1840s and 1850s demanded a solution for handling the deceased. The recently arrived immigrants' role in the society was so prominent that Wilmington's *Daily Herald* referred to the new organization as "True Brothers (German Jews)."¹¹ In 1855 the new burial ground was dedicated as a part of the city cemetery with the attendance of Christians and consecrated by Isaac Leeser, the prominent hazan of congregation Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia, who was visiting

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the city.¹² After the dedication the True Brothers continued their work, provided burials in the ritually prescribed Jewish manner, and assumed expenses for destitute Jews. The society remained a bond for Jewish identity in Wilmington and carried on its work in the ensuing decades alongside the Harmony Circle, a social club founded in 1866, and the newly established lodges of B'nai B'rith and Keshet Shel Barzel.¹³

*Deutsch: Jewish Wilmington
and the Origin of its People, 1860–1880*

Wilmington's early Jewish community was largely composed of descendants of old Jewish American families of Sephardic background such as the Mordecais and Lazaruses. By 1860 the nature of the population had changed in favor of the German element. Wilmington's Jews from the Sephardic tradition no longer played a dominant role, unlike their counterparts in larger cities like Savannah or Charleston. From twenty Jews in 1849, the community increased threefold by 1860.¹⁴ Between 1860 and 1880, Wilmington's Jewish population more than tripled. In 1860, 63 Jews lived in Wilmington (0.6 percent of the population), 116 in 1870 (0.86 percent), and 215 in 1880 (1.23 percent).¹⁵ Of the 116 Jewish Wilmingtonians who are identifiable in 1870, the census closest to the formation of both congregations, 47 were American born, 38 of whom were under the age of eighteen and children of immigrants. Jewish Wilmington in 1870 was therefore a community of immigrants.¹⁶ And, the majority of the city's adult Jews, 56 of 77, were from German states.¹⁷ Fourteen Jewish Wilmingtonians came from Prussia but none of these verifiably from Prussia's Polish provinces. (For the origin of Wilmington's German Jewish immigrants, see the table on the facing page.)

Hasia Diner describes the typical German Jews in America of the period between 1820 and 1880 as young, single male and female immigrants coming from rural communities in southern Germany, predominantly from Bavaria. They had made their livelihood in Europe in small businesses and left because of economic hardships, restrictions (to marry, for instance), and/or followed relatives or friends in a chain migration pattern. In America they

Places of Birth for Jews of Wilmington, NC, 1860–1880 Based on the United States Censuses of 1860, 1870, and 1880			
Origin	1860	1870	1880
Baden	-	1	1
Bavaria, mainland/ not specified	18	27	40
Bavarian Palatinate	9	10	12
Hessen-Darmstadt	1	3, (1) ¹	4
Prussia, not specified	2	7	4
Prussian Hanover	3	4	4
Prussian Hessen[-Kassel]- Nassau	1	1	-
Prussian Westphalia	1	1	1
Prussian Silesia	-	1	1
Prussian Poland/ Posen, resp. Poznań	-	-	3
Württemberg	-	1	3
Germany, not specified	6	-	1
[Total Germany]	[41]	[57]	[74]
Austria-Hungary	-	1	-
France	-	-	1
Great Britain	-	1	2
Russia/Russian Poland	-	1	1
Canada	-	1	1
USA	1, (15)	9, (38)	33, (92)
Origin unknown	1, (5)	8	11
Total	63	116	215
% of Population	0.6	0.86	1.23

¹ Numbers in parentheses refer to Wilmingtonians under 18 years of age.

decided to settle in communities with other Jews from their home region. Once sufficiently affluent, the single young men returned to find spouses in the German villages and towns of their origin.¹⁸

This description matches the experiences of Jews in Wilmington: These people were young (the average adult Jewish Wilmingtonian in 1870 was thirty-two-years-old up from thirty-one in 1860), single (in 1860, there were only eight Jewish married couples), and self-employed or clerking for Jewish merchants. In 1870 the largest number of adult Jews were immigrants from Bavaria (thirty-eight), of whom at least ten were from Bavaria's extraterritorial province Bavarian Palatinate, also known as Rhenish Palatinate (in German: *Bayerische Pfalz* or *Rheinpfalz*). The French Republic had occupied this German territory on the western bank of the River Rhine for about twenty years, beginning in 1795. Officially annexed into the Napoleonic Empire in 1801, it remained French until the Congress of Vienna decreed its cession to the Kingdom of Bavaria in 1815.¹⁹ As subjects of France, the Jews in the Palatinate enjoyed political equality under the Code Napoléon/Code Civil for thirteen years. In 1808, the French so-called *Décret Infame*, however, again limited the rights of Jews in the Palatinate. Money lending was restricted, licenses for trading had to be obtained annually, and new Jewish immigrants were prohibited from settling in eastern France, i.e. the German provinces of the Empire.²⁰ This *décret* remained in effect in the Bavarian Palatinate until the 1840s but was, despite its anti-Jewish leitmotif, rather liberal compared to the conditions in Bavaria proper. There, Jews were liable to Bavaria's illiberal jurisdiction aimed at the reduction of the state's Jewish population. For instance, Bavarian Jews were subjected to the *Matrikelgesetz* (license law): closed *Matrikel* lists limited the number of Jews for each village and town individually to prevent growth of the Jewish population. Jewish residents received licenses to live in the community until their numbers reached the limits. Licenses for additional Jews, newcomers or children of residential families, were then refused and the surplus Jewish residents had to leave the community.²¹

The world the Bavarian immigrants left behind when they ventured to America was still dominated by rural villages and

small towns. Brothers Jacob, Daniel, and David Kahnweiler came from Rockenhausen as minors with their father, Benedict, in the 1840s.²² The Blumenthals, Abraham and his children Jacob, Samuel, and Rosa, came from Teschenmoschel²³ (today part of Rockenhausen). Bernard, Lewis, and Sigmund Solomon were from Ungstein,²⁴ as was Jacob Loeb and likely his cousin Jacob Lyon, born Loeb.²⁵ Abraham Weill came from Lambsheim²⁶ and Frederic Rheinsteins and his nephew Leopold Bluethenthal from Münchweiler an der Alsenz.²⁷ Nathan Greenewald was born in Breunigweiler, his daughter-in-law Rosa Sternberger in neighboring Börrstadt, as was her sister Henriette who married Samuel Blumenthal. West of Börrstadt lies Steinbach am Donnersberg, the birthplace of Leopold and Henry Brunhild²⁸ (originally Brünhild). These villages and small towns were in fact situated in the Bavarian province of the Palatinate. Identifiable native villages of later Wilmingtonians in the mainland of Bavaria include Bibergau²⁹ (Julius Fernberger), Fellheim³⁰ (Gustav Rosenthal and Bertha Solomon), Öttershausen³¹ (the Bear Family), Thüngen³² (Babette Bear, née Forcheimer), and Forchheim³³ (Lewis Schwarzman and Joseph Lederer).

These Jewish immigrants followed the same pattern of chain migration that holds true for much of the South and America. Typically, relatives or acquaintances followed earlier immigrants. Brothers William and Bernard Goodman sent to Bavaria first for their sister, Sophie Liebman, and later for their brother, Moritz, to work in their store.³⁴ Rockenhausen is only about five miles from Teschenmoschel, so at least an acquaintanceship between the Kahnweilers and Blumenthals before their emigration can be assumed. Samuel Blumenthal brought over his parents, two brothers, and a sister to Wilmington after the Civil War.³⁵ His wife Henriette Sternberger was born in Börrstadt, fifteen miles from Samuel's own birthplace. Breunigweiler, the Greenwalds' home, was within the same range. Jews of both Börrstadt and Breunigweiler attended services in the synagogue of Steinbach am Donnersberg, the origin of Leopold and Henry Brunhild of Wilmington. Thus a connection dating back to Bavaria likely existed for at least the Brunhilds, Blumenthals, the Sternberger sisters,³⁶

the Greenwalds and the Kahnweilers. In Ungstein, the Solomons only lived about 7.5 miles away from the Weills in Lambsheim. (See maps on the facing page.)³⁷ The world of the closed communities of rural Southern Germany of the first half of the nineteenth century strongly suggests that most of the immigrants from Bavaria or the Palatinate to Wilmington already knew each other.

Although Jews had constituted only a minority in the mid-nineteenth century German states,³⁸ the Bavarian villages and towns of origin of emigrants to Wilmington had considerable Jewish populations³⁹ that provided a potentially rich network after immigration, as well as a supply of German Jewish spouses. The portion of Jews in the communities ranged from 3.5 percent in Forchheim (103 Jews), 7.9 percent in Rockenhausen (140), 30 percent in Münchweiler (178), to 65 percent in Fellheim (92).⁴⁰ Dürkheim, to which Ungstein belongs today, and Münchweiler were also the seats of their districts' rabbinates.⁴¹ Öttershausen, the home village of the Bear family, on the other hand, had only a small Jewish community of about fifteen to twenty persons around 1820, and by 1880 it ceased to exist.⁴²

Most of these communities were neither large nor prosperous. For Rockenhausen, the mayor reported in 1866:

The Israelites in Rockenhausen largely are not in favorable financial circumstances as they are almost entirely without means. The other Israelites own some property but they have to be very active in their business in order to feed their families. Only one family is among them that might be called quite wealthy.⁴³

This wealthy family was in fact the Kahnweilers. Menasse Kahnweiler, described as "a rich and very religious man,"⁴⁴ set up a small synagogue for the community on the upper floor of one of his buildings in 1811.⁴⁵ His son, Heinrich/Hirsch, uncle of Wilmington's Kahnweilers, imported cotton and groceries, such as coffee. As a member of Rockenhausen's community council, Heinrich Kahnweiler participated in road construction and owned real estate including forest land as well as sheep.⁴⁶ Economic or financial hardships therefore do not seem to be reasons for the Kahnweilers to have left Europe.

THE GERMAN EMPIRE IN 1871

Map 1

THE ORIGIN OF JEWISH WILMINGTONIANS IN BAVARIA

Map 2

The socioeconomic background of the grandfather-generation of the German immigrants to Wilmington was rather homogeneous regardless of the size of the home community. With the exception of Marx Salomon Fernberg in Bibergau (probably a relative of Julius Fernberger) who in 1817 was listed in French records as a *Schmuser*, a term applied to a *shadchen*, the families of the future immigrants of Wilmington were traders in one way or another. The Böhr family of Öttershausen (Americanized to Bear in Wilmington) sold horses,⁴⁷ whereas the Rheinsteins of Münchweiler⁴⁸ and Levy Weill of Lamsheim dealt in cattle. Alexander Weill of the same community was a *Kolonialwarenhändler*, meaning grocer.⁴⁹ Abraham Salomon Fernberg of Bibergau⁵⁰ as well as Assor Brünhild of Steinbach am Donnersberg were also merchants. Samuel Brünhild of the same community dealt in potassium.⁵¹ The noticeable wealth of the Kahnweilers, however, was not normative for the immigrants from Germany to Wilmington. In 1810, the French Imperial occupants of the Palatinate counted the Jewish population according to tax brackets in order to raise the *Kultusumlage*, an early form of today's German church tax. Seventy percent of the Palatinate's Jewry belonged to the two lowest brackets (as did the Rheinsteins of Münchweiler, the Sternbergers of Börrstadt, and the Brünhilds of Steinbach am Donnersberg), and 28 percent could be described best as middle class (like the Löbs of Ungstein and the Weills of Lamsheim). Only 0.7 percent was considered wealthy, as were indeed the Kahnweilers.⁵² With the exception of this family, the typical immigrant from the Palatinate to Wilmington therefore came from a modest background but also did not belong to the poorest layer of society.

In North Carolina, Jewish Wilmingtonians followed the economic tradition of their families, which was the typical pattern for Jewish immigrants of that era. They were mostly self-employed merchants, often beginning as clerks in Jewish-owned stores. In 1860, for instance, Jews owned twelve of eighteen clothing stores in the city.⁵³ In 1870, twenty-six adult Jewish Wilmingtonians were dry goods and clothing merchants. Three were wholesale liquor dealers (Nathan Mayer, Gustav Rosenthal, and Henry

*Samuel Bear, 1868, left, and Abraham Weill, c. 1890.
(Courtesy of New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, NC,
and, right picture, from its collection of Laura Freedlander.)*

Brunhild). Herman Marcus operated a saloon, and Hannah Blumenthal a hotel. According to records, the only one working for a non-Jewish owned company in 1870 was Solomon Haas, a railway clerk,⁵⁴ who had also failed as an independent dry goods merchant the previous year.⁵⁵ By 1885 Frederick Rheinstein's company had developed into "the leading wholesale house in the state with a trade of about a half million dollars." After the Civil War, the shoe company of Sigmund and Bernard Solomon distributed shoes produced in Massachusetts throughout the South. Abraham David ran a clothing factory and produced police uniforms.⁵⁶

Many Jewish immigrants to Wilmington retained their German identity by participating in German organizations such as the

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*A. David Company Building, still standing at 212 N. Front Street.
The company, founded in 1865, moved to this building in 1908.
(Courtesy of New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, NC.)*

German-American Alliance, the Germania Lodge of the Knights of the Pythias, the Schützenverein (Rifles Club), and the German Club. Many of the Jewish men present during the Civil War had joined the German Volunteers. Economically, the German Jewish immigrants worked also in fields traditional in their home regions such as winemaking. Solomon Bear, for instance, was from one of Bavaria's important wine-producing regions near the river Main and became North Carolina's leading vintner. He later sent his son to the Rhineland to improve the company's skills in winemaking.⁵⁷ The German language also remained important in the community. At least until the turn of the twentieth century German was taught at Temple of Israel's congregational school together with Hebrew,⁵⁸ and the temple's Rabbi Mendelsohn gave sermons in German.⁵⁹ German identity was highlighted by Jewish participation in the celebration of the birthday of Kaiser Wilhelm I in 1887. Solomon Bear, Morris Katz, and Frederick Rheinwein were members of the event committee the following year. When the Kaiser died just two weeks before his ninety-first birthday, the celebrations were turned into a requiem with Rabbi Mendelsohn holding the memorial service at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, as organized by Daniel Kahnweiler. For that occasion, Jews draped their stores with black.⁶⁰ Still, this emphasis on their German background, like other pre-World War I German immigrants elsewhere in the United States, was carried out by a group within southern society, not by separated outsiders.

*Southern: Jewish Wilmingtonians
and Southern Identity, 1860-1880*

Wilmington's Jewry of 1860 was mainly composed of German immigrants who had settled in the city during the 1840s and 1850s and had become acculturated to the antebellum South. But how southern were they in their identity? The Kahnweiler and Brothers store, for instance, owned five slaves in 1860⁶¹ and became involved in hunts for runaways.⁶² Historian Jonathan Sarna wrote, "as a rule those southern Jews who could afford slaves owned them—that was the southern way."⁶³ The Federal Census for 1860 shows several Jewish Wilmingtonians with personal

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wealth over \$15,000, like Abraham Weill (\$55,000), Morris M. Katz (\$50,000), and Libman Anathan (\$18,000).⁶⁴ The Kahnweilers, however, were the only identifiable Jewish slaveholders in Wilmington in 1860. Even they owned slaves not as personal property but through their company.

Reward notice for a runaway slave, showing Kahnweiler & Brothers as the local agents, Wilmington Daily Journal, November 22, 1862.

(Courtesy of Anton Hieke.)

Overall, such a low number of slave owners is remarkable. Christian Wilmingtonians did not see a problematic issue in owning slaves. New Hanover County had a slave population of about seven thousand in 1860 compared with fifteen thousand free individuals.⁶⁵ At the same time, German-born David Elias, Levi Drucker, and Siegfried Frankenthal, fellow North Carolinian Jewish dry goods merchants from Charlotte, had no problem owning slaves.⁶⁶ In comparison to Jewish Wilmington, Atlanta had an equally young and small Jewish community (fifty-two Jews in 1860).⁶⁷ Unlike Wilmington, four out of the six Jewish families in 1850 owned slaves. As historian Steven Hertzberg points out, this proportion corresponded to the 75 percent of slave owners among Jews in larger cities such as Savannah and Charleston. Ten years

later, Jews in Atlanta not only owned slaves but also dealt in them as did David Mayer, Levi Cohen (that city's first mohel), and, on a larger scale, Solomon Cohen.⁶⁸ On the other hand, information indicates that Jews in Texas with a similar background as in Wilmington likewise owned few slaves.⁶⁹ In fact, Texas had, like North Carolina, a considerably lower slave population than Georgia or South Carolina.⁷⁰ For Wilmington, the reason might be found in the fact that the Jewish community was closely linked to Philadelphia where antislavery sentiments were widely held among its population. Jewish Wilmingtonians clearly could afford purchasing slaves but either did not do so for ethical reasons, or, as other southerners did during that period, simply rented them or owned them outside of Wilmington.⁷¹ In addition, fellow Jewish immigrants who came to Wilmington were often related to or acquainted with the Jewish merchants. They spoke the same language, German, and offered an alternative to a labor force based on slavery.

During the Civil War, many Jewish Wilmingtonians also fought for the Southern Cause, and Jacob Blumenthal and Henry Wertheimer died for it. Solomon Bear joined the German Volunteers in 1861, before being discharged and sent to Europe to run the blockade. Frederick Rheinstein and Abraham Weill both acted as purchasing agents, the latter for medical supplies in Charlotte.⁷² Wilmington, as one of the last southern cities to surrender, developed into one of the major centers of supply for the South by blockade running. During the war, the Kahnweilers offered rare products they received through this smuggling, such as millinery, shoes, and thread. Simon Kahnweiler went to Europe and served as an agent. The family also chartered a ship and imported much needed saltpeter and possibly used their father, Benedict, as an agent in Philadelphia.⁷³

Members of the later Temple of Israel, including M. M. Katz, Gustav Rosenthal, David Eignbrunner, and Jacob Weil, had served as soldiers.⁷⁴ All of them immigrated in the late 1840s and early 1850s, with Jacob Weil as late as 1857, and thus seemingly internalized the Confederate cause. But how far can army service be used as an indicator of acculturation? Solomon Fishblate, for

*Hebrew Section of Oakdale Cemetery, Wilmington, founded in 1855.
(Photograph by Jennifer Scott, New Hanover County Public Library.)*

example, was born in New York and fought for the Union during the war.⁷⁵ Yet, he later became a Jewish adherent of southern white, conservative racism in Wilmington.⁷⁶ Jews in Wilmington, coming to the city before the war or after, were fighting for their homes and interests during the conflict, but their fluid regional identity is reflected through their high mobility between northern and southern states, and their conviction remains unclear.⁷⁷ Apparently, serving the Confederacy, even voluntarily, did not necessarily define the Jews of Wilmington as having an exclusive southern identity. At the same time, serving the Union did not exclude such an identity for later Wilmingtonians as exemplified by Fishplate. The racism he accepted and performed was, of course, not a sign of southernness but simply of the widespread racism of his time throughout the United States (and Europe, one might add).

Some Jews made their loyalty clear during Reconstruction (1865 to 1877), when North Carolina, as the other former

Confederate states, experienced times of political upheaval. Nathaniel Jacobi and Solomon Fishblate were outspoken supporters of the conservative, white supremacist Democratic Party. Fishblate became the Democratic mayor of the city immediately after the official end of Reconstruction in 1878 and governed Wilmington for four years, longer than any other mayor between 1866 and 1884.⁷⁸ Samuel Bear, Abraham Weill, Gustav Rosenthal, David Aaron, and other Jewish Wilmingtonians joined the Young Men's Democratic Club, founded in 1863, with the purpose of supporting the Democrats.⁷⁹ Opportunities for political activities were expanded with the passage of Article 32 of North Carolina's constitution in 1868 by the Republican Reconstruction government. Previously Jews and non-Protestant Christians were excluded from state office.⁸⁰ It is, however, not known if some of the city's Jews supported the Republican Party.

Within Wilmington's social and fraternal organizations, Jews were active citizens of the community as members of Wilmington's Masonic Lodge St. John (e.g., Solomon Weill, Abraham Shrier, Nathan Mayer), the benevolent Royal Arcanum (e.g., Isaac L. Greenewald, Jacob Weil), and the Independent Order of the

*Solomon H. Fishblate, 1895.
(Courtesy of New Hanover
County Public Library,
Wilmington, NC.)*

Odd Fellows' Cape Fear Lodge (e.g., William Goodman and Nathaniel Jacobi).⁸¹ Historian J. S. Reilly claims that Nathaniel Jacobi played a pivotal role in the formation of the Wilmington chapters of the American Legion of Honor and the Knights of Honor.⁸²

Overall, Jewish Wilmingtonians were integrated members of Wilmington's white society and supporters of their southern home during the war. On the other hand, their identity as southerners is somewhat problematic. Apparently, Jewish Wilmingtonians were rather unfixed in their regional identity and constantly moved between North and South. Only sixteen of the sixty-three Jews in Wilmington of 1860 were still present in the city in 1880 and could be identified in the census.⁸³ Many Jewish Wilmingtonians had close ties to Philadelphia, a city easily accessible through a direct steamship line. The Kahnweilers resided there for several years in the 1840s after immigrating to the United States and before coming to Wilmington,⁸⁴ as had the families of David Aaron, Isaac Reichman, Jacob Loeb, and others.⁸⁵ Samuel Blumenthal had peddled in Pennsylvania,⁸⁶ and Morris M. Katz managed a Philadelphia hotel before coming to Wilmington in 1853.⁸⁷ Of the Jewish Wilmingtonians in 1860, twenty-seven found a new home elsewhere by 1870, and most of them, twenty-one, in Philadelphia.⁸⁸ By 1880, several Jewish families from Wilmington had moved to Philadelphia and then returned, as did the families of Simon Anathan, David Aaron, Jacob Lyon, and Solomon Levy.⁸⁹ The Nathan Greenwalds came from Philadelphia to Wilmington by 1880.⁹⁰ Abraham Weill and his family resided in Wilmington in 1860, in Philadelphia in 1870, and in Wilmington again in 1880, whereas son Charles reportedly resided in California for some time between 1870 and 1880.⁹¹ Philadelphia also became important in the process of forming the second Wilmington congregation. Rabbi Marcus Jastrow of Philadelphia's congregation Rodeph Shalom inspired and guided the formation of Temple of Israel.⁹²

New York was the other important city for Jewish Wilmingtonians. Several New York Jews moved to Wilmington after the war. Typically, these newcomers acted as agents for northern companies, like Solomon H. Fishblate and his brother Ephraim for

Louis Davis & Co. of New York.⁹³ Usually, relatives ran the mother companies. In the 1870s, tobacco dealers and brothers Henry Humboldt and Charles Kasprovicz did business in the name of their father who lived in New York.⁹⁴ Daniel Kahnweiler most likely returned to Wilmington from New York where his family had moved by 1870 in order to manage the family's store in North Carolina.⁹⁵ Isaac D. Ryttenberg "commenced business since the occupation of Wilmington by federal troops."⁹⁶ He was an officer of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation and possibly worked with his brother Marcus for their father Joseph, who had relocated from New York to Sumter, South Carolina.⁹⁷ The mobility of Jewish Wilmingtonians was not confined to business relations. For instance, Robert and Louisa Katz lived in New York in 1880, while their father, Morris, resided in Wilmington.⁹⁸

Richmond, Baltimore, and Charleston, the large Jewish communities closest to Wilmington, appear to have exerted little substantial pull to Wilmington's residents. Only the Jacobis, Moses Spertners, and Nathan A. Cohens lived in Charleston before coming to North Carolina. J. I. Macks, born in Virginia, was the only one who had resided in Baltimore before coming to Wilmington.⁹⁹ Other Jewish Wilmingtonians left the city for even farther places. Prussian-born Charles Posner, a clerk in Wilmington in 1870, may have gone to the Dakota Territory; and Austrian-born Charles Boskowitz, also a clerk in 1870, went to Carson City, Nevada, by 1880 (he also married a Christian).¹⁰⁰ Julius Fernberger and his wife Theresa, née Bear, returned to Bavaria in 1888.

The birthplaces of their children especially reflect the Jewish Wilmingtonians' high mobility. Twenty of Wilmington's sixty-three Jews in 1860 were minors, eleven of whom were born in North Carolina; one, Harry Loeb, in Pennsylvania. The three children of Hanoverian Herman Marcus were born in Connecticut (the family resided in Wilmington since about 1858 and returned to New Haven, Connecticut, by 1880).¹⁰¹ In 1880, Wilmington was home to ninety-two Jewish children, seventy-two of them born in North Carolina. Of the other twenty, one each was born in Illinois (Joseph Scharff), New York (Benedict Kahnweiler), Tennessee (Miriam Greenwald), Alabama (Theresa Scharff), and Missouri

(William Rosenthal, whose parents were in Wilmington in 1860, but had moved to Missouri by 1864 where William was born. The family returned to Wilmington by 1880). Seven were born in Pennsylvania, four in Virginia, and three in Georgia.¹⁰² In their mobility, Jewish Wilmingtonians therefore defy being confined to a southern identity and were rather, to paraphrase historian Mark Bauman, Jewish Americans: Southern Style.¹⁰³

Jewish: The Two Congregations of Wilmington

As early as 1852 in his *Occident and Jewish Messenger*, Isaac Leeser had bemoaned the fact that there was no synagogue in North Carolina although there were enough Jews to be found in the state, a criticism he repeated in 1860.¹⁰⁴ In 1867, he emphasized:

It is curious that in all North Carolina there is not a Jewish congregation. There are many individuals at Wilmington,—I hear more than one hundred and twenty souls,—of whom at least ninety-five are adults, many in Newbern, others in Fayetteville, others again in Charlotte, and thus far it has been an utter failure to have as much as a Shochet in any of these places. I hope it may be different soon, as the present state of things is not alone disgraceful, in a religious point of view, but hurtful to Israelites—to their respectable standing in the community; for their townsmen are not blind to the fact that of all denominations the Jews alone are without a place of worship or any religious organization.¹⁰⁵

Besides the situation being discussed among Christians, or “their townsmen” as Leeser put it, Wilmington’s reputation within broader American Jewry also suffered. In a private letter to Leeser in 1867 Alfred T. Jones, president of Philadelphia’s Congregation Beth El Emeth and future editor of the *Jewish Record*, wrote: “Your description of the Jews of Wilmington is not very hopeful, but I fear it is but a sample of those in the South & South Western towns. Mammon appears to be the god they worship everywhere & every thing [*sic*] is sacrificed to moneymaking, which must be obtained at price.”¹⁰⁶

Although efforts had been made to establish a congregation as early as 1860,¹⁰⁷ the war precluded success. Apparently it was

Leeser's repeated public criticism that sparked the establishment of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation on Rosh Hashanah in 1867. The importance of this event was stressed by an invitation to the governor of North Carolina to attend the ceremony. Although he declined, he sent his greetings.¹⁰⁸ In its coverage of the event, the *Occident* stated twenty-three members and several sponsors raised almost two thousand dollars in postwar Wilmington for a house of worship¹⁰⁹ that eventually occupied a former church.¹¹⁰ The congregation was dissolved, however, only a year later and the hazan, E. M. Myers, left Wilmington for New York. The *Wilmington Star* covering the event stated the lack of funding for the congregation as the reason for its failure. The fact that the furniture at the hazan's residence was auctioned off seems to support this.¹¹¹ The reason given, however, does not seem completely plausible since four years later the problems in funding were obviously solved when the permanent Reform Temple of Israel was established and twenty thousand dollars was raised for the building of a synagogue in 1876.¹¹² Wilmington Hebrew Congregation appears to have been dissolved because of tensions between the congregation and hazan over the issue of orthodox practice and personal reasons.

Rabbi Martin Weitz, in his centennial history *Bibilog* of Temple of Israel, sees Wilmington Hebrew Congregation as a result of Leeser's efforts to fight reform as propagated by Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati and David Einhorn of Baltimore and Philadelphia, by increasing the number of traditional congregations in the United States.¹¹³ The same year that the Wilmington congregation was established, Leeser, for instance, also initiated the formation of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation in Atlanta.¹¹⁴ As to its orthodox nature, Wilmington's Hazan Myers stated in 1867 "that everything has been organized on orthodox principles, and that these will be preserved in all public affairs."¹¹⁵ His congregants, however, apparently disagreed. Even though they had observed the holy days in an orthodox style before the official establishment of the congregation,¹¹⁶ overall submittal to traditionalism, as Hazan Myers demanded, appears to have been impossible or not desired by the majority of Wilmington's Jews. The observance of tradition by

the congregants of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation was held so low that Hazan Myers in December 1867, about two and one-half months after the establishment of the congregation, deliberated to his congregants:

[His] object was, if possible, to induce them to close their establishments on the Sabbath day. He pointed out to them most forcibly the necessity for their so doing, and the great and lasting injury they were doing to the growing generation by its violation. He went on to point out to them the ridiculous position in which they placed themselves by forming a congregation and not keeping the Sabbath, and appealed in the strongest manner to their feelings as Jews, as men and as parents.¹¹⁷

Resolutions were passed on that occasion with the congregation pleading in written form their desire to keep orthodox rules — with little result. Within the sole year of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation's existence, the *Occident* reported on another occasion that the hazan repeated his requests publicly. In March 1868, Jewish Wilmingtonians had invited him to a "surprise party . . . in token of their good feeling and commendation."¹¹⁸ This was a goodwill event to bring together hazan and congregation. He used the occasion to demand their adherence to orthodoxy once more. He said:

[That] if they failed in the observance of that duty, they rendered themselves a "by-word and a laughing-stock among the nations," and neglected a fundamental principle of our holy religion. That he referred to it upon the present occasion, because it was a subject so near to his heart that he would never rest in his endeavors until he had accomplished it, and that it was necessary to his happiness amongst them.¹¹⁹

There is little doubt that Hazan Myers had submitted both articles to the *Occident* himself. The hazan's complaints were reprinted in the London *Jewish Chronicle* and the German *Der Israelit*,¹²⁰ thus exposing and denouncing Wilmington Jewry's failures in observance and practice internationally, including to their families in Europe. As it appears, neither hazan nor congregants were very happy with each other. In 1867, Isaac Leeser had introduced E. M. Myers as a scholar.¹²¹ Within his year in North

Carolina, he indeed published a revision of *Twelve Hundred Questions and Answers on the Bible* by the London rabbis M. H. and I. H. Myers.¹²² Unfortunately for him, Wilmington was small and home to a Jewish community unwilling to abide by orthodox practice – a matter genuinely dear to Myers. Having lived without hazan or rabbi for years, the congregants apparently were also unwilling to give up their individual autonomy. Myers was therefore obviously fighting an already lost battle. From the congregants' perspective, the result of their struggle for a Jewish congregation left them with an uncompromising hazan who constantly admonished them.

Another reason for the failure of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation might be found in the different backgrounds of its members, as exemplified by the officers. Of the congregation's five officers, three were non-Germans: President Nathaniel Jacobi, born in England; Treasurer Isaac D. Ryttenberg, native of Russian Poland; and trustee Abraham Wronski, born most likely in Prussian Poland. Only Vice President Gustav Rosenthal, native of Bavaria, and trustee Herman Marcus, born in Prussian Hanover, were from the German provinces.¹²³ The board therefore did not represent the Jewish community of Wilmington in 1870 that was predominately influenced by German culture and less firmly rooted in orthodoxy in comparison to Jews coming from eastern Europe including from Polish Prussia.¹²⁴ As there are no minutes available for this congregation, the non-German Jews' role in the formation of the congregation remains unknown. However, they appear rather influential when taking into consideration their overrepresentation on the board and the difficulties between the orthodox hazan and less traditional, mostly German congregants.

The majority of the congregants had been raised in a Jewish environment in German states where modernization and the *Haskalah* were exerting an impact well before they reached eastern Europe.¹²⁵ In the first decades of the nineteenth century, many German administrations also had commenced to demand Jewish "Emancipation through *Bildung*." *Bildung*, education and cultivation according to the majority's German norms, was seen as the foundation of emancipation, or better acculturation to

German culture.¹²⁶ Rabbis were required to have university degrees, to speak German, and to refrain from Yiddish during services.¹²⁷ These measures laid the basis for a “reforming” Judaism in German-speaking Europe and thus, through the immigrants, in America. In addition, Wilmington’s Jewish community was closely linked to Philadelphia and constantly moving between North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Philadelphia’s congregations were moving away from orthodoxy and undergoing reforms in the 1860s themselves, and influential reformers like David Einhorn, Samuel Hirsch, and Marcus Jastrow occupied the city’s pulpits.¹²⁸ Moreover, Isaac Leeser, who had supported not only Wilmington Hebrew Congregation but also a more conservative approach to reforming American Judaism, died in 1868. Thus, Leeser’s “alternative strategy aimed at regenerating Jews within the confines of Jewish law lacked a nationwide champion and lost ground,” as historian Jonathan Sarna wrote.¹²⁹ Moreover, Jews had experienced life in more or less secular surroundings in North Carolina for at least a decade. To

*Postcard showing Market Street, looking east from Fourth Street,
with Temple of Israel on right, 1910.*

(Courtesy of New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, NC.)

Hazan Myers's dismay, his congregants apparently possessed, as historian Stephen Whitfield phrased it, a "braided identity" as Jews:

Jews might tincture the values and lives of other Southerners; but they lacked the numbers or the will to form a vigorous, cohesive, and self-sustaining subculture of their own. They were especially susceptible to the regional pride and mores that, beginning in the nineteenth century, were so pervasive and intense.¹³⁰

Wilmington announcement, 1876.

(Courtesy of New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, NC.)

As southerners, Jews in Wilmington had managed to balance their Jewish and southern or, more accurately, their American, identity. They kept their self-perception of being Jewish, followed Jewish traditions and laws. In 1871, for instance, the *Wilmington Star* reported that so many Jews had honored the holidays and had closed their stores that "some of the business localities would have presented the appearance of Sunday."¹³¹ But despite some symbols of their Judaism, overall submittal to Jewish law, as Myers demanded, appears to have been no longer desirable for the majority of Wilmington's Jewry. Traditional practice would also have set them apart too dramatically from the rest of Wilmington's society.

Orthodoxy itself separated Jews adherent to this branch of Judaism from gentile Americans ideologically since Jerusalem was in the center of traditional religious and spiritual identity. One part of the seder at Passover puts the tenet in a nutshell when the traditional Haggadah reads: "This year we celebrate [the Passover seder] here, but next year we hope to return to celebrate it in the land of Israel. This year we are bondsmen, but next year we hope to be free men." Jews in America, and especially those living in the South, had experienced the true meaning of an existence as bondsmen or slaves. As eyewitnesses of slavery themselves, they were most likely aware of the incompatibility of this idea with their own situation as free people. Moreover, the spiritual orientation toward the land of Israel with the expressed hope for redemption to end the Diaspora in this foreign land (the United States) had conflicted ideologically with the desire to find a permanent home in America. Earlier generations of American Jews could only abandon their faith if they found it to be unfulfilling,¹³² as did some of Jacob Mordecai's children. Jews now had an alternative in the early Reform movement that reflected their reality as Jews for whom the Diaspora had ended with their life in America. Consequentially, Reform Judaism moved America into the center of the national creed, the same way as its German counterpart, *Liberales Judentum*, did with the German Empire.

In some German states, the *Gemeindezwang* (literally, "compulsion of community") required Jews until the 1870s to either belong to the Jewish community in their hometown or to convert to Christianity.¹³³ It consequentially made the leaders of the Jewish communities both influential and inescapable. The immigrants to Wilmington, however, were not bound to a *Gemeindezwang* they knew in Europe. They were free to make decisions on behalf of their congregations, especially with emerging Reform Judaism that also allowed the congregation to contest the power of their rabbis. Thus, a situation where neither hazan nor congregants apparently were happy with one another provided an option for Wilmington's Jewry. As Americans they were free to make changes. In Atlanta, the congregation that was formed the same year as the one in Wilmington also took steps toward reform after

Leeser's death. Atlanta's Hebrew Benevolent Congregation hired a new rabbi who would lead them to further modifications.¹³⁴ Members of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation chose a different path by allowing the congregation to fade away altogether. Rabbi Weitz wrote, "attendance diminished, membership declined, and revenues—and the great hopes of 1867 ceased to be."¹³⁵ The hazan was sent away, the building abandoned, and services were held at private homes including that of Nathaniel Jacobi. Overall, the dissolution of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation appears to have been an internal agreement among the congregants against their hazan and his traditionalism.

Yet, to dispense with a synagogue altogether was not an option. Instead of a neglect of Judaism or a hollow devotion to it in accord with southern public religiosity, the years following the failure of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation saw an accentuation of the former congregants' Jewish identity. The Harmony Circle was founded in 1866. In 1874, North State Lodge, no. 222, of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith was established. Two years later, Manhattan Lodge, no. 158, of the benevolent Keshet Shel Barzel followed.¹³⁶ The lists of officers of these organizations were more or less identical. For younger Jews, the Irving Literary and Debating Society was founded in 1873, and in 1881, the Young Men's Hebrew Association.¹³⁷ Among other activities, the organizations invited lecturers to Wilmington to discuss aspects of Jewish life. That way the organizations fostered interaction between Jews and gentiles. Former Governor Zebulon Vance provides the most prominent example with the deliverance of his philosemitic "The Scattered Nation" presentation at the request of the True Brothers Society.¹³⁸ The Ladies' Concordia Society, officially formed in 1872, was equally important for the development of the new congregation. Although some evidence indicates the women of Wilmington had already supported Wilmington Hebrew Congregation in 1867, their works benefited Reform Temple of Israel the most. Through fundraising events such as balls, concerts, and festivals, the women's auxiliary supported the construction of the synagogue the same way as ladies' societies did in other communities.

They provided the organ, Torah, and maintenance of the building.¹³⁹

Four years after the failure of the traditional congregation, mentored by Isaac Leeser, his Reform counterpart Isaac Mayer Wise reported:

[There] is no Hebrew congregation in the State of North Carolina. . . . It is, therefore, of particular interest to learn that our co-religionists of Wilmington, N.C. have resolved to establish a Minhag America congregation in that city and to erect a synagogue. . . . Some forty men had responded to the call, resolved upon the construction of a congregation, the erection of a synagogue, the adoption of the Minhag America, and subscribed \$3,000 on the spot, to carry out all these points.¹⁴⁰

Wise propagated the idea of adjusting Judaism to the realities of life in America. For this purpose, "he . . . traveled the length and breadth of the country, preaching, dedicating new synagogues, and spreading the gospel of Jewish religious reform wherever he went."¹⁴¹ Wise had visited Wilmington in 1850¹⁴² but it is unknown if he revisited the city in the 1870s. His ideas, however, found fertile soil, and Wilmington's Jews began preparation for the establishment of a new congregation. Rabbi Marcus Jastrow, a prominent rabbi of Philadelphia, was invited to Wilmington to help in the process of establishing the new congregation, which was officially organized in 1872. Three years later, however, Wise scorned Wilmington's Jewry for still not having found a house of worship and a permanent rabbi. He was especially affronted by the fact that Nathaniel Jacobi's son, Edward, was buried by a Baptist clergyman because there was no rabbi available. (Nathaniel Jacobi himself typically officiated as a lay reader.) Wise wrote:

[There] is no place of worship, no minister, not one single person who could have conducted the simple services usually performed at the grave of an Israelite. Is this not a shame, a disgrace and reproach to all Israel? That such a large number of persons, claiming to be Israelites, should be content to live without a semblance of religious organization, and only awake to a knowledge of necessity therefore by the occurrence of a death in

their midst is very singular, and deserves no better name than criminal neglect.¹⁴³

The building was erected within one year, and a rabbi was hired. Jastrow's student, Lithuanian-born Samuel Mendelsohn of Philadelphia officiated as the congregation's rabbi until shortly before his death in 1922. The news coverage of the dedication of the temple indicated that membership totaled approximately forty, about twice the number of the previous congregation.¹⁴⁴ Whereas Germans and non-Germans alike had served as officers of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation, the officers of the new congregation were, with the exception of Treasurer Nathaniel Jacobi, exclusively German: President Solomon Bear, Vice President Abraham Weill, Secretary Jacob I. Macks (born in Virginia to Bavarian parents), and directors Frederick Rheinlein, Solomon Levy, Morris M. Katz, Nathan Greenwald, and Herman Marcus.¹⁴⁵ These men thus represented the community majority. Yet, fervent Reform was not forced upon a community whose orthodoxy had failed only four years before. As Leonard Rogoff writes, "Typical of American congregations, Temple of Israel's commitment [to Reform] was inconsistent and wavering. The Temple included an organ and family pews. There were no daily services nor were skullcaps required. Rather than Wise's *Minhag America*, the prayer book first chosen was Rabbi Benjamin Szold's *Abodat Yisrael*, amended by Rabbi Jastrow, which served to mediate between reform and traditionalism."¹⁴⁶

The ceremonies in connection with the erection of Temple of Israel, the first Jewish house of worship built solely for that purpose in North Carolina, were marked by American and southern symbols. Representatives of the St. John and Wilmington Masonic lodges laid the cornerstone of the new Moorish-style building on July 15, 1875.¹⁴⁷ Residents of the city participated by marching in a procession.¹⁴⁸ And they deserved to be included: Christian Wilmingtonians had donated money toward the erection of the temple because, as the *Morning Star* phrased it, "[The city's Jews] are but a handful as compared with other denominations and must of necessity rely upon a certain outside aid."¹⁴⁹

Ground was broken on May 20, 1875, the centennial of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, North Carolina's alleged dissolution of its ties with Britain that occurred before any other colony.¹⁵⁰ A facsimile copy of the declaration was laid into the cornerstone, along with lists of the local B'nai B'rith lodge, the True Brothers Society, the Harmony Club,¹⁵¹ and nondenominational fraternal organizations, including the Free Masons. Also placed within the cornerstone were local and New York newspapers (one being from 1775), bylaws of the temple, bonds and currency of the Confederacy, money of the Union minted during and after the Civil War, and European coins, mostly from the southern German states.¹⁵²

For the congregation, however, not all was settled and peaceful. Tensions still appeared among the congregants and also with the rabbi. In October 1877, the *Jewish South* printed an anonymous letter to the editor that presented both congregation and rabbi in an unfavorable light:

The affairs of the congregation are, alas, not in as prosperous a condition as at the time when you [editor Dr. E. B. M. Browne] were here with us; dissensions have arisen, disturbing seriously the attendance at service and completely disorganizing our former fine choir. This sad state of affairs has been brought about mainly by the officiating, [*sic*] minister who is a young man possessed of an uncontrollable, [*sic*] rash temper, and instead of healing these wounds, seems to have made it a study to increase and aggravate the cause.¹⁵³

At least one member left the congregation for reasons other than departing Wilmington. Abraham Wronski, formerly an officer of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation, resigned his seat in 1876.¹⁵⁴ Most tensions, however, were overcome and the congregation moved towards Reform. In 1878, Temple of Israel joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the recently formed central organization of the American Reform movement.¹⁵⁵ Two years later, the congregation had thirty-eight members and the same number of children enrolled in Sabbath school.¹⁵⁶ Temple of Israel proved to be one of the enduring

*Temple of Israel's historic sanctuary as it appears today.
(Photograph by Jennifer Scott, New Hanover County Public Library.)*

congregations of the American Southeast and remains in existence as a Reform congregation today.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

For Jewish Wilmington the two decades between 1860 and 1880 proved to be formative. Within these twenty years, the city's Jewish population more than tripled, from about sixty to over two hundred. Comparable to many Jewish communities in America of the period, most Jewish Wilmingtonians were immigrants from Central Europe, predominantly from Bavaria and the Bavarian Palatinate. They typically came from rural towns with a rather large Jewish proportion and from families with traditional Jewish professions as self-employed petty merchants, generating only modest income. They therefore represented the typical contemporary German Jewish immigrants. Once in America, Jews who resided in Wilmington demonstrated a high mobility that

connected them especially with Philadelphia and New York. A residence in one of these cities was typical for Jews before coming to or after leaving Wilmington. The choice to move to North Carolina, either directly from German states or indirectly through Philadelphia or New York, was apparently often made on the basis of associations previously formed in the old country. Within the city, they overwhelmingly became self-employed merchants or worked as clerks for small retail establishments owned by Jews, similar to Jews in other communities throughout the United States.

They were not exclusively or even primarily southern in their American identity. As many Jewish Wilmingtonians fought and some died for the Confederacy during the Civil War, their support for their southern home seems obvious, but there also appear limits in their southern acculturation. Unlike Jews in some other southern communities, Jewish Wilmingtonians were, with the exception of one family, not slaveholders in 1860 and instead relied on cheap immigrant workers, typically relatives or acquaintances. In this, Jewish families and businesses resembled more an antebellum North than the South. With only temporary residence in the South, Jews of the city were not limited to a southern identity, but were Americans with rather flexible identities that bridged North and South even in an era of tensions between the regions. As residents of Wilmington, they actively participated in the city's society by joining benevolent and secret societies, the Masons being one example. Jewish Wilmingtonians also became politically active as exemplified by Democrat Solomon Fishblate.

Wilmingtonians established the state's first Jewish congregation in 1867, but Wilmington Hebrew Congregation did not reach its second anniversary. It had been the product of the desire of Wilmington's Jews to establish their own house of worship and Isaac Leaser's constant pressure upon its necessity. The reasons for its failure were to be found in the tensions between hazan and congregation over the practice of traditional Judaism itself. The fact that most congregants were immigrants from the German states and acculturated in America over several decades proved incompatible with the maintenance of traditional Judaism as their

admonishing and inflexible hazan demanded. The hazan's rigid emphasis on ritual and practice conflicted with the realities of life in Wilmington. In addition, the constant movement of Wilmington's Jewry between North Carolina and Philadelphia also brought them in contact with the emerging Reform movement in Pennsylvania. The first congregation was dissolved rather than reform, a path taken in Wilmington that was unique when compared to other Jewish communities such as Atlanta that developed towards an Americanized Judaism at the same time. Although the congregation was allowed to fade, the early 1870s saw an accentuation of Jewish identity through the establishment of Jewish organizational, social, and spiritual structures. Reform Judaism provided an alternative to the rigidness of traditionalism for Jews in Wilmington, as elsewhere in the United States. In 1872, a new congregation, Temple of Israel, was formed and during the decade moved towards Reform; a building was erected in 1876. Overall, Wilmington Jewry developed their Judaism according to their own needs, with setbacks such as the failure of the first congregation, but eventually laying the basis for a lasting American Jewish Reform congregation with Bavarian roots in the South.

NOTES

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¹ Isaac Markens, *The Hebrews in America: A Series of Historical and Biographical Sketches* (New York, 1888), 113–114.

² Emily Bingham, *Mordecai: An Early American Family* (New York, 2003), 132–136.

³ *Ibid.*, 69, 132–136. Insertion in quotation of Jacob Mordecai “[to God]” was made by Bingham. Church services for Jews also served more purposes than simply religious ones. Myron Berman states that at least for Emma Mordecai “attendance at church was a social as much as [an] intellectual outlet.” Myron Berman, *The Last of the Jews?* (Lanham, MD, 1998), 71.

⁴ Aaron Lazarus to Bishop Richard C. Moore, January 1, 1823, Correspondence Files, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter cited as AJA).

⁵ Myron Berman, *Last of the Jews*, 71. Of Jacob Mordecai's daughters, none who married remained Jewish. Only the unmarried retained their faith.

⁶ David J. Goldberg, "An Historical Community Study of Wilmington Jewry, 1738–1925" (history seminar paper, University of North Carolina, 1976), 10–11.

⁷ "Kosher Meat—A New Practice Inaugurated in Wilmington," *Wilmington (NC) Star*, April 7, 1876.

⁸ The *Jewish Messenger* reported a triple circumcision performed by Reverend Moses Spertner in Wilmington. See Jeremiah J. Berman, "The Trend in Jewish Religious Observance in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, (1947): 43. Spertner was from Charleston and lived in Wilmington in the 1870s before moving to Norfolk, VA, by 1880. See Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Charleston, South Carolina; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Norfolk, Virginia. From Wilmington, he advertised as a "practical Mohel for the last 25 years in the States of South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia." (Atlanta) *Jewish South*, August 30, 1878, 8.

⁹ *The Occident*, 13 (1856), quoted in Rabbi Karl Rosenthal, "Brief History of Temple of Israel," *75th Anniversary of Temple of Israel Wilmington, North Carolina* (Wilmington, 1951), 3.

¹⁰ Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585–1984* (Lanham, MD, 1984), 165. Marcus relies on historical censuses and estimations. The numbers have to be taken cautiously for they differ drastically for each given year. In 1900, North Carolina is said to have been the home to 12,000 Jews, five years later only half that number, and another two years after that only 1,500. The numbers are not convincing although Marcus's source for both latter numbers was the *American Jewish Yearbook* for the given years.

¹¹ *Wilmington (NC) Daily Herald*, May 3, 1855.

¹² "Address, Delivered at Wilmington, North Carolina, at the Opening of the Jewish Burying-Ground, March 6th, 5616," *Occident and Jewish Messenger*, 13 (1855): 215–224.

¹³ For the importance of Jewish associations as a bonding element for Jewish identity, see Cornelia Wilhelm, *Deutsche Juden in Amerika: Bürgerliches Selbstbewusstsein und jüdische Identität in den Orden B'nai B'rith und Treue Schwestern, 1843–1914* (Stuttgart, 2007). An English translation is being prepared.

¹⁴ The following overview of Jewish Wilmingtonians, 1860–1880, is based on the membership list of Temple of Israel (Treasurer Records of Temple of Israel 1876–1888, Wilmington, NC, Microfilm No. 2723, AJA); B'nai B'rith, Keshet Shel Barzel, Young Men's Hebrew Association, the Ladies' Concordia Society, and Harmony Circle; see individual organization records in Bill Reaves Collection, New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, NC (hereafter cited as Reeves Collection); records of Oakdale cemetery (survey by the author); the R. G. Dun credit reports for the 1840s until 1880 (Wilmington, NC, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, v. 18, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School,

Boston); and contemporary publications. Identifiable names of Jews in Wilmington were researched in the United States census records for 1860–1900. Persons who were identifiable as Jews in Wilmington in the period 1860–1880 but who were not found in the census were counted as Wilmingtonians in the census year closest to the time of their evidenced residence in the city. In the table of Jewish Wilmingtonians given below, they appear with in the “birthplace unknown” column. Due to the nature of this research, the statistics cannot be considered to be definite but are as close as possible.

¹⁵ The city directory for 1860–1861 gives the number of Wilmingtonians as 11,000. T. Tuther, Jr., *Kelley's Wilmington Directory to Which is Added a Business Directory for 1860–61* (Wilmington, NC, 1860), 12. The numbers for Wilmington's population for 1870 (13,500) and 1880 (17,350) were taken from “The 1898 Wilmington Conflict: Context and Overview,” *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Home Page*, <http://1898wilmington.com/index.shtml> (accessed April 27, 2010).

¹⁶ Only Isaac D. Ryttenberg (Russian Poland), Charles Julius Boskowitz (Austria-Hungary), Godfrey Hart (Canada), and Nathaniel Jacobi (Great Britain) were immigrants born outside of Germany.

¹⁷ The concept and territory of Germany changed drastically during the twenty years for which this survey of Jewish Wilmington was taken. After the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, victorious Prussia annexed, among other territories, the formerly independent states of Hanover, Hessen-Kassel, and Nassau, the latter two were incorporated into the Prussian state as one province: Hessen-Nassau. Five years later, after the Franco-Prussian War, the newly unified Germany took possession of French Alsace-Lorraine (Louisa Rosenthal, shown as being from France in the census of 1880, might in fact be from there). The political entities shown in the table therefore represent the situation of the not yet unified Germany in 1870. Hanover and Hessen-Nassau were thus independent states in 1860 but Prussian provinces in the table. Also, all German states lost their individual independence by 1880.

¹⁸ Hasia Diner, *The Jewish People in America: A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration 1820–1880* (Baltimore and London, 1992), 42–49.

¹⁹ Ellen Latzin, “Bayern und die Pfalz: Eine historische Beziehung voller Höhen und Tiefen,” *Einsichten und Perspektiven: Bayerische Zeitschrift für Politik und Geschichte*, No. 02/2006) http://www.km.bayern.de/blz/eup/02_06_themenheft/index.asp (accessed February 13, 2010).

²⁰ Hermann Greive, *Die Juden: Grundzüge ihrer Geschichte im Mittelalterlichen und Neuzeitlichen Europa* (Darmstadt, 1980), 156.

²¹ “Bavaria,” *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, (1901–1906). See also Hannes Ludyga, *Die Rechtsstellung der Juden in Bayern von 1819 bis 1918: Studie im Spiegel der Verhandlungen der Kammer der Abgeordneten des bayerischen Landtags* (Berlin, 2007).

²² Jacob Kahnweiler Passport, 1863, Philadelphia, <http://search.ancestry.com> (accessed March 12, 2010).

²³ Abraham Blumenthal Family Sheet, New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, NC, and Abraham Blumenthal [1875-1964], "Life in Wilmington," ca. 1950. Samuel Blumenthal came to North Carolina first and then sent for his family.

²⁴ Bernard Solomon's tombstone inscription, 1854-1943, Oakdale Cemetery, Wilmington, NC, and Sigmund Solomon Passport, 1879, New Hanover County, NC, <http://search.ancestry.com> (accessed February 27, 2010).

²⁵ Jacob Loeb obituary, April 5, 1888, Reaves Collection. Both Jacob Loebes were merchants. To prevent confusion, one of them who joined his cousin in Wilmington changed his name to Lyon, the Americanized form of the original Loeb/Löwe [Lion].

²⁶ Abraham Weill's tombstone inscription, 1831-1902, Oakdale Cemetery.

²⁷ Frederick Rheinsteint obituary, *Wilmington Star*, January 17, 1899; Aaron Bluethenthal Family Sheet, New Hanover County Public Library.

²⁸ Leopold Brunhild Passport, 1895 and 1906, Philadelphia; Henry Brunhild, Passport, 1873, New Hanover County, NC, and Passport, 1891, New York, NY; <http://search.ancestry.com> (accessed March 12, 2010). B. Kahnweiler witnessed Henry Brunhild's application for a passport in New York.

²⁹ Julius Fernberger Passport, 1878, New Hanover County, NC, <http://www.ancestry.com> (accessed November 17, 2009). Julius Fernberger later remigrated with his wife Therese, née Bear, back to Würzburg in Bavaria, about twelve miles from Bibergau. He is buried there. Julius Fernberger Death Certificate, Würzburg, <http://search.ancestry.com> (accessed November 17, 2009), and *Wilmington Star*, February 19, 1902.

³⁰ Gustav Rosenthal's tombstone inscription, 1834-1889, Oakdale Cemetery; Bertha Solomon's tombstone inscription, 1845-1882, Oakdale Cemetery.

³¹ Mosiah Bear Family Sheet, New Hanover County Public Library; Bear family members' tombstone inscription, Oakdale Cemetery.

³² Mosiah Bear Family Sheet, New Hanover County Public Library.

³³ Lewis S[ch]warzman obituary, *Wilmington [NC] Daily Journal*, March 9, 1862; Al Lederer, descendent of Joseph Lederer, to author, March 12, 2010.

³⁴ Kimberly Sims, "Wilmington Jewry: 1800-1914" (Honors thesis, History Department, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 1999), 12-13.

³⁵ Abraham Blumenthal, "Life in Wilmington."

³⁶ It could not be established if the other two Sternbergers, Solomon and Joseph, present in Wilmington in 1880, were brothers of the Sternberger sisters. For Solomon, the census states Bavaria as place of birth, for Joseph nearby Hessen-Darmstadt, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Wilmington, North Carolina.

³⁷ Maps adapted from Hermann Habenicht, *Justus Perthes' Taschen-Atlans* (Gotha, 1895) No. 3,6.

³⁸ About 1820, only 1 percent of Germany's population was Jewish (260,000 persons). This included the large Jewish population of Prussia's Polish provinces Posen and Western Prussia (together, about 80,000). The area with the second largest Jewish population was

Bavaria (53,000). Klaus Guth, ed., *Jüdische Landgemeinden in Oberfranken (1800–1942): Ein Historisch-topographisches Handbuch* (Bamberg, 1988), 388.

³⁹ The high percentage of Jews especially in the small villages without considerable economic opportunities can be explained by the fact that they were mostly *Adelsdörfer*, i.e. villages in the possession of sovereign families of the German nobility. Before the cleansing of the some 1,500 independent entities within the German Empire during the Napoleonic wars and by the Congress of Vienna, the territories of these sovereign noble families, as very small political entities, entailed not much more than a few villages. As such, the sovereigns' liberal approach to encourage settlement of Jews in their "state" was mainly rooted in the expected and needed income generated through the Jews' taxes. See Wilhelm Kreutz, "Die pfälzischen Juden der napoleonischen Ära: Bevölkerungsentwicklung, regionale Ausbreitung und Sozialstruktur," in *Pfälzisches Judentum Gestern und Heute: Beiträge zur Regionalgeschichte des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Alfred Hans Kubly (Neustadt a.d. Weinstraße, 1992), 37.

⁴⁰ The numbers for the communities reflect the Jewish population around 1830–1840 with the exception of Forchheim, 1812. In the eighteenth century Fellheim's large percentage of Jews among the overall population earned it the nickname *Judenhausen* (Jewtown). See the individual communities in Klaus-Dieter Aliche, *Lexikon der jüdischen Gemeinden im deutschen Sprachraum v. 1–3* (München, 2008); Stefan Fischbach and Ingrid Westerhoff, ". . . und dies ist die Pforte des Himmels": *Synagogen Rheinland-Pfalz – Saarland* (Mainz, 2005).

⁴¹ "(Bad) Dürkheim," and "Münchweiler," Aliche, *Lexikon*, v. 1 and v. 2, 218 and 2881.

⁴² "Öttershausen (Stadt Volkach, Kreis Kitzingen)," *Alemannia Judaica: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden im süddeutschen und angrenzenden Raum*, http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/oettershausen_juedgeschichte.htm (accessed March 3, 2010).

⁴³ "Rockenhausen," Aliche, *Lexikon*, 3533. Translation by the author.

⁴⁴ Fischbach and Westerhoff, ". . . und dies ist die Pforte des Himmels," 322–323.

⁴⁵ "Rockenhausen," *Alemannia Judaica*, http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/rockenhausen_synagoge.htm (accessed March 3, 2010).

⁴⁶ Egon Busch, "'Andenken an mich in der Stadt meiner Vorfahren': Die Familie Kahnweiler in Rockenhausen," *Donnersberg Jahrbuch: Heimatbuch für den Kreis um den Donnersberg* 32 (2009): 49–53. The article relies on the reminiscences of Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, grandson of Heinrich/Hirsch, who moved to Paris and operated one of the first galleries exhibiting works by Pablo Picasso.

⁴⁷ "Öttershausen," *Alemannia Judaica*.

⁴⁸ "Münchweiler an der Alsenz," *Alemannia Judaica*, http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/muenchweiler_synagoge.htm (accessed March 3, 2010).

⁴⁹ "Lambsheim mit Maxdorf," *Alemannia Judaica*, http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/lambsheim_synagoge.html (accessed March 3, 2010).

⁵⁰ "Rockenhausen," *Alemannia Judaica*.

⁵¹ Kreutz, "Die pfälzischen Juden," 77.

⁵² For the statistical evaluation of the French census, see Kreutz, "Die pfälzischen Juden," 33–45. Kreutz's article includes the tax lists for the Jewish population in the French Imperial Département Donnersberg, today's northern Palatinate. The French authorities did not count the poorest of the society who could not afford the tax. Their number is estimated at 10 to 15 percent of the Jewish population. For the actual survey of the tax brackets, see Kreutz, 59–77.

⁵³ Tuther, *Kelley's Wilmington Directory*, 96; Eighth Census, 1860, Wilmington; Wilmington R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, v. 18.

⁵⁴ All information from Ninth Census, 1870, Wilmington.

⁵⁵ Wilmington, NC, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, v. 18.

⁵⁶ Beverly Tetterton, "History of the Temple of Israel, Wilmington, North Carolina," in *History of the Temple of Israel, Wilmington, North Carolina, 1876–2001: Prepared for the One-Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Celebration*, ed. Beverly Tetterton, Helen F. Solomon, and JoAnn Fogler (Wilmington, NC, 2001), 12–13.

⁵⁷ Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 121. Wine and winemaking still play an important role in the community of Volkach, to which the Bears' home village of Öttershausen in Bavaria belongs today. From April to September communities around Volkach hold monthly wine fests. "Die Weinfeste rund um Volkach (2010)," *Stadt Volkach*, www.volkach.de/wein_weinfest_liste_de,177.html (accessed April 27, 2010).

⁵⁸ School Roll Book and Report Cards for the Congregational School of Temple of Israel, 1898–1901, Microfilm No. 2723, AJA.

⁵⁹ Some of these sermons were actually written in Philadelphia, where he studied at Maimonides College, and Norfolk, VA, where he held his first pulpit. See, for example, "Die sieben- und dreißig-tägige Trauer"/The Thirty-Seven Day Morning, Norfolk, VA, March 1, 1874. He likely reused them in Wilmington. Rabbi Samuel Mendelsohn Manuscript Collection, <http://library.uncw.edu/web/collections/manuscript/MS058/ms058.html> (accessed April 27, 2010).

⁶⁰ Goldberg, "Historical Community Study," 30; Sims, "Wilmington Jewry," 33–34.

⁶¹ Eighth Census, 1860, Wilmington, Slave Schedules.

⁶² "Rewards," *Wilmington Daily Journal*, November 22, 1862.

⁶³ Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven and London, 2004), 113.

⁶⁴ Eighth Census, 1860, Wilmington.

⁶⁵ University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html> (accessed June 12, 2010).

⁶⁶ Elias owned six slaves, Drucker four, and Frankenthal three. Eighth Census, 1860 Charlotte, North Carolina; *ibid.*, Slave Schedule. They might in fact have rented some, although not all, of the slaves that were counted in the schedule under their names.

⁶⁷ Marcus, *To Count a People*, 49.

⁶⁸ Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta 1845-1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 182. Hertzberg also points out that opposition to slavery was a moral reason for David Steinheimer of Atlanta to resist conscription into the Confederate army.

⁶⁹ Bryan E. Stone, *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (Austin, TX, 2010), 47.

⁷⁰ South Carolina had a percentage of 58.5 among its population, Georgia of 44, North Carolina of 36.5, and Texas 30. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970*, Part 1 (Washington, DC, 1975), 24-36.

⁷¹ In 1861 Confederate soldier Daniel Merz, for instance, reported to his family in West Point, GA, when stationed in Wilmington that Samuel Mayer had purchased a plantation outside of Wilmington. Daniel Merz to Heyman and Betty Heyman, May 15, 1861, Heyman Family, Correspondence, AJA. In addition, his letter provides further proof of broader ties of Jews in the United States. Daniel Merz was born in Dürkheim, Bavarian Palatinate, within the vicinity of Ungstein where several Jewish Wilmingtonians were born. In his letter he mentioned some Jews of Wilmington he did not have to introduce to his family as they were apparently known to them.

⁷² *History of the Temple of Israel*, ed. Tetterton et al, 6. There he entertained Jefferson Davis on the Confederate president's flight from Richmond.

⁷³ Robert J. Wild Cooke, *Wicked Wartime Wilmington: Being an Account of Murder, Malice, and Other Assorted Mayhem in N.C.'s Largest City during the Civil War* (Wilmington, NC, 2009), 184-185, 209.

⁷⁴ Sims, "Wilmington Jewry," 20-21; Goldberg, "Historical Community Study," 26. Nathaniel Jacobi was the chief clerk in the quartermaster's department and settled in Wilmington after he visited the city during the war. Tetterton, *History*, 5.

⁷⁵ Solomon H. Fishblate Civil War Pension File, *Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934*, http://search.ancestry.com/iexec/?htx=View&r=an&dbid=4654&iid=T288_153-3956&fn=&ln=Solomon+H.+Fishblate&st=r&src=&pid=1730014 (accessed April 27, 2010.)

⁷⁶ Testimony collected by a commission on the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 denounced Fishblate as having been part of the insurgents. "1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission, Appendix J," 2006 North Carolina Office of Archives & History (2006), <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/AppdxJ.pdf> (accessed June 12, 2008). The Wilmington Race Riot was in fact a coup d'état that overthrew the democratically elected government of the city through the use of violence and coercion. It was carried out by "white businessmen and former Confederate soldiers, mostly Democrats, against a lawfully elected government of fusionists and Republicans, who were mostly black." John Desantis, "Wilmington, N.C., Revisits a Bloody 1898 Day," *New York Times*, June 4, 2006, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E02E4D71731F937A35755C0A9609C8B63> (accessed June 12, 2008). This was the only successful rebellion on American soil since the War for Independence and claimed a still unknown number of blacks in the city. Cape Fear River "could be dammed up with black bodies, but we have no way of knowing just how many," as a member of the 1898 Race Riot Commission put it.

⁷⁷ It is unfortunately difficult to determine whether Jews who were present in the city in 1860 and left Wilmington to northern regions by 1870 did so with the outbreak or the closing of the war. This might have shed light on their support for the Confederacy or the Union. However the issue may be partly addressed by taking into consideration the places of birth of the children in the censuses. David Aaron, for instance, left North Carolina between 1863 and 1867 as one daughter was born in North Carolina in 1863 and the next in Pennsylvania in 1867. Tenth Census, 1880, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

⁷⁸ J. S. Reilly, *Wilmington: Past, Present & Future of Wilmington, NC* (Wilmington, 1885), 23.

⁷⁹ Sims, "Wilmington Jewry," 35.

⁸⁰ Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Durham, NC, 1937), 427.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 119; *Information and Statistics Respecting Wilmington, North Carolina: Being a Report by the President of the Produce Exchange* (Wilmington, 1883), 64–68.

⁸² Reilly, *Wilmington: Past, Present & Future*, 109.

⁸³ Eighth Census, 1860, Wilmington; Tenth Census, 1880, Wilmington.

⁸⁴ David Kahnweiler Naturalization Certificate, New Hanover County, NC, 1852.

⁸⁵ Birthplaces of the children of those families according to the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Census, 1860–1880, Wilmington, show that they were born in Pennsylvania, indicating at least a temporary residence of the families there.

⁸⁶ Myron (Mike) Blumenthal, "The Samuel Blumenthal Family of Wilmington, North Carolina," unpublished manuscript, 1976, New Hanover County Public Library.

⁸⁷ Morris M. Katz obituary, *Wilmington Star*, March 7, 1894.

⁸⁸ Ninth Census, 1870, Philadelphia. These were the families of Abraham Weill, Jacob Lyon, Simon Anathan, and David Aaron. The Kahnweiler brothers had moved to New York where they became involved in the cottonseed oil business. Ninth Census, 1870, New York, NY. Additionally, within that decade four Jewish Wilmingtonians had died (L. Schwarzman, Jacob Blumenthal, H. Wertheim[er], and Theresa Loeb) and another eight cannot be found in the census for 1870. Overall, only the Abram Weill family and Daniel Kahnweiler returned to Wilmington before 1880.

⁸⁹ Tenth Census, 1880, Philadelphia. Solomon Levy had actually married the widow of Isaac Reichman, Rosa Blumenthal, in 1867. The families of S. Levy and I. Reichman were thus partially identical.

⁹⁰ They lived in Tennessee in 1860, Philadelphia in 1870, and Wilmington in 1880. Eighth Census, 1860, Brownsville, Tennessee; Ninth Census, 1870, Philadelphia; Tenth Census, 1880, Wilmington.

⁹¹ Eighth Census, 1860; Tenth Census, 1880, Wilmington; Ninth Census, 1870, Philadelphia, 1870; Wilmington, NC, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, v. 18.

⁹² *History of the Temple of Israel*, ed. Tetterton et al, 7–9.

⁹³ Wilmington, NC, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, v. 18. S. H. Fishblate is listed in the credit reports from 1869–1880.

⁹⁴ Ibid. They were listed for 1874–1880. The peculiar name Humboldt came from the German vessel the family had boarded to immigrate to the United States in 1853 rather than from the explorer. Eighth Census, 1860, New York; Samuel Kasprowicz [brother of Charles and H. H.] Passport, New York, 1894, <http://search.ancestry.com> (accessed February 23, 2010).

⁹⁵ Eighth Census, 1860 and Tenth Census, 1880, Wilmington; Ninth Census, 1870, New York.

⁹⁶ Wilmington, NC, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, v. 18.

⁹⁷ The Ryttenbergs were in New York in 1860 and in Sumter, SC, a decade later. Eighth Census, 1860, New York; Ninth Census, 1870, Sumter, SC; Wilmington, NC, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, v. 18; Sumter, SC, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, v. 13.

⁹⁸ Tenth Census, 1880, Wilmington; Tenth Census, 1880, New York.

⁹⁹ Eighth Census 1860, Ninth Census 1870, and Tenth Census 1880, Charleston, SC, Baltimore, and Wilmington, NC.

¹⁰⁰ Tenth Census, 1880, Carson City, NV; Tenth Census, 1880, Dakota Territory, 1880.

¹⁰¹ Eighth Census, 1860, Wilmington; Tenth Census, 1880, New Haven, CT. For five children of the Wilmingtonians, the records differ as to their place of birth in two or more censuses taken.

¹⁰² Tenth Census, 1880, Wilmington. The missing child is Rebecca Weill who was either born in Philadelphia or North Carolina.

¹⁰³ Mark K. Bauman, *The Southerner as American: Jewish Style* (Cincinnati, 1996).

¹⁰⁴ *Occident and Jewish Messenger*, 17 (1859): 300; 18 (1860): 408.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 25 (1867): 36.

¹⁰⁶ Alfred T. Jones to Isaac Leeser, May 3, 1867, Issac Leeser Papers, AJA.

¹⁰⁷ Isaac Mayer Wise had even wrongly reported in 1855 a congregation had already been established. See *The Israelite* 2 (1855): 76. In 1860, the Jews of Wilmington had unsuccessfully advertised for a hazan, schochet, and mohel. Leonard Rogoff, "Synagogue and Jewish Church: A Congregational History of North Carolina," *Southern Jewish History* 1 (1998): 48.

¹⁰⁸ Jonathan Worth to Nathaniel Jacobi, October 6, 1867, Jonathan Worth Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

¹⁰⁹ *Occident and Jewish Messenger* 25 (1867): 414. Leeser never stated the name of the congregation in his coverage of Wilmington.

¹¹⁰ "History of Temple of Israel: Fiftieth Anniversary Observed Wednesday," *Wilmington Star*, May 13, 1926.

¹¹¹ *Wilmington Star*, September 30, 1868.

¹¹² Martin M. Weitz, ed. *Bibilog . . . Temple of Israel* (Wilmington, 1976), 17.

¹¹³ Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁴ Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 49.

¹¹⁵ *Occident and Jewish Messenger*, 25 (1867): 414.

¹¹⁶ Weitz, *Bibilog*, 13.

¹¹⁷ *Occident and Jewish Messenger*, 26 (1868): 541.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 26 (1868): 43–44.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *London Jewish Chronicle*, February 7, 1868, 7; *Mainz Der Israelit*, January 15, 1868, 44.

¹²¹ *Occident and Jewish Messenger*, 25 (1867): 414.

¹²² M. H. and I. H. Myers, revised by E. M. Myers, *Twelve Hundred Questions and Answers on the Bible* (Wilmington, NC, 1868). It is not known if the authors were related to Hazan Myers of Wilmington.

¹²³ "History of Temple of Israel," *Wilmington Star*; Ninth Census, 1870, Wilmington.

¹²⁴ Unfortunately, no membership lists or minutes are available for Wilmington Hebrew Congregation. Therefore, speculations rely on contemporary news coverage and the social structure of Jewish Wilmington as identifiable in the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870.

¹²⁵ Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 25.

¹²⁶ For the changes in the Jewish religion and society in Germany caused by Haskalah and the role of *Bildung* in the transformation process towards a Jewish bourgeoisie, see David Sorokin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780–1840* (New York and Oxford, 1987).

¹²⁷ Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 16–17.

¹²⁸ Einhorn held the pulpit of Keneseth Israel from 1861 to 1866; Hirsch succeeded him. Marcus Jastrow had served the German congregation Rodeph Sholom since 1866. "David Einhorn," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?letter=E&artid=94 (accessed March 20, 2010); "Samuel Hirsch," *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon v. 14*, (Herzberg, Lower Saxony, 1998); "Marcus Jastrow," www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=170&letter=J&search=Jastrow (accessed March 20, 2010).

¹²⁹ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 128.

¹³⁰ Stephen J. Whitfield, "The Braided Identity of Southern Jewry" in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark K. Bauman (Tuscaloosa, 2006), 434.

¹³¹ *Wilmington Star*, September 17, 1871.

¹³² Several Wilmingtonians appear to have converted or at least married outside their faith: Gustavus Shields and Charles Boskowitz married Christian women, and Jacob Loeb as well as his son Harry received Christian funerals. St. Paul's Episcopal Church Records, Wilmington, New Hanover County Public Library; Jacob Loeb obituary, *Wilmington Star*, April 27, 1888; Harry Loeb obituary, *Wilmington Star*, July 12, 1910.

¹³³ Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 16–17.

¹³⁴ Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 57–64.

¹³⁵ Weitz, *Bibilog*, 15.

¹³⁶ *Wilmington Star*, July 23, 1874; July 16, 1876.

¹³⁷ *History of the Temple of Israel*, ed. Tetterton et al, 16.

¹³⁸ "The Scattered Nations [sic]," *Wilmington Star*, July 4, 1875.

¹³⁹ Helen F. Solomon, "History of the Ladies Concordia Society of the Temple of Israel Wilmington, North Carolina," in *History of the Temple of Israel*, ed. Tetterton et al, 32; "The Ladies' Concordia Society, Temple of Israel, Wilmington, NC," Reaves Collection.

¹⁴⁰ *American Israelite*, November 8, 1872, 8.

¹⁴¹ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 99. Wise officiated at several dedications of Reform temples in Southern states, for instance, in Augusta, GA, 1869, and Brunswick, GA, 1886. Jack Steinberg, *United for Worship and Charity: A History of Congregation Children of Israel* (Augusta, GA, 1983), 11; Congregation Beth Tefilloh, Bainbridge, GA, The William Breman Jewish Heritage and Holocaust Museum, Atlanta.

¹⁴² Isaac M. Wise, *Reminiscences*, trans. David Philipson (Cincinnati, 1901), 141–142.

¹⁴³ *American Israelite*, April 9, 1875, 2.

¹⁴⁴ "Israel's Temple," *Wilmington Star*, May 5, 1876.

¹⁴⁵ "History of Temple of Israel," *Wilmington Star*; Ninth Census, 1870, Wilmington. Many of the last names of the first officers reappear on the board of the temple over the more than 135 years of the congregation's existence.

¹⁴⁶ Rogoff, *Down Home*, 96.

¹⁴⁷ The Moorish or Oriental revival architectural style was among the most fashionable for synagogues in the second half of the nineteenth century. It became popular in Germany (visible especially with Berlin's Neue Synagoge [1866, rebuilt 1988–1995] whose architecture was influenced by the Alhambra in Grenada) as it was distinct from the architecture of the contemporary neo-Gothic churches. The style in America was not only employed in Wilmington but also, for example, in the synagogue of Hebrew Benevolent Congregation in Atlanta (1877). Steven H. Moffson, "Identity and Assimilation in Synagogue Architecture in Georgia, 1870–1920," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 9, (2003): 156.

¹⁴⁸ Weitz, *Bibilog*, 18; *Wilmington Star*, July 10, 1875; "Temple of Israel," *Wilmington Morning Star*, July 16, 1875.

¹⁴⁹ *Wilmington Morning Star*, November 26, 1872.

¹⁵⁰ *Wilmington Star*, May 28, 1875.

¹⁵¹ The Harmony Club was the forerunner of the Ladies' Concordia Society. Helen F. Solomon, "History of the Ladies Concordia Society of the Temple of Israel Wilmington, North Carolina," in *History of the Temple of Israel*, ed. Tetterton et al, 32.

¹⁵² "Temple of Israel," *Morning Star*, July 16, 1875.

¹⁵³ *Jewish South*, October 14, 1877, 5.

¹⁵⁴ Treasurer Records, Temple of Israel 1876–1888.

¹⁵⁵ J. I. Macks to Lipman Levy [secretary of the UAHC], December 3, 1878, Correspondence, UAHC Collection, AJA.

¹⁵⁶ Annual Report to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1880, Correspondence, UAHC Collection, AJA.

¹⁵⁷ A lasting orthodox congregation, B'nai Israel, was finally established in Wilmington in 1898 by eastern European immigrants. Tetterton, "A Brief History of the Jewish Community Wilmington, North Carolina," in *History of the Temple of Israel*, ed. Tetterton et al, 43.

That Spirit Must be Stamped Out: The Mutilation of Joseph Needleman and North Carolina's Effort to Prosecute Lynch Mob Participants during the 1920s

by

Vann Newkirk*

On the night of April 2, 1925, a dozen men broke into the Martin County, North Carolina, jail and kidnapped Joseph Needleman. While several men held the poor man, the leader of the vigilantes pulled out a knife and ripped out Needleman's testicles. The men then calmly returned to their cars and left the bloodied victim to fend for himself. Needleman had been in jail awaiting trial for the rape of a local woman. According to the surviving court documents, he did not confess to any crime nor did the avenging mob attempt to extort a confession.

The assault on Joseph Needleman presents a classic picture of vigilante justice. Not only did the members of the mob deprive Needleman of his constitutional right to a trial by jury, among other things, they removed him from the hands of legal authorities and administered their own brand of justice. However, in comparison to most acts of mob violence, little about the case was commonplace. For one, the victim was only one of a handful of survivors of such violent crimes. The assault also occurred in a relatively moderate Upper South state where racial fears were not as strong as in the Deep South. However, perhaps the biggest surprise was the fact that the victim was not black, Mexican, nor Native American, but Jewish. These and other factors set the stage for one of the most celebrated legal cases in North Carolina history.

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Jews have long lived in the South. They were attracted to the region by the coastal and Mississippi River trade. On the eve of the Civil War, 13 percent of the country's Jewish population lived in the South.¹ Since they comprised only a small segment of the population, southern Jews generally did not experience a great deal of hostility. Indeed many Jews formed deep and lasting friendships with their gentile neighbors. They also gained a degree of acceptance by filling a specific niche, selling goods and extending credit to white and black farmers.² Yet, acceptance did not always eliminate antisemitism and sporadic acts of violence. As historian Patrick Mason observes, "There . . . 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 usually able to draw on . . . latent symbols . . . of traditional antisemitism."³

For example, in 1915, anxiety over the perceived Jewish menace contributed to perhaps the most infamous act of antisemitism in American history, the lynching of Leo Frank. Frank, a Jewish factory manager, stood accused of the murder of thirteen-year-old Mary Phagan. After a highly charged trial in which the district attorney painted Frank as a sexual pervert, a Georgia court sentenced him to death. Nonetheless, shortly after his conviction, doubt surfaced concerning Frank's guilt, leading Governor John Slaton to commute Frank's sentence to life in prison. Yet, he never served the term. A mob calling itself the Knights of Mary Phagan broke into the prison and lynched Frank. Ironically, the evidence pointed to Jim Conley, the factory's black janitor whom the prosecution claimed only helped Frank dispose of Phagan's body.⁴

There are many similarities between the Needleman incident and the Frank case. For example, both stemmed from the alleged assault on a non-Jewish white woman. Also, both cases highlighted several themes then prominent in southern life including a deep distrust of outsiders and a continuing reliance on yellow journalism, mob coercion, and acts of violence to enforce unwritten social rules.⁵

*Front page of the Raleigh (NC) News & Observer, May 7, 1925.
Images of Joseph Needleman are scarce and the quality is extremely poor.
This is the best picture of Needleman that the journal was able to secure.
(Courtesy of Vann Newkirk.)*

The differences between the Frank case and the Needleman incident are equally important. Although both men were from the North, they differed in class. Frank, an industrialist, identified with Atlanta's Jewish elite, whereas Needleman, the son of a poor Russian immigrant, worked as a traveling salesman. The victims of the men's alleged crimes also differed. Frank's alleged victim, Mary Phagan, was a chaste, thirteen-year-old child, whereas the complainant in the Needleman case was a nineteen-year-old with a somewhat questionable reputation. Finally, the context of the cases differed, urban versus rural—the lynching of Frank taking place in Atlanta whereas the Needleman assault occurred in the small, eastern North Carolina hamlet of Williamston.

The assault on Needleman was not a spontaneous outburst of rage nor was the mob a mindless rabble. Like the lynching of Frank, the attack on Needleman was a well-organized action carried out by community leaders, law enforcement officials, and long-term residents of the county who wanted the act of violence to assume a meaning that transcended the actual act of castration.⁶ For them, the attack served as a powerful and violent instrument of societal control aimed at those who had violated social mores. Perhaps due to these factors, the members of the mob, again as was the case with Frank's lynching, enjoyed a great deal of community support.

Nonetheless, for many North Carolinians the violence proved troubling. As R. E. Powell, a reporter for the *Raleigh* (NC) *Times* put it, "well informed people have not . . . nor have they at any time in the past (had) any sympathy for the mob."⁷ The editor of the *Washington* (NC) *Times* demanded, "No stone should be left unturned to bring to justice all who have participated in the outrage against the peace and dignity of the state."⁸

Major newspapers in the North and West also printed details of the attack, thus providing it a national audience. This, in turn, drew the attention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and several Jewish organizations.⁹ In response, North Carolina launched arguably the most aggressive effort in its history to punish members of a mob.

Yet, despite its significance, few historians, and even fewer of the general population, have ever heard of the Needleman case. Lenwood E. Thomas and Luci Peel Powe vaguely remembered the Needleman case in two fictional accounts: *Cry Wounded Innocence* (1994) and *Roanoke Rock Muddle* (2002). Leonard Rogoff also mentions the case in three publications: "Is The Jew White?: The Radical Place of The Southern Jew;" *A History of Temple Emanu-El: An Extended Family, Weldon, North Carolina*; and *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina*. However, other than these cursory glances, scholars have largely ignored the incident.¹⁰

Such lack of scholarly attention is particularly lamentable because an analysis of the Needleman episode places a human face on the cruel and inhumane institution of mob violence. As one of only a handful of cases in which the victim of a lynch mob survived, it provides a unique perspective: namely that of the victim. The case also offers insight into the function of lynching and mob violence in North Carolina, a state that despite experiencing hundreds of acts of mob violence nonetheless remains largely outside of scholarly focus.

As a final consequence, the sentences handed down to the mob participants shocked North Carolinians and stunned the nation. More importantly, the sentences allowed North Carolina to cast itself as a leader in the effort to end lynching and mob violence. Thus, an examination of the case provides a means for viewing the reaction of a southern state to violence against Jews during the 1920s.

Williamston, North Carolina

Williamston is located on the right bank of the Roanoke River, sixty miles from the Atlantic Ocean. Starting in the eighteenth century, English entrepreneurs, attracted to the abundance of pine trees from which they could extract naval stores of pitch, turpentine, and resin, established a small settlement known as Tar Landing.¹¹ The village prospered and it became the seat of government upon the organization of Martin County in 1774. Five years later, settlers incorporated Tar Landing

and gave it the new name Williamston, in honor of Colonel William Williams.¹²

The renaming of the village after this wealthy planter relates to the fact that by the late 1700s large plantations dominated Martin County. Numerous slaves worked these plantations producing corn and naval stores. By 1860 slavery was so entrenched that bondsmen made up half of the county's residents.

At the close of the Civil War, the construction of lumber mills made Williamston the leading lumber town in North Carolina. The resulting boom increased the town's population from less than 500 in 1880 to more than 750 ten years later. This number included a small group of Jewish merchants.¹³

As in much of the South, the movement of Jews into North Carolina accelerated during the postbellum era. After the war, thousands of freedmen entered the workforce as wage earners. This development, coupled with the rise of new industries such as lumber and tobacco, breathed new life into many towns and, in some cases, created entirely new communities. Jewish entrepreneurs, eager to harness these new markets, traversed the coastal plain peddling goods. In time, these traveling salesmen opened stores and established permanent businesses. In similar fashion, some German Jewish peddlers established businesses in Williamston, such as Abe Adler and Simon Rutenburg who opened a department store there, which they operated until the great influenza outbreak of 1918 led them to sell the business.¹⁴

By 1925, a half dozen Jews called the town home.¹⁵ However, as with many small-town enclaves, the Jewish community in Williamston was really an extended family, namely the Margolis brothers Frank and Irvin and their kin. The Margolises arrived in Williamston in 1919 when Warsaw, North Carolina, merchants Max Margolis and partner Abe Brooks purchased the retail store formerly operated by Adler and Rutenburg. To manage the store, Margolis convinced his younger brothers, Frank and Irvin, to move to Williamston.¹⁶ From the start, the brothers had a natural knack for business, holding frequent sales and advertising women's dresses for 50 cents and men's Sunday suits for \$1.50. They also imported hard-to-find items such as Boy Scout uniforms and

helped organize the Williamston Merchants Association. By 1925, the Margolis brothers were established members of the community, and the store they operated served as an institution as well as a community gathering place. Yet, the small number of Jews in Williamston precluded the development of Jewish institutions. To escape isolation, the Margolises maintained close connections with coreligionists in nearby Tarboro, which had a synagogue and a robust Jewish community.¹⁷

Antisemitism of the 1920s

Between 1915 and 1930 antisemitic tendencies in American society crystallized. For example, when America entered the Great War nativists attacked Jews, charging them with dodging the draft and profiteering. On top of this, the United States Army charged that the “foreign born and Jews were more apt to malingering than native born” citizens.¹⁸

After the war more shocking claims appeared. Hatemongers held Jews responsible for Bolshevik uprisings in Russia and Germany. Other stories purportedly documented a Jewish-Bolshevik plot to overthrow the United States government. In 1918, *Literary Digest* published “Are Bolsheviki Mainly Jews?” an article in which the author claimed that Jews were prominent leaders in the worldwide Bolshevik movement. The next year, the *Digest* published “American Jews in the Bolshevik Oligarchy.” The author of this diatribe professed to have discovered a sinister connection between American Jews and Russian Bolsheviks.¹⁹ However, the most damning condemnations came from Henry Ford’s newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*.

As one of history’s most innovative entrepreneurs, Ford pioneered the mass production of the automobile. This innovation allowed him to become arguably the nation’s most powerful businessman. Unfortunately, between 1910 and 1920, Ford became increasingly antisemitic as he came to believe in a Jewish conspiracy to control world finances. He also believed that Jews plotted to undermine the financial stability of his company.²⁰ Consequently, the *Independent* published a series of anti-Jewish articles, the most provocative of which, the reprinting of

the notorious fabrication, "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion," declared, among other sinister assertions, that atheism in Europe was a Jewish plot.²¹ As a follow up, in 1920, the *Independent* published the "International Jews, the World's Foremost Problem," that, like the earlier *Protocols*, sought to denounce Jews by maintaining that a Jewish conspiracy planned to gain global hegemony by manipulating world economics.²²

Closely following these developments, Congress passed the Emergency Quota (1921) and the Johnson-Reed (1924) acts that restricted immigration from eastern Europe, including large numbers of Jews. The period also saw the rise of quota systems and restrictive hiring practices reducing the number of Jews admitted to the nation's most prestigious colleges and hired in professional positions such as banking, insurance, and medicine.

In North Carolina, antisemitism manifested itself in a number of ways during the 1920s. For example, hotels such as Grove Park Inn in Asheville adopted policies that banned Jews while the University of North Carolina limited Jewish enrollment in its medical college.²³ As if this were not enough, during the same period, a host of xenophobic traveling evangelists, including Mordecai Ham, Arthur Talmage Abernethy, and Oscar Haywood, invaded North Carolina railing against miscegenation and condemning what they perceived as Jewish efforts to contaminate the white race.²⁴

Such attitudes were not new in North Carolina. Throughout much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, North Carolina had one of the smallest Jewish populations in the Southeast, and hostility toward Jews was deeply rooted. The North Carolina constitution of 1776 forbade Jews from voting. State measures also prohibited Jews from holding public office, although some like Jacob Henry evaded the law. Not until 1868, did North Carolina repeal these discriminatory constitutional provisions and laws.²⁵

In contrast, the postbellum period also saw North Carolinians exhibit a great deal of support for Jews. For example, from the mid-1870s until his death in 1894, North Carolina Governor Zebulon Vance delivered his "Scattered Nation" speech declaring that Jews were some of the most remarkable people in

the world. During the same period, the University of North Carolina also conferred an honorary degree upon Samuel Mendelsohn, rabbi of Wilmington's synagogue. Perhaps the most notable expression of support occurred in the early 1920s when North Carolinians contributed \$143,111 for the relief of Jews in eastern Europe suffering from the impact of World War I.²⁶

Unfortunately, a rising tide of antisemitic literature, hiring quotas, and restrictive immigration legislation seemingly overwhelmed the scattered expressions of support. This provided the motor and the backdrop for acts of physical violence against Jews. For instance, in 1916, a mob bound and beat a Jewish doctor and threatened him with death if he returned to Kings Hospital in New York.²⁷ Four years later, Colorado extremists killed one Jew and badly wounded another after quarreling over a horse.²⁸ In 1921, a mob in Fort Worth, Texas, kidnapped a Jewish plumber, tied him up, and beat him with sticks until he agreed to leave town.²⁹

Several acts of aggression against Jews also occurred in North Carolina. In 1921, Klansmen in Roland sent a threatening letter to Jewish merchant Phillip Leinwand warning him away from white women.³⁰ Later that same year four masked men in nearby Saint Pauls whipped an eighteen-year-old Jew named Mitchell Epstein and threatened to lynch him if he refused to stop dating a certain young woman.³¹ The next year, the manager of the Durham public utility physically assaulted a Jewish grocer named Harry Murnick for attempting to pay his water bill with a roll of pennies. When Murnick attempted to flee, the manager slapped him and called him a "Goddamned Jew."³² However, the most noteworthy act of violence of the period occurred on a cool Carolina night in April 1925: the mutilation of Joseph Needleman.

The Assault on Joseph Needleman

On the evening of March 16, 1925, Effie Griffin, a nineteen-year-old store clerk from Williamston, agreed to accompany Joseph Needleman to see a movie in the nearby community of Washington. Griffin's sister Rosa and Rosa's boyfriend, Coy Robertson, accompanied them. They planned to

leave Needleman's car at Smithwick Baptist Church and ride in Robertson's car. However when they reached the church, Needleman claimed that he ought not leave his company car at such an isolated location.³³ Instead, he decided to follow Robertson to Washington. What happened next is subject to controversy. Griffin claimed that after leaving the church she and Needleman followed Robertson for a short distance. Then Needleman turned around and drove back toward the church.³⁴ When they reached a lonely spot in the highway, Griffin alleged that Needleman pulled his car to the side of the road, tore off her clothes, and raped her. Then, according to Griffin, Needleman pulled a gun and threatened to kill her if she disclosed the rape to anyone. Nonetheless, a week after the incident she broke down and told her mother. The next day a magistrate issued an arrest warrant for Needleman.³⁵

Questions surround the young woman's account. According to Needleman, on the way to the theater, he and Griffin drove to a secluded spot where they had consensual sex.³⁶ Griffin's behavior appears to substantiate this version of events. For example, in the hours after the alleged assault, several people, including Rosa Griffin, Coy Robertson, and the owner of a gas station, saw Griffin. None of them noticed any torn clothes or sign of rape. In addition, Farris Nassef, the owner of the store where Griffin worked, stated that in the week following the incident, Needleman came into his establishment several times and spent considerable time chatting and joking with Griffin. "During none of these visits did Griffin contact authorities, even though she knew the police were searching for Needleman."³⁷ Why Griffin failed to contact authorities is unknown. Perhaps she feared that if local authorities arrested Needleman, he would reveal intimate details about their relationship. This would have raised questions about her virtue, something socially damaging in a small town like Williamston.

Nonetheless, a week after the alleged assault authorities arrested Needleman in Edenton, North Carolina. They brought him to Williamston and placed him in the county jail for a preliminary hearing. However, the next day authorities abruptly canceled the hearing when Griffin claimed she was sick and could

not testify. Several hours later, she married twenty-one-year-old Furnie Sparrow, Jr.³⁸

Even without a hearing, a large number of white men assumed Needleman had raped Griffin, and a host of curious townsmen traveled in and out of the jail to see and hurl insults at the man who had raped one of "their" girls. For example, R. J. Peele, the clerk of court, told Needleman "you are the damned man that came down here and ruined one of our Martin County girls.³⁹ You ought to be shot lying right there where you are and I'd like to do it myself."⁴⁰ Several citizens subsequently asked the sheriff to hire someone to guard the jail.⁴¹ The sheriff laughed the matter off.⁴²

Yet this was no laughing matter. The Martin County jail had been the site of three infamous jailbreaks. In 1887, a mob forced its way into the jail, seized, and lynched Benjamin White for an alleged assault on a white woman. Fifteen years later, another mob broke into the jail and hung Jim Walker for poisoning his boss.⁴³ Then, in 1923, perhaps the most inept attack came when a mob of more than fifty men stormed into the building only to learn that the man they had come to murder was not in the jail.⁴⁴ Despite a history of attacks, the sheriff left the jail unguarded for the night.

The assault on Joseph Needleman began shortly after midnight when a throng of men broke into the jail. As soon as the men reached Needleman's cell, he turned on his light. He immediately recognized one of the men and shouted, "Paul Sparrow what in the hell are you doing here?"⁴⁵ The fact that Sparrow was one of the attackers is extremely important. Paul Sparrow was a nickname of Furnie Sparrow, Jr., Effie Griffin's new husband. Almost one year earlier, Needleman met Sparrow and the two were friends. Sparrow, in turn, introduced Needleman to Effie Griffin and encouraged the salesman to call on the woman. Sparrow's subsequent marriage to Griffin suggests that the attack on Needleman possibly evolved from a dispute over Griffin's affections. Whatever the case, after Needleman identified Sparrow, according to the *Williamston Enterprise*, a voice snarled back "we are going to take you where your father's money will do no good."⁴⁶ Then, with guns in their hands, two men forced Needle-

man into the back seat of a car. As they sped away, one of the vigilantes yelled, "We have come after your sexual organs, which do you prefer, to give them up, or your head?"⁴⁷ "Do as you please, as you are the doctor," Needleman allegedly replied.⁴⁸

About a mile from the jail, the ringleader of the mob stopped the motorcade. Within seconds, an agitated crowd of men swarmed around the doomed man jockeying for position to watch the action. Then, while several men held the victim, the leader of the mob pulled out a dull knife and hacked at Needleman's genitals. As Needleman shrieked in pain, the vigilante made two small incisions, forced his fingers inside the slits, and ripped out the poor man's testicles. Then, as Needleman lay in a pool of his own blood, a member of the mob told him to "get out of the county as quick as you can."⁴⁹ He also warned that should Needleman report the crime, or "get on the stand and swear against an American girl he would be killed."⁵⁰

That a member of the mob issued such a statement served to remind Needleman of the uncertain place Jews occupied in southern society. As Eric Goldstein put it, "Jews remained racially ill-defined within Southern society, treated as probationary whites who had all the civic privileges of whiteness but were often excluded from social and cultural venues where their uncertain status might undermine the assertion of white racial purity and integrity."⁵¹

Whatever the case, Needleman's torment had not ended. He bled profusely and his clothes clung to him like oilcloth. When he walked to several nearby homes, homeowners refused to render aid, forcing him to hobble nearly a mile and a half to the Britt Hotel before receiving help. Doctors, however, believed Needleman had but hours to live, and they summoned Sheriff Thad Roberson.⁵²

Roberson embodied the affable, "good old boy." In office for eight years, he ran Martin County as his personal fiefdom, controlling political appointments and liberally granting favor to his supporters. According to rumors, he accepted bribes from moonshiners.⁵³ By all accounts, whites in the county regarded him highly. However, when Roberson arrived at the Britt Hotel,

Needleman claimed that he could not identify any members of the mob. Only after doctors encouraged the sheriff to leave did Needleman make a surprising turnabout giving the names of his attackers to his physicians.⁵⁴ Even more shocking, Needleman survived.

Roberson's refusal to protect the jail at night, his power and influence as sheriff, and Needleman's actions in the hours after the attack suggest the possibility of police involvement. As Jerome Skolnick points out, lawmen frequently participated in mob attacks as participants, or "more often as approving observers."⁵⁵ In the attack on Needleman, Sheriff Roberson likely may have been at least in collusion with the mob if not a member of it. In an article published by the *Raleigh News & Observer*, Roberson claimed that shortly before the mob seized Needleman several vigilantes visited his home. Although he refused to hand over the keys to the jail, Roberson maintained he could not follow the mob or sound the alarm because his daughter had passed out when she saw the strange men.⁵⁶ Tellingly, two years earlier when another mob visited the sheriff's home, he single-handedly dispersed it.⁵⁷

Roberson's excuse was not the only one that rang hollow. D. R. Gurganus, who served as the night policeman in Williamston, said that on the night of the assault, he noticed several cars near the courthouse. Instead of going over to investigate, he claimed he went to the sheriff's house. During his absence, the mob seized Needleman.⁵⁸

Reaction to the Assault

In the days after the assault, news spread across the nation. Antilynching forces reacted immediately.⁵⁹ On the national level, the NAACP sent a letter to Governor Angus McLean and several Jewish groups offered a reward of ten thousand dollars for the capture of Needleman's attackers. The Jewish groups also hired two attorneys to help North Carolina prosecute the case.⁶⁰

On the state level, Governor McLean offered a four hundred dollar reward for each person arrested for the crime. He also ordered Dornell Gilliam, the Martin County prosecutor, to

vigorously investigate and “bring to justice all parties that are responsible for this terrible crime against the laws of our state.”⁶¹ The motivation for the governor’s prompt action had little to do with Needleman and more to do with concern that failure to act would raise the ire of northern bankers and investors.

In the decade before McLean became governor, North Carolina’s textile industry underwent unprecedented growth brought about by demands for American products during World War I. Accordingly, the number of mills increased from 293 in 1914 to 343 in 1921. The value of the state’s textile output grew from \$90-million in 1914 to \$191-million in 1921.⁶²

However, in the period following the war, oversupply, weak demand, and high transit costs caused by the state’s poor roads sent the textile industry into a tailspin. To revive the industry, McLean convinced several mill owners to convert their mills to new products such as synthetics and terrycloth. Two of the leading owners in this effort were Jewish industrialists, Julius and Bernard Cone. Through their ownership of Cone Mills, the brothers controlled a textile empire that operated six mills, employed four thousand North Carolinians, and housed more than fifteen thousand of their dependents. However, for textile mill owners like the Cones, the decline in the fortunes of the state’s textile industry, coupled with limited local capital and the state’s poor highways, threatened plans to diversify production. To resolve the financial issues, McLean launched a campaign to attract potential investors.⁶³

On top of these developments, several years earlier the legislature passed the Highway Act. This law authorized a bond issue of \$50 million to construct a modern highway system.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the state only sold \$17,700 of the securities. To launch construction, state officials negotiated a loan of \$5 million from a syndicate of New York banks.⁶⁵ This sum, however, only represented a fraction of the amount needed to build the highway system. As a result, McLean’s predecessor Cameron Morrison negotiated the sale of high yield bonds to a syndicate of Wall

Governor Angus McLean, 1925.

(Courtesy of the North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh.)

Street investment banks including the Jewish-owned investment houses of Lehman Brothers, Kauffman, Smith, Emert & Company, and Curtis & Sanger.⁶⁶ Since the investment banks and the Cones played major roles in efforts to revive the textile industry and improve road infrastructure, it is plausible that state leaders reasoned that failure to prosecute Needleman's attackers

would adversely affect the state's ability to secure badly needed resources from the North.⁶⁷ Hence, the identification and prosecution of Needleman's attackers became major priorities.

Also possibly influencing the decision-making of state leaders was the Matthew Bullock case. In 1922 the state attempted to extradite Matthew Bullock, a young black man from Canada, for attempted murder. Although the extradition should have been routine, the fact that Bullock's brother died at the hands of a lynch mob rallied Canadians to his defense. Major newspapers picked up the case, and the NAACP launched a campaign to keep Bullock in Canada by highlighting North Carolina's lynching history.⁶⁸ More importantly, the furor raised by Bullock's supporters embarrassed North Carolina leaders and raised anxiety that federal antilynching legislation sponsored by the NAACP would gain approval in the U.S. House of Representatives.⁶⁹ To prevent similar embarrassment and potential fallout in the wake of the Needleman attack, Governor McLean placed the full apparatus of state government at the disposal of the prosecutor.

In taking such an aggressive stance, the governor confronted a difficult task. Needleman faced charges of sexual assault on a non-Jewish, white woman in an area where fears of miscegenation had long colored the social and economic fabric of the community.⁷⁰ This meant that the members of the mob benefited from the support of a large segment of the community including many potential jurors. Frequently in such an environment, prosecutors faced great difficulty in arresting, prosecuting, and convicting mob participants.

In addition, North Carolina had an extremely low rate of conviction for mob participants. Between 1865 and 1924, the state convicted three people for acts of lynching and mob violence while at the same time more than 150 North Carolinians died at the hands of mobs.⁷¹ Perhaps no case better illustrates this reality than the 1891 trial of the men charged with lynching Hezekiah Rankin, a twenty-eight-year-old African American. In the days following the homicide, North Carolina officials held a grand jury hearing during which half a dozen witnesses identified four white railroad employees as the men responsible for Rankin's death.⁷²

Authorities arrested the men and scheduled a trial for the next session of criminal court. Nonetheless, the judge dismissed the case declaring witness testimony insufficient to prosecute the men.⁷³

Fifteen years after the Rankin debacle, North Carolina launched its second attempt to prosecute a lynch mob. In May 1906, a mob of Anson County farmers broke into the county jail and lynched John V. Johnson, a forty-two-year-old white male.⁷⁴ Following the murder, authorities arrested twenty-two men and charged them with lynching. To ensure that the defendants did not exert undue influence on the jury, the state moved the trial to nearby Union County. Nonetheless, this made little difference, as a jury failed to convict the men. Throughout the trial, the prosecution based its case on the 1893 statute that defined the crime of lynching as an act in which a victim(s) had to be in the hands of the law before the state considered it a lynching.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, the prosecutor failed to review the 1905 revisions that, while maintaining the essence of the older law, nonetheless altered the 1893 provision. The most important difference between the two codes was the failure of North Carolina to define lynching in the revision. This was extremely important because several years earlier the state's highest court had ruled that a "crime had to be defined within the body of law for prosecution to be valid."⁷⁶ Due to this technicality, the men charged with the Anson County lynching escaped conviction.

In prosecuting Needleman's attackers, North Carolina officials were determined that this case would end with the conviction of the members of the mob. Hence, before arriving in Williamston, the prosecutor carefully reviewed North Carolina's lynching codes. Then he hired several special police officers and removed the investigation from the hands of local authorities.

A week after making these changes Gilliam got his first break. John Jones, a local farmer, claimed that on the night of the jailbreak he noticed a crowd of men standing near Skewarkee Church. When he stopped to investigate, the men drove him off. However, Jones recognized several of the men and gave their names to the prosecutor.⁷⁷

*Skewarkee Primitive Baptist Church, Williamston,
site of the Needleman attack.
(Photograph by Vann Newkirk, September 2007.)*

One day later Gilliam received additional information. Throughout Williamston rumors circulated that the night policeman in Robersonville, a town about ten miles from Williamston, was a member of the mob. When this report reached Gilliam he brought the officer, John Coltrane, in for questioning. At first, Coltrane claimed that he had no knowledge of the crime. Yet, when threatened with arrest, he made a full confession. According to Coltrane, on the night of the assault, Dennis Griffin, Effie Griffin's cousin, Julian Bullock, and Tommy Lilley asked him to join them in the attack on Needleman. Although he refused, he lent the men his gun. After the assault, Coltrane said that Julian Bullock told him that they had "fixed that damn Jew so that he won't bother any more women."⁷⁸

This was an important statement since evidence suggests that several of the ringleaders of the mob were members of the Ku Klux Klan, and many others harbored strong anti-Jewish biases.⁷⁹

For example, during the assault several members of the mob proclaimed, "that damned Jew got exactly what was coming to him." Supporting the belief that the attack was racially motivated, a reporter from the *New York World* placed the blame on the Ku Klux Klan and Sheriff Roberson's antipathy for Jews.⁸⁰ The *Kinston, (NC) Daily Free Press* maintained, "reports that the mutilation mob was promoted by members of the Ku Klux Klan and that Klan members enticed boys to take part in the affair by representing that it was nothing more than a flogging party are current here."⁸¹ Closer to home, the *Williamston Enterprise* printed an editorial which held Klan ideology responsible for the assault. "The Needleman case . . . was (caused by) the reflex or backwash of the Klan. A fair analysis of the case seems to warrant the belief that certain members of the Klan or those who had been members participated."⁸²

Whatever the case, on the heels of Coltrane's confession, a judge issued arrest warrants for John Griffin, Effie Griffin's brother, and John Gurkin, her brother-in-law.⁸³ Authorities also arrested twenty-one-year-old Furnie W. Sparrow, Jr., Effie Griffin's husband, as well as thirty-two additional suspects including Furnie W. Sparrow, Sr., Effie Griffin's father-in-law, and the pastor of Skewarkee Primitive Baptist Church, Edward Stone, Griffin's stepfather.⁸⁴ Mob member Tommy Lilley was noticeably absent. As news of the arrests spread, Lilley grabbed his .22 caliber rifle and put a bullet into his head.⁸⁵ Few believed that he would recover, although he did survive.

Trial for the mob began on May 6, 1925, with the selection of twelve all-white male jurors. Without question, attorneys for the accused felt that the makeup of the jury offered the defense the upper hand.⁸⁶ Consequently, they decided to employ a strategy of having their clients plead not guilty. To support this argument, they planned to use a mixture of testimony from the defendants and a handful of character witnesses to shore up their clients' alibis. Although the use of such tactics might seem risky today, in 1925 the lawyers had good reason to be optimistic. In trial after trial of lynch mob participants, almost any alibi supported by witness testimony was

enough to garner an acquittal. Moreover, all-white juries notoriously refused to convict white defendants charged with attacking blacks, Jews, and members of other minority groups.⁸⁷

The prosecution, however, came prepared. In the days before the trial, the prosecutor targeted twenty youthful members of the mob and two of the alleged ringleaders, John Gurkin and Edward Stone. The confessions thus obtained allowed the prosecution to uncover the roles played by each of the thirty-six defendants.⁸⁸ It also fit squarely into Gilliam's strategy of targeting the ringleaders in the belief that their convictions would make it easier to secure guilty verdicts for the remaining mob members.⁸⁹

When the trial opened on May 7, 1925, the prosecution called John Gurkin as the first witness. In a lengthy testimony, Gurkin named Dennis Griffin as the leader and organizer of the mob. He also identified Furnie Sparrow, Sr., Julian Bullock, and Furnie Sparrow, Jr., as the men who restrained Needleman while Dennis Griffin performed the castration.⁹⁰ Then he revealed that several of the men had intended to lynch Needleman and dump his body in the Roanoke River.⁹¹ Gurkin, however, claimed that he persuaded the men to spare Needleman's life. In cross-examination, the defense attempted to unnerve Gurkin by demanding to know why he had confessed. He calmly replied, "the truth never hurt anybody that I knows [*sic*] of."⁹²

Following Gurkin, the prosecution called its star witness, Joseph Needleman. Pale and weak, Needleman presented a pitiful picture. He was unable to walk or speak beyond a whisper, and deputies lifted him into the witness stand.⁹³ Trembling with emotion, Needleman gave a damning testimony. On the night of the attack, Needleman stated, a strange noise awakened him. When he turned on a light, he saw several men standing nearby.

At this point, Needleman rose from his chair, extended his arm, and pointed at Dennis Griffin, "and that man is sitting right

*Martin County Courthouse where the trial took place.
The jail where Needleman was held was a separate
building to the rear of the courthouse.
(Photograph by Vann Newkirk, March 2008.)*

there, he's the guy." For a brief moment, Needleman and Griffin glared at each other while hundreds of spectators, tense with curiosity, held their breath. According to the *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, this unnerved Griffin, and he began to sweat and move anxiously. Needleman next described how Furnie Sparrow, Jr., Furnie Sparrow, Sr., and Julian Bullock held him while Griffin tore off his

underwear and performed the castration. The stress of this testimony overcame Needleman and tears began to streak down his face.⁹⁴ As tears choked his speech, Needleman finished his testimony by claiming that Griffin threatened to kill him if he told anyone about the assault. Then in an attempt to raise doubt about the identity of the person responsible for the mutilation the defense limited its cross-examination to one brief question about the source of his injury.⁹⁵ Needleman replied by pointing at Griffin.

Other prosecution witnesses also offered damaging testimony. Edward Stone testified that Dennis Griffin told him that "something should be done to Needleman and that a crowd could be gotten together from different towns to lynch or castrate Needleman."⁹⁶ Alfred Gurkin and Roy Gray also identified Griffin as the leader and organizer of the mob.

The next day the defense opened its rebuttal by calling Furnie Sparrow, Sr., who claimed he was at home at the time of the attack. According to Sparrow, he closed his store around 12 AM and then drove home. To corroborate his alibi, William Croom, a Kinston police officer, declared that he saw Sparrow between 10 PM and 12 AM. He also claimed that he saw Sparrow's car at Sparrow's home at 1 AM. Two other Kinston police officers gave virtually the same testimony. Upon cross-examination, however, the state seriously weakened the officers' credibility when the prosecutor revealed that Sparrow's nephew was chief of police in Kinston and that the officers owed their jobs to him.⁹⁷

After Sparrow, the defense called Dennis Griffin. Dennis Griffin denied involvement in the assault. However, he admitted that he met John Gurkin and Tommy Lilley at a hardware store where they told him of the plan to get Needleman out of jail.⁹⁸ After this stunning admission, Griffin acknowledged, "if I quivered when Needleman pointed at me yesterday I did not know it, yet such an accusation against anyone guilty or innocent would make anyone shudder."⁹⁹ He closed by claiming his innocence. However, few in the courtroom took this claim seriously since a host of witnesses as well as Needleman had placed Griffin at the center of the crime.

The next morning lawyers presented closing arguments. Defense attorney Vernon Cowper compared the trial with the crucifixion. "Give us Barabbas the crowd before Pilot [*sic*] cried. . . . [The] state in a like manner today is seeking the crucifixion of Griffin, being willing to release Barabbas in order to get Griffin."¹⁰⁰ Cowper declared, "in trying all of the cases at one time the state seeks to bundle all of the defendants into the vortex of stripe and bonds without regard to the separate stories of the men."¹⁰¹

The most dramatic moment of the closing, however, happened when Prosecutor Gilliam spoke. First, he provided a summary of Needleman's testimony. Then he attacked the alibi given by Furnie Sparrow, Sr., by asking the jurors if they would not know how a man looked who had held them while they were being tortured. Finally, in an obvious reference to the remaining mob members, Gilliam declared that, "any man who is mean enough to stand by and see a crime like that committed is mean enough to commit it himself."¹⁰² With that, Judge N. A. Sinclair instructed the jury to convict anyone who encouraged, counseled, or advised the perpetrators of the crime as an accessory. Four hours later the jury returned verdicts of guilty with malice against Julian Bullock, Dennis Griffin, and Furnie W. Sparrow, Sr., and a verdict of guilty without malice against Claro Heath.¹⁰³ The remaining defendants including Edward Stone, Johnny Gurkin, Alfred Griffin, and Furnie Sparrow, Jr., pleaded guilty to the charge of accessory to the crime. After these proceedings the prosecutor announced that the state did not have enough evidence to prosecute Needleman for rape.¹⁰⁴

That the Needleman verdict did not raise any objections from local authorities and supporters of the defendants in the mutilation trial almost certainly stemmed from Effie Griffin's actions following the alleged assault. As indicated earlier, she kept the assault secret for a week, during which time she freely communicated with Needleman.¹⁰⁵ More astonishingly, Griffin married Furnie W. Sparrow, Jr., several hours after canceling her testimony at Needleman's arraignment.¹⁰⁶ For most whites such behavior

was unacceptable. This undoubtedly led the prosecutor to drop efforts to prosecute Needleman.

County Prosecutor Dornell Gilliam (left) and Judge N. A. Sinclair, outside the Martin County Courthouse, c. 1925. (Courtesy of the Raleigh News & Observer.)

The next morning Judge Sinclair sentenced Dennis Griffin to thirty years in the state penitentiary. Then he sentenced Furnie Sparrow, Sr., Furnie Sparrow, Jr., and Julian Bullock to prison terms ranging from six to ten years.¹⁰⁷ Coconspirators Claro Heath, Edward Stone, Johnny Gurkin, Alfred Griffin, Albert Gurkin, and Ray Gray received prison terms ranging from one to three years.¹⁰⁸ Sinclair fined the other mob members five hundred dollars each. Then as a warning to other would-be mob participants the judge declared:

I think this trial is a demonstration of the fact that the people of North Carolina can trust the courts. I have been surprised to read in the public press and to hear intelligent men say, that the

courts are not functioning, an implied justification of the people taking the law into their own hands. It is a lie and a slander upon the government of the state, and I hope that the press of North Carolina will stop that carping spirit of criticism which, to a great extent has created a feeling that the courts cannot be trusted. You can trust the courts. They never fail. Men have no excuse, no justification for taking the law into their own hands. The old sentiment that because some woman has been wronged you must revert to barbarism and become savages, taking the law into your own hands and redressing such wrongs is a reflection upon civilization. Men who ought to know better, from time to time attempt to justify and excuse such conduct is absolute poison running through the State and the men who express such sentiments are bad citizens and a positive menace to the government of the State. That spirit must be stamped out in North Carolina.¹⁰⁹

Nonetheless, the case refused to go away. In July 1927, Needleman filed a one hundred thousand dollar lawsuit for damages against Sheriff Thad Roberson, Effie Griffin, and the men charged in the assault.¹¹⁰ At first, few of the defendants appeared to worry about the suit. Most realized that the suit was more than a year after the crime. North Carolina law required persons seeking compensatory damages to file suit within one year from the date of the crime. In addition, during the trial, Needleman signed an agreement in which he consented not to bring a civil suit if the men agreed to plead guilty as accessories.¹¹¹ Needleman, however, overcame these obstacles by filing his suit in federal court. Federal law superseded state law. Consequently, in June 1928, the defendants concluded an out-of-court settlement with Needleman.¹¹²

What were the motivations of the attack? In his study, *Lynching in The New South*, W. Fitzhugh Brundage maintains that acts of lynching and mob violence often had a "twofold nature: not only were they intended to enforce social conformity . . . but they also served as a means of racial repression."¹¹³ It is plausible such motivations were factors in the decision to attack Needleman. For example in the 1920s, when a wave of nativist sentiment spread across the country, many white Protestant Americans

regarded “hyphenated Americans” with great suspicion and as members of alien races. At the same time, groups like the Ku Klux Klan heightened tension by forging white Protestant fears over immigration, sexual promiscuity, miscegenation, and alcohol into a potent political force with common targets: immigrants, African Americans, Catholics, and Jews.¹¹⁴ In such an environment the very thought that a Jew would sexually assault a white woman represented a serious transgression that demanded a response. Perhaps the most dramatic punishment would have been castration, which “symbolically exorcised the threat of interracial mingling,” thus disempowering the Jew.¹¹⁵

At the center of such beliefs lay two vastly different stereotypes of Jewish men then present in American culture. On one hand, these images portrayed Jewish men as physically weak, bookish, and asexual. On the other hand, these beliefs held that Jewish men harbored an insatiable sexual appetite for white Christian women. Taken together both stereotypes represented a threat to white Protestant masculinity. For one, the prowess and prominence of Jewish athletes and blue-collar workers easily discredited characteristics traditionally assigned to Jewish males. Hence, instead of competing with weak, sickly rivals, white Protestant men contended with strong physical specimens. Furthermore, as criminologist Barbara Perry maintains, the thought that Jewish men might engage in what were then defined as interracial relationships represented an even more insidious threat since this would have deprived white heterosexual Christian men of their rights to white women and weakened the white race by introducing inferior bloodlines.¹¹⁶ Such views were analogous to black rapist theories in which white men feared and resented black men for their alleged large sexual organs and their supposed lust for white women. Castration and subsequently lynching were symbolic and very real attempts to destroy this imaginary threat to white masculinity. Moreover, like the black rapists theory, white Protestant males possibly felt that the only way to maintain their masculinity was through the emasculation of the Jewish threat.

Aftermath

The results of the mutilation trial were far-reaching since the trial marked the first time in North Carolina's history and one of the few instances in American history that a southern state successfully prosecuted and sent key members of a mob to prison. More importantly, the state's success in prosecuting members of the mob allowed officials and sympathetic journalists to cast North Carolina as a symbol of the New South in which lynching and mob violence were passé and unacceptable. After the conviction, R. L. Gray wrote in the journal *World's Work*, "it should not be possible to have hereafter in North Carolina a lynching." Samuel S. McClure, the editor of *McClure's Magazine*, stated, "The results of the trial discouraged lynching in North Carolina." The most vocal acclaim came from William H. Richardson, the former private secretary of North Carolina Governor Cameron Morrison. "The mob is dead! Long live the law! Well might be the slogan of North Carolina for that state has ended the reign of the mobmen."¹¹⁷

Despite the headline, the trial did not end mob violence nor did it herald the start of a new era in North Carolina law enforcement. In fact, from June 1925 to December 1935 North Carolina experienced nine lynchings and five serious acts of mob violence. In only one of these cases, the 1925 mob attack on the Asheville jail, the state prosecuted those responsible. Not until 1937, when North Carolina created a Department of Justice and formed the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, would the state bring to an end the reign of Judge Lynch and vigilante law.¹¹⁸

The question remains what happened to Joseph Needleman and the key players in his castration. Evidence obtained from the 1930 census revealed that after his mutilation trial Needleman returned to Philadelphia. One year later he married and became a salesman for a cleaning plant. Needleman died in 1986.¹¹⁹ Effie Griffin and Furnie Sparrow, Jr., separated in 1942 and divorced one year later. In 1942, Griffin joined the Women's Army Corp. She died in 1984 at the age of seventy-eight.¹²⁰

*Portrait of WAC Effie Griffin Sparrow, c. 1944,
from the Effie Sparrow Papers (WV0179).
(Courtesy, Betty H. Carter Women Veterans Historical Project,
Martha Hodges Special Collection, and University Archives,
University Libraries, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.)*

Furnie Sparrow, Jr., served three years in prison for the attack on Needleman. After his divorce from Effie Griffin, he remarried and returned to Martin County. He died in 1976 at the age of seventy-one. Tommy Lilley, another key player in the case, never recovered from his self-inflicted gunshot and died less than a year after the famous trial. Julian Bullock escaped from the Caledonia State Prison on January 2, 1927, and disappeared. As for Dennis Griffin, he reported to prison in 1925. However, existing records do not reveal what happened to him after 1930.¹²¹ As for black and Jewish reactions to the crime, the surviving evidence presents only cursory information about how Jews, only ten years after the lynching of Leo Frank, reacted to the attack. However, for local African Americans reaction to the attack was likely one of forced indifference. Martin County had a long history of repression against blacks. In the period from 1883 to 1925, Martin County mobs lynched three African Americans. Dozens of other blacks suffered beatings or economic reprisals at the hands of whites. As a result, most African Americans expressed little desire to become involved in a case especially because it lacked any black participants.

The assault on Joseph Needleman was the last documented act of mob violence carried out on a white man in North Carolina. As such, the tragedy helps us understand a complex and crucial moment in history when North Carolina, like much of the South, was mired in efforts to end lynching and mob violence. The case also helps us to understand the tenuous place Jews occupied in southern society during the 1920s. For example, Furnie Sparrow, Jr., and several other members of the mob had been friends with Needleman. Sparrow's decision to seek revenge over Needleman's relationship with Effie Griffin and the subsequent participation of Klansmen and others who harbored strong anti-Jewish biases in the tragedy also reveals that during the 1920s, in much of the South, prejudice towards Jews continued to stir just below the surface, ready in moments of crisis to break loose. More significantly, it illustrates just how blurred the line was between revenge and antisemitism. Yet, the case did not herald an upsurge in antisemitism. On the contrary, after the initial excitement, Jews

living in North Carolina resumed their daily lives with little fanfare. As for the Ku Klux Klan, less than two years after the Needleman case, a split in the organization's leadership led to a rapid decline in membership. By 1935, only remnants of the Invisible Empire remained in North Carolina.

NOTES

¹ Cindy Sier, "Long History and Strong Spirit of Jews in the Deep South." Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, 2006, http://www.msje.org/media/article_remote_communities.htm (accessed October 2009).

² Deborah R. Wiener, *Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History* (Champaign, IL, 2006), 49; Marcie Cohen Ferris and Mark Greenberg, eds., *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil: A New History* (Waltham, MA, 2006), 9.

³ Patrick Q. Mason, "Anti-Jewish Violence in the New South," *Southern Jewish History* 8 (2005): 77-78.

⁴ Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York, 2003), 343-565; Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (Athens, GA., 1999).

⁵ Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York, 1995), 35.

⁶ "Doubt Girl's Tale Which Fired Mob," *New York World*, April 6, 1925; "Leader of Williamston Mob Is Given Sentence of Thirty Years in State Penitentiary," *Raleigh (NC) News & Observer*, May 14, 1925.

⁷ "Martin County's Sheriff and Court Clerk Totter on Thrones," *Raleigh (NC) Times*, May 9, 1925.

⁸ "Total Sentences 63 Years Imposed Five Mob Members," *Kingsport (TN) Times*, May 14, 1925; "State Must Avenge This Crime," *Washington (NC) Daily News*, April 1, 1925.

⁹ "Doubt Girl's Tale," *New York World*, April 6, 1925; Papers of the NAACP, Anti-Lynching Campaign 1916-1950, part 7, reel 15, Joyner Library, East Carolina University.

¹⁰ Lenwood Thomas, *Cry of Wounded Innocence* (New York, 1994); Lucia Peel Powe, *Roanoke Rock Muddle* (Raleigh, NC, 2002); Leonard Rogoff, *A History of Temple Emanu-El: An Extended Family, Weldon, North Carolina* (Durham, NC, 2007); Leonard Rogoff, *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2001); Leonard Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?: The Radical Place of The Southern Jew," *American Jewish History* 85 (1997): 195-230.

¹¹ "Williamston," *Williamston (NC) Enterprise*, September 23, 1914.

¹² Shelby Jean Hughes, *Martin County Heritage* (Williamston, NC, 1980), 71.

¹³ Fred W. Harrison, *Martin County: Images of America* (Charleston, SC, 1999), 1-2.

¹⁴ During the 1918 influenza outbreak Rutenburg sold his interest in the store to Dennis Taylor and left town. The next year Adler and Taylor sold their interest in the store to Max

Margolis. Margolis then sold the store to his brothers Frank and Irvin who operated the enterprise until 1972.

¹⁵ Williamston was also home to several Arab-owned businesses. Like the Jews, most initially entered the country as traveling salesmen. One of the most notable of this group was Farris Nassef, a man prominent in this story as Needleman's employer and a witness to certain events.

¹⁶ Hughes, *Martin County Heritage*, 403-404.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Organizations: View from the Ten-Yard Line," *Time*, February 8, 1968.

¹⁹ Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 79-80.

²⁰ Sidney M. Bolkosky, *Harmony & Dissonance: Voices of Jewish Identity* (Detroit, 1991), 81-82.

²¹ Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 81-82.

²² The *Dearborn* (MI) *Independent* also sought to create an American Dreyfus case. In October 1918, after a shooting accident left an army officer dead, the paper tried to pin the incident on a Jewish captain named Robert Rosenbluth. Although a military court ruled the death was accidental, the *Independent* went through a great deal of trouble to create the impression that the only reason such a verdict had been rendered was due to Jewish financiers working behind the scenes. Allan J. Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York, 2003), 45-46.

²³ Edward Halperin, "The Jewish Problem in U.S. Medical Education, 1920-1955," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 56 (April 2001): 140-167.

²⁴ Ham was best known as the preacher who converted Billy Graham. Abernethy was a well-known writer who later became pastor of Asheville's First Christian Church and Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan. Haywood was a member of the North Carolina legislature as well as a minister. James Baker, "The Battle for Elizabeth City: Christ and Antichrist in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 54 (October 1977): 397.

²⁵ Rogoff, *Homelands*. 7; Isaiah Janowsky, *The Jew: A Composite History* (Freeport, NY, 1942), 12.

²⁶ "\$143,111 for Jewish Relief," (Lumberton, NC) *Robesonian*, March 13, 1922.

²⁷ Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 100.

²⁸ Ida Libert Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers & Tsadikin: The History of Jews in Colorado* (Boulder, CO, 1951), 159.

²⁹ Ralph D. Mecklenburger, "Comfort and Discomfort: Being Jewish in Fort Worth," in *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, ed. Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth Roseman (Waltham, MA, 2007), 271.

³⁰ "Says Ku Klux Klan Sends Letter of Threat," *Robesonian*, November 10, 1921.

³¹ "Young Jew Beaten By Masked Men," *Robesonian*, January 30, 1922.

³² Several days after the beating a court convicted the manager for attacking Murnick. Rogoff, *Homelands*, 131.

³³ Needleman was employed as a traveling cigarette salesman for the Lorillard Tobacco Company. Two years earlier Needleman, fresh out of high school, moved to Kinston, North Carolina, to work in a store his brother operated. He met Furnie Sparrow Jr. and Effie Griffin through this relationship. When business declined he took a job with Lorillard.

³⁴ "Miss Effie Griffin Gives Her Version of Alleged Assault," *Tarboro (NC) Daily Southerner*, April 6, 1925.

³⁵ "Philadelphia Traveling Salesman Arrested in Edenton on Charge of Criminal Assault on Local Girl," *Williamston Enterprise*, November 27, 1925.

³⁶ "Needleman Still in Serious Condition at Washington is Friendly to Williamston," *Williamston Enterprise*, April 3, 1925.

³⁷ "Judge Sinclair Expected to Join Gilliam Investigation," *Raleigh News & Observer*, April 3, 1925.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Peele was Effie Griffin's cousin. *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ "Needleman Gives Pathetic Account," *Raleigh News & Observer*, May 8, 1925.

⁴¹ "Needleman Still in Serious Condition," *Williamston Enterprise*, April 3, 1925.

⁴² "Needleman Tells His Story on Stand," *Washington Daily News*, May 7, 1925.

⁴³ Ironically, Walker's boss Dr. Tayloe later served as one of Needleman's physicians. Vann Newkirk, *Lynching in North Carolina* (Jefferson, NC, 2008), 10-14.

⁴⁴ In addition to the attacks on the jail, in 1919 a mob lynched Dan Williams, an elderly black man. "Grand Jury Indicts Three Young White Men for Murder," *Williamston Enterprise*, March 23, 1923; "Feeling Against Sheriff Grows," *Tarboro Weekly Southerner*, April 2, 1925.

⁴⁵ The assault on the jail occurred on the night of March 29, 1925. "Needleman Accuses D. Griffin Dramatic Scene When Victim Says That's The Man," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 7, 1925.

⁴⁶ "Gurkin Tells His Side of the Crime: Puts Entire Responsibility for Crime on Dennis Griffin," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 10, 1925.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ "Doubt Girl's Tale," *New York World*, April 6, 1925.

⁴⁹ "Needleman Tells His Story on Stand," *Washington Daily News*, May 7, 1925.

⁵⁰ "Gurkin Tells his Side of the Crime," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 10, 1925.

⁵¹ Eric L. Goldstein, "'Now Is the Time to Show Your True Colors': Southern Jews, Whiteness, and the Rise of Jim Crow," in *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil*, ed. Ferris and Greenburg, 135; Cheryl Lynn Greenburg, *Troubling Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, 2006); Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, 2008); Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?"

⁵² On the day after the assault a throng of curious townsmen rushed to the site of the attack. Arriving first, the local undertaker collected Needleman's testicles. In a type of morbid exhibitionism he placed the testicles in a jar of embalming fluid. Over the next few

days, he did a brisk business displaying the remains for curious townspeople. "Needleman Accuses D. Griffin," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 7, 1925.

⁵³ "Martin County's Sheriff and Court Clerk Totter on Thrones," *Raleigh Times*, May 9, 1925; "Doubt Girl's Tale," *New York World*, April 6, 1925; "Sheriff and His Deputies Seize A Still Thursday," *Williamston Enterprise*, September 21, 1923.

⁵⁴ "Needleman Accuses D. Griffin," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 7, 1925.

⁵⁵ Jerome Skolnick and James J. Fyfe, *Above the Law: Police and the Excessive Use of Force* (New York, 1994), 24.

⁵⁶ "Needleman Accuses D. Griffin," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 7, 1925.

⁵⁷ "Lynching Party From Plymouth Fumbled the Job," *Williamston Enterprise*, June 19, 1923.

⁵⁸ "Needleman Taken From Jail," *Williamston Enterprise*, March 31, 1925.

⁵⁹ "Jury Chosen For Needleman Case," *Washington Daily News*, April 16, 1925.

⁶⁰ "Doubt Girl's Tale," *New York World*, April 6, 1925.

⁶¹ Four hundred dollars was the maximum reward allowed by North Carolina law. "Governor Ignores Martin Sheriff in Offering Reward," *Raleigh News & Observer*, April 4, 1925.

⁶² Mary Underwood, "Angus Wilton McLean Governor of North Carolina," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1962), 198; Brent Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC, 1992), 61-63; Bernard Cone, *Some Present day Problems of the Textile Industry* (Charlotte, 1930); *A Century of Excellence: The History of Cone Mills, 1891 to 1991* (Greensboro, NC, 1991); Patrick Huber, *Linthead Stump: The Creation of Country Music in the Piedmont South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2008), 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ D. L. Corbitt, ed., *Public Papers and Letters of Cameron Morrison* (Raleigh, 1927), xxxiv.

⁶⁵ Banks in the syndicate included First National Bank of New York, B. J. Van Ingen & Company, Kissel, Kinnicutt & Company, Hornblower & Weeks, Eldredge & Company, Redmond & Company, and Stacy & Braun. Cecil Kenneth Brown, *The State Highway System of North Carolina: Its Evolution and Status* (Chapel Hill, 1931), 125.

⁶⁶ Brown, *The State Highway System of North Carolina*, 125; "New Bond Offerings of the Week," *New York Times*, July 1, 1922.

⁶⁷ Underwood, "Angus Wilton McLean Governor of North Carolina," 68, 187, 198; William Richardson, "North Carolina Crushes Mob Rule," *Dearborn Independent* (April 1926), 7, 23-24.

⁶⁸ "Sees No Hope for Bullock If Sent Back," *Toronto Globe*, January 20, 1922.

⁶⁹ Newkirk, *Lynching in North Carolina*, 56-74.

⁷⁰ Goldstein, "'Now Is the Time to Show Your True Colors,'" Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*; Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?"

⁷¹ Newkirk, *Lynching in North Carolina*, 167-170.

⁷² "The Coroner's Inquest," *Asheville (NC) Citizen*, September 26, 1891.

⁷³ "Asheville Lynchers Go Free," *Statesville (NC) Landmark*, November 5, 1891.

⁷⁴ "White Man Is Lynched," *Charlotte (NC) Observer*, May 29, 1906.

⁷⁵ Investigations of Lynchings, etc., Public Law 461, North Carolina General Statutes, 1893; Walter Lockhart, "Lynching in North Carolina" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1972), 84.

⁷⁶ Lockhart, "Lynching in North Carolina," 84.

⁷⁷ "Needleman Mutilated by Mob," *Williamston Enterprise*, March 31, 1925.

⁷⁸ "Three Men Charged With Parts in Joe Needleman Case Silent; Many Talk," *Kinston (NC) Daily Free Press*, April 14, 1925; "Needleman Accuses D. Griffin," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 7, 1925.

⁷⁹ Both F. W. Sparrow, Sr., and F. W. Sparrow, Jr., were rumored to be members of the Ku Klux Klan. In addition several of the members of the mob claimed that they had come to Skewarkee Church, the site of Needleman's castration, to attend a Klan rally. "Arguments in Martin County Cases Resume Today," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 11, 1925.

⁸⁰ "Three Men Charged With Parts," *Kinston Daily Free Press*, April 14, 1925; "Doubt Girl's Tale," *New York World*, April 6, 1925.

⁸¹ "Three Men Charged With Parts," *Kinston Daily Free Press*, April 14, 1925.

⁸² "Where the Ku Klux Klan Falls Down," *Williamston Enterprise*, April 10, 1925.

⁸³ "Three Men Arrested Suspected of being Members of Mob," *Tarboro Southerner*, March 31, 1925; Furnie Sparrow & Effie Griffin marriage license, March 26, 1925, Martin County Licenses 1921-1927, v. 7, Microfilm, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

⁸⁴ The indictments, however, did not remove the original charges that Needleman faced. On the same day the mob members were arraigned, the state found enough probable cause to charge Needleman with rape. *North Carolina v. Joe Needleman*, Grand Jury Minutes, May 4, 1924, Martin County Minute Docket, v. 10, 1924-1930, Microfilm IXV, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

⁸⁵ "Tommy Lilley Shoots Self With Small Caliber Rifle; Not Expected to Recover," *Williamston Enterprise*, April 24, 1925.

⁸⁶ "Special Term of Trial of Joe Needleman and Mob Began Monday," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 5, 1925; "Gurkin Tells His Story;" "State Puts in Rebuttal Defense Testimony," *Washington Daily News*, May 9, 1925; "Court Idle While Six Deputies Summon Men For Jury Service," *Raleigh News & Observer*, May 6, 1925; "The Grand Jury Return 33 Bills In Record Time," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 7, 1925; "The Mutilation Joseph [sic] Needleman Told by John W. Gurkin," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 7, 1925; "Jury Try Men Charged With Attack Needleman be Drawn Tomorrow," *Greenville (NC) Daily Reflector*, May 5, 1925; Newkirk, *Lynching In North Carolina*; "First Night Session Mob Trial to Night," *Washington Daily News*, May 8, 1925; "Needleman Says Henry D. Griffin Leader of Mob," *Greenville Daily Reflector*, May 7, 1925; "Two Defendants Deny Any Part in Needleman Attack," *Greenville Daily Reflector*, May 8, 1925; "Needleman Points Out Griffin As The Man Who Mutilated," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 8, 1925; "Dennis Griffin Attempts Prove Alibi At Trial," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 9, 1925; "Arguments In Martin County Cases Resume Today," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 11, 1925; "Needleman and Sparrow Slated Next For

Trial," *Wilmington (NC) Morning Star*, May 12, 1925; "Needleman Gives Pathetic Account," *Raleigh News & Observer*, May 7, 1925."

⁸⁷ Newkirk, *Lynching In North Carolina*; Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till* (Baltimore, 1988); George C. Wright, *Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940* (Baton Rouge, 1990); Laura Wexler, *Fire in a Canebrake* (New York, 2003); Ralph Ginzburg, *100 Years of Lynching* (Baltimore, 1988); Walter Howard, *Lynchings and Extralegal Violence in Florida During the 1930s* (New York, 1995).

⁸⁸ "Gurkin Tells His Story"; "The Mutilation Joseph Told by John W. Gurkin," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 7, 1925; "Needleman Points Out Griffin As The Man Who Mutilated," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 8, 1925.

⁸⁹ "Three Men Charged With Parts," *Kinston Daily Free Press*, April 14, 1925."

⁹⁰ "Needleman Tells His Story on Stand," *Washington Daily News*, May 7, 1925; "Gurkin Tells His Story," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 7, 1925; "The Mutilation Joseph Told by John W. Gurkin," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 7, 1925; "Needleman Points Out Griffin As The Man Who Mutilated," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 8, 1925.

⁹¹ "Needleman Accuses Griffin," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 10, 1925.

⁹² "Eye Witness Describes Attack on Needleman," *Raleigh News & Observer*, May 7, 1925.

⁹³ "Needleman Gives Pathetic Account," *Raleigh News & Observer*, May 7, 1925."

⁹⁴ "Needleman Points Out Griffin As The Man Who Mutilated," *Tarboro Daily Southerner*, May 8, 1925.

⁹⁵ "Needleman Gives Pathetic Account," *Raleigh News & Observer*, May 7, 1925.

⁹⁶ "Needleman Accuses Griffin," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 10, 1925.

⁹⁷ "Griffin Denies Everything. Claims He Was Not in Mob That Mutilated Needleman," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 8, 1925.

⁹⁸ "Griffin Attempts Prove Alibi at Trial," *Tarboro Daily Southern*, May 9, 1925.

⁹⁹ "Needleman Case Will be Ended Tomorrow Save for Trial Sparrow Junior," *Kinston Daily Free Press*, May 8, 1925.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ "Trial of Alleged Mob Members Nearing Its Close," *Greenville Daily Reflector*, May 11, 1925.

¹⁰² "Mob Leaders Guilty, Needleman to Go Free, Griffin and Bullock May Get Sentence of Sixty Years," *Wilmington Morning Star*, May 13, 1925.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ "Dennis Griffin Gets 30 Years," *Williamston Enterprise*, May 11, 1925.

¹⁰⁵ "Judge Sinclair Expected To Join Gilliam," *Raleigh News & Observer*, April 3, 1925.

¹⁰⁶ "Marriage Licenses Issued in March," *Williamston Enterprise*, April 3, 1925; Furnie Sparrow and Effie Griffin marriage license.

¹⁰⁷ "Leader of Williamston Mob is Given Sentence," *Raleigh News & Observer*, May 14, 1925.

¹⁰⁸ Two weeks after Sinclair closed the trial, Dennis Griffin's attorney filed an appeal and secured his release on the grounds that improper evidence was used in his conviction.

One month later the North Carolina Supreme Court upheld Griffin's conviction and sent him back to prison. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ "Needleman Enters Suit for \$100,000 Against Mutilators," *Williamston Enterprise*, July 29, 1927.

¹¹¹ "Defendants in Needleman Suit File Their Answer in Washington Federal Court," *Williamston Enterprise*, August 26, 1927.

¹¹² "Needleman's Suit For \$100,000 Ended," *Statesville Landmark*, July 2, 1928; "Needleman \$100,000 Suit is Compromised," *Gastonia (NC) Daily Gazette*, June 28, 1928.

¹¹³ William Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Champaign, IL, 1993), 18.

¹¹⁴ Glenn Feldman, *Politics and Religion in the White South* (Lexington, KY, 2005), 70-71.

¹¹⁵ Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archive: Gender, Race & Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, 1999), 14.

¹¹⁶ Barbara Perry, "White Genocide, White Supremacists and the Politics of Reproduction," in *Home Grown Hate: Gender and Organized Racism*, ed. Abby L. Ferber (Florence, KY, 2004), 91-93; Goldstein, "'Now Is the Time to Show Your True Colors,'" 135; Greenburg, *Troubling Waters*; Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*; Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?"

¹¹⁷ R. L. Gray "Winning the War of Lynching," *World's Work* (September 1925): 507-511; S. S. McClure, "The Cause and Cure of Excessive Crime in the United States," *McClure's Magazine*, November 1925, 9-30; "Mob Law Ended in State Says Writer in Henry Ford's Dearborn Independent," *Gastonia Daily Gazette*, March 25, 1926.

¹¹⁸ Newkirk, *Lynching In North Carolina*, 123-140.

¹¹⁹ Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Salem, New Jersey; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; U.S. Social Security Administration Death Index, Pennsylvania, Issue Date: Before 1951, No. 183-09-2872.

¹²⁰ Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Griffins, Martin, North Carolina; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Kinston Ward 5, Lenoir, North Carolina; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Kinston, Lenoir, North Carolina; Florida Divorce Index, 1927-2001, Certificate No. 1436, Florida Department of Health, Jacksonville, Florida; U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, Record Group 64, U.S. National Archives, College Park, MD; North Carolina Department of Health and Humans Services, North Carolina Death Records 1968-1996, North Carolina Vital Records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*; "Defendants in Needleman Suit File Their Answer in Washington Federal Court"; "Resources of State in Lynching Probe," *Burlington Daily News*, August 21, 1930.

Kristallnacht and North Carolina: Reporting on Nazi Antisemitism in Black and White

by

Robert Drake *

Journalists must therefore lead, particularly on issues where
it's all too easy for prejudice to dominate public discourse.

Laurel Leff¹

On November 9–10, 1938, in what has become known as *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass, Nazi storm troopers, party members, and other citizens looted and burned Jewish property throughout Germany. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Jews were attacked, arrested, and then assessed fines for damages done to their own property. The pretext for these actions occurred when Herschel Grynszpan, a young German-born Polish Jew, shot and mortally wounded the third secretary of the German Embassy in Paris, Ernst vom Rath. This important event in the timeline of the Holocaust has often been interpreted as an early sign presaging the death camps. However, regardless of widespread press coverage, it has been charged that contemporaries who might have acted to rescue Jewish refugees may not have clearly understood the meaning of the events surrounding this escalation in the persecution of German Jews.

A number of historians have examined why so few American grassroots movements protested the Nazi antisemitism of the 1930s and the genocide of the 1940s.² Some believe that the lack of response reflected the failure of the American press to

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clearly present the public with the threat to German Jews.³ These critics assume that many Americans would have reacted differently had there been a clear message that German Jews were in serious danger. Other historians argue that, regardless of the nature or extent of media coverage, factors including economic insecurity, nativism, and antisemitism dictated American reactions.⁴ These disagreements concerning the flow of information and public opinion lie at the heart of the debate over the rescue of German Jews during the 1930s.

Deborah Lipstadt, in her important work *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933–1945*, finds that national press coverage of *Kristallnacht* provided misleading rationalizations and incorrect explanations rather than accurate analysis. This lack of clarity by the media, according to Lipstadt, may have confused many Americans. For example, newspaper coverage often depicted the persecutions as acts carried out by angry mobs that defied law and order and were bent on plunging Germany into chaos or even civil war. According to Lipstadt, this misrepresentation led many readers to perceive the Nazi government as weak, unpopular, and unlikely to last. Lipstadt also observes that many journalists presented the cyclical nature of the persecutions, coming for short periods in 1933, 1935, and 1938, as times when radicals within the Nazi Party gained temporary control over more moderate forces within the party including Hitler and Goering—a misleading analysis of these events.⁵

Although access to accurate, clear information acted as a necessary initial step to understanding Nazi antisemitism, it would not necessarily have been enough to change public opinion or fuel an organized attempt to rescue Jews—even if Americans had been so inclined. First, enough people needed to feel sufficiently confident to express their opinion, something that might prove difficult if they thought that their opinions could generate criticism. In *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion – Our Social Skin*, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann observes that public opinion is based upon fear and conformity rather than on information alone. She argues that because people fear being isolated from others, they need to feel sure that others have accepted their position before they will risk

*Portrait of Herschel Grynszpan, November 7, 1938,
taken after his arrest by French authorities for the
assassination of German diplomat Ernst vom Rath.
(United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,
courtesy of Morris Rosen.)*

taking a public stance on that issue. Thus, for people to speak out on a controversial subject, they would need to feel that their position will be accepted and not ridiculed by others.⁶

A similar process occurs when newspaper managers and editors monitor the climate of opinion in their community in an effort to predict what is important or off-limits for their readers. Laurel Leff, author of *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper*, studied this phenomenon, noting that journalists were often "stymied by what they perceived to be the public mood." Furthermore, Leff argues that journalists in the 1930s were well aware of the prevalence of antisemitism in American life. Consequently, to "avoid appearing to take sides in what was considered a controversial issue and to avoid alienating Americans hostile to immigration and to Jews, journalists did nothing."⁷ Adolph Ochs exemplifies this phenomenon. As the Jewish publisher of the *New York Times* from 1896 to 1935, he downplayed his religion to ensure that critics and readers did not perceive the *Times* as a Jewish paper in a city that was the most Jewish and perhaps the most antisemitic in America. During his tenure as publisher, he refused to hire a Jewish managing editor, stating that he preferred to hire an "American." In addition, Ochs seemed obsessed with downplaying anything Jewish. He refused a number of invitations to events honoring American Jews and reportedly asked *Times* writers with "Jewish" names to abbreviate them rather than use their full names. Thus, three popular journalists with the first name "Abraham" became A. M. Rosenthal, A. H. Raskin, and A. H. Wheeler.⁸ Ochs's Jewish successor, Arthur Hayes Sulzberger, while sympathetic toward the plight of German Jews, avoided the perception that the *Times* was a Jewish paper with equal adamancy.⁹

Historians of Jewish life in America Arthur Hertzberg, Henry Feingold, and Leonard Dinnerstein all conclude that antisemitism in the United States reached its height during the 1930s, although Jews were not the only group to face heightened discrimination during the Great Depression.¹⁰ From 1932 to 1940 approximately twelve hundred hate groups existed in the United States, more than at any other time in history. Many of these groups claimed

antisemitism as a central tenet. Evidence of this includes the widespread and routine use of hate speeches, mass meetings and rallies, radio broadcasts, print advertising, vandalism, and incidences of physical violence.¹¹ Among these groups with antisemitic agendas were the Nazi Party USA, the Friends of the New Germany, and the very visible German-American Bund.

*On the morning after Kristallnacht local residents in Darmstadt, Germany,
watch as the Ober Ramstadt synagogue is destroyed by fire.
Photographed by Georg Schmidt, a youth whose
family was opposed to the Nazis.
(United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,
courtesy of Trudy Isenberg.)*

For David S. Wyman, author of *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941* and *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945*, the climate of opinion in the United States during the 1930s was squarely stacked against any efforts to rescue German Jews.

Three major factors in American life in the late 1930's tended to generate public resistance to immigration of refugees: unemployment, nativistic nationalism, and anti-Semitism. Debate, generally centering on the first two elements, often carried overtones of the third. Indeed, separation of these three factors is nearly impossible. . . . Many people, no more than a generation removed from being immigrants themselves, responded to several years of economic insecurity by wholeheartedly accepting the nativist slogan "America for the Americans."¹²

It is hard to argue with Wyman on any of these counts. Concerns about preserving America's resources and culture for Americans by keeping immigrants out were codified in the immigration restriction laws of the 1920s and elevated to emergency status with the coming of the Great Depression. As a result, in 1930 the U.S. State Department began denying a high proportion of visa applications from Germany and elsewhere, a practice continued through the war with the exception of a brief period in the late 1930s.¹³

Wyman is not the only historian who believes that concerns about antisemitism worked against efforts to rescue more German Jews. Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, in their well-researched book, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945*, argue that concerns that increased immigration would "magnify latent American anti-Semitism" influenced U.S. policy makers when it came time to figure out what to do with Germany's Jews. Relying heavily on public opinion data, high-ranking State Department officials concluded that bringing German Jews to the United States must occur within the limitations of existing immigration policy.¹⁴

Additional research may help resolve conflicts between these historical schools of thought. When it came to press coverage of *Kristallnacht*, for example, North Carolina treated the news of Nazi

antisemitism more thoroughly than did most other places in the country. The state's newspapers generally devoted more space and analysis to defining Nazi antisemitism in comparison to press coverage elsewhere. Articles were more numerous and direct, and offered far fewer misleading explanations. Furthermore, grass-roots movements began to develop as both individuals and church groups condemned racial hatred and persecution of all kinds, not only those occurring in Germany but also those dominating the American South. Thus a case study of the reactions of North Carolinians to *Kristallnacht* raises questions concerning the universality of prevailing historiographic models and suggests the need for similar studies of other states that may have diverged from the norm.

*Germans pass the broken shop window of a Jewish-owned
business in Berlin destroyed during Kristallnacht.
(National Archives and Records Administration,
College Park Bildarchiv Abraham Pisarek,
courtesy of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.)*

Methodology

This study examines *Kristallnacht* daily press coverage in twenty daily newspapers representing all or part of five states from early November 1938 until between two and five weeks later when each stopped printing regular articles on the subject.¹⁵ Concentration centers on North Carolina periodicals with those in northern California, New Mexico, New York, and Wisconsin providing a comparative framework. Each article was analyzed in relation to content and placement. Paper selection depended on availability in a digital format, diversity of region nationally, and diversity of location within each state, where possible.¹⁶ Whenever available, individual cities were chosen with similarly sized populations to those in North Carolina.¹⁷ Thus, newspapers from small to medium sized cities, rather than large metropolitan areas like New York and Chicago, were utilized.¹⁸ A final factor, diversification in political affiliation or affinity, was ascertained by analyzing the newspapers' reaction to the Republican gains in the 1938 elections announced just days before *Kristallnacht* and discussed during it.

In each case, the dailies utilized one or more national news services for their foreign affairs coverage. The Associated Press (AP) was by far the most common. However, some papers also employed the United Press (UP) or the International News Service (INS). The newspapers received news articles on a daily basis. Then the newspaper management decided whether or not to publish the article, to publish it in part or in its entirety, where it should appear, and what the headline should be. Thus, by assigning an article to the front page, the newspaper's management made a point, emphasized a point of view, and/or determined that this was an issue that their readers would find important. By giving it front-page headline status they showed that they judged it more important than many other articles. The number of articles published on a topic and the existence of follow-up coverage signaled the management's belief that readers wanted or needed to know more about the topic. For example, in November 1942, an article titled "German Death Plot Charged" appeared on page two of a daily newspaper in Arizona.¹⁹ This was the newspaper's first

announcement of the mass murder of Jews in German-occupied territory and its last until the news of the liberation of the concentration camps in late 1944. The use of the word *charged* rather than one like *exposed*, the placement of the article away from the front page, and the lack of any follow-up news articles all sent implicit messages that this problem lacked importance, if not reliability, and/or in the management's judgment, was not of interest among readers. Therefore, the mass murder of European Jews was not effectively placed on the agenda of the newspaper's readers.

North Carolina Newspaper Coverage

On November 8, 1938, the *Greensboro Daily News* reported the shooting of Ernst vom Rath with a front-page article titled, "German Diplomatic Official Wounded; Polish Jewish Refugee Fails in Attempt at Assassination in Paris." The article explained that Grynszpan acted "to avenge Polish Jews driven out of Germany." The *Charlotte Observer* followed on November 9 with a front-page report stating that Grynszpan had appealed to President Franklin D. Roosevelt for help. In response to the violence in Germany on November 9-10, the *Asheville Citizen*, the *Raleigh News & Observer*, and the *Wilmington Morning Star* all chimed in with coverage on November 11. For these North Carolina newspapers, *Kristallnacht* remained the most important news item in the coming weeks.

During the initial phase, the papers portrayed the violence as widespread, but disorganized, mob attacks. Typical November 11 page-one headlines included "Jewish Property Wrecked, Looted By German Mobs; Few Police on Hand as Looters Run Wild" (*Raleigh News & Observer*), "Anti-Jewish Violence Sweeps Germany; Angry Crowds Wreck Number Of Synagogues" (*Charlotte Observer*) and "Nazi Mobs Ignore Orders To Halt Anti-Jew Drive; Wild Orgy Of Looting, Burning Continues Over Germany" (*Asheville Citizen*). As historian Lipstadt observes concerning the press nationally, these newspapers had not yet realized that these were forces supported by the Nazi government.

However, more accurate North Carolina press reports regarding the ongoing persecutions against German Jews began

quickly and lasted well through the first week of December. The headlines and articles were numerous, lengthy, confidently stated, and prominently placed on the front page. On November 12, the *Wilmington Morning Star* clearly linked the violence to the Nazi government with the very large headline, "Nazis Consider Re-Establishment Of Ghetto; Police Stage Secret Raids On Jew Homes; Several Hundred Members Of Race Are Taken Into Custody In Berlin." Examples appearing on the following day include the *Asheville Citizen's* large headline "Nazis Clamp Drastic Decrees On Jews: Thousands Arrested" and the *Raleigh News & Observer's* headline "Nazi Government Takes Violent Action Against Jewry Through Nation: Jews Virtually Barred From Participation in German National Life." Nothing in these explanations of the events in Germany would mislead readers.

The sheer quantity of articles is striking as the North Carolina newspapers averaged 2.88 articles per day on coverage that extended from one to two weeks beyond that of the newspapers surveyed in other states. For example, on November 14, the *Asheville Citizen* printed five articles from various perspectives on the problem. It then included four in each of the following two days, six the next, and then seven each on November 18 and 19. The busiest single day for any of the North Carolina papers came on November 17. The *Charlotte Observer* carried a large headline, "Baptists Berate Persecution of Jews," a three- by two-inch column-wide, front-page photo with the caption, "Jewish shops in Berlin and elsewhere were plundered by looters," and seven articles.

The North Carolina papers also kept their readers updated with serial articles covering subtopics related to the persecutions. One of these addressed the Nazi government's insistence that German Jews pay for all of the damage to their own property. Coverage of this aspect of the persecutions began for the *Wilmington Morning Star* on November 13 and 14 with the sweeping front-page headlines "'Liquidation' of Jews Completed By Germany; 400 Million Special Tax Is Assessed" and "Nazis Levy Heavy Assessments On Rich Jews; Fund To Be Used To Mend Damage Done By Numerous German Window Smashers," respectively. On

Asheville (NC) Citizen-Times, November 20, 1938.
(Courtesy of North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.)

November 24, front-page coverage described new financial restrictions on Germany's Jews that included a 20 percent tax on all Jewish wealth in excess of \$2,000. An additional article the following day reported that all such taxes needed to be paid before anyone would be allowed to emigrate. On November 27, a front-page article described how the Nazis established an agency to buy Jewish personal property (like jewelry and art) at the government's "final evaluation" so that German Jews could raise the cash necessary to emigrate or pay their fines and taxes. Finally, on December 7, an article stated that the Nazi regime had taken "a strangle hold" on all remaining Jewish resources and wealth. This decree essentially proclaimed that anything owned by Jews was

*Editorial page cartoon showing the Nazis torpedoing
a lifeboat named "Human Rights,"
Raleigh News & Observer, November 19, 1938.
(Courtesy of North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.)*

ultimately "German," so, by definition, it was inherited by the state. The article identified the process as "full aryanization." Arguably the most important and prominently placed set of articles treated the threat that additional persecutions and decrees posed to the safety and well-being of those Jews remaining in Germany. The *Raleigh News & Observer* reported regularly on the continuing problem with some of the most expressive headlines of the month. With article titles like "Prospect of New Terrors Driving Jews to Suicide; Nazis Plan Field Day at Martyr's Funeral; Jewish Orphans Driven Out," "Dozen Jews Are Killed in Murderous Gantlet of Hitler Black Guards; Nazi Leaders Discuss Plans to Exterminate All Jews in Germany," and "Jews Hear Grim Warning Against Shooting Hitler: Official Nazi Organ Says Mass Killings of Jews Would Be Consequence," the newspaper accurately predicted how far Nazi antisemitism would go.²⁰

Other articles followed President Roosevelt, whose first act was to recall the U.S. ambassador to Germany, Hugh R. Wilson, for consultation on November 14. Thus, papers in North Carolina also reported about the effect of the persecutions on U.S.-German relations. For example, on November 15, the *Charlotte Observer's* most prominent front-page headline read "U.S. Ambassador Ordered Home From Germany" and carried the subtitles, "Hull Aroused By Continued Nazi Attacks Against Jews; Move is Diplomatic Protest On Treatment of Minorities; Not Severing Relations." Following Roosevelt's actions, on November 18, Germany recalled its ambassador to the United States, Hans Diekoff. This again received front-page coverage from the *Charlotte Observer* as well as the other North Carolina papers on November 19. Most papers did not end this thread until late November when Roosevelt met with Ambassador Wilson to discuss the situation.

Additional long-term coverage began on November 16 with reports on efforts to find homes for the refugees. The *Asheville Citizen* published two front-page articles on plans to assist Jews in Germany, one of which came from the U.S. ambassador to Great Britain, Joseph Kennedy, that promised a "bold plan to find new homes abroad for many of Germany's 700,000 terrorized Jews." On November 16, 18, and 19, the *Wilmington Morning Star*

reported on resettlement of Germany's Jews that included the headlines "New Plan To Aid Jews Considered; Democracies May Attempt To Remove Remainder of Race Out of Germany," "Britain Pushes Efforts To Find Homes For Jews," and U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull's request for the "Participation Of All Nations In Handling Jewish Problem."

North Carolina press editorials on the persecution of German Jews can be categorized as numerous, direct, and consistent. The papers averaged fifteen editorials on the persecutions for the one-month period following *Kristallnacht*. In addition, all the editorials criticized the Nazi government. In many cases, they openly and directly resorted to sarcasm. For example, the *Greensboro Daily News* began its editorial coverage on November 12 with a piece titled "A Sample of Nazi Culture":

Using the youth's crime as a pretext, German mobs inaugurated a day of terror in Berlin, Vienna, and elsewhere, surpassing anything even the third reich has yet seen. Synagogues were burned, Jewish shops sacked and looted, homes were raided, thousands of Jewish citizens were beaten and abused, and other thousands were hustled off to prison. The Hitlerite "patriots" went about this thievish and bloody business in systematic fashion—with thorough German efficiency . . . the police looked on, making no move to interfere."

Later in the month the paper printed an article titled "Non-Smoking Dictators." This tongue-in-cheek article quoted Julius Streicher, the notorious Nazi antisemite and propagandist, who, like Hitler and Mussolini, did not smoke because it was "the greatest poison" of the German nation. Streicher, according to the Greensboro paper (in the heart of tobacco country), stated, "Jews taught the Germans to smoke in order to destroy the German nation and to make money."²¹

The *Charlotte Observer* also published a number of hard-hitting editorials. The editorial writers expressed their disgust with titles like "Away with Civilization: Back to Barbarism," and "The American Stomach Turned." One unique editorial, "The Dictators Compliment Rotary," stood out in its explanation that Adolf Hitler paid perhaps the greatest tribute to the Rotary in its thirty-

four year history by banishing it from Germany "because occasionally a Jew had been admitted to membership." Details about Hitler's other likely reasons for outlawing the organization included the fact that the group's members were held to high ethical standards in business, ascribed to the ideal of community service, and pledged to try to advance "international understanding, good will, and peace through a world of fellowship." One can imagine many a Rotarian chuckling proudly over this article.²²

Other very direct editorials utilized titles like "Penalizing the Innocent,"²³ "Shaking Down the Minorities,"²⁴ "The Sad Facts,"²⁵ "Horror in the Reich,"²⁶ "Has the Man Become Insane?"²⁷ and "Death and Evil."²⁸ Clearly the authors of these editorials felt anger and sadness at what they must have found difficult to adequately describe, as was the case with the following:

Words are powerless to express American sympathy for the plight of the German Jews. . . . This planet thought it had plumbed the depths of human degradation and suffering during the World War of twenty years ago; but the fighting of those days, however horrible, was good clean sport in comparison to the brutal bullying that the Germans of today are administering to the helpless Jews in their midst.

Asheville Citizen, November 16, 1938

This is frenzy. This is not only anti-Semitic violence, this is evidence of almost national insanity.

Raleigh News & Observer, November 15, 1938

It is difficult for the logical, reasoning mind to comprehend how Adolf Hitler can expect to retain the respect of civilized men and nations in view of the inhuman injustices he persists in inflicting upon the Jews of Germany.

Charlotte Observer, November 17, 1938

The lengths to which Germany's nazi government now goes in the persecution of Jews are almost inconceivable in the Year of Our Lord, 1938. The nazis have turned back the clock hundreds of years!

Greensboro Daily News, November 16, 1938

Taken as a whole, the level of distaste for the Nazi regime is apparent, right down to the use of a lower case 'n' in the word

“nazi.” These were not the words of writers who believed that their readers were rabid antisemites.

Finally, several editorials made the connection between the persecution of Jews in Germany and race relations in the American South—something that the Nazi government itself used occasionally to justify its acts. In fact, some of these editorials presented powerful arguments for the improvement of race relations in the South. One editorial that directly connected persecution in the United States with *Kristallnacht* reads in part:

Here in the United States, and in the south most unfortunately, we have sometimes had demonstrations somewhat like, though on a smaller scale, the one just experienced in Herr Hitler’s empire. Only a few days ago in a southern state, a negro, accused of a crime against a white person, was seized and put to death by white mobsters. The mob then proceeded to terrorize a number of innocent negroes and to set fire to some of their properties.²⁹

A *Raleigh News & Observer* editorial titled, “The Dogs Let Loose,” made the case for ending prejudice in the United States.

In the persecution of the Jews in Germany, Americans can view an illustration of what can happen when prejudice against race, creed or religion is once put on its feet and set in motion. The United States . . . is no stranger to racial or religious dislikes and discriminations.³⁰

In “Mob Crimes at Home,” the editorial writer asked readers to “give a little more thought and action in the matter of crime and its prevention at home” so that law and order could prevail over “King Lynch.”³¹ Finally, in a two paragraph editorial, “Lynching Is Here,” the author stated that victims of lynching in the South “deserved at least as much attention from an intelligent, law-abiding and humane public as do similar crimes against humanity, if not law, thousands of miles away.”³²

North Carolina Reacts to Kristallnacht

Letters to the editor in North Carolina strongly opposed the persecutions. In fact, of the dozens of letters published only two were not outwardly critical of events in Germany. One of the latter used the persecutions to remind Jews that they should repent

Raleigh News & Observer,
front page,
November 13, 1938
(Courtesy of North Carolina
Collection, Wilson Library,
University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill.)

in the name of Jesus Christ so that their "sins may be blotted out." The other, titled "Germany for the Germans," was a nativist rant that advocated resettling all Jews in Palestine and leaving "North America for Americans."³³

The overwhelming majority of the letters to the editor expressed indignation, extolled the virtues of Jews, or took the opportunity to relate the situation in Germany to the treatment of African Americans in the South. The letters-to-the-editor section in the *Charlotte Observer* was perhaps the most interesting and detailed. The editorial staff provided a title that corresponded with at least one of the featured letters of the day in every issue. During coverage of *Kristallnacht*, these included "Assassination Goes With Persecution," "Have the Jews Any Rights Whatever?" "What Do We Owe the Jews?" "Why Are Jews Always Scapegoats?" and "Jehovah Will Long Outlast Hitler." Statements in these letters

included "Adolf Hitler's treatment of the Jewish race is a disgrace to modern civilization" and "Hitler, the very essence of foulness and corruption, is not the first fool to attempt to do away with God."³⁴

These letters disclose a dichotomy in the perceived identity of Jews among the writers. On the one hand, the letters referring to Jesus Christ and Jehovah clearly took a religious perspective that one might expect from inhabitants of America's Bible Belt. On the other hand, portraying Jews as a race seemed to support the argument of both the nativist and the Nazi detractor who stated that Hitler was "a disgrace to modern civilization." Apparently perceptions of Jews as a race or a religious group were not universally accepted nor did they necessarily predict how one felt about Jews. Moreover one could define Jews as a separate race without that categorization justifying persecution.

Many other letters characterize German Jews in a very positive fashion. For example, one letter cited how bravely ninety thousand German Jews fought in World War I, while another stated, "If Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest is correct, surely the Jews must be a superior people, for no nation on earth has ever undergone such ages of oppression and cruelty." The most interesting and hard-hitting letter had as its title, "Carrying Aryanism to Logical Limits." The author challenged Nazis to take their zeal to its "logical extremes" by doing without all Jewish medical discoveries. Citing the February 15, 1934, issue of the *New York State Journal of Medicine*, the letter states that the Nazis would not be able to accept treatment for syphilis, heart disease, toothache pain, typhus, diabetes, or even the common headache.³⁵

Finally, several letters, reflecting editorials noted above, reminded North Carolinians that racism was no stranger at home. Although some condemned racial prejudice in general terms, a number directly compared treatment of German Jews and the system of Jim Crow and lynching in the South. Some of these letters thoughtfully expressed the need for improved race relations in the region.

America is forging ahead to provide a haven for Jews in their hour of need and in harsh terms openly voices disapproval to

such racial antagonism. However, can we as American citizens remain patriotically blind to our own original and traditional grievances? The Southern Negro faces a situation closely akin to the racial injustice imposed upon the German Jew. Negroes are also barred from public concerts, schools, executive offices, and State laws demand segregation on public conveyances. As a citizen, he is isolated and limited in his freedom to participate in civic affairs. . . . He must assume his responsibility to support tax-paid institutions of higher learning, yet there is a remote possibility that he or any member of his race will ever attend.³⁶

Finally, one letter with the title "Is America Setting the Standard?" suggested that President Franklin D. Roosevelt could not criticize Hitler effectively until southern racial policies changed:

Wouldn't it be a happy, effective, and influential thing if he [FDR] could hold up to Hitler, as an example of how minorities should be treated, the record of the United States, the greatest democracy in all the world . . . yet we have consistently and persistently denied the negro . . . the rights guaranteed him by our Federal constitution . . . Before Uncle Sam can seriously and effectively reprimand Hitler for persecuting the Jews, he must clean his skirts of racial hatred, racial discrimination, and racial injustices as are practiced against the negro of America.³⁷

Church groups also reacted publicly to the persecutions. On November 17, all North Carolina dailies reported that the North Carolina State Baptist Convention adopted two resolutions condemning Germany's treatment of Jews. Each of the papers ran articles that emphasized the convention resolutions regarding the persecution of Jews in Germany and included forcefully worded front-page headlines. Examples include "NC Baptists Condemn Nazi Drive on Jews,"³⁸ "Baptists Condemn Nazi Persecution of Jews,"³⁹ and "Baptists Berate Persecution of Jews."⁴⁰ In addition, the *Raleigh News & Observer* carried a front-page article titled "Nazi Persecution of Jews Assailed by Baptists Here." Each of these articles quoted Resolution IV, "German Persecutions," that went beyond condemning Nazi Germany by advocating that the U.S. provide a haven for the refugees:

1. That the North Carolina Baptist Convention . . . does hereby condemn and deplore, the present policy of the German Government which it pursues in relentless and inhuman persecution both of Christians and Jews on purely religious and racial grounds.
2. That we believe the government of the United States, without any general repeal or revision of its immigration laws, should somehow find it possible so to modify the application of these laws as to offer asylum to these persecuted and outraged people regardless of the immigration quotas fixed by statute.⁴¹

The articles also utilized two other resolutions that called on Christians and their governments to care for the millions of refugees that needed assistance in Germany, China, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and the Sudetenland.⁴²

On November 21, the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, adopted similar resolutions. However, this received less coverage than the Baptist actions, with short articles appearing in three of the five papers (two of which appeared on page one). According to the articles, the conference resolutions denounced the "barbarous cruelties" imposed on Jews in Germany and elsewhere. They also called for the "extension of Christian sympathy" to those in need and pledged to support efforts to relieve their plight.⁴³

Thus the leadership of the two largest religious denominations in the state gave forceful and clear statements condemning Nazi persecution and advocating specific American government policies. Furthermore, their policy statements received almost complete coverage in the area press.

However, the coverage of the North Carolina State Baptist Convention was not complete. It failed to include wording condemning the state of race relations in the American South. Here, Resolution I, "Concerning Race Relations," broadly condemned racial injustice everywhere. However, it particularly singled out

the treatment of African Americans in the South and Jews in Germany:

We recognize and deeply regret human weakness and frailty which express themselves in universal racial antipathies and friction. Racial frictions are by no means limited to the South; nor to the relations of the White man and the Negro. The most flagrant antipathy at the present time is found in the universal prejudice against the Jew and the terrible persecution now inflicted upon the Jews in Germany, Poland and other countries. We rejoice that the gospel of our Lord is adequate remedy for racial hate, and we believe that only as this gospel is preached and accepted by all nations can we hope to see racial hatred disappear and to see all races living together in peace.⁴⁴

In every case, the newspapers omitted the strong wording in Resolution I, which referred to southern race relations. Neither the Baptists' antilynching resolution nor the language in the Methodist convention's resolution that called for racial "tolerance," "good will," and "universal brotherhood" gained publication in the newspapers.⁴⁵ The omissions are both startling and surprising since the resolutions mirrored sentiments in various editorials and letters to the editor that were published. Unfortunately, the reasons for the newspapers' decisions in this regard cannot be determined.

The Middle Ground:

Comparisons and Contrasts with Coverage in Other States

Difference between North Carolina and the northern California, New Mexico, and New York newspaper coverage starts with how often they presented the issue of the persecution of German Jews to their readers (Wisconsin will follow because its newspaper coverage diverged dramatically from the norm). While the North Carolina papers averaged 2.88 articles per day, the three newspapers chosen from northern California, the *Hayward Review*, the *Oakland Tribune*, and the *San Mateo Times*, averaged 1.82 articles per day during regular coverage of the persecutions. The New Mexico papers, the *Albuquerque Journal*, the *Clovis News-Journal*, and the *Gallup Independent*, published 1.5 articles per day, while coverage in the five New York papers, the *Albany Times-Union*,

Glens Falls Post Star, *Oswego Palladium-Times*, *Saratoga Saratogian*, and *Watertown Daily Times*, averaged 1.43 articles per day. In addition, regular articles appeared in most North Carolina dailies until December 9, while regular coverage in all but one of the papers in these other states ended by November 29.⁴⁶

San Mateo (CA) Times, front page, November 18, 1938.
(Courtesy of Robert Drake.)

Newspapers from northern California, New Mexico, and New York primarily focused their reporting on the effects of *Kristallnacht* on foreign relations. For example, in New York, the *Oswego Palladium-Times*' headline, "Britain Voices Indignation At Anti-Jew Drive; German Violence Impedes Chamberlain's Plan for Negotiations With Hitler";⁴⁷ the *Glens Falls Post Star*'s "Appease-

ment Plan Not Affected by Nazi-Anti-Semitic Drive; Chamberlain Hints in Face of Gathering British Opposition";⁴⁸ the *Albany Times-Union's* "President 'Shocked' by Nazi Purge, Pledges Nation to Vast defense Program Guarding All Americas";⁴⁹ and the *Saratoga Saratogian's* "Nazis Challenge Entire World At Envoy's Funeral"⁵⁰ all express some relationship to foreign affairs. Similarly the northern California and New Mexico papers' typical headlines pronounced: "London, Berlin Near Break Over Jewish Purge; Colony Demanded; Public Anger on Persecutions Halts Peace Plan; Joint Power Protest Proposed,"⁵¹ "War Clouds Settle Over Europe Again; Berlin Envoy Returns; Will Confer With FDR Over Nazi Situation,"⁵² and "Jewish 'Purge' Will Not Halt Peace Attempts."⁵³

Editorials in these papers were also not nearly as numerous. While the North Carolina papers averaged fifteen editorials each during the month after *Kristallnacht*, the northern California, New Mexico, and New York papers averaged fewer than five. As did their mainstream coverage, many of the editorials tended to focus on the impact of the persecutions on foreign relations. A November 22 editorial in the *Glens Falls Post Star* provides a good example. Its author reasoned that Hitler did not speak at the funeral of Ernst vom Rath because he wanted to minimize the fallout from international opinion. The editorial concluded that Hitler was "in the main a cool and intelligent interpreter of political currents, who knows enough to pull his punches when the occasion calls for patience." The article depicted Hitler "as a moderating force, on the side of Marshall Goering, who has violently disapproved from the first the immoderation of the Jewish attacks."⁵⁴ These types of explanations obviously deflected the issue away from Nazi antisemitism by placing them in the context of international relations and by spinning the yarn that Hitler opposed overt acts of antisemitism.

Of the three northern California newspapers, only the *Oakland Tribune* included any editorials that did not focus entirely on foreign relations, although even these made some reference to diplomacy.

Protests and denunciations directed at the sadistic persecutions of Jews and Catholics in Germany reveal how stunning the shock has been to the outside world. . . . Already the Nazi revels in barbarism have halted the moves for peace and understanding between Britain and Germany.⁵⁵

*Gallup (NM) Independent, front page, November 17, 1938,
showing the funeral procession of the "martyred" Ernst vom Rath.
(Courtesy of Robert Drake.)*

While the New Mexico editorials were more numerous and at times more revealing of Nazi antisemitism, they also typically misled or concentrated on foreign relations. With editorial titles like "Caution the First Requisite in Dealing with Germany"⁵⁶ and "World Refugee Situation Demands Careful Study,"⁵⁷ the newspapers seemed to suggest that readers should control their emotions and refrain from rushing to rescue. The *Gallup Independent* also included a photo of a young and attractive Leni Riefenstahl that had the title "Hitler's Friend, Leni Arrives." The caption, clearly depicting Hitler as a "regular guy," stated:

The glamorous Leni Riefenstahl says she merely "works" for Adolf Hitler. But continental gossips have long talked of a

romance between *Der Fuehrer* and the German movie star, pictured as she arrived in the United States. Purpose of her trip is to show movies of the 1936 Olympics.⁵⁸

Newspapers with a letters-to-the-editor section were few. However, the *Oakland Tribune* and the *Albany Times Union* each had a section associated with the editorial page.⁵⁹ In the *Oakland Tribune*, the discussion over Nazi Germany and the persecution of German Jews proved to be nothing short of a battleground. Just as the news of the persecutions reached page one of the paper on November 10, a letter to editor titled, "Heils Hitler," contended that Hitler and Mussolini were "self-learned men with brains." The writer particularly took a positive view of Hitler when he stated that the German leader was "not sleeping, but busy at work building up a country run down in the last war." Furthermore, the letter's author may have been tacitly comparing the situation in Germany to the United States with comments like:

Everybody is working and Germany is prospering, making money. Hitler knows how to take care of people. . . . Hitler is avoiding war if he can help it to save humanity from murder and terror.

A letter appearing two days later titled "Unemployables" insisted that most of those who were "unemployable" and on relief roles were "largely aliens dumped on us while we were blinded by 'Melting Pot' propaganda." In another letter taking a strongly isolationist position, the writer proclaimed that he was not "an 'American internationalist,' i.e. a Jew" as he attacked a previous pro-German letter that ridiculed the United States for asking other nations to stop rearming for war. A letter from "Eighteen Seventy" overtly stated that "it might be wisdom and beneficial to make a thorough impartial investigation into the real reasons of the Jewish persecutions."⁶⁰ This kind of back and forth banter continued throughout the survey period. While some of these letters were not specifically directed at the Jewish refugee situation and the persecution of Jews in Germany, many of them carried decidedly pro-Hitler, restrictionist, isolationist, and antisemitic overtones.

However, nearly as many letters openly addressed the persecutions and took a sympathetic and supportive position. In fact, any of these letters could have appeared in the North Carolina papers. For example, in response to the letter written by Eighteen Seventy, "Nineteen Two" wrote:

Is there ever any justification for the persecution of any race, color or creed. I judge from the anonymous signature of Eighteen Seventy that this is his year of birth, that would make him 68. Supposing it was decided to persecute all over 65 because they are a burden nine times out of ten to the community anyway. How would he complain. [*sic*]

Another thoughtful letter with the title "Brutality" added:

Brutality never stops where it starts, it must expand to justify its existence and always uses its force on the helpless. The individual brute finds it very easy to start using his brutal force on his wife and children. National brutality finds it easiest to abuse those most helpless in its domains. The Jew comes in very often to start on, but it never stops there. Great . . . is the individual and the nation who have accepted the true basis of life and society that "all men are created equal," and act accordingly.

In "To Pay Sometime," "The Man from Mars" wrote:

German "culture" phooey! The power-drunk lunatics now in the saddle in that unfortunate land are reverting to the savageries of their forebears. . . . If the laws of Nature have not been repealed, the brutal Nazis will in due time pay for their orgy of cruelty.⁶¹

Two additional letters related the persecutions in Germany with injustices in the United States.

Why is it that sane men and women fall for the stupid and outrageous propaganda that is overwhelming the world. . . . Pray that the day may not come when I would consider myself above my fellowmen, be he black or white, be he Democrat or even Republican.

While I wish to compliment you on your editorial in which you pointed out that Jewish outrages were committed with Hitler's consent I would like to also point out that we have had in this county identically the same brutal treatment of minority groups, and the press as a whole has either apologized for or upheld this

(to put it mildly). . . . Let's clean up our own cesspool, then perhaps our condemnation of nazism will have more weight.

The extremely small letters-to-the-editor section of the *Albany Times Union* normally contained only two very short letters that concerned local events or announcements. While three letters mention Hitler or Nazi Germany, two placed these references in the context of speculation on Germany's territorial ambitions and one called for readers to join in the boycott on German goods—although it did not mention that this was in response to antisemitism in that country. However, there were two pages filled with letters that voiced individual and/or group support and approval for a front-page editorial by publisher William Randolph Hearst that condemned Nazi antisemitism. Examples of these include:

Your historic message to the American people to unite for another crusade for liberty, tolerance and justice came like a cool zephyr on this earth of hell. Millions of Jews and true Christians as well applaud your truly humanitarian stand in the noble fight against the present brutal and animal instincts of blind passion, intolerance and the gradual destruction of civilization.

Your fine editorial of last weekend against intolerance and injustice deserves warmest congratulations. Every true American must thrill with pride.⁶²

Finally, the California, New Mexico, and New York newspapers reported on a number of incidents where local groups protested or held some kind of vigil on behalf of German Jews. The northern California newspapers stood out somewhat in this respect as front-page articles appeared with the titles "Bay Pastors Score Race Persecutions,"⁶³ "Prayer for Jews in S.M. [San Mateo] Church,"⁶⁴ and "Dynamic Speaker Addresses Rotary" that cited a Dr. Rieger who delivered a Thanksgiving address that listed many of the strengths that Jews possessed and modeled for others.⁶⁵ While all ten regional newspapers published at least one of these announcement-like articles, six contained more than one. Thus, public reactions to the persecutions in the form of letters to the editor and public condemnations and supportive prayer meetings occurred there just as they did in North Carolina.

A More Limited Response

With towns and cities with names like Germantown, Berlin, and Rhinelander, and a governor in 1938 with the last name Heil, Wisconsin reveled in its German American culture. It was also a place where the four newspapers under study, the *Appleton Post-Crescent*, the *La Crosse Tribune*, the *Rhinelander Daily News*, and the *Sheboygan Press*, averaged the fewest numbers of articles per day (1.23) on the Nazi persecution of Jews. The coverage also ended nearly two weeks sooner than in the other states.

Like most of the other newspapers, the Wisconsin papers focused on the effects that *Kristallnacht* had on foreign affairs rather than the danger to German Jews or the nature of Nazi antisemitism. The vast majority of the articles limited the threat to German Jews to vandalism (where property was damaged) or economic distress (when they were fined for the assassination of vom Rath). For example, the headlines of the *La Crosse Tribune* declared "German Mobs Plunder, Burn Jewish Shops" and "U.S. Protests Destruction of Property" but failed to describe the physical attacks on Jews. On November 17, the paper also jumped to the conclusion that the problem had been solved with the headline "Britain To Try Jew Refugee Plan: Hebrews May Be Saved By Kennedy Idea; Problem Being Treated As One of Urgency."⁶⁶ The latter referred to U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain Joseph Kennedy's plan to resettle German Jews in the colonies lost by Germany in the aftermath of World War I.

Almost half of the articles in the Wisconsin papers concerned the problem of where the refugees should go once they emigrate from Germany. While it was unusual to see articles in the other papers concerning overt opposition to increasing immigration into the United States, several articles of this nature appeared in Wisconsin. The restrictionist position appeared in "Immigration Quota Change Opposed"⁶⁷ and "Borah Opposed to Quick Revision of Immigration Laws"⁶⁸ referring to well-known isolationist, Idaho Senator William Borah's opposition to changing U.S. immigration policy to accommodate more German Jews. Other articles included statements like, "Administration officials said . . . they anticipated a bitter struggle between members of Congress

*Front page, Rhinelander Daily News, November 21, 1938.
(Courtesy of Robert Drake.)*

wishing to relax immigration barriers for these refugees and members desiring to retain or strengthen them."⁶⁹

Also in Wisconsin, Nazi antisemitism was often disconnected from leaders in the German government. For example, a *Sheboygan Press* headline read "Retaliatory Acts Over Death of Official Finally Halted by Order of Goebbels,"⁷⁰ while the *Rhineland Daily News* reported "Goering Bans Further Acts Against Jews."⁷¹ Numerous other articles describe how Nazi actions were moderated in response to the boycott of German goods in the United States and elsewhere. Here, the *Appleton Post-Crescent* reported, "Goering Ban on Street Attacks On Jews Indicates Boycotts are Cutting Reich's Foreign Trade."⁷² The *Rhineland Daily News* stated "Germany Feels Pinch of Boycott,"⁷³ and the *La Crosse Tribune* observed "Boycotts Being Felt By Nazi Foreign Trade."⁷⁴ In each of these cases wording within the article had Goering calling for an end to the persecutions because of its effect on trade. For example, the text of the *Appleton Post-Crescent* article cited above is clear in this respect:

A new order by Field Marshall Herman Wilhelm Goering banning further street action against Jews was interpreted today to indicate that foreign boycotts were having a telling effect on Germany's foreign trade. . . . Sources close to Goering said his order undoubtedly was in the interest of foreign trade, upon which the Nov. 10 shop wrecking by angry crowds had a boomerang effect.

The article implied that antisemitism among important Nazi leaders had practical limits and thus may have lacked depth of belief and enthusiasm of purpose. Unlike the sixteen newspapers from the other states, none of the Wisconsin papers published an article that reported the existence of local events like prayer sessions or mass meetings in support of German Jews. Either local efforts to support German Jews did not materialize or the newspapers purposely failed to report them.

Fewer than three editorials per newspaper appeared on the subject for the months of November and December and half of these primarily concerned foreign affairs. One editorial, while acknowledging the necessity of Jewish resettlement, never cited the

United States as a potential place that this might occur.⁷⁵ Another, appearing in the *Sheboygan Press*, cautioned that while people in the United States might sympathize with German Jews, "it is not for us to interfere in any foreign country's affairs." A day later an editorial in this same newspaper called the "reported" persecutions "reprisals" when calling upon the United States government to get the "facts and not rely upon newspaper accounts." It went so far as to explain that recalling the American ambassador to Germany was merely to report "the true situation" (making one wonder why this could not have been done without leaving Germany).⁷⁶ Still another, although more subtle, article, described the experience of a young Oregon girl who was visiting Berlin during *Kristallnacht*. She cited local shopkeepers as saying that the Nazis were not "real" Germans—the implication being that most Germans were not antisemites. Ultimately only one editorial in the four Wisconsin daily newspapers, titled "Hit Prejudice Hard," seemed to understand the true nature and extent of Nazi antisemitism:

Since we live in a world that has come to accept the mass murder of women and children in time of war as a matter of course, a return to the barbaric pogroms of medieval Europe can hardly seem surprising. Yet if we grow callous about these things we lose our defense against them. Only by making ourselves feel the horror of these abominations can we keep alive the hope for a restoration of civilization.⁷⁷

Conclusion

By focusing on more than international relations, news reporting on the persecutions in the North Carolina newspapers provided a more detailed picture of Nazi antisemitism. While some of this had to do with the fact that the North Carolina papers picked up many more news service articles, they also provided clearer and more descriptive titles, more prominent placements, and more follow up articles. Evidence that readers and newspaper editors in North Carolina better understood Nazi antisemitism, and felt secure enough to attack it, appeared in newspaper editorials, letters to the editor, and the resolutions of two statewide

"The Tortoise and the 'Herr'-1938,"

Wilmington Morning Star, November 20, 1938.

The cartoon also appeared in the Albuquerque Journal on the next day.

(Courtesy of North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library,

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.)

church conferences representing over six hundred thousand North Carolinians. As such, sufficient information for North Carolinians to form personal opinions joined with a comfort level that encouraged people to speak up in support of German Jews.

One explanation for the reason why North Carolinians may have been more sympathetic to Jews is offered by Lee Shai Weissbach's book *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History*. Weissbach argues that living in a small community reshaped life for many Jews and "was one of the most powerful environmental factors that could influence American Jewish life." Weissbach also identified 1927 North Carolina as the state that had the most sparsely populated and decentralized Jewish population of the day.⁷⁸ In addition, historian Leonard Rogoff argues in *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* that the small-town atmosphere and the lack of a central urban Jewish community served as important factors in how Jewish life evolved in the state. Thus, without any city having a thousand or more Jewish residents, in North Carolina "communal constraints and rabbinic authority" did not impede its small-town influence and thus tended to encourage more developed community relationships across religious boundaries.⁷⁹

However, many readers in small, medium, and relatively large Jewish communities in northern California, New Mexico, and New York also protested against the persecutions. For even though newspaper coverage in these three states was not as detailed as North Carolina's, in every newspaper there was evidence of public reaction against Nazi actions in Germany. This was not the case in Wisconsin. By minimizing the number of reports, reminding readers that the U.S. immigration laws should not be challenged, offering misleading headlines to articles, and writing editorials that questioned reports sympathizing with the plight of German Jews, these Wisconsin newspapers promoted a different agenda. As such, it is evident that there were powerful cultural and social conditions in Wisconsin that were not present elsewhere in this study.

Thus, the coverage in Wisconsin offers an example unlike any found in Lipstadt's work. It was a place that seemed to do its best not only to downplay the plight of German Jews but also to reframe it, something that could only be done to suit the newspaper managers' agenda and/or be in line with newspaper managers' perceptions of their readers' beliefs and biases. As

such, regardless of how the message of the persecution of German Jews was presented to these Wisconsin newspaper managers and readers, it is unlikely that they would have organized to rescue Jews anywhere, let alone in a place thousands of miles away.

For many of these same reasons, David Wyman's conclusion that the American public was too antisemitic to push for a more aggressive and timely rescue agenda could be viewed as a bit too reductionist, especially since only the Wisconsin papers promoted a restrictionist, and at times, antisemitic agenda. Along these lines, the assumption made by the State Department that bringing more Jews into the country would create more antisemitism should also be questioned. After all, antisemitism in the United States was not the monolithic national monster that many may have thought it was. Strong differences existed between places like North Carolina and Wisconsin.

In the end, reporting on *Kristallnacht* within each location was strikingly consistent in terms of the number of articles per newspaper, the choice of articles and their presentation, the tone and focus of editorials, and the coverage of local events that expressed sympathy for German Jews. This documents a degree of uniformity in how these newspaper writers and editors perceived their readers' biases and belief systems. As such, there is little evidence that any of these papers challenged their readers' beliefs by speaking with a stronger voice than their neighbor newspapers. This supports Laurel Leff's contention that journalists "too readily allow fears of public backlash to inhibit their actions."⁸⁰ The news coverage clearly matched the audience.

NOTES

¹ Laurel Leff, "A Distinction Journalists Like to Ignore," *Nieman Reports* 60 (Summer 2006): 86.

² Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (New York, 1986); David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York, 1984); Robert W. Ross, *So It Was True: The American Protestant Press and the Nazi Persecution of the Jews* (Minneapolis, MN, 1980).

³ See, for example, Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*.

⁴ See, for example, Wyman, *Abandonment of the Jews*.

⁵ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 110–111.

⁶ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion – Our Social Skin*, 2nd ed., (Chicago, 1993), 37–57.

⁷ Leff, "Distinction Journalists Like to Ignore."

⁸ Richard F. Shepard, *The Paper's Paper: A Reporter's Journey through the Archives of the New York Times* (New York, 1996), 276.

⁹ Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (New York, 2006), 29–48.

¹⁰ Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History* (New York, 1989), 279; Henry Feingold, *The Jewish People in America: A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920–1945* (Baltimore and London, 1992), 251–255; Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York, 1994), 128.

¹¹ William O'Neill, "American Jewry: The Pivotal Years," *Dimensions* 10 (1996): 9–14.

¹² David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941* (New York, 1985), 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3–14.

¹⁴ Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (Bloomington, IN, and Indianapolis, 1987) 58–59.

¹⁵ The North Carolina newspapers utilized for this study were the *Asheville Citizen*, the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Greensboro Daily News*, the *Raleigh News & Observer*, and the *Wilmington Morning Star*.

¹⁶ The intention here was to have a concentrated area in the Northeast, Midwest, Northwest, and Southwest to go along with North Carolina in the Southeast.

¹⁷ Albany, NY, and Oakland, CA, are on the high side in both total population and number of Jewish residents (especially Albany for number of Jewish residents and Oakland for total population). This is justified in that neither were the important centers of Jewish life in the state or region, and both city's newspapers had the advantage of offering a letters-to-the-editor section.

¹⁸ This data comes from the Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, and a 1937 report on Jewish population that appeared in the 1940-1941 *American Jewish Year Book*, published by the Jewish Publication Society, referred to in the table as AJYB. See H. S. Linfield "Jewish Communities of the United States: Number and Distribution of Jews of the United States in Urban Places and in Rural Territory" *American Jewish Year Book 5701 1940-1941*, (Philadelphia, 1940) 215-266.-The percentage was arrived at by dividing the 1937 data by the 1940 census data.

	U.S. Census for 1940	1937 AJYB Data	Total Con- gregations (AJYB)	% of Jews
NORTH CAROLINA	3,571,623	7,333		0.21
Asheville	51,310	950	2	1.9
Charlotte	100,899	720	1	.7
Greensboro	59,319	535	1	.9
Raleigh	46,897	334	2	.7
Wilmington	33,407	330	2	1.0
CALIFORNIA	6,907,387	157,471		2.30
Hayward	6735	50	0	.7
Oakland	302,163	7415	4	2.5
San Mateo	19,403	265	0	.14
NEW MEXICO	531,818	1179		0.22
Albuquerque	35,449	450	2	1.3
Clovis	11,144	(< 10)	0	na
Gallup	8343	28	0	.3
NEW YORK	13,479,142	2,206,328		16.37
Albany	130,577	9400	6	7.2
Glens Falls	23,085	630	2	2.7
Oswego	22,062	120	1	.5
Saratoga	16,918	450	1	2.7
Watertown	33,385	460	1	1.4
WISCONSIN	3,137,587	39,917		1.27
Appleton	28,436	510	2	1.8
LaCrosse	42,707	200	1	.5
Rhineland	8,501	30	0	.4
Sheboygan	40,638	1,000	3	2.5

¹⁹ *Arizona Daily Star*, November 25, 1942.

²⁰ *Raleigh News & Observer*, November 17, 23, 30, 1938.

²¹ *Greensboro Daily News*, November 12, 1938; December 3, 1938.

²² *Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 16, 17, 1938.

²³ *Greensboro Daily News*, November 21, 1938.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, November 24, 1938.

²⁵ *Asheville Citizen*, November 27, 1938.

²⁶ *Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 1938.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, November 17, 1938.

²⁸ *Raleigh News & Observer*, November 18, 1938.

²⁹ *Greensboro Daily News*, November 12, 1938.

³⁰ *Raleigh News & Observer*, November 25, 1938.

³¹ *Greensboro Daily News*, November 29, 1938.

³² *Raleigh News & Observer*, November 24, 1938.

³³ *Raleigh News & Observer*, November 26, 29, 1938.

³⁴ *Charlotte Observer*, November 12, 19, 21, 26, 30, 1938; November 12, 30, 1938.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, November 18, 19, 1938.

³⁶ "Hitler as Imitator," *Raleigh News & Observer*, November 23, 1938.

³⁷ *Charlotte Observer*, November 22, 1938.

³⁸ *Wilmington Morning Star*, November 17, 1938.

³⁹ *Asheville Citizen*, November 17, 1938.

⁴⁰ *Charlotte Observer*, November 17, 1938.

⁴¹ Annual of the Session, North Carolina Baptist State Convention 1938, North Carolina State Baptist Convention Archive, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC.

⁴² *Raleigh News & Observer*, November 17, 1938.

⁴³ *Greensboro Daily News*, November 22, 1938.

⁴⁴ Report on Committee on Social Service and Civic Righteousness, North Carolina Baptist State Convention 1938, North Carolina State Baptist Convention Archive, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC.

⁴⁵ The North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal, South: *Journal of Proceedings* (November 17–21, 1938): 37–40, General Commission on Archives and History, the United Methodist Church. Charlotte, NC.

⁴⁶ "Regular coverage" is defined here as at least once every two days.

⁴⁷ *Oswego Palladium-Times*, November 12, 1938.

⁴⁸ *Glens Falls Post Star*, November 15, 1938.

⁴⁹ *Albany Times Union*, November 16, 1938.

⁵⁰ *Saratoga Saratogian*, November 17, 1938.

⁵¹ *Oakland Tribune*, November 14, 1938.

⁵² *Gallup Independent*, November 10, 1938.

⁵³ *Albuquerque Journal*, November 15, 1938.

⁵⁴ *Greensboro Daily News*, November 22, 1938.

⁵⁵ *Oakland Tribune*, November 15, 1938.

⁵⁶ *Gallup Independent*, November 22, 1938; *Clovis News-Journal*, November 23, 1938.

⁵⁷ *Clovis News-Journal*, November 11, 1938.

⁵⁸ *Gallup Independent*, November 17, 1938.

⁵⁹ Outside of North Carolina, where three of the five newspapers had a letters-to-the editor section, the *Oakland Tribune* and the *Albany Times Union* were the only two that had such a section.

⁶⁰ *Oakland Tribune*, November 12, 11, 24, 1938.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, November 29, 21, 22, 1938.

⁶² These letters were in response to the editorial titled, "Let America Lead the Way" by William Randolph Hearst that appeared on November 13, 1938 in the *Albany Times Union* and presumably all the Hearst papers. November 20, 1938.

⁶³ *Oakland Tribune*, November 14, 1938.

⁶⁴ *San Mateo Times*, November 21, 1938.

⁶⁵ *Hayward Review*, November 22, 1938.

⁶⁶ *La Crosse Tribune*, November 10, 16, 17, 1938.

⁶⁷ *Rhineland Daily News*, November 19, 1938.

⁶⁸ *Appleton Post-Crescent*, November 19, 1938.

⁶⁹ *La Crosse Tribune*, November 17, 1938.

⁷⁰ *Sheboygan Press*, November 10, 1938.

⁷¹ *Rhineland Daily News*, November 25, 1938.

⁷² *Appleton Post-Crescent*, November 25, 1938.

⁷³ *Rhineland Daily News*, November 25, 1938.

⁷⁴ *La Crosse Tribune*, November 25, 1938; November 21, 1938.

⁷⁵ *Rhineland Daily News*, November 25, 1938.

⁷⁶ *Sheboygan Press*, November 14, 15, 1938.

⁷⁷ *La Crosse Tribune*, November 17, 1938.

⁷⁸ Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America* (New Haven, 2005) 8–9, 30.

⁷⁹ Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

⁸⁰ Leff, "Distinction Journalists Like to Ignore," 86.

The Hermans of New Orleans: A Family in History

by

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In *Rabbis and Lawyers*, an important study of communal leadership, the historian Jerold S. Auerbach notes “the boundless admiration that Jews bestowed on American law” in accounting for the speed with which this particular minority achieved full citizenship.¹ In Auerbach’s version of this process, a commitment to the law—as a profession and as a source of moral authority—has been decisive in weaning American Jews away from the religious mandates of the Torah (and *its* laws). The bar, he argued, has thus accelerated the process of secularization that has framed the experience of modern Jewry. Other historians need not refer to the Hebrew Bible as a baseline, however, in order to underscore the significance of the legal profession as a booster rocket for the upwardly mobile. Membership in this profession has facilitated Jewish absorption into a robustly dynamic society that has afforded ample opportunities for advancement. The bar has certified achievement, and betokened privilege and prestige.

Ever since 1916, when Louis D. Brandeis took his place on the U.S. Supreme Court, a “Jewish seat” has usually been occupied. In the 1930s, and during the current term as well, Jews have proven themselves so adept at the bar that a pair or even a trio of them have served simultaneously on the Supreme Court. When no Jew is among the nine on the nation’s highest appellate court, the absence has been noted. In 1970 Senator Roman L. Hruska (R-Neb)

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tried to justify the nomination of a very undistinguished judge to the Supreme Court by asserting that "there are a lot of mediocre judges and people and lawyers. They are entitled to a little representation . . . We can't have all Brandeises, Frankfurters, and Cardozos," the Nebraska Republican pleaded. After Norman Mailer watched his attorney seek to spring him from jail in the aftermath of the 1967 march on the Pentagon, the novelist generalized that "there was no lawyer like a good Jewish lawyer."² (Bad Jewish lawyers do not seem to generate stereotypes and have attracted little historical interest.)

How the Jewish commitment to the legal profession has worked out over the course of a couple of generations can be illustrated through the fate of one particular family. Based for about eight decades in New Orleans, the Herman family is worthy of consideration in the light of Jewish history. That broader saga has been punctuated by totalitarianism, which constitutes the systematic violation of the human status, and which underscores the value that a vulnerable minority so commonly ascribes to law itself. However imperfectly, it represents a struggle to achieve the fairness in which a marginalized group invests its faith. This essay is intended to contextualize the Hermans within the ambit of the southern Jewish experience and within the larger framework of the Diaspora. The life of a family that has been devoted to the practice of law might therefore be inflected with meaning. Everyone knows that families form, fight, fragment; they expand and contract. They can sustain and strengthen but damage their members as well. Families can also be historicized.

A Place and a Profession

If a context does not come easily into focus for the history of postbellum New Orleans Jewry, however, the explanation may stem from the absence of any scholarly volume on the subject. The Civil War is where Rabbi Bertram D. Korn brings to a halt his indispensable 1969 account of the growth of the city's Jewish community. Something scandalous, it must be asserted, hovers over the failure of scholars to pick up the story where Korn's *The Early Jews of New Orleans* leaves off.

*Harry and David Herman (center) flanked by their sons,
on the steps of Louisiana Supreme Court, New Orleans, 1977.
Left to right: Fred, Maury, Russ, and their father Harry;
David and his sons, Shael, Mark, and Avram.
(Courtesy of Shael Herman.)*

That volume evokes the distant lineage of New Orleans Jewry. Its origins can be traced to the eighteenth century and to pre-American and non-British auspices, and the arrival of eastern Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century did not dwarf the earlier waves from the German states and from Alsace as decisively as in other parts of the United States. The community was just big enough so that Jewish marriage partners did not have to be sought or pursued elsewhere with the same intensity as smaller southern towns; families could therefore become easily entwined within New Orleans itself. Its Jews therefore often leave the impression that they identify primarily with the city, and much less so with a larger region, unlike many other southern Jews, whose

kinfolk may be more widely scattered. By 1958, one sociologist discovered, almost half of the city's Jews had been born in New Orleans; and of those who had been born elsewhere, another third had lived there for at least two decades. This was a stable community (or, according to its critics, a stagnant one). Legend and history conspire to give the Jewish people a reputation for wandering. But the Jews of New Orleans were scarcely more mobile than their gentile neighbors. According to the U.S. Census of 1960, four out of five residents of Orleans Parish had been born there.³

The failure of New Orleans Jewry to elicit full-scale research also runs the risk of overestimating the homogeneity of the region. Located in the Deep South, New Orleans has neighborhoods and atmospherics without their equivalent in, say, Shreveport or Jackson or Birmingham. In 1959, when the cosmopolitan journalist A. J. Liebling visited Louisiana to cover its politics for the *New Yorker*, he realized that "New Orleans resembles Genoa or Marseilles, or Beirut . . . more than it does New York." That distinctiveness produced what a Tulane University scholar called "narcissism."⁴ It may also account for a certain insularity among the Jews of New Orleans, who might easily have sensed the singularity of their community when venturing outside. In the South the domination of Reform Jews whose roots could be traced to Germany has also tended to obscure the role of Zionism and the presence of eastern European Jews, of which this essay is intended to serve as a slight corrective. The origins of the Herman family would nevertheless hardly strike historians of American Jewry as eccentric, or require revision of the standard overview of transatlantic crossing to achieve upward social mobility.

In the Ukraine the surname was Germanofsky, and in 1900 two sons—Jacob and Samuel—crossed over to the New World. They got as far as Wayne County, Michigan. In that year Jake married Gertrude Siniawsky, also an immigrant from Tsarist Russia. They had five children: David, born in 1913 in Detroit; Harry, born in 1915; Rebecca, born in 1918; Ethel, born in 1920; and Morris, born in 1929.⁵ The parents used Yiddish with one another, and the children spoke that language to their parents. The furniture business was then flourishing in Michigan; and though "more

Gertrude and Jacob Herman and their five children, c. 1948.

Left to right: Morris, Harry, Ethel, Gertrude, Jacob, Rebecca, and David.

Morris is the only one who is still alive.

(Courtesy of Shael Herman.)

than a whiff of socialism" could be discerned in the family,⁶ it was primed for enterprise rather than for class struggle. Like most Jewish immigrants and their progeny, the aim was not to rise with their class but *from* their class instead. Jake was a cabinetmaker and a repairer of furniture, and he and his wife Gertrude moved to New Orleans. The U.S. Census of 1920 listed him as a cabinetmaker. A decade later, the census identified him as the proprietor of a furniture store. The city boasted significant commerce in antiques. Jews came pretty close to dominating this field of endeavor, with families like the Raus, the Manheims, the Brenners, the Shapiros, the Sterns, and the Waldhorns prominently doing business on Magazine and Royal streets in the French

Quarter. For instance, the father of Anne Levy, Mark Skorecki, was also a cabinetmaker and furniture repairman, who came to the city with his wife and two daughters after miraculously surviving the Holocaust. (How the family escaped from the Warsaw ghetto to reach New Orleans is the subject of a remarkable book that Tulane University historian Lawrence N. Powell published in 2000, *Troubled Memory*.) Anne Levy's husband, Stan, also owned an antique shop on Magazine Street.⁷

The Herman family lived above the store, in a home at 2029 Magazine Street that was modest and comfortable. The youngest son, Morris, eventually entered the family business, J. Herman, and has remained an antiques dealer on Royal Street. His two brothers signed up for the law, which they envisioned as giving them dignity and status in the community. It is difficult to exaggerate the admiration that the learned professions could elicit in the Jewish community. Here is one instance. Among the most influential agitators of the past century was Saul D. Alinsky, whose work as a community organizer became the topic of the senior thesis that Hillary Rodham submitted to Wellesley College in 1969; and the vocation he invented also inspired the early activism of Barack Obama. Alinsky took a certain pride in making trouble. "To other people, I'm a professional radical," he once commented. But to his mother, Sarah, "the important thing is, I'm a professional."⁸

Growing up in the poor neighborhood known as the Irish Channel, Dave and Harry were the first in their generation to go to college. They managed to go on to law school despite the searing impact of the Great Depression. Dave graduated from Loyola University night school, and then from Louisiana State University Law School; Harry went to Loyola University and then Tulane Law School and entered private practice in 1936. Antisemitism in that era still had the power to sting, especially in the form of omission from the city's social clubs like Boston, Louisiana and Pickwick, and from the Mardi Gras krewes, including Comus, Momus, and Rex. The mere accumulation of wealth was less of an automatic assurance of high social status than elsewhere in the nation. Perhaps no American city was less ashamed of the class

distinctions that it cultivated, which led a Tulane University anthropologist to conjecture that the exclusion of Jews has historically operated as a normal function of "stable provincial society."⁹

Nonetheless Abraham Lazar (Abe) Shushan and Seymour Weiss served as key figures in the political machine of Huey P. Long, whose demagoguery did not tap into religious or even racial prejudice. Nor did antisemitism impede the aptitude of enterprising Jews in New Orleans for the import business (coffee, bananas), as well as for success in downtown retailing and real estate. Little if any evidence of discrimination has surfaced to mar the reputation of the admissions policies of LSU Law School in Baton Rouge or of Tulane Law School. Even in the 1940s, the city's most prominent law firms would often include a token Jew, preferably one stemming from a family (unlike the Hermans) with long-established roots in the city.¹⁰ (The *yichus* of Judah P. Benjamin, Esq., of Bellechasse, Louisiana, could not be bequeathed to posterity. The "brains of the Confederacy" fled after its defeat, to practice law quite successfully in England. His only child, a daughter, had lived in Paris as early as 1843, and stayed there.) Some attorneys whose antecedents could be traced to nineteenth-century Germany and France (Dreyfous, Steeg, Danziger) were unimpeded in their rise to prominence in the city's bar. So complete was the absorption of this ethnoreligious group in the history of the Crescent City that in 1941 Rabbi Julian Feibelman could not discern "a distinct Jewish community in New Orleans. There is rather a distinct New Orleans culture of which the Jewish community is a part." The city and its Jewish minority were inextricably entwined. They went together, as a local adage has it, like red beans and rice. "Binx" Bolling, the narrator of Walker Percy's National Book Award-winning novel, *The Moviegoer*, is an Underground Man, alienated from his surroundings in New Orleans. No wonder that he feels "more Jewish than the Jews I know. They are more at home than I am."¹¹

The Herman brothers did not create a partnership immediately after law school. Instead the pair worked as associates in other firms before creating Herman & Herman in 1947. Its practice was usually in private or civil law (such as real estate law

transactions, wills, and estates). Where there is a will, goes the saying, there is a lawyer to break it. The firm had virtually no criminal practice. The brothers complemented rather than duplicated one another. Dave liked to solve the problems of clients, making the law into a kind of social work. But Harry responded with a humane touch as well. A certain division of labor prevailed. The client who wanted sympathy was advised to go to Harry; whoever wanted to get a difficulty resolved preferred to match up with Dave. It was a matter of emphasis rather than contrast. Harry was more the attentive “people” person, Dave more the detached diagnostician. The waiting room of the offices of Herman & Herman was often packed.¹²

*Jake Herman in front of his furniture store on Magazine Street,
New Orleans, c. 1950.
(Courtesy of Shael Herman.)*

Yet, it was Harry Herman who helped found the American Trial Lawyers Association (ATLA),¹³ whose ethos is undoubtedly an echo of the fierce colonial political cartoon: "Don't Tread on Me." And it was Dave Herman who became a juvenile court judge, seeing a chance to engage in what his oldest son described as "therapy," as a way of helping those down on their luck. In 1973 Joe Sanders, the chief justice of the Louisiana State Supreme Court, appointed Dave Herman judge ad hoc of the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court. By then Dave had already served twice on the Juvenile Court. But the experience of dealing with troubled families and children left him less idealistic and more embittered. He also tangled with black attorneys, like the flamboyant Lolis Elie,¹⁴ who had helped organize a black boycott of downtown merchants in 1959. Receptive to the participation of the B'nai B'rith in negotiating the process of desegregation, Elie was dissuaded when a Chamber of Commerce representative told him: "Keep those goddamn Jews out of it." The antisemitism that the activist attorney discovered among white leaders was "vicious." Disenchanted with the progress toward racial equality in New Orleans, Elie could not bring himself during the turbulent 1960s to denounce the prospect of "armed rebellion."¹⁵ By the middle of the following decade, Herman & Herman hired its first black law clerk, Ken Carter, whose uncle had hauled furniture for Jake Herman a generation earlier. Herman & Herman gave Ken Carter his first position after graduation from law school, in a state whose bar had managed to reject for admission every black applicant from 1927 until 1947.¹⁶

Racism proved so endemic that it took the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 to force New Orleans officials to agree to desegregate fallout shelters; the imminence of Armageddon was needed to alter "the southern way of life." Its adherents made racial purity an obsession. State law classified as black a citizen with "any traceable amount" of Negro blood. The region's Jews were less likely to be devoted to racial segregation than were other southern whites, and the Herman family fit comfortably within that generalization. It is worth noting that one of Dave's sons, Mark, cannot recall expressions of racial prejudice within his family (with the partial

exception of his mother Bertha, known as Bea). Herman & Herman welcomed blacks as clients and could arrange for loans when some banks were reluctant to do so.¹⁷ Such gestures did not in themselves demonstrate liberalism; they were also fully consistent with the southern paternalism traditionally bestowed upon favored Negroes. Not that the city's blacks could easily find attorneys of their own race, if firms like Herman & Herman were unsatisfactory; as late as 1952, there were only two, though the general populace was 40 percent black.¹⁸ Herman & Herman probably attracted a Jewish clientele somewhat greater than the proportion of Jewish residents of New Orleans, but the firm drew in as clients the brothers' Italian American and Irish American neighbors as well.¹⁹

Faith and Fellowship

Both brothers were Orthodox. They were active members of a synagogue, Congregation Agudath Achim Anshe Sfarad (United Brothers of the Sephardic Rite), which despite its name followed the Lithuanian Hasidic rite. Beginning in 1925 the shul was located in the Dryades Street neighborhood, at 2230 Carondelet Street, about seven blocks from the home where Harry and Dave grew up. They sang in the choir and even served separate terms as presidents of the shul. For a while Dave and Harry belonged not only to Anshe Sfarad but also to Chevra Thilim (the Society of the Psalms), a Galitzianer shul that was first located on 826 Lafayette Street. In 1949 Chevra Thilim relocated to 4429 South Claiborne, about two blocks from the household of Dave and Bea Herman and their children. In 1955 the congregation—one of six synagogues in the city—erupted into a dispute over the introduction of mixed seating. The majority, including the Herman brothers, claimed that “family pews” were consistent with the Orthodox status of the synagogue, which did not have a balcony upstairs for women. No *mehitza* should be permitted to separate the sexes, the majority argued.

The minority disagreed and, to resolve the schism, took the case all the way to the Louisiana Supreme Court. Affidavits were presented from chief rabbi of the British Commonwealth, and

from one of the two chief rabbis of the state of Israel. The verdict of the Louisiana Supreme Court in *Harry Katz et al. v. Gus Singerman et al.* was rendered in 1961 (127 So.2d 515), and smacked down the faction that advocated the segregation of men and women. Even though the charter of Chevra Thilim specified that services were to be conducted as they had been in Poland, the court ruled that Orthodoxy was not inconsistent with mixed seating, in part because no stable definition of the essentials of that branch of Judaism could be agreed upon. The donor of the original building for the shul had not stipulated that there be a *mechitza*, the court noted; and therefore Chevra Thilim was free to provide family pews if it so voted. The faction that sought separation of the congregants by gender was so incensed that the appellants wanted to make a federal case out of it. But in late October 1961, the Supreme Court denied a writ of certiorari (368 U.S. 15). In any event, a new Conservative congregation had already been formed in New Orleans three years earlier for those who wished to escape the turbulence that the lawsuit had generated at Chevra Thilim.²⁰

Orthodoxy in the South was not historically as strict as its rabbis would have preferred. In Charleston, South Carolina, in the 1920s, for instance, a congregant of Brith Sholom Beth Israel estimated that as many as 60 percent of the businesses that members of the congregation owned were closed on the Sabbath. But piety alone may not have motivated the merchants, whose best gentile customers worked in the navy yards and the phosphate factories and did not get paid until Saturday night, anyway. Nor were Sunday blue laws widely enforced in Charleston, so that the imperatives of *shomer shabbos* did not directly conflict with the prospects of profitability. Orthodoxy in another southern port city was also indulgent. In New Orleans even those who professed to adhere to religious law did not stigmatize the choice of non-kosher food, or the habit of driving to *daven* on the Sabbath. The municipal moniker was, after all, the Big Easy, and Reform observance was spectacularly lax. It should come as no surprise that the first funeral that Rabbi Feibelman conducted, upon arriving at Temple Sinai in 1936, was of a congregant who died on Yom

Kippur (which coincided that year with the Sabbath). The deceased had not been in shul. That afternoon he had collapsed in the stands of the Sugar Bowl during a Tulane football game.²¹

Culturally and ethnically the Herman brothers felt themselves to be very Jewish. Like others whose ancestry was in eastern rather than in western Europe, the Hermans tended to look inward rather than outward. One visitor to the city observed that the daily lives of the eastern Europeans revolved around Jewish friends, charities, clubs, and organizations. "Their goals and values steer them away from the New Orleans social set," Eli N. Evans commented in 1973. "They resent . . . the aloofness of the German Jews, who seem to imitate the gentiles in their obsession with genealogy." The Hermans were drawn, for instance, to the Young Men's Hebrew Association, which had been founded in New Orleans in 1891 and was located on Clio Street. In 1948 the YMHA relocated to St. Charles Avenue and was renamed the Jewish Community Center. Harry Herman served on the boards of the JCC, the Jewish Federation, and the local chapter of the Zionist Organization of America. Dave Herman eventually served as treasurer of the local Jewish Welfare Fund, joined the board of directors of the local chapter of the Anti-Defamation League, and chaired the New Orleans Committee to Aid Soviet Jewry.²² The chief civic commitment of the brothers, however, was the Communal Hebrew School, which they attended until becoming *b'nai mitzvah*. Such was the family's allegiance to the school, founded in 1918, that Bea Herman served as the president of its Mothers' Club. Harry served a term as the school's president, and his wife Reba served as its administrator.²³

A measure of that loyalty was the Hebrew name, Ephraim, bestowed on Fred (born in 1950), one of Harry's sons. The Minsk-born Ephraim Lisitzky served as principal of the Communal Hebrew School, which offered an after-school program designed for pupils who were the same ages as in a heder. A prominent Hebraicist and poet, Lisitzky was well aware of "the insecurity and degradation that marked Hebrew teaching in America." The plight of such *melamdim* was not entirely ignored in New Orleans, where the Herman family showed its appreciation for what

Lisitzky had wrought. One of his pupils, Dave Herman's oldest son Shael (born in 1943), recalled his *moreh* in a poem titled "Eulogy," "teaching for 50 dollars a month/in good times/for nothing in bad ones," a scholar who "spoke with a heavy Polish accent/his voice always sounding like it/came through a cheap tape recorder/he begged softly/always for the sake of your people/your heritage/not to play baseball/when you had lessons."²⁴ The pupils tended to be children of families from Chevra Thilim and Anshe Sfard, and the education was coeducational. Rosalie Palter Cohen, for example, performed with academic distinction (presumably because baseball did not distract her), and grew up into perhaps the city's leading Zionist. Her father and her uncle happened to be in the furniture business. Shael Herman remembers that about half of his own classmates were female.²⁵

He has speculated also that his father and uncle picked up from Lisitzky some sense of legal reasoning and, with his prodding, showed an aptitude for *pilpul*, seeing the Torah as a set of legal codes. One of the Herman brothers' contemporaries, Label Katz, was also a product of the Communal Hebrew School. Katz earned a degree in the law but did not practice it, preferring to invest in real estate. He became international president of the most durable Jewish organization in the United States, the B'nai B'rith, in 1959. In that same year Lisitzky published his autobiography, which is in part dedicated to Katz. No previous president of the organization, founded over a century earlier, had been so learned in Judaism; none before Katz had been capable of speaking fluent Hebrew.²⁶

The Sons Also Rise

The family tree that this essay now needs to climb is thick with foliage, if only because, as Charles Lamb once put it, "lawyers, I suppose, were children once." (This conjecture serves as the epigraph that Alabama's Harper Lee selected for her first—and only—novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*.) Harry Herman and his wife, the former Reba Hoffman, had five children, of whom four became attorneys: Russ, Maury, Shelley, Fred, and Carey. (Shelley Herman Gillon became a city attorney in New Orleans, but then

abandoned the law for the sake of the theater.) In 1940 Dave Herman married Bertha Brainis, who had been born to Russian Jewish immigrants in East Baton Rouge in 1917. College educated, she became a medical technician and nurse. She and Dave Herman had four children: Shael, Mark, Sherril, and Avram, all of whom graduated from law school. (Instead of practicing as an attorney, however, Sherril became a nursery school teacher, first at the Communal Hebrew School, and then at the Isidore Newman School.)²⁷ Fred Herman suspects that the bar retained its allure not only because of the secure income that the profession could generate, but also because of the spillover effects of the religious respect for "the law of Moses." "We were taught at an early age, not just us Hermans but also us Jews, to learn the law," he noted. Nor could the collective memory of marginalization be entirely obliterated. "How do I get around the law that says I cannot work in this place, or get an education in that place?" many a Jew must have wondered. But in America, Fred Herman added, "the law can overcome social, racial and religious discrimination like nowhere else."²⁸

The national dream of civic inclusion has been expressed since the mid-nineteenth century in the form of public education; and the children of Harry and Dave Herman tended to attend public schools. The privileged alternative, the Isidore Newman School, was officially opened in 1904. It was formed to provide manual training for the children of the Jewish Children's Home of New Orleans, but eventually appealed to the Jewish upper crust; and its scions generated an atmosphere that the Herman family deemed "snobbish."²⁹ Primary school desegregation began in the fall of 1960 and instigated a crisis in public education, which Robert Sharenow adroitly evoked in a recent novel, *My Mother the Cheerleader* (2007). One of the white mothers who participated in the boycott was asked on local television how her young son would henceforth be educated. "I'll learn 'im myself" was the reply. Home schooling evidently did not provide much of an alternative to the troubles (both academic and racial) that the public school system confronted. Long before its dramatic deterioration, however, Edith Rosenwald Stern had established

the Metairie Park Country Day School, which also attracted well-to-do Jews.

Most of the Herman cousins went on to Tulane University, which despite its reputation as a party school has long attracted an academically serious coterie of undergraduates as well. Thus the student body has ranged from Dekes to geeks. For example, among those entering Tulane in 1960 with Shael Herman was Sander L. Gilman (class of 1963), who became an influential authority on German Jewish intellectual history and in 1995 was elected president of the Modern Language Association. But as late as the 1960s, when the proportion of Jewish undergraduates was probably higher than almost anywhere else in the South, the Tulane curriculum included no course devoted to Jewish history or religion or languages. An entire program in Jewish Studies would come later.

Though historians know Jews to be wanderers susceptible to eviction and more open than other peoples to the prospect of flight, the Herman first cousins—the children of Dave and Harry Herman—demonstrate the opposite tendency. Not only did all the males become lawyers; neither the males nor the females distanced themselves from New Orleans when they went off to college, and all the members of that generation remained in the city after completing their education. Thus the first two generations of native-born Hermans mostly retained their loyalty not only to the law but also to the Crescent City itself. Perhaps that rootedness, that rather fierce allegiance to New Orleans, reflects its own insularity, a characteristic that also includes the city's tiny Jewish community (which has hovered at 1 percent of the population for many decades). In 1953 an estimated 9,100 Jews lived in the city. Even though the average household size was three persons (above replacement level), five years later the figure only rose to 9,500, or about 2 percent of the white population.³⁰ (Immediately after Hurricane Katrina, the Jewish population dropped to about 7,800, served by nine synagogues, or less than 1 percent of the population of Orleans and Jefferson parishes.) By 1958 three out of every four adult males in the Jewish community fit the categories of professional, proprietor, or manager. One of those self-

employed residents, Jake Herman, passed away in 1956; his widow Gertrude Herman died a decade later. By the 1960s the median family income of New Orleans Jewry had doubled that of the American populace itself.³¹ Soon another generation of Hermans would enter the adult ranks of New Orleans Jewry. Space permits mention of only two members of this cohort.

Pairing Off in the Profession

The oldest son of Harry and Reba Herman, Russ, graduated from Tulane University in 1963 and from its law school in 1966. He ultimately became a senior partner in the firm of Herman, Herman, Katz & Cotlar. Its other partners have included his brother Maury and Russ's son Stephen, whose wife Karen K. Herman later became a criminal district court judge in the city. After serving as president of the Civil Justice Foundation in 1987 and 1988, Russ Herman became national president of ATLA in 1989. The membership of ATLA consisted of about sixty-five thousand product liability and personal injury lawyers.³² They are the attorneys who could convince jurors that drug companies neglected to show due diligence in the manufacture of their sometimes lethal products, that the Ford Motor Company had dangerously designed its Pinto, and so forth. That field of specialization has helped provoke controversy over the function of law itself, and whether the representation to which corporations are fully entitled is compatible with the need to honor the ideals of justice. In early 1973, for instance, a sniper named Mark Essex climbed onto the roof of the Downtown Howard Johnson's Hotel in the French Quarter and then proceeded to murder eight persons and wound another seventeen before getting gunned down. Were the operators of the hotel negligent in failing to anticipate that a terrorist could climb the stairs and get onto the roof? Was hotel security sufficient against the threat that an urban guerrilla posed? Russ Herman did not think so, and in six consolidated cases spearheaded a legal team that represented, among others, the parents of a honeymoon couple whom Essex had killed. In the summer of 1975, a jury found the plaintiffs' case persuasive. Total damages were awarded in the high six figures.³³

Three generations of Hermans, New Orleans, 1949.

Jacob and Gertrude Herman, seated in the center of the middle row, surrounded by their children and grandchildren.

Back row, left to right: Rebecca Herman Zuckerman, Robert Mason, Ethel Herman Mason, Reba Hoffman Herman, Harry Herman, Morris Herman, and David Herman. Middle row (l to r): Bess Herman Bavly, Jacob, Gertrude, and Bertha Brainis Herman.

Seated in front (l to r): Russ M. Herman, Maury A. Herman, Fay Zuckerman, Shael Herman, and Mark Herman.

(Courtesy of Shael Herman.)

As Jerold Auerbach pointed out in an ambitious social history of the legal profession, personal injury lawyers emerged a century ago in a struggle to level somewhat the playing field that made corporate profits paramount. Without such attorneys, luckless victims of chicanery, carelessness, and heartlessness had no recourse in the courts, which is why the most respectable elements of the bar (and the companies that hired them) vilified personal injury law and deprecated the contingency fees that were necessary to any chance of success in litigation. That very many of the "ambulance chasers" were Jews, whom upper-crust Protestants tended to exclude from the prestigious law firms that served a corporate clientele, only reinforced the stigma that was historically attached to negligence claims.³⁴ "Representatives of the most ancient race of which we have knowledge [are] coming up to be admitted to the practice of law," one worried attorney warned in 1916. But lacking "the incalculable advantage of having been brought up in the American family life," they "can hardly be taught the ethics of the profession as adequately as we desire."³⁵ Such sentiments in that era were commonplace.

Even as discrimination against Jewish attorneys eventually vanished, Russ Herman has been in a sense a legatee of that history. He actively resisted Congressional efforts to limit the damages awarded in malpractice suits and the fees that tort attorneys can collect. "It is grossly unfair, under the American system of justice, for professionals, be they lawyers, doctors or others who reap maximum economic and social benefits," Herman told the *New York Times*, "to limit their own responsibility for damages that they cause their innocent patients or clients." Those who practice "medicine ought to be defensive," he added, "as should [members of] every profession."³⁶ A little over a decade later, he won the ATLA's highest award, as a "champion of justice." Herman has been listed among the nation's top five hundred litigators. In 2007 he served as the lead negotiator for the plaintiffs in reaching a \$4.85 billion settlement with Merck, which such attorneys attacked because of the effects of Vioxx.

The case that generated the greatest national publicity involved the greatest historical damage to public health. The

cigarette as a specimen of mass production and mass consumption is little more than a century old. In the era when Jake and Sam Herman reached the shores of the United States, for example, physicians rarely encountered a patient who suffered from lung cancer. But with the extraordinary popularity of cigarettes, a pandemic resulted, and the correlation has been known to medicine for over half a century. The resultant deaths have been of a magnitude that dwarfs homicides and suicides, plus the terminal illnesses caused by alcohol and HIV and illegal drugs, *combined*.³⁷ At mid-twentieth century about one in every two Americans smoked. But so obvious are the consequences of such an addiction that at the beginning of the current century only about one in five Americans still smokes. Litigation against the tobacco behemoths forced them to reveal their efforts to mislead the public and to conceal the terrible effects of cigarettes. Lawsuits exposed a record of extraordinary corporate cupidity at the expense of the common good, including consistent and systematic deceit through disinformation campaigns. Among the attorneys bringing such lawsuits was Russ Herman. He achieved a spectacular victory in 2004 when he served as lead trial counsel in a case in Civil District Court in Orleans Parish, and won a jury verdict of \$591 million in *Scott v. American Tobacco, et al.* He also represented class-action plaintiffs in the negotiations that pitted attorneys working on behalf of smokers and states presenting Medicaid-related claims against the tobacco companies.³⁸

Such lawsuits honor, at their best, what Edmond Cahn called “the sense of injustice,” the recognition of a wrong, the violation of trust, the denial of dignity, the anger at unfairness due to inequities of power and wealth. Cahn, a New Orleans-born legal theorist with degrees earned entirely at Tulane, achieved fame while teaching jurisprudence at New York University. He acknowledged that “the sense of injustice” can be misapplied and misdirected; “it is finite and fallible.” Nonetheless it also addresses the needs of “the weak [and] the insecure”; and absent the Populism that flourished in the South roughly a century ago to decry the concentrations of political and economic privilege, lawyers like Russ Herman and his partners have increasingly stepped

into the breach. The extreme unlikelihood of a jacquerie has shifted to such attorneys much of the responsibility of challenging the entities listed on the stock exchanges. It cannot be coincidence that the Republican Party has made tort reform, with caps on the damages that juries might award plaintiffs who claim to have been the victims of corporate and professional malfeasance, integral to its agenda. "The Bushes and lawyers have been at odds for years," Herman explained to the *New York Times* in 2000. One year earlier liability lawyers donated \$2,751,862 to the Democrats, and all of \$2,800 to Republicans.³⁹

Russ Herman's first cousin Shael has, if anything, carved out an even more remarkable career. He is the only figure in this family history who converted the law from a professional service into a subject of scholarship. He may well have come to the vocation of the law less directly than his brothers and cousins did, due to the formidable versatility that he displayed, first precociously, then persistently. Shael had considered becoming a clarinetist, for example, and in 1957 was studying music at Xavier College, the black Roman Catholic institution, with the clarinetist of the city's opera company. In the next room, he recalled, was Ellis Marsalis, who was about a decade older; he was studying composition. Herman later played in a pickup band with a trumpeter named Wynton Marsalis, and also joined by invitation much older black jazzmen at Preservation Hall in the French Quarter. (In 1961 Allan and Sandra Jaffe, who had transplanted themselves from Pennsylvania, joined local art dealer Larry Borenstein to found Preservation Hall to perpetuate the city's musical legacy, in a building that had once housed slaves.) Herman belonged to a Dixieland band, the New Leviathan Oriental Fox-Trot Orchestra, an annual favorite at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. (The orchestra can be heard playing on the soundtrack of Woody Allen's 1994 film, *Bullets over Broadway*.) Herman has played classical clarinet as well. But while remaining a member of the musicians' union, he foresaw no suitable way to make a living at it. The U.S. Census of 2000 vindicated that decision: Louisiana had one of the nation's lowest percentages of employed musicians and other artists.⁴⁰

That reluctant conclusion undoubtedly held for poetry as well. In 1974 the prolific cultural critic Richard Kostelanetz argued that certain literary reputations were much inflated through the politics of critical malpractice, while other, mostly younger writers were unjustly neglected. On Kostelanetz's list of poets suffering such a fate was Shael Herman.⁴¹ The poet Miller Williams concurred. Most famous for having delivered the inaugural poem in 1997, when Bill Clinton took the oath of office, Williams once commented that, despite having coedited a volume titled *Southern Writing in the Sixties*, he was uneasy about connecting "regional" literature to aesthetic judgment. "I don't like to say who the best writers are in the Southeast because that sounds as if you're removing them from competition with writers as a whole," he explained. "When I say, for example, that Shael Herman, who happens to live in New Orleans, is one of the best poets around without a book, I mean in the United States."⁴²

That statement is not entirely accurate, because *Offshoots*, with an introduction by Marcus J. Grapes, was privately printed in New Orleans in 1967. Herman's poetry did earn him a slot at the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in Middlebury, Vermont, five years later. Having earned a master's degree in English at Tulane, with a thesis on Faulkner, Herman might have enjoyed a stellar career as an academic in liberal arts and in literature in particular. While he was still in high school, his poetry had been anthologized; and he had won a scholarship to Tulane because he had earned the highest grades in the city's public schools. But, as though a magnetic needle were directing him, he found his way into the law.⁴³ He did not define his position within it narrowly, however. It is, after all, a learned profession. In the year that Kostelanetz's book appeared, Herman served as a fellow in the law and humanities at Harvard.

Thus his career somewhat resembles the virtuosity of the Delta planter Will Alexander Percy, the author of *Lanterns on the Levee* (1941) and a cousin (and foster parent) of the future novelist Walker Percy. Will Alexander Percy was an attorney as well as a litterateur, whose *Selected Poems* the firm of Alfred A. Knopf published in 1930. "He took up a legal career only because it was the

expectation for most male Percys," historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown noted; but in fact Will Alexander Percy "intensely disliked legal practice."⁴⁴ Nor did he show any scholarly historical curiosity about the intricacies of the law. Here he stood in contrast to Shael Herman, who moreover demonstrated an extraordinary facility for foreign languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, and Hebrew). Drawing on Latin, Herman worked his way back into Roman and medieval law and then forward into European Union codification. He became the only American member of the European Academy of Private Lawyers, headquartered at Italy's University of Pavia. Herman has taught and lectured widely abroad, and has been a visiting fellow at Wolfson College (Cambridge University) and at the Max-Planck-Institut in Hamburg. In collaboration with a law professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Herman has published on such subjects as the transition from mandatory law (under British rule) to Israeli law. Herman's collaborator, Gabriela Shalev, later became the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations. Though he was a partner in the New Orleans law firm of Sessions & Fishman from 1981 until 1990, he worked primarily as a law professor, first at Loyola, from 1971 to 1978, and then at Tulane from 1978 to 1981 and 1990 to 2005, where he had earned a J.D. in 1969.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, even the vulgarian Stanley Kowalski knows enough to inform his wife Stella that "in the state of Louisiana we have the Napoleonic Code." He interprets it to mean that "what belongs to the wife belongs to the husband and vice versa." Not until 1980, however, did the commonwealth of Louisiana finally abrogate a law that made husbands the "lords and masters" of all property that married couples jointly held. Kowalski may well have misunderstood the Napoleonic Code. But then, as Stella and her sister Blanche speculate, to be Polish is "something like Irish," but perhaps "not so — highbrow."⁴⁵

He would have benefited from the scholarship of Shael Herman. While teaching a variety of subjects in law school, he became a key expositor of the continental influence upon the law in Louisiana, which is unique among the fifty states in its adherence to the Napoleonic Code. However Louisiana's version is much long-

er, he explained, with more than 3,500 articles compared to 2,281 in the French code of the First Empire. Herman specialized in exposing the roots of the civil law within the tradition of the Roman law (as opposed to Anglo-American systems). He also joined in panels that have sought to adapt the code to modern conditions in such fields as family relations, inheritance, and property. He nevertheless asserted its enduring relevance in a world in which many European nations play by the rules that his own historical scholarship has illuminated. Louisiana is therefore linked to Europe in a way that no other part of the United States is. "As long as we're different," Herman explained to the *New York Times*, "we might as well capitalize on it."⁴⁶ By 2005, when he retired from Tulane Law School, he was responsible for more than seventy publications in civil and comparative law (in French, Spanish, and German, in addition to English), some on abstruse technical subjects such as prerogative writs. Introducing the *Festschrift* in his honor, Vernon V. Palmer noted not only Herman's "formidable talent for speaking foreign languages" but also the absence of "any outer edge to his intellectual interests."⁴⁷ More than other members of his family, Shael Herman enlarged the definition of the law as a learned profession.

The Trauma of Totalitarianism

In 1965 he wed a Newcomb College graduate (class of 1965), Helen Yomtov. Not surprisingly she is also a lawyer. After earning her J.D. from Loyola, Helen Herman clerked for the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court and then taught at Loyola Law School from 1981 until 1986. From 1989 until 1997 she served as dean of students at Tulane Law School. But Helen Herman's origins link the family that she married into to the most horrible chapter of modern Jewish history, and indeed the most ghastly suffering undergone in the entire duration of the Diaspora. She was born during the Second World War on a farm in Volkach-am-Main, within the system of German labor camps.⁴⁸ How her family managed to survive the Holocaust became the subject of her mother's oral history, a master's thesis that Helen Herman transcribed, edited, and submitted to Tulane University in 2002.

The recollections of Ida Tenenbaum Yomtov were preserved on tape, to recount how the German occupiers of Siedlce (about fifty miles east of Warsaw) ordered her and her husband David, along with the town's other Jews, to report at the Umschlagplatz (transfer place) on August 22, 1942. Those who were shot that day were intentionally wounded, so that they would die of the heat, die of thirst, or simply bleed to death. Those who were not shot were less lucky; they were deported to Treblinka. But the Yomtovs, who had been married in 1940, and who lost their parents to the Final Solution, went into hiding rather than report at the Umschlagplatz. They also made an astonishingly counterintuitive decision, which was to flee to the west, to enter the Third Reich itself, and with false papers to try to pass as Polish laborers whom Nazi Germany needed for its war effort.⁴⁹ They managed to pass as "Aryans." Born into an assimilated family, Ida Tenenbaum had been educated in Polish schools, and her fair complexion undoubtedly saved her life. David looked more "Jewish" but still somehow managed to pass. The couple worked for the next two years on a farm and in a flour mill in Obervolkach, alongside Russians, other Poles, and French prisoners of war.

The Yomtovs slept in a hayloft. When their daughter was born in 1943, Ida and David knew that their child would not survive unless she was given over to a German couple, the Hoffmans. They could take care of her in a nearby village. After the Allied invasion of Western Europe, civilian morale as well as military discipline in the Reich began to collapse. In the chaos the Yomtovs were able to recover their infant daughter and flee from the farm.⁵⁰ After V-E Day (May 8, 1945), they became displaced persons. A son, Bernie, was born in 1946. In Frankfurt David learned of changes that the United States Congress was making to loosen up immigration law, and in 1949 HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) placed the family on the list to come to the United States. When they learned that they were to get visas, "we were dumbfounded," Ida Yomtov recalled. "If you had told us that the sky was falling, that a hundred pounds of gold were to fall at our feet, we would have believed it as much."⁵¹ Sometimes the law can work in favor of refugees and displaced persons.

But what happens when the rule of law is utterly absent, when procedural niceties are defied, and when justice is merely — to quote the cynical Thrasymachus in *The Republic* — “the interest of the stronger”?⁵² The logical terminus of lawlessness is called totalitarianism, which took the form of both left and right in roughly the middle of the twentieth century. Both versions afflicted the Herman family.

Any historical assessment of the faith that Jews placed in the opportunity and the comfort of American society needs to be weighed against the totalitarian alternatives that emerged in the twentieth century. For example, the memoirs and personal histories of the Stalinist terror in the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s, produced in increasing numbers, provide conclusive evidence that the Gulag Archipelago stands beside the Holocaust in scale of cruelty and death, in barbaric assault upon the human status. Totalitarianism serves as the very definition of utter lawlessness, of gangsterism in power. Stalin’s rule was twice as long as Hitler’s; the numbers of those sentenced to death through torture, starvation, slave labor and anonymous murder were far larger in the USSR than in Nazi-dominated Europe. Both dictators made no distinction in terms of their victims. Hitler murdered millions of non-Jews aside from those killed in the course of military action in the Second World War, and many Jews were among the millions herded into the camps that the Soviet Union established after the Bolshevik Revolution, a system consolidated under Stalin.

One of those Jews was Victor Herman, an American whose father Sam settled in Michigan amid the mass migration from tsarist oppression at the turn of the twentieth century. Such flight from what Lenin had called “the prison of nations” was typical. Born in Detroit in 1915, Victor Herman enjoyed a pleasant if not idyllic boyhood. Sam Herman (Jake’s brother) was a Communist committed to the union movement, a political profile that was far from bizarre among the impoverished Jewish immigrants of that generation. He became unemployed at the outset of the Great Depression, however; and in 1931 the family moved to the Soviet Union. There, in the “workers’ paradise,” joblessness did not

officially exist; and the Ford Motor Company agreed to build a factory there. The Hermans lived in the American village of Gorky, believing that they could help construct socialism with the technical skills that they had learned in the West. Although Victor's formal education had ceased after Detroit, he trained himself as a marksman and athlete, and he achieved celebrity for a parachute jump that set a world's record. Feted at the Kremlin, he became known as "the Lindbergh of Russia." Victor Herman's father, still devoted to the Soviet dream despite the purges, converted the family's passport to a Soviet document. Victor remembered protesting this decision. But he was under age and thus lost his American citizenship.⁵³

The next eighteen years proved horrifying. In 1937, the Soviet regime extinguished the American village and arrested Victor without explanation. His first day in Gorky Prison hit him hard and constituted a searing violation of his identity and dignity. The rest of his term there was typical of the experience of many in the Soviet Union. Daily he crouched in loathsome filth in isolated silence and endured an interrogator's vicious beatings every night, on top of the dangers of disease amid air almost too foul to breathe. Yet, however terrible this ordeal was, his fate darkened with a standard ten-year sentence as a *zek* (prisoner) in the labor camps to the north. To work in the Kolyma camps, in northeast Siberia, for example, meant that, with temperatures dropping to a negative 50 degrees Celsius, the *zeks* worked sixteen hours a day, using pickaxes to chip off gold ore, hauling it in wheelbarrows. The prisoners had to sustain themselves on a diet of 400 grams of bread, a slice of salty herring, and what passed for soup. Those who collapsed and died were readily replaced by others, who became walking skeletons, plagued by pellagra or bloody diarrhea, with their frostbitten fingers and toes oozing pus and blood.⁵⁴

What Victor Herman managed to endure resists comprehension. As a "political," he was assigned the most arduous physical labor. Often from five in the morning until nearly midnight, seven days a week, he felled trees, hauled logs, and dug in phosphorus mines. Nature was remorseless: swarms of bedbugs prevented

sleep, and nighttime temperatures dropped well below zero. But representatives of our species were worse: guards tortured him in the “isolator,” and sadistic criminals ruled in the bunks, mutilating and murdering their fellow prisoners with whimsical abandon. “Spies, traitors, counter-revolutionaries, Jews, professors—they are all alike,” one criminal warned Herman. “We give them hell.” Most oppressive was the incessant, unrelieved hunger. A potato was a luxury; sometimes “soup” was ladled directly into his cupped hands because no bowls existed. One *zek* bit off another’s lip to snatch a smear of food. Herman ate tree slugs and devoured huge rats that thrived on the human carcasses dumped in the outhouse. Perhaps only the concentration camps and the extermination camps of the Third Reich offer comparable instances of the debasement below which human existence is not known to sink. Yet somehow Victor Herman lived. The most fiendish of the camps to which he was sent was considered an extermination camp, because no one was expected to fulfill the work assignments. Eighteen *zeks* were once sent into the marshland to collect wood; only Herman returned.⁵⁵

The desolation and degradation of the Gulag Archipelago did not crush his rage or his will to prevail. The miracle of his resilience certainly stemmed in part from his athlete’s body. His canny intelligence also improved his chances—but the opportunity to exercise his mind was limited in the frozen wastes. Without firm political beliefs, he was uninspired by hopes for a world in which such tyranny would be unknown. The other *zeks* did not express ideals of fraternity. Herman’s Jewish knowledge and awareness were thin. He was apparently not animated by any belief in God’s ultimate mercy, nor was there any reason to harbor such a faith. Rarely has the social texture of camp life been depicted so bleakly as in his haunting memoir, *Coming Out of the Ice: An Unexpected Life* (1979), which mentions no solidarity among his fellow Jews. However mystifying and implausible his survival, it helps validate the theory that Terrence Des Pres advanced in *Survivors: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* that an elemental, biological drive characterized those prisoners who outlasted everything that torment and hatred could contrive.

*Front and back book jacket
of Victor Herman's book*

Back jacket pictures include top, Herman with his two daughters reunited in the U.S. in 1976. Middle left, Herman with his wife, Galina, in 1949. Middle, right: a few weeks after Herman's release from hard labor camp. Bottom: Herman teaching parachute jumping in Russia in 1936.

Released in 1948, Victor Herman was sentenced—again without any official explanation—to exile in Siberia. There he met his wife Galina, with whom he shared the joy of raising two daughters. But the NKVD intensified the anguish of exile by forcing the family to live in the forests, in near isolation. One idea sustained him: *America*—the memory of it, the promise of it. In 1955 a Moscow military tribunal informed him that “no case exists,” that Herman’s eighteen years in the region of ice had not

been based on verifiable charges. The lawlessness of the Stalinist system could not have been more evident; “justice” was indeed the interest of the stronger. The family was permitted to leave Siberia and live in Kishinev, the Moldavian city where a notorious pogrom had erupted in 1903.⁵⁶ (A century ago, the massacre of about four dozen Jews could arouse what was then called the “conscience” of humanity.) Herman managed to contact his first cousin to initiate the process of repatriation, by writing a letter to him. The envelope was addressed to “Dave Herman, New Orleans.” No street address was provided, though the addressee might have been identified as an attorney (“Esquire”). Memories have faded. But despite such meager information, the post office delivered the letter. Suddenly, by belonging to a family whose New Orleans branch practiced law, Victor Herman had some hope of enjoying what the political philosopher Hannah Arendt called “the right to have rights.”⁵⁷

Dave Herman visited his first cousin in Moscow in 1968. When they hugged one another, the former *zek* recalled: “I wept, calling up tears and feelings that I did not believe were still in me.”⁵⁸ Thus was inaugurated the process by which he might dare to dream of returning to his native land. Not long thereafter he was working in Kishinev as a translator when Shael and Helen Herman, visiting on an Intourist tour, managed to meet him in Kiev in the Ukraine—from which the family had fled to America at the dawn of the century. Bureaucratic obstacles were exceptionally difficult to overcome. But in 1976 Victor Herman succeeded in returning to Michigan, where his sister Rebecca was still living. He stayed for nearly a month in the New Orleans home of Shael and Helen Herman, when their younger daughter, Dara, was three years old. (When Dara Herman became a mother, her memories of him were fond enough to name her daughter Vivian, partly for Victor Herman.) Fifteen months after his return to Michigan, his daughters rejoined him, and soon thereafter his wife. He later coauthored a study of the Soviet Union, where he had lived for forty-five years. But within two years of repatriation, so easily had he adapted to national habits that he filed a lawsuit against the Ford Motor Company. Herman asked for \$10 million

*Shael and Helen Herman with their two daughters, 1989, New Orleans.
Seated to the left of her father is Dara Yomtov Herman, age 16.
Jordana Leigh Herman, age 20, is standing to the left of her mother.
(Courtesy of Shael Herman. Photograph by Matt Anderson.)*

in damages, for having abandoned him in Gorky. The lawsuit was unsuccessful, and he died in 1985, at the age of sixty-nine.⁵⁹ In 1996 CBS adapted *Coming Out of the Ice* into a made-for-TV film, starring John Savage as Victor Herman. The cast also included Ben Cross and Willie Nelson.

If the Jewish experience of dislocation, estrangement, and disaster constitutes a microcosm of the modern condition itself, a special place should be accorded to the testimony of Victor Herman and to the oral history of Ida Yomtov. Too many cries in the night have been muffled for their voices not to be heard—a duty

that historians are equipped to assume. The primary sources that Victor Herman and Ida Yomtov provide also echo the particularly Jewish fear that the sociologist Daniel Bell traced to the ancient world, where the Israelites had tasted the bitterness of the Babylonian exile and the Assyrian conquest: without *halacha* or law, passions are unleashed that can turn humanity into predatory animals.⁶⁰ Law can thus mean more than assure its practitioners economic comfort and social status. Law can also fortify a bit the very fragile membranes of civilization. The New Orleans branch of the Herman family lived secure and peaceful middle-class lives, under the rule of law. Opportunity entailed blessings. Such good fortune should not, however, allow a question to be dodged that Keats posed in one of his last letters, before tuberculosis felled him at the age of twenty-five. "Is there another Life?" he wondered. "There must be," he concluded, because "we cannot be created for this sort of suffering."⁶¹

NOTES

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⁵ Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Orleans Parish, Louisiana.

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⁷ Jane W. Ravid, Newton, MA, e-mail to author, December 26, 2009; Lawrence N. Powell, *Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, the Holocaust, and David Duke's Louisiana* (Chapel Hill, 2000), 435.

⁸ Eric Norden, "Interview: Saul Alinsky," *Playboy*, March 1972, 64.

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¹⁰ Shael and Helen Herman interview, August 19, 2009.

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¹³ Hon. Lindy Boggs, "Harry and David L. Herman Honored in New Orleans," *Congressional Record*, 129 (January 31, 1983), n.p.).

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¹⁹ M. Shael and Helen Herman, interview conducted by author, August 14, 2009.

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⁴⁸ Helen Yomtov Herman, Introduction, "The Worst of Times: Recollections of a Polish-Jewish Survivor" (Master's thesis, Department of History, Tulane University, 2002), 2.

⁴⁹ Herman, "Worst of Times," 20-21, 22.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 24-25, 30-31.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁵² Plato, *The Republic*, ed. and trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (New York, 1945), 18, 19.

⁵³ Victor Herman, *Coming Out of the Ice: An Unexpected Life* (New York, 1979), 6-77 passim; Walter H. Waggoner, "Victor Herman, Exile in Soviet," *New York Times*, March 29, 1985.

⁵⁴ Herman, *Coming Out of the Ice*, 105-140 passim; Leon Aron, "The Problematic Pages," *New Republic*, September 24, 2008, 37.

⁵⁵ Herman, *Coming Out of the Ice*, 143-287 passim; "From Russia and Rats," *New Orleans States-Item*, May 23, 1977.

⁵⁶ Herman, *Coming Out of the Ice*, 293-338 passim.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 345-346; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1951), 296.

⁵⁸ Herman, *Coming Out of the Ice*, 347.

⁵⁹ Shael and Helen Herman interview, August 19, 2009; Lena Williams, "A Former American Exile Awaits Daughters' Arrival from Russia," *New York Times*, May 29, 1977; Frank J. Prial, "Ex-Soviet Worker is Rebuffed," *New York Times*, June 14, 1978; Waggoner, "Victor Herman."

⁶⁰ Nathan Liebowitz, *Daniel Bell and the Agony of Modern Liberalism* (Westport, CT, 1985), 70.

⁶¹ John Keats to Charles Brown, September 28, 1820, in *The Selected Letters of John Keats*, ed. Lionel Trilling (New York, 1951), 275.

Rabbi Benjamin Schultz and the American Jewish League Against Communism: From McCarthy to Mississippi

by

Allen Krause*

On two or three occasions during research on the role southern rabbis played in the civil rights movement in the South, this author came across the name of Benjamin Schultz, the maverick who served as rabbi of Temple Beth Israel of Clarksdale, Mississippi, from 1962 until his death in 1978. What distinguished Schultz from all his southern colleagues was a political conservatism marked by a passionate antipathy to Communism joined by a conviction that there was a clear and present danger of a Communist takeover of the United States. This obsession carried over into the arena of civil rights in that Schultz, like the majority of southerners, early on believed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to be a Communist-influenced (if not controlled) organization intent on creating unrest among the African American population.¹

Jewish Conservatives: An Oxymoron?

Schultz's Mississippi colleagues knew of his political orientation when he arrived in the state as a result of the tremendous publicity he received battling the Red Menace prior to moving south. Consequently, he was all but anathema to the rabbis of the Magnolia State from the moment he crossed their state border. He was also disliked by most non-southern Jews throughout the country who were familiar with his name and crusade. Within a

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few decades after 1881, when the first of the approximately three million eastern European Jews of the "new immigration" began arriving in this country, in many respects the words "American Jews" had become synonymous with the words "political liberalism."² As Hasia Diner points out, Jews were conspicuous among the supporters of left-wing causes in the United States throughout the twentieth century. Many had, in fact, supported Socialist and Communist organizations. By mid-century, although large numbers of American Jews had transitioned to suburbia, they retained their liberal *weltanschauung*, voting for Democratic candidates and sending donations to the American Civil Liberties Union and other left-wing causes. This held particularly true of Jews who affiliated with the Reform and Conservative movements, as is reflected in the stands taken by their rabbinic and lay leadership.³ In the 1950s both groups issued pronouncements in support of labor, the protection of civil liberties, and the need to do away with racism, especially in the American South.⁴

However, a small cadre of Jews had grown disaffected with the liberal ethos. One indication of this came in November 1955 when William F. Buckley, Jr., published the premier volume of the *National Review*. Jewish names comprised five of the thirty-one of those on the masthead. According to George H. Nash, "Each was a personal friend of Buckley's, and each contributed substantially to the insurgent journal in the years ahead."⁵

One aspect of political conservatism is the suspicion of government and the assertion that society is best served when government interferes as little as possible, except for when it is protecting its citizens from crime and immorality. Unfettered capitalism is the gold standard, bringing prosperity to all who are industrious. Though these values were central to political conservatism up to the end of World War II, the cold war added a new concern which, according to Murray N. Rothbard, proved to be a "betrayal of the American Right," namely a diversion from domestic to foreign affairs and the dependence on the federal government as our tool in destroying the international Communist conspiracy.

“The guts of the New Conservatism,” Rothbard wrote, “was the mobilization of Big Government for the worldwide crusade against Communism.” From Rothbard’s perspective, it was Buckley and his journal that were at the very heart of the “betrayal.”

[Interest] in individual liberty was minimal or negative. . . . Interest in free-market economics was minimal and largely rhetorical. . . . we should now ask whether or not a major objective of *National Review* from its inception was to transform the right wing from an isolationist to global warmongering anti-Communist movement; and, particularly, whether or not the entire effort was in essence a CIA operation. We now know that Bill Buckley, for the two years prior to establishing *National Review*, was admittedly a CIA agent in Mexico City, and that the sinister E. Howard Hunt was his control. His sister Priscilla, who became managing editor of *National Review*, was also in the CIA. . . . Frank Meyer, to whom he was close at the time, was convinced that the magazine was a CIA operation.⁶

Whether or not one chooses to accept Rothbard’s analysis, unquestionably the desire to destroy the Communist world conspiracy motivated many of the twentieth century “godfathers” of Jewish political conservatism. Eugene Lyons, a graduate of the Young People’s Socialist League, who in his youth had joined with enthusiasm in singing “The People’s Flag is Deepest Red” and later was the editor of the apologetic *Soviet Russia Pictorial*, lost his utopian illusions when he served as a United Press correspondent in Moscow from 1928 to 1934. His autobiographical *Assignment in Utopia*, published in 1937, became one of the most powerful anti-Communist works of the century. Willi Schlamm’s odyssey took him from being editor-in-chief of the Austrian Communist Party’s periodical in the twenties to editing an anti-Stalinist newspaper in the late thirties. The transformation of other Jewish conservatives was similar, caused by a deep disillusionment with Stalin particularly as a result of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, the revelations about the slave labor camps in Siberia, the Slansky trial, execution of prominent Jewish Communists in Czechoslovakia, and the purge of Jewish doctors in Russia following Stalin’s death, all of which happened prior to the creation of *National Review*. Also, *Assignment in Utopia* proved a powerful

weapon when read by those beginning to doubt the Marxist utopian vision.

Eugene Lyons's autobiography was only his first step in the fight against the perverted utopian dream. His next book, *The Red Decade: The Stalinist Penetration of America* (1941), turned the spotlight on Communist influence in the United States and thereby brought the battle to a much closer arena. He and others prepared the soil for the hysteria of the late forties and early fifties, and for a certain senator from Wisconsin.⁷

Rabbi Benjamin Schultz.
(*Clarksdale Press Register*, October 8–9, 1977.)

Early Years

Benjamin Schultz, arguably for Jews, the most disliked American rabbi of the mid-twentieth century, was born on March 12, 1906, the son of Joseph and Rose Minskey Schultz, both recent immigrants from the pogroms in Poland. The eldest of six children, four boys and two girls, Schultz grew up in Rochester, New York. His father was a tailor and manufacturer of women's coats who had limited success even before he was stricken with cancer in 1933 when his eldest child was twenty-seven years old. An invalid until his death in 1949, Joseph relinquished his role as breadwinner and decision-maker to his first-born, while the younger siblings went about shaping their lives and careers.

Possibly because of his additional burdens, Schultz's years at the University of Rochester were undistinguished. Having flunked math twice, his degree was not granted until after he had made up the deficiencies; thus he failed to graduate with his class. Math, however, was not essential to the path Schultz was to pursue. His mother's father, grandfather, and one of her uncles were all rabbis. Ben's youngest brother told *New York Post* reporter Fern Marja, "It was a tradition in our family that the first-born son would be a rabbi and when Ben decided to become one, my mother was understandably very proud. Ben was her whole life -- and still is."⁸ As Schultz later told it, since his mother said to him when he was a toddler, "You grow up and be a great rabbi," his career path was decided when he was a tender four years old.⁹

Thus in 1926, upon completion of his B.A., he enrolled in Rabbi Stephen S. Wise's seminary in New York, the Jewish Institute of Religion. According to some of his fellow seminarians interviewed over a quarter of a century later, the young Schultz was "consistently egotistical, insistently oracular. Even at twenty he exulted in the sound of his own voice and could not resist any opportunity to indulge in oratory." The faculty as a whole regarded him as "mentally nimble, if a little lackadaisical." In their eyes he seemed "destined to a life of mediocrity."¹⁰

Nonetheless, as was the custom, while Schultz was still a student Wise recommended him to a small group in Englewood, New Jersey, about to launch a Conservative synagogue, which he

apparently served in a competent fashion. The following year Schultz served as a student-rabbi at Temple Emanuel in Kingston, New York. Ordained in 1931, the young rabbi went to congregation Ahavath Sholom in Brooklyn to function as its interim spiritual leader and director of education. Five years out of the seminary, with two significant congregational experiences under his belt, Schultz accepted the call to another Temple Emanu-El, this one in Yonkers, New York.¹¹

On the surface things seemed to be going well for Schultz; the vast majority of the congregation considered their rabbi to be very good, though "rather aloof." One congregant told Marja, "A group of us started going to Friday night services and began to like them, because Schultz gave short, concise, topical, and interesting sermons. We all had a great deal of respect for him then." Such was not the case, however, with the synagogue's leadership. By 1942, according to past-president Charles Schnall, "the members of the Board of Trustees were generally dissatisfied with Rabbi Schultz. . . . We wanted him to show more interest in the individuals of the congregation. . . . [We] felt that he didn't take sufficient interest in his parish duties, *such as visiting the sick and concentrating on the Sunday School.*" When their rabbi showed no inclination to change his ways the board scheduled a special congregational meeting for the purpose of ousting him, but Schultz undercut the leaders by phoning and visiting many of his supporters in order to "rally the troops." Schnall was of course disappointed: "They had never worked closely with him. . . . [They] were impressed with the little they had seen of him. We were out-voted and Schultz remained."¹² Five years later he was still with this Reform congregation with no obvious sign of problems. That is, until his three articles came out in the *New York World Telegram* on October 14, 15, and 16, 1947.¹³

The Articles of Separation

Caught unawares, the members of Schultz's board of trustees opened their newspapers and found a series dramatically titled "Commies Invade the Churches," with the explanation: "Communists have a foothold in our churches. Many key Protestant and

Jewish leaders are their dupes or willing pawns. Catholic-born labor leaders and glamorized celebrities use their 'faith' to lure Catholics into helping Communism."¹⁴ The October 14 column focuses on the Protestant churches, claiming that "17 Methodist bishops and 4000 ministers and lay people" are in a Communist-front organization. It proceeds to name Dr. Harry F. Ward, the distinguished professor emeritus from Union Theological Seminary, and other well-known Protestant clerics as being "pro-Russia."

On October 15 the author informed the reader that "Red Crocodile Tears Ensnare Some Rabbis." In this article Schultz asserted that Professor Abraham Cronbach, one of the most esteemed faculty members of the Hebrew Union College, supported Communist-front groups. Then Schultz turned his weapons on his own teacher, one of the great rabbis of the twentieth century. He stated that Stephen S. Wise was soft on Communism and "in a sermon called for giving Russia the atom bomb know-how." Wise, Schultz concluded, says that he "sincerely believes that liberals and Communists can work together against Fascism, as certain Protestant bishops and ministers also believe. Thus believing, they lend their names to sinister groups."

Having dealt with the Protestants and Jews, the October 16 column is titled, "Reds Use Prominent Catholics as Bait to Lure Masses." As in his first two articles, Schultz attacked key Catholic leaders with similar accusations. Schultz ends the series with the ominous warning: "A minority took over Russia and Germany. A minority could paralyze America—and are working now toward that eventuality. . . . Let's root the Russia-first network out of all faiths."

This was not a new passion for the Yonkers rabbi. Since his parents were refugees from eastern Europe it seems reasonable to infer that he grew up in a family concerned with the treatment of Jews behind the Iron Curtain. Indeed, his youngest brother told the *New York Post*: "There was no one thing that led to Ben's anti-communism. It was a general atmosphere of our home, a gradual build-up. There was a hatred of Czarist persecution—my parents had been born in Russia. Perhaps as an indication of what our

politics were . . . the Jewish Daily Forward was always in the house, along with The Nation and the New Leader. I can remember that we were always a liberal, anti-Communist family."¹⁵

"A Weekly Digest of the Yiddish Press," a regular column he wrote in the forties for the *Jewish Post*, reflects this interest. In a reminiscence penned in 1971, Morrie Ryskind recalls "an article Rabbi Schultz wrote while still at Yonkers about the Bolsheviki's calculated antisemitism which stated, 'The 150,000 Jews who escaped into Russia from Nazi-occupied Poland were sent to heavy labor camps in Siberia. One-third died within six years.'"¹⁶

On another occasion Schultz quotes an article from the *Jerusalem Journal* written by S. Isaacs:

Zionists, stop flirting with Russia! . . . Thousands of Arabs are joining the Communists. Russians are playing up to them; and saying 'that Zionism is supported by the Jewish capitalists.' And a Forward reader conjures up the picture of Stalin, from a conquered Iran, breaking through to Palestine. 'There would be nothing left of Eretz Israel. Stalin has ruined and plundered every land he ever entered.' Also, true Zionists would be shot or sent to Siberia.¹⁷

The chastisement of American Jews was not limited to those who were Zionists. More and more Schultz' columns attacked Jewish agencies and Jewish leaders for what he viewed as "the inroads made by communism in their ranks." In two of these articles the Yonkers rabbi quotes the Yiddish-language *Jewish Daily Forward* when it calls Rabbi Stephen S. Wise the "Chief Rabbi of our Communists," and when it criticizes Wise for being on the same lecture platform with Soviet journalist Ilya Ehrenburg.¹⁸ After Schultz cited a number of such attacks, Rabbi Wise responded to him on April 8, 1947, saying "I want you to know of my disgust for your column "Uptown and Downtown." . . . I find it my duty to say to you that I am throughly [*sic*] ashamed . . . that you are an alumnus of the Jewish Institute of Religion." Schultz replied: "I'm sorry you are displeased but I shall continue my discussion of attempted communist domination of the American Jewish Congress . . . of which you are unhappily the president at the moment."¹⁹

*Abraham Cronbach (left) and Stephen S. Wise,
two prominent and esteemed targets of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz.
(Courtesy of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives,)*

Schultz had thus dealt with the topic in his weekly *Jewish Post* columns,²⁰ but these had a very limited readership; never had he so blatantly made the accusations that he did in the October articles, and never had he placed his ideas on so large a stage. Even though his Emanu-El congregants had changed the rabbi's contract from a one-year to a two-year extension on the occasion of his tenth anniversary, they were as shocked by the *World-Telegram* articles as were the congregation's leaders, who had been trying to get rid of Schultz for half a decade.²¹

Almost immediately, a congregational meeting was called to "discuss the rabbi's case." The anger was so intense that he surely would have been dismissed had not interventions changed the final outcome. In the first and most important intervention Hearst-syndicated columnist George Ephraim Sokolsky, himself a Jew, came to the meeting and threatened to devote a column to the matter in which he would charge the Emanu-El leadership with being soft on Communism. In the second intervention, S. Andhil (Sol) Fineberg, community relations consultant for the national office of the American Jewish Committee, suggested that it would

be wiser, especially in the light of continued negative publicity, if the congregation simply allow Schultz to remain until his contract ended a few months later. The board grudgingly accepted Fineberg's advice, but to show their displeasure, they (and most other congregants) stayed away from Friday night services. "He came and preached," Fineberg wrote, but "nobody came, the temple was practically empty."²²

Emanu-El congregants were not the only ones upset with Schultz's public attacks. As reported in the *New York Times*:

The New York Board of Rabbis in a resolution adopted yesterday, condemned Rabbi Benjamin Schultz . . . for three articles he wrote for the *New York World-Telegram*. . . . The resolution declared that Rabbi Schultz . . . "has used the smear technique of the scandalmonger, a technique entirely inappropriate for a rabbi." . . . The board suggested that Rabbi Schultz should make a public apology "to those whom he has wronged."²³

Thus began a three-decades-long period in which all but a few of his rabbinic colleagues treated Schultz as a pariah.

The Birth of a Crusader

Schultz, however, was not without friends. Some of these—Jewish, influential, and of like mind—decided to create an organization whose principal goal would be "ferreting out all Communist activity in Jewish life wherever it may be," and to make it clear that the word "Jew" was not perceived to be synonymous with the word "Communist."²⁴ Among the founders of this organization, named the American Jewish League Against Communism (AJLAC), were George Ephraim Sokolsky, Eugene Lyons, Alfred Kohlberg, Lawrence Fertig, Benjamin Gitlow, Maurice Tishman, Harry Pasternak, and Schultz. In addition to being a syndicated columnist, Sokolsky worked as a radio commentator. Journalist and author Lyons, having rejected his early left-wing associations, became at various times an editor of the *Reader's Digest*, *American Mercury*, and the *National Review*. He hosted the organizing meeting in his Manhattan home. Kohlberg, a wealthy textile merchant, headed the so-called "China Lobby," a group that supported Chiang Kai-shek, president of the Taiwan-based,

Republic of China.²⁵ Fertig also wrote a syndicated column. Gitlow was an ex-Communist turned right-wing author and politician. Tishman was a diamond merchant. Pasternak, a real estate man, owned a seat on the New York Stock Exchange.

A few months later Roy Cohn, another man of influence, joined the league's board of directors. Admitted to the bar at age twenty-one, Cohn went on to become a Manhattan-based federal prosecutor, who was known for his zealous prosecution of accused American Communists, including Alger Hiss and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. In the early fifties he gained notoriety as chief counsel for the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations headed by Joseph R. McCarthy. Schultz gladly accepted the offer to become the executive director of this fledgling organization.²⁶ "My pulpit," he announced after he took the position, "is 220 W. 42d Street in New York and my congregation is America."²⁷

The new executive director moved enthusiastically into his ideal job as reflected in the fact that his name began to appear frequently in newspapers around the country. Readers learned that in May he flew to Los Angeles "to organize anti-Communist forces among Southern California Jews," and there he announced that Russia had jailed "2,000,000 Jews behind her 'iron curtain' because of their religion." Schultz returned from the West Coast in time to testify before the Control of Subversive Activities Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee of the United States Senate. The focus was on what was popularly called the Mundt-Nixon Bill, a comprehensive attack on Communists and suspected Communists in the United States. Within its seventeen sections it declared that the Communist world conspiracy was "a clear and present danger to the security of the United States." The bill therefore would levy a fine up to ten thousand dollars and imprisonment for up to ten years as penalty "for any person to [*sic*] participate in any movement to establish a foreign-controlled totalitarian dictatorship in the United States." If confirmed by the Senate, as it had been by a six-to-one majority in the House, it would result in the loss of citizenship and passport for anyone convicted of this crime and would make it illegal for him/her to be employed by the federal

government. It would require that every Communist organization and every "Communist-front" organization register with the attorney general and submit a complete membership list including names and addresses.²⁸

In a written memorandum to the committee, Attorney General Tom C. Clark, who opposed the bill, argued that even if the question of its constitutionality "were removed," elements in the bill would force the Communist Party "underground where surveillance of its activities will become increasingly difficult."²⁹

Schultz was given an opportunity to testify before the committee on May 31, 1948, the final day of the hearings. In his testimony he utilized a syllogistic tactic he would repeat often in the coming years: "according to my observation" the average American is for the Mundt bill, and, "since the average Jew is an average American," it stands to reason that most Jews are also in support of it. Asked whether he saw anything constitutionally problematic about the bill, Schultz replied that he saw "no intrusion upon the civil rights or civil liberties of Americans" in it.³⁰

In his column published in mid-July Sokolsky noted the establishment of a branch of the AJLAC in Hollywood. About four weeks later, the *New York Times* and newspapers from coast-to-coast carried the news that the Catholic War Veterans had awarded the Red-fighting rabbi their Americanism Medal. In November Sokolsky again plugged Schultz and the AJLAC in his column, writing that the creation of the organization is "something that needed doing long ago."³¹

As 1949 began Schultz appeared before the Brooklyn Board of Education and, to a chorus of boos and hisses, insisted that the board no longer allow the Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order, a subsidiary of the International Workers Order, to use public school classrooms after school hours. A week later the board unanimously "shattered a long-established precedent" and did exactly what Schultz had demanded. He followed this up in March with a campaign aimed at keeping Dmitri Shostakovich and other Russian delegates from attending a "cultural and scientific conference for world peace" to be held in New York at the end of the month.³²

Although the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) primarily focused on the Alger Hiss trial in the early months of 1949, it also continued to interrogate friendly and not-so-friendly individuals in its campaign to root out Communists. One of the key targets of the committee was the artistically acclaimed black singer, Paul Robeson, who had spent time in Moscow and was reported to have said that if a war should break out between the USSR and the United States, America's Negroes would not take up arms. This embarrassed the more conservative black leadership, which finally approached HUAC Chairman Ed Wood (D-GA), asking to testify before the committee. To provide moral support, Ben Schultz again made his way to the Hill, where he told the committee that the Communists were engaged in a "deliberate conspiracy to inflame religious and racial minorities here against the United States." The next day articles throughout the country carried headlines like this one from the *Dothan [AL] Eagle*: "Rabbi Accuses Paul Robeson of Red Conspiracy." While certain congressmen in Washington worked hard to revive a version of the defunct Mundt-Nixon Bill, Schultz continued his vigorous support: The accusation that these bills are "fascist" or "anti-freedom of speech" is as specious as it is largely insincere. . . . There are no restrictions on speech. There is only an insistence that the public has the right labels. . . . Many of . . . [our youth] are coming under pro-Soviet influences. He then again attacked various academics in high places and finished: "The gap in our Maginot Line is the upper intellectual segment of our population."³³

Getting bolder as every month passed, in September Schultz sent a telegram to Thomas Dewey in which he demanded on behalf of the AJLAC that the governor "take strong measures to 'wipe out the Communist conspiracy' in New York State." By the end of the year Schultz had become the darling of an ever-expanding number of conservative syndicated columnists, and his name could frequently be found in their columns. One of these, Peter Edson, said that the rabbi has "become one of the country's outstanding authorities on the Red Menace," in the same category as Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen for the Catholics.³⁴

*Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (left) with his chief counsel,
Roy Cohn, c. 1953.
(Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Image ID-8004.)*

During August 1950, Schultz's name became even more a household word when, just before the new television season began, he and the league demanded that the "Aldrich Family" television show drop one of its three stars, Jean Muir, who played Henry Aldrich's mother. The accusation was that her name appeared in 1949 on the letterhead of an alleged Communist-front group called the Congress of American Women. The information, as usual, came from J. B. Matthews via a small booklet called *Red Channels* that focused on "communists and fellow-travelers" in the entertainment industry. In response to Schultz's pressure, General Foods Corporation, the show's sponsor, quickly had Muir dropped from the cast. The matter became a cause célèbre, widely reported in the press, with Schultz's name in almost every article. *Time* magazine reflected the feelings of many when it wrote:

All it took was a handful of telegrams and 20 telephone calls to kick Actress Jean Muir off the air as a "controversial personality". . . . Last week, crowing over their victory against Actress Muir, a little group organized themselves as a special committee to keep the air waves pure. The committee members were old hands at the game. Among them: Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, head of the newly formed Joint Committee Against Communism.³⁵

On the day after Muir was let go Schultz assured the press that this was but the first step in a process meant to "cleanse the radio field of pro-Communist actors, writers, producers and commentators." At least partly as a result of Muir's treatment by Schultz and the show's sponsor, her life spiraled into a period of depression and alcoholism that lasted through the decade. For Schultz and his supporters, this was not a big price to pay to save America from the Red Menace.³⁶

Continuing celebrity caused Schultz's name to appear in unlikely places; for example, in Ed Sullivan's syndicated column, "Little Old New York." Just prior to writing that Joe DiMaggio looks thinner and Ralph Kiner is dating a tennis star, Sullivan wrote: "Hard-hitting anti-Commie leader Rabbi Benjamin Schultz [is] demanding [New York] Mayor [Vincent] Impellitteri probe 'extensive pro-Red influence in the New York Public Library.' He charges one librarian sponsors Commie fronts and just wrote a

foreword to a new Commie-line book."³⁷ Dr. Joshua Bloch, director of the Jewish Division of the library, was the person being charged.

Having attacked Muir and having made demands on Dewey and Impellitteri, Schultz now turned his attention to two American icons, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and Secretary of Defense General George Marshall. Many reacted with astonishment when the papers published in late January 1951 contained the accusation that Nimitz had a "bad record on tolerance of pro Communists" and that Marshall had been used as a "fall guy" in a "military plot." "When Nimitz was Chief of Staff," Schultz told delegates to the Women's Patriotic Conference on National Defense, "Army orientation courses largely followed the Communist party line."³⁸

Jewish groups rushed to reject what they saw as outrageous accusations. A statement signed by representatives of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Labor Committee, the National [Jewish] Community Relations Advisory Council, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the Jewish War Veterans was crystal clear:

The undersigned Jewish organizations, representing through their affiliates the overwhelming majority of the organized Jewish community of the United States, regard as infamous the attack by Rabbi Benjamin Schultz . . . on the patriotism and moral character of two great Americans, Secretary of Defense Marshall and Admiral Nimitz. . . . Such irresponsible attacks impair the fight against Communism by creating confusion and distrust at home and by undermining overseas the high confidence earned by Nimitz and Marshall. . . . These tactics are particularly reprehensible at a time when the preservation of American democracy requires the highest regard for civil rights and liberties as fully as it needs opposition to Communism. Rabbi Schultz in no way represents any section of the American Jewish community and the major Jewish organizations repudiate and condemn his repeated resort to vilification and slander of reputable Americans on the pretext of combating Communism.³⁹

Noting the response from the Jewish community, Westbrook Pegler devoted an entire column to Schultz, titled in some newspapers "Let Me Introduce Rabbi Benjamin Schultz." Pegler began, "I think you would like to become acquainted with Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, of New York, the director of the American Jewish League Against Communism, who has suffered much for his opposition to the creeping treason which became systemic in our government under Franklin D. Roosevelt." Pegler concludes, "Rabbi Schultz works under handicaps. Even some of his own people who exalt the name of Roosevelt, suspect him of 'Fascism.' Yet he cries out against 'misleaders of my people.' . . . He is on the right side." Alfred Kohlberg also came to Schultz's defense, circulating a high-quality six-page pamphlet claiming that the attack on him was "ludicrous" and that it was but one of "a series of incidents of distorted and untruthful statements" about him. This controversy also marked a significant turning point for the AJLAC. According to Marja, after this "the ranks of his National Board dwindled" and "the rabbi had to turn more and more to the American Legion and the Minute Women of America" for comfort.⁴⁰

The next major Schultz controversy came in mid-November, when as a guest of a meeting of the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs, Schultz suggested censorship of school textbooks, claiming that many of these books were written in such a manner that "the United States is presented to our children in language and ideas which weaken their love of country, and that Soviet Russia is often extolled." In support, the New York County American Legion in convention presented Schultz with its annual Americanism Award before two thousand delegates in attendance.⁴¹

The McCarthy Era: From Censor to Censure to Closure

Three and a half years after the formation of the AJLAC, and two and a half years after his famous Wheeling, West Virginia, speech, Joseph Raymond McCarthy had become the most important figure on the American anti-Communist scene. As yet, however, Schultz seems to have had little connection to the

Republican senator from Wisconsin. That connection was publicly established on October 13 when Schultz said of McCarthy, "If it were not for him, we would now be talking about Amerasia . . . and aid to China." However, it was still too early for Schultz to hitch his wagon to this middle-American star. When asked about his connection with the senator, he replied that although he approved of McCarthy bringing the Communist threat to the notice of the American people and was "strongly in favor of the Wisconsin senator . . . I am not in politics."

He may not have been in politics in 1952, but he was unquestionably moving in that direction.⁴² Even before Schultz became part of McCarthy's entourage, he played a key role in shaping the senator's anti-Communist inner circle. According to McCarthy biographer Fred J. Cook, Schultz came across a six-page pamphlet, *Definition of Communism*, written by G. David Schine, which had been placed in every room of the Schine family's hotels, including the Ambassador in Los Angeles and the Ritz-Carlton in Atlantic City. Cook indicates that journalist Richard Rovere described the pamphlet as follows:

It puts the Russian Revolution, the founding of the Communist Party, and the start of the First Five Year Plan in years when these things did not happen. It gives Lenin the wrong first name. It confuses Stalin with Trotsky. It confuses Marx with Lenin.

Cook wrote that Schultz was "so dazzled by its depth of understanding" that he introduced Schine to Sokolsky, who introduced him to Roy Cohn, who in turn introduced him to McCarthy. On July 30, 1953, the AJLAC hosted a luncheon in New York's Hotel Astor at which Schultz presented a plaque to the twenty-five-year-old Schine, who was now "chief consultant" to McCarthy's Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. The plaque cited Schine for his "outstanding patriotism and loyalty to American and Jewish anti-communist principles."⁴³

By now Schultz's name frequently could be seen connected to McCarthy's. Thus Lee Mortimer wrote in one of the August editions of "New York Confidential," his syndicated column, "Rabbi Benjamin Schultz . . . tips me off that Joe McCarthy will let go a new H-bomb on September 14. . . . Bigger than anything he's yet

exposed, which is plenty big." McCarthy's "H-bomb" appears to be his declaration that Communists had infiltrated the United Nations, which had become "'a perfect set-up' for information trading among American Reds and U.N. delegates from Communist countries." He also identified Joel Remes, an American employee of the Polish delegation, as "a high official of the Communist Party."⁴⁴

In November 1953 the Army drafted Schine. Thus began a saga that would lead to McCarthy's downfall, but not until an amazing spectacle played out before the American people. When Cohn learned of Schine's draft status, he initiated a campaign to get special privileges for his friend. He apparently tried to get Schine a commission and an assignment to McCarthy's committee to fulfill his military commitment. When that did not work he made calls to numerous individuals, from Schine's company commander up to Secretary of the Army Robert Stevens, demanding that Schine be given light duties, extra leave time, and that he not be sent overseas to Korea. At one point he even threatened to "wreck the Army" if his demands were not met. When the Army rejected Cohn's efforts, McCarthy countered that its response was nothing more than retaliation because of his subcommittee's investigations into Communists in the Army.⁴⁵

Stevens did not take this abuse passively. At the Army's request, hearings began on March 16, 1954, under the auspices of a newly-appointed subcommittee chaired by Senator Karl Mundt (R-SD) created to investigate the opposing accusations made by McCarthy and the Army. These televised hearings did not conclude until June 17, 1954, and are generally believed to have marked the beginning of the end for McCarthy and McCarthyism.

During the beginning of the Schine brouhaha, Schultz created new ways to get his name into the tabloids. On November 2 he spoke to the Charleston, West Virginia, branch of the Minute Women of the U.S.A., where he made public a letter from Eleanor Roosevelt in which she defended alleged Communist Alger Hiss.⁴⁶ For those looking for excitement Schultz did not disappoint. Not only did he attack Mrs. Roosevelt, he also tore into one of America's most respected rabbis, Abba Hillel Silver, lumping him with

“editorial writers on publications like the *Saturday Review of Literature*.” “Their opinions,” said Schultz, “widely reported in so-called cultural circles from coast to coast, serve to make our citizens feel constricted in opposing the evil of international Communism. This plays into Communist hands.”⁴⁷

Little more than a week later in a speech to veterans in Bedford Hills, New York, Schultz aimed his sights even higher. Reporting on this talk, the *New York Times* announced, “Decries Honor to Truman: Rabbi Schultz Says Jewish Unit Should Have Canceled Award.” The American Jewish Congress was wrong, Schultz told his audience, to present an award to former President Harry S. Truman knowing he had become “the center of a dispute involving protection of a Soviet spy.”⁴⁸

By June 1954, as the Army-McCarthy hearings moved toward closure, Cohn’s image had badly deteriorated. Since McCarthy, too, was not doing well, it was deemed necessary for Cohn to relieve some of the pressure by resigning his position as chief counsel for McCarthy’s subcommittee. Schultz was so upset by this development that he planned a series of testimonial dinners for Cohn to take place in various locations on the East Coast. *Time* magazine described the first of these dinners, held on July 29 in Manhattan, as “One Enchanted Evening.”

Dancers swung and swayed with Sammy Kaye on the Astor [hotel] roof and short-sleeved crowds jostled up and down Times Square . . . last week as 2,000 men and women filed . . . into the Astor’s grand ballroom to pay homage to Roy Cohn. . . . New York had probably not seen such a display of sentiment since Lou Gehrig said farewell at Yankee Stadium. Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, toastmaster and prime organizer of the \$7-a-plate dinner, gave Cohn the first plaque.

The plaque was awarded to Cohn “in recognition of his battle for his God and country, which has inspired America.” After presenting the plaque Schultz assured the gathering that “The plain people [of America] know that the loss of Cohn is like the loss of a dozen battleships.” The presentations and speeches continued past midnight and included talks by Sokolsky, Fulton Lewis, Jr., and Teddy Roosevelt’s son, Archibald. But “the loudest ovation of

*Schultz was the prime organizer and toastmaster of the "Enchanted Evening" honoring Roy Cohn. "New York had probably not seen such a display of sentiment since Lou Gehrig said farewell at Yankee Stadium."
(Time, August 9, 1954.)*

all came when Rabbi Schultz introduced 'My Hero,' Joe McCarthy himself."⁴⁹

Although remaining Schultz's "hero," McCarthy had lost most of his support in Congress and much of his popularity with "the little people" who had watched his performance on television. One of the most dramatic moments during the hearings came on June 9, when the Army's lead counsel, Joseph Welch, responded to a McCarthy attack with the words "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?" Two days later Senator Ralph E. Flanders (R-VT) introduced a Senate resolution to censure the junior senator from Wisconsin. Even though McCarthy cavalierly dismissed the idea of censure, his colleagues did not. In response to Flanders' request an ad hoc committee was appointed to consider the merit of the resolution, and this committee brought back a recommendation to act in the affirmative. It was decided that the debate on censure would begin in the Senate November 8, 1954, a few days after the fall elections.

As could be expected, these developments appalled Schultz. In response he again made front-page news by calling for Americans to make their way to Washington on November 11, to participate in a huge rally on McCarthy's behalf. A *Fresno* [CA] *Bee* article said it all with the title "Rabbi Plans Big March to Plead for McCarthy." In the last week of October, the International News Service distributed a picture of a smiling Rabbi Benjamin Schultz holding a stack of papers in his hands, with the accompanying caption saying that he was being "swamped by telegrams from some 15,000 persons anxious to join his proposed rally in Washington on behalf of Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy." The day of the rally those fifteen thousand shrunk to approximately three thousand hard-core McCarthyites, who were treated to the touching moment when Schultz presented the senator with a plaque praising him for "fearless persistence in battling the enemies of our country."⁵⁰

Inside the chambers of Congress, however, Schultz's words of praise fell on deaf ears. The debate on censure continued, concluding finally on December 2, with a condemnation of McCarthy

that carried by a three-to-one margin. Although his supporters might not wish to see it, the glory days of McCarthyistic intimidation were gone. During the Eighty-fourth Congress the disgraced senator was “conspicuously ignored” whenever he got up to speak; even the press chose the same tactic. The word “McCarthyism” became a pejorative adjective, symbolic of demagoguery. In both physical and emotional decline, beset by alcoholism, the once-mighty senator died less than three years later at the age of forty-eight.⁵¹

The American Jewish League Against Communism

The new mood following the Army-McCarthy hearings and the censure debate proved inhospitable to the AJLAC and its executive director. Reflecting this change, Peter Edson, who had praised Schultz as “one of the country’s outstanding authorities on the Red menace,” turned much less enthusiastic. In a mid-November column titled “Professional Anti-Red Promoted McCarthy Rally,” he quotes Schultz: “The leaders of the McCarthy censure movement are dominated by elements that favor the admission of Red China to the United Nations. They are out to ‘get’ every anti-Communist in the United States.” Edson then moved in for the kill: “The Rabbi emphasizes the ‘they’. . . . But when questioned about who ‘they’ are, he refuses to name names.” Edson concluded by sarcastically telling his readers that Schultz defined a “pro-Communist” as “any anti-anti-Communist.”⁵²

Like McCarthy, after December 2 Schultz and the AJLAC all but disappeared from the pages of America’s newspapers. In late April 1955, the faithful gathered at New York’s Henry Hudson Hotel for one last hurrah, a testimonial dinner for the man who had organized many such dinners not so long before. Reportedly seven hundred attended including, one can surmise, Cohn, Schine, Sokolsky, Kohlberg, and Lyons. At the appropriate moment the main speaker, Senator McCarthy, took the microphone and began:

Ladies and Gentlemen: Our meeting tonight is long overdue. The gallant warrior we are honoring has been covering himself with glory for so many years, it’s a wonder we have never

stopped, until now, to say thanks. That's the trouble, Ben, with being a solid, unwavering bastion of strength . . . people tend to take you for granted. . . . How, for example, would the anti-Communist fight have fared over the past decade without Rabbi Schultz? And how should we bear the loss if ever he were to leave his post? . . . What is it that can make a man indispensable . . . ? Is it the possession of keen insights . . . ? Or is it practical shrewdness in the day-to-day battles? Is it an ability to joust with the dialecticians at the intellectual level? Or is it stubbornness and grit at the street level? Is it unflinching courage? Is it single-mindedness of purpose—an unswerving determination to defeat the enemy absolutely?

Each of these qualities is a scarce commodity. . . . But when you find them all in one individual, you have found a rare man indeed. . . . The good Lord put in all the ingredients when he made Ben Schultz.

After praising him as one of the founders of the AJLAC, the speaker continued:

Ben Schultz, ably seconded by . . . other leaders who share his religious beliefs, has managed to expose the malicious myth that persons of the Jewish faith and Communists have something in common. . . . The very existence of this hard-hitting anti-Communist group gives the lie to a vitally important item of Communist propaganda. . . . I frankly doubt that there is a single organization in this country that the Communists are more anxious to destroy . . . Ben Schultz and his indomitable crew of heroes will not be beaten down by anybody. . . . It's a personal honor to me, Ben, to be able to join in paying tribute to you. . . . You have served your country well. Thank you, Good luck and God-speed.

When the applause subsided, the speaker returned to his seat. The next day papers throughout the land carried headlines similar to that in the *New York Times*: "Rabbi Schultz Honored: McCarthy Praises Him for His Fight against Communism."⁵³ It almost sounded like Schultz was being put out to pasture, but it was not so. He was to hang around five more years, trying in each of them to justify his position and the existence of the AJLAC, a difficult task at best. It wasn't easy.

An omen of what was to come appeared in Edson's November 1954 column, when he wrote regarding Schultz, "he has no synagogue and he says his present pay is lower than what most rabbis get." Around the same time Sokolsky wrote a column that one paper titled "Anti-Marxism on a Pittance" in which he explained, "The Jewish League Against Communism has to pass the hat to pay its rent, and its one employee, Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, is often never paid at all." Schultz corroborated this in the winter 1957-1958 edition of *Jews Against Communism*, the official newsletter of the AJLAC, where he wrote "Our League is always dying for lack of support; it always survives because it is doing the work of God." Again in 1959 he reported, "Our organization operates on an admittedly meager budget, and we are in danger this year of not raising even that. . . . [Help] is necessary."⁵⁴

S. Andhil Fineberg

Rabbi Sol Fineberg, a Marine Corps veteran and National Chaplain for the Jewish War Veterans, met Schultz when both served synagogues in the Yonkers area. Three years after Schultz accepted the Yonkers position, Fineberg made a career change and became the national community relations director of the American Jewish Committee, a position he held until 1964. An avowed "cold war liberal," anti-Communist to the core, he typified many of the AJC professionals. In this regard he was on the same page as Schultz, seeing "New Deal liberals" (like those in the leadership of the American Jewish Congress) as naïve and ineffectual in combating the Communist menace. Yet he was a fan neither of the AJLAC nor McCarthyism, believing their goals admirable but their methods seriously flawed.⁵⁵

Despite their different approaches, Schultz always perceived Fineberg to be an ally and friend. In an unpublished 1974 interview, Fineberg recalled:

Schultz constantly . . . had to prove that there was a need to have such an organization. Then one day . . . Eugene Lyons, who was then one of the senior editors of *Readers Digest*, rode back on the train with me from New Bedford. . . . We two had been the speakers that evening. . . . Lyons was a board member of the

American Jewish League Against Communism and a very active one. He told me that they were running out of funds. Their backers were losing interest, and they just didn't know what to do with Rabbi Schultz. . . . [They] did not feel that the organization was worth continuing and now they had this rabbi and didn't know what to do with him. A few days later I received a phone call from Schultz. He said nothing about the difficulties of the League or anything of that sort, but he told me how desperately he wanted to get back "to preach the word of God." . . . He didn't know where to turn to find a pulpit that might accept him. . . . He called me back several weeks later. He had found a small pulpit in the South.⁵⁶

Elsewhere Fineberg wrote that Schultz had asked him to be a reference for any potential position, and that he had consented to do so. In the years following Schultz repeatedly told reporters and others that the reason he left New York and came to Brunswick, Georgia, was so that he could "preach the word of God."⁵⁷

*S. Anhil Fineberg.
(Courtesy of the American
Jewish Committee.)*

HAIR, the Musical

Before moving with Schultz to the South, it is difficult to ignore one last New York memory. In October 1967, long after Schultz's fifteen minutes of fame had ended, *HAIR*, a rock musical written by Gerome Ragni and James Rado, opened in the off-Broadway Public Theater of Joseph Papp. A year later it made the big leap to Broadway, and found a home there. Written in the mid-1960s, it was totally counter-culture, criticizing and satirizing racism, war (especially the one waging in Vietnam), sexual repression, and institutionalized religion. One of the absurdities it pointed out was that the military draft is "white people sending black people to make war on the yellow people to defend the land they stole from the red people."

In the original Broadway script in a scene toward the end of act 1, Berger, the Tribe's leader, hands out hallucinogenic pills to the kids in the Tribe. As he does so he recites "One pill for . . ." and lists a famous person's name. The Tribe member who receives that pill gives some sort of response, e.g., when Berger says "One pill for James Brown," the Tribe member sings a few bars of "I Feel Good." Pills are given in the name of Richard M. Nixon, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Pope—and Rabbi Benjamin Schultz. The one who accepted the latter pill sang a few bars of "Hava Nagila."

Why Schultz? James Rado (né Radomski) believes the idea originated with Ragni. Possibly Ragni had such an antipathy to McCarthyism that the rabbi from Yonkers remained fresh in his mind years after Schultz had disappeared from the scene. Within a short time Schultz also disappeared from the script, replaced by a more contemporary adversary. But, for a brief moment in time, the man who from his youth had wanted to be a rabbi had his name on Broadway.⁵⁸

"Swanee! How I Love You" – The Brunswick Interlude

When Schultz arrived to Brunswick in late summer, 1960, the community included a total of 170 Jews, approximately fifty Jewish families. Such small Jewish communities experienced great difficulty attracting rabbis. Dr. Alvin Labens, a past president of

the larger Clarksdale, Mississippi, synagogue, told the author “I had an older friend in the congregation . . . who always said, ‘The only thing we get is a rabbi on his way up or a rabbi on his way down.’ In my old age I’m trying to figure out when did we get one on his way up.” The members of Brunswick’s Temple Beth Tefilloh were thus as pleased to have their new rabbi as he was pleased to be there.⁵⁹

Apparently Schultz spent his first year in Brunswick becoming active in the local Rotary and other civic organizations, meeting other clergy, and tending to the needs of his congregants. In addition, he made speeches to local groups, so many that, by the time he left after two years, he claimed to have made nearly two hundred such presentations.⁶⁰

Temple Beth Tefilloh, Brunswick, Georgia.
(Courtesy of Julian H. Preisler, *AmericanSynagogueArchitecture.com*.
Photograph by Hans J. Preisler, 2007.)

Schultz continued a long-standing tradition of annual summer trips to Europe, done, he often said, so that he could interview ordinary people and people of status in order to gain a sense of political and cultural trends. On June 25, 1961, in a handwritten note to Sol Fineberg, Schultz wrote that he and Lottie were leaving "at dawn tomorrow for a trip to London, Bonn, Amsterdam, Paris, Venice, Rome, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem." He closed the note, "Lottie and I spent the happiest year of our life" during their first year in Brunswick.⁶¹

The August 18, 1961, edition of *The Brunswick News* included an article, "Rabbi Sees No Shooting War Over Berlin Crisis," that announced Schultz "recently returned from a six-week European tour" and that he discussed his trip at the previous day's Rotary Club meeting. Although the article quoted a part of Schultz's speech, the August 24 edition of *The Rotrygram* gives more insight into the talk; "Rabbi Ben Schultz turned a travelogue into a commentary on the image of America abroad." He told the Rotarians that, in Europe, members of the Communist party were "tolerated and even accepted socially." Then he moved into the theme that he repeated consistently in the months and years ahead: "The South . . . is looked upon with disfavor and is without a defender" in Europe. Another of his favorite themes followed: "There is dry rot at the intellectual core of America which has equated pro-Americanism with evil." The article concluded, "He [Schultz] would have us . . . develop and promote a pro-American attitude. To these concluding words of wisdom, one can only add a hearty 'amen'—as did the Brunswick Rotary Club with a standing ovation." Elsewhere in the same newsletter is the comment: "Ben Schultz's address last week should evoke in all of us the desire to promote actively a sense of national pride. This country has been criticized unjustly too long."⁶²

Thus Schultz continued his crusade, only now in a much smaller theater. As could be expected the publicity for his talks almost always carried the same credentials, listing the awards he had received for his patriotism (by the American Legion, the Catholic War Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars). In addition, the publicity invariably cited his favorable mention in J.

Edgar Hoover's *Masters of Deceit*, which placed him in the same company as Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and financier and presidential advisor Bernard M. Baruch, and mentioned that, in 1955, "he opened the U.S. Senate in prayer." Sometimes the public relations people went a little too far, as in the article in the *Southeast Georgian* that maintained Schultz has "been associated with Bernard Baruch, the Senior Editors of *Readers Digest*, General A. A. Weidrenauer [*sic*], and Senator Barry Goldwater" and that he is "the author of many books on Communism." Rarely did newspapers add that he was the past executive director of the AJLAC, and they never associated him with McCarthy, Cohn, or Schine, facts that Schultz seems to have kept to himself.⁶³

On June 28, 1962, after two years in Brunswick, Schultz wrote to his friend Fineberg in New York:

Dear Sol:

As a friend of mine, at great sacrifice to yourself, you have often been of aid. Now, comes one of the "rewards." I have achieved a "promotion"—election as the rabbi of Temple Beth Israel, Clarksdale, Miss., a congregation three times as large as this one, with a magnificent plant, fine school, active workers, ultra-modern parsonage, etc. . . . I start in August.

The July 2 edition of the *Brunswick News* informed the community that Rabbi Schultz had "accepted a call to Temple Beth Israel of Clarksdale" and noted that he had been "in demand here as a speaker on Communism, on Europe where he traveled extensively, and on interfaith relations" and shared Schultz's words of gratitude for the "life-long friends" he and Lottie had made in the community. Interestingly, a few weeks later an article in the *Yonkers [NY] Herald Tribune*, accompanied by Schultz's picture, was headlined: "Anti-Red Leader: Rabbi Schultz Named to Mississippi Temple." The article mentions that he and Lottie were honored at a farewell reception there at which "the rabbi received a gold watch," and that they had "moved into their new Clarksdale home before coming east to begin their Europe trip." Schultz was off to get more data, for there were many more speeches that had yet to be delivered.⁶⁴

Temple Beth Israel, Clarksdale, Mississippi.
Courtesy of Julian H. Preisler, AmericanSynagogueArchitecture.com.
Photograph by D. Gorton.)

Clarksdale

Clarksdale is part of the Mississippi Delta, an area that historian James C. Cobb calls “the most southern place on earth.” The Delta begins in Memphis and, following the Mississippi River, snakes down about two hundred miles to Greenwood. It is narrow, no wider than sixty miles, but rich, flat land. This is where the great cotton plantations were to be found, and, according to journalist and author Curtis Wilkie, around the time Schultz arrived in town it was “the country’s last feudal system.”⁶⁵

On the face of it, Clarksdale might seem to have been an island of tranquility during the tumultuous sixties, with hardly a sit-in or demonstration to be seen within its boundaries, even though it was home to Dr. Aaron Henry, an African American pharmacist who served for three decades as state president of the NAACP. The tranquility, however, was a sign of the all but total impotence of the black community rather than their satisfaction. An important part of their problem was police chief Ben Collins, known as “the toughest lawman in the Delta.”⁶⁶ On the one occasion when Aaron did organize a local protest, Collins “simply

rejected black demands and packed the jails with demonstrators."⁶⁷

But the main support of the feudal system came from far outside of the Delta; from the Oval Office and congressional chambers in the nation's capital. In the 1930s money began to pour into the pockets of Delta planters as a reward for their reducing their cotton acreage. A clear outcome was a corresponding reduction in the planters' need for labor. Add to this the federal support of agricultural mechanization, and the result was an African American population living in abject poverty, totally dependent on the will of the planters for whatever small income they could manage to bring in. To make matters even worse, the selfsame planters distributed the surplus food commodities sent by Washington to sustain those in need. With the support of men like Delta natives James O. Eastland in the Senate and Jamie Whitten, chair of the powerful House Appropriations Sub-Committee on Agriculture, in a typical year in the 1960s federal farm payments allocated to about one-third of one percent of the population were six times greater than the money expended in food relief for the sixty percent of the people living below the poverty level.⁶⁸

When Schultz arrived in 1962, the Clarksdale synagogue claimed about 120 families, making it the third largest in the state behind Greenwood and Jackson. Although large by Mississippi standards, the congregation was small in comparison with the vast majority in the United States. Past president Dr. Alvin Labens explained, "We were not a cultural center; we were not an educational center. We were dependent on a cotton crop and when mechanized cotton pickers came out the farmers didn't need labor like they used to and then eventually Wal-Mart came out and that just killed the mom and pop operations." Typical of almost every small town in the South, the Jewish residents were overwhelmingly in the merchant class, often with stores on Main Street. A minority were professionals, usually physicians or attorneys. These middle- and upper-middle class members of Temple Beth Israel were delighted with the arrival of their new rabbi to the Delta.⁶⁹

*Rabbi Schultz with the 1963 confirmation class,
Temple Beth Israel, Clarksdale.
(Courtesy of Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life.)*

The *Clarksdale Press Register* provided a gracious, small-town welcome with an article titled "New Rabbi Appointed at Temple Beth Israel." It began, "A national leader in the anti-Communist movement has been named rabbi of Beth Israel Temple here. Rabbi and Mrs. Schultz, who were moving into their home today [Friday], will depart Monday for Europe where the rabbi expects to gather further information in his anti-Communist activities." A similar article appeared in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* written by Anne Fleming (who would write many more sympathetic articles about Schultz in the following years). The article begins:

A one-man crusade against communism recently moved to Clarksdale and assumed his duties as the new rabbi of Beth Israel Congregation. Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, who was born in New

York, has a voice as soft as any Southerner's and a deceptively mild manner for a man who has fought communism throughout the length and breadth of the United States and abroad. Though a lifelong New Yorker, the rabbi asked for a Southern congregation. "I believe this section to be among the most pro-American in the nation," he explained. "As yet it is relatively free of infiltrating communists and their unwitting tools, those misguided 'liberals.'" . . . The rabbi believes he can be happy in Clarksdale "because I can go about my purely religious duties without too much distraction arguing with 'liberals' and pro-communists."⁷⁰

Schultz hit the ground running. As soon as he came back from Europe he told a reporter that he detected "a 'subconscious feeling' among these Europeans that the U.S. is not firm enough and that the Communists eventually will win." He also reported there was "a totally twisted idea of the South" in Europe. "There was no defender of the South in all of Europe. . . . Even Eichmann has his defense council [*sic*], but the South has no defender over there." Schultz said he would like to see southerners "organize a public relations campaign in Europe [since] . . . films and newspaper articles particularly have contributed to the erroneous ideas of the South." Three days after his return from his trip abroad Schultz made these points in a speech to the local Exchange Club.⁷¹

Thus began a series of talks to various groups including the American Legion, Rotary Club, Altrusa Club, Daughters of the American Revolution, Exchange Club, and many churches. Most of these speaking engagements took place in Clarksdale proper, but many occurred elsewhere in the Delta, in other sections of Mississippi, and even in other southern states. None of these talks, however, proved as controversial as the one he delivered before the Clarksdale Business and Professional Women's Club on October 24, 1962.

"America Needs More Mississippi"

The other rabbis serving Mississippi congregations felt less than enthusiastic about Schultz's presence in the state, but, with prodding from Perry Nussbaum in Jackson, they had reached out to him in a collegial spirit. That ended on October 25, 1962, when

the newspapers and airwaves throughout the state reported in great detail Schultz's remarks the day before to a Clarksdale women's group. Months later that speech remained in people's minds and on their lips. Almost four months later, the *Clarksdale Clarion-Ledger* reported in its Sunday edition:

"BIG JOHNNY REB," the five-station radio network covering much of Georgia, has featured a special editorial quoting a widely publicized statement by an esteemed religious leader in Mississippi upholding its stand for constitutional government and American principles. We think the "Big Johnny Reb" editorial is well worth passing along, as follows:

Out of the unfortunate and unconstitutional imposition of Federal force upon the Sovereign State of Mississippi came the clarion-clear voice of a Jewish Rabbi, speaking with the wisdom of Moses. Rabbi Benjamin Schultz of Clarksdale, Mississippi, says: "What America needs is more of Mississippi, not less." The Rabbi listed these five reasons:

1. If Mississippi had its way, Castro would not be in Cuba today. Washington would not have installed him there.
2. If Mississippi had prevailed, the Berlin Wall would have been torn down as soon as it went up.
3. If Mississippi had prevailed, there would be no Communists on American faculties and corruption of our youth would stop.
4. If Mississippi, with its States Rights philosophy, had its way, Big Government, provocative dictatorship and eventual national bankruptcy would be thrown out the window.
5. If Mississippi had its way, traditional patriotism would again sweep the land to strengthen out [*sic*] people inwardly and insure victory in the international crisis. After all, if Communism conquers, we all lose—Jews and Gentiles, black and white. Religion loses most of all.

Rabbi Schultz emphasizes the point that our nation needs more people who will stand up for constitutional government [i.e. "states' rights"], for patriotic principle, for American interests in the face of the Communist challenge.⁷²

In the speech, Schultz had actually ended his comments calling on “the dedicated clergy of Mississippi and the South . . . to demand that our Northern preachers fight the Cold War . . . against Communism, even if it means less time to attack the South.” One of the most enthusiastic responses to Schultz’s message came from the White Citizens’ Council, which reprinted a précis of it in its October 1962 newsletter, *The Citizen*.⁷³

Schultz’s remarks were consistent with statements he had made well before he arrived to Mississippi. As executive director of the AJLAC, he had delivered a letter to the White House asking President Truman to appoint a commission “to investigate Communist-inspired ‘racial tension’” in this country. The Communist Party intended, he wrote, “to inflame the discontent and grievances of each minority group” with the result being “hatred toward constituted authority.” Again, in testimony before the HUAC, Schultz argued that our country’s Communists “are trying to stir up racial and religious hatreds in an effort ‘to throw this land into confusion, paving the way for Stalinist revolution and conquest.’” Minorities (i.e., African Americans) should not be concerned, however, because, although anti-minority injustices do exist in the United States, “the one sure thing about America today is that, through the democratic process, injustices are being gradually removed.”⁷⁴

What had been happening in Mississippi in the months between 1961 and the day of the speech? In what hopeful way were injustices “being gradually removed?” Here is a sampling of occurrences in Mississippi during that period:

- On March 27, 1961, nine black students from Tougaloo College attempted to use the public library in Jackson and were arrested and thrown into jail. The next day students from Jackson State University marched peacefully to the jail in protest and club-wielding police set upon them using tear gas and dogs. That night more than one thousand African Americans attended a rally in support of the Tougaloo Nine.
- On May 24, 1961, twenty-six freedom riders, having survived vicious attacks in Alabama, arrived in Jackson,

where they were jailed. Mississippi governor Ross Barnett justified the treatment thusly: "The Negro is different because God made him different to punish him." By the end of the summer more than three hundred freedom riders had been incarcerated in the state, most being sent to the penitentiary in Parchman.

- On September 25, 1961, in Liberty, E. H. Hurst shot and killed Herbert Lee, 52, who had assisted African Americans to go to the polls to vote. Hurst, a member of the Mississippi legislature, was never charged with the crime.
- In late October 1961, Paul Potter and Tom Hayden of Students for a Democratic Society were dragged from their car and beaten in the street when they came to McComb to show support for the Voter Registration Movement. Shotgun blasts from a Klan nightrider almost killed Dion Diamond and John Hardy. Throughout the state less than seven percent of Mississippi blacks were registered to vote – in many black-majority counties not a single black citizen was registered – and, of those few on the voter rolls only a handful dared to actually cast a ballot.
- On April 9, 1962, Cpl. Roman Ducksworth, Jr., a military police officer stationed in Maryland, was ordered off a bus by a police officer in Taylorsville and shot dead. The police officer apparently mistook Ducksworth for a freedom rider testing bus desegregation laws.
- On August 31, 1962, the son-in-law of the local state representative and a cousin of the sheriff brutally beat Bob Moses, leader of the state's Voter Registration Project. An all-white jury acquitted the assailants.
- On September 3, 1962, riots broke out in Oxford when James Meredith arrived on the campus of the University of Mississippi. Two people were killed and 160 of the marshals, who had been pulled from the ranks of various federal agencies to try to keep order, were injured. President John F. Kennedy sent in the National

Guard and the Army. In the following days, twenty-three thousand soldiers arrived in Oxford.

- And, of course, there was the continuing specter of the August 28, 1955, killing of fourteen-year-old Chicagoan Emmett Till in the Delta hamlet of Money, when he said something like “bye, baby” to the wife of the proprietor in a small country store.

Nonetheless, according to Rabbi Schultz, America needed more Mississippi.

Responses to a Verbal Earthquake

On November 20, 1962, E. Stanley Basist, president of the board of trustees of Schultz’s synagogue, sent a letter to the presidents of all the other Mississippi Reform congregations, in which he wrote:

It has come to my attention that several Mississippi Rabbis have made uncomplimentary remarks about our Rabbi, Benjamin Schultz. These remarks were made shortly after a speech of his was publicized in several Mississippi and Tennessee newspapers, and, more important, further remarks were made about him to the president of our Temple Youth Group and the Youth Group advisors at the Conclave held last weekend in Memphis.

Rabbi Benjamin Schultz has my complete endorsement and the overwhelming backing and support of the Clarksdale Jewish Community. . . . [The other rabbis] further stated that should Clarksdale be appointed the host city for the Temple Youth Conclavette this coming spring that they would not attend as long as Rabbi Schultz held the Pulpit position here in Clarksdale. . . . As a layman it is not within my capabilities to try to cope with jealousies and misunderstandings between Rabbis. . . . I hope . . . if certain Rabbis are guilty of such unbecoming conduct, they will now consider the incident closed and will not persist in making further damaging remarks. I am, therefore, asking you to check into this matter for me with your own spiritual leader and to determine if there is any basis to the reports as received by me, and advise.⁷⁵

On the day Basist mailed his letter, Sol Fineberg sent Schultz a letter labeled "PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL." Fineberg stated that he was "writing as a friend . . . [who has] defended you during the many years in which all other rabbis were hostile, [but] I am on the verge of questioning my own judgment. I fear you have let a flurry of popularity lead you to believe that you can throw caution and discretion to the wind." Fineberg continued:

You were welcomed back into the active rabbinate as a rabbi. You did a magnificent job in Brunswick, as a rabbi. . . . I have urged rabbis to discard any reservations they have about your becoming a genuine colleague. They agreed readily. As for Perry Nussbaum you were wrong.⁷⁶ He did not object to your coming to Mississippi and even put in a favorable word. But he is alarmed. They all are. . . . What will happen if a member of an audience or a reporter asks you "What do you think . . . about James Meredith? About White Citizens' Councils? Etc." Assuming that you give the . . . nativist, anti-Negro answers needed to satisfy certain elements! What then? The same questions will then be put publicly to other rabbis in your area. Are they to be pilloried if their views . . . are expressed? Or for remaining silent . . . you do need—all rabbis need—rabbinical cooperation and good will. . . . No one wants more than I do, to see you succeed. My assurance was given the [rabbinic] placement committee [of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)] that your work in the pulpit would not antagonize your colleagues. . . . I hope you will not become the temporary idol of the same sort of people who idolized you in the past and let you down later.⁷⁷

One week later Schultz sent a three-page response to Fineberg, affirming that they were friends, having been so since 1926. In the letter he admitted that he has perhaps "gone to an extreme in making it plain on the outside that my present congregation likes me," but he has not in any speech or pronouncement "mentioned segregation or integration." His controversial speech was given only to provide "a 'lift' to the sorrowing citizens of Mississippi." He expressed resentment against the rabbis of the state, several of whom "opposed my coming before I came." Nonetheless the end of the letter is conciliatory: "I should like to reach an

agreement. . . . Sol, there must be ways and means of getting something in motion."⁷⁸

In a letter sent the same day to Nussbaum, Fineberg wrote that he spoke with Sidney Regner, executive director of the CCAR, "this morning," and that Regner said Schultz had sent him a letter "a week ago complaining to him that his rabbinical colleagues in the South have been unkind." Fineberg closed:

this will have to be played out slowly and carefully, giving Schulz [*sic*] as little opportunity as possible to denounce those who disagree with him as soft on Communism, lacking patriotism, etc. He may come to his senses and I hope he will, but I am not as confident as I wish I could be.

Fineberg wrote Nussbaum two days later, enclosing a copy of Schultz's letter to him. Fineberg asked Nussbaum to write the following: "Dear Rabbi Schultz: I know there has been some misunderstanding in which you and others are involved. Why not arrange to talk it over?" Heeding Fineberg's advice on December 4 Nussbaum wrote to all of the Reform rabbis in Mississippi—Robert Blinder (Vicksburg), Moses Landau (Cleveland), Arthur B. Lebowitz (Natchez), Charles Mantinband (Hattiesburg), Allan Schwartzman (Greenville) and to Schultz—inviting them and their wives to a "rabbinic gab-fest" at his home on December 20, "*Lifnay darchay sholom*, and to forestall a potential *Chillul Hashem* in our State."⁷⁹

Fineberg had good reason to turn to Nussbaum for leadership in this matter. From the moment Nussbaum arrived in Jackson in 1952 he was passionately committed to the concept of unity among the Jews of Mississippi. Possibly because he grew up in the established Jewish community of Toronto, he was painfully aware of the scant number of Jews not only in Jackson but also in the state as a whole. He labored for years trying unsuccessfully to create and maintain a Mississippi Assembly of Jewish Congregations. In like manner, he worked to enhance communication and contact among his rabbinic colleagues. There is a certain irony to this, in that Nussbaum was in many ways the least likely candidate to succeed in either of these tasks; he was anything but diplomatic and was generally considered to be a very difficult

person to like, given his irascible personality. Mantinband, who was just the opposite, might have been a better choice, but he was just weeks away from announcing that he had decided to leave Hattiesburg to settle in Longview, Texas.

Shortly after sending the invitation to the other rabbis Nussbaum received a copy of a letter from Fineberg to a Philip Kantor. Apparently Fineberg had met with Kantor while breakfasting with a friend in Memphis. The letter reads in part:

This is to tell you that since we met I have had personal conversations with Rabbi Mantinband . . . and with Rabbis Regner and [Dan] Davis in New York [members of the rabbinical placement committee], three telephone calls to Rabbi Nussbaum in Jackson and have seen and carried on intensive correspondence with Rabbi Schultz. I am hopeful that Rabbi Schultz will overcome the ill effects of the startling newspaper report of his speech, and that he will make good in every way in your congregation.⁸⁰

Fineberg noted that "the president of your congregation" had written an "ill-advised letter to presidents of other congregations. . . . This threat to the security of the other rabbis is most objectionable." He informed Kantor that Nussbaum was taking steps to establish goodwill among "all the rabbis of Mississippi towards Rabbi Schultz and I believe he can succeed, provided someone tells Mr. Basist that he is on the wrong track." He assured Kantor that Schultz was capable of being "a splendid person, humble, kind, considerate and a genuine rabbi." He continued:

Please tell no one, except Lester Rosen, that I have corresponded with you. Please tell no one how you received the copy of the attached [Basist] letter. . . . I very much want Rabbi Schultz to remain in Clarksdale. . . . I shall appreciate your keeping me informed and be sure that I shall treat whatever you communicate to me in complete confidence. Please let me know all the important developments.⁸¹

So, who are Kantor and Rosen? Fineberg provided the answers in a letter to Nussbaum written on the same day, which began: "Dear Perry: No one is to know that I have a correspondent on the Board of the Clarksdale congregation, one of the few who is critical of Rabbi Schultz." He continued:

Perry, I am completely convinced that we are on the right track. I am, in brief, sharing with you a peculiar relationship which I have maintained with Rabbi Schultz throughout the years, preventing his becoming a very hurtful figure on the national scene. . . . If you manage to get all the rabbis of Mississippi to let bygones be bygones in regard to Schultz and give him a luke-warm (if not warm) treatment, that would be excellent. . . . that would be infinitely better than the kind of explosion that would be necessary to get Ben Schultz out of Mississippi. . . . At this point I bow out and shall initiate nothing further whatever. . . . I would recommend that others . . . regard you as the person to whom the problem *in its entirety* be referred. [emphasis in original]

On December 7 Nussbaum wrote Rabbi James Wax of Temple Israel in Memphis regarding the December 20 meeting with Schultz: "It may be that the latter is sincerely motivated to keep the peace with his Mississippi colleagues and put some kind of checkrein on his extreme rightist pronunciamentos." He asked Wax to give him a "rundown of your contacts with Schultz." Nussbaum chose to contact Wax for a number of reasons. First of all, Memphis was the closest large Jewish community. As such, it hosted almost all the major Reform conventions and regional meetings that included Mississippi congregations. Also when Mississippians, especially those in the Delta, longed for more sophisticated entertainment or shopping, Memphis was a popular destination. As rabbi of the most prestigious synagogue in this prestigious city, Wax was well regarded for his stands and, among colleagues, well respected. In addition, Nussbaum felt a collegial connection with "Jimmy" Wax, with whom he corresponded on many occasions. Finally, Wax shared Nussbaum's concern about Schultz's arrival on the southern scene, as he told the author in 1966:

There's one rabbi that I think is a reprehensible character and I don't mind being quoted, that's Ben Schultz of Clarksdale, who made the statement—you'll find it quoted in Silver's book, *The Closed Society*—that President Kennedy should have sent the troops to Cuba rather than to Mississippi—it was during the time of Meredith's admission to Ole Miss.⁸²

On January 2, 1963, Nussbaum again wrote Wax:

Ben Schultz and his wife spent several hours in Jackson at our home, as did Charles Mantinband and his wife and Bob Blinder. We impressed on Schultz that we are not in sympathy with his McCarthy-like speeches, but could understand how his anxiety to establish himself in his new community led to some *injudicious statements*. He was full of *charoto* about his Ole Miss publicity but insisted that he will not back down on his anti-communist position, etc. etc. We also gave him to understand that his public image from here on in will have a decisive influence on individual rabbis' decisions to support him in his youth work.⁸³ Only time, of course, will tell about the degree of his repentance.

Schultz's *charoto*, or sense of guilt, apparently was short-lived. On February 1, 1963, both the *Delta Democrat-Times* of Greenville and the *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* carried articles in which Schultz argued that the United States needed "more nationalism" and that the South particularly needed better public relations, repeating once again his analogy that Eichmann had a defense but the South has neither defense nor defender.⁸⁴ The same day that the articles were published, Nussbaum responded with a letter:

This morning I have carefully read the enclosed UPI report on your Greenville Rotary speech, as I have listened to a summary of it on one of our Jackson radio news programs. . . . [Until] your coming to Clarksdale, we kept our differences within the rabbinical family as much as possible, because these have become abnormal times both for Jews and Judaism in our State. . . . Our principle of expedience in general on integration was criticized . . . by many people outside of the State. . . . throughout all these months of James Meredith the Mississippi Rightists and Racists, and their publicity media, have not injected what have become classic antisemitic phenomena . . . in spite of the fact that some of us are clearly identifiable as anti-Rightists and anti-Racists. . . . The paramount consideration in these times, in this State, is the image of the Rabbi. . . . In Mississippi, we simply cannot afford the luxury of 7 Rabbis not presenting a united front. . . . I strongly disagree with your publicized positions as expressed last Fall, and in the UPI account of your Greenville speech. . . . [Whether] you intend it or not, you are portraying yourself as a

*Perry Nussbaum confidentially forwarded to Sol Fineberg a copy of his
letter to Benjamin Schultz.
(Courtesy of Allen Krause.)*

defender of the South at a time when Mississippi . . . has defied every fundamental American legal, moral and Jewish principle. You have been telling extremists what they want to hear. . . . It was a shot in the arms to the extremists and racists last Fall to have a clergyman extol Mississippi contra the established authority of the government and the people of the United States, and you made the pages of the Citizens' Council publication, as I suspect you have been favorably quoted in the professional anti-semitic media. I have felt uncomfortable when I have had to explain you to the Christian clergymen and laity with whom I work. . . . In my judgment, you are misrepresenting Judaism . . . according to my interpretation of Judaism, the stereotype of Mississippi is not so different from that of Adolph Eichmann, and we deserve what Europeans think of us. . . . I deplore the support the racists and extremists will elicit from this latest publicity, particularly when a handful of younger Mississippi Methodist preachers at last have openly dared to challenge the stranglehold of Methodist racists and extremists. . . . This is the time for Mississippi Rabbis to be extremely careful, therefore, not to cut the ground from under the handful of Christians who are beginning to rebel against the fascistic atmosphere in the State. You have become a fellow-traveler with those elements in the State to which I am absolutely opposed, even though you have the best of intentions, because you refuse to see that your brand of political Conservatism is meat and drink for the fascists who are in control of Mississippi. . . . If you continue to make public speeches . . . if in such speeches you further the line of the unholy alliance in our State which panders to every latent human prejudice—in the name of decentralized government, states' rights, white supremacy, etc.—you are furthering the vicious tactics of the communist conspiracy of which you are an outstanding opponent. This, to me, is your blind spot. We will see each other next weekend in Memphis.⁸⁵ It remains to be seen if I can get the Mississippi Rabbis there together with you after this newspaper account of your latest speech.

This extraordinary letter gives clear evidence of Nussbaum's commitment to civil rights and his sense of despair regarding the climate in Mississippi, reminiscent of the correspondence he carried on with the state's rabbis in the summer of 1961 when he was secretly visiting Jewish Freedom Riders incarcerated in Parchman Penitentiary. In 1961 Nussbaum was rebuffed or rebuked by all of

his colleagues save for Blinder in Vicksburg and Mantinband in Hattiesburg. Nonetheless, the intensely negative reaction of all of the men to Schultz's speech strongly suggests that they also had serious problems with southern racism; their silence and inactivity regarding civil rights was more a response to fear for their congregants' welfare and for their own. Although they did not feel free to speak out, they obviously were incensed when one of their own did so in support of the status quo.

Schultz's reply of February 6 to Nussbaum had a conciliatory tone, at least to a degree. "Thank you for taking the trouble to write about my speech in Greenville" he wrote. "Much of . . . your reasoning I cannot follow. . . . [There] is a rabbis' breakfast on Sunday and we shall all see one another there. I hope to keep your friendship. You have mine, and I hope you welcome it." Nussbaum was by now running out of patience with Schultz. His frustration is evident in a letter he wrote on October 28, 1963, to Sol Kaplan, director of the Southwest Council of the UAHC (with a copy to Sidney Regner, executive vice-president of the CCAR):

As you know, my own position is that he is another rabbi in this State and that he is called to serve a congregation which is happy with him. From the beginning of my ministry in Mississippi, I have been dominated by one desire: to achieve *achdus* among the rabbis as well as mutual cooperation among the Congregations, in these trying times for Judaism and rabbis in Mississippi.

Since the very unfortunate business of Schultz's statements during the first weeks following his arrival in Mississippi a year ago, [Allan] Schwartzman has conducted his own personal vendetta. He has been unable to draw a line between his responsibilities to community and his personal feelings about Schultz, witness the collapse of several hours of discussion yesterday, only because Schwartzman would not allow his signature to appear with Schultz's.⁸⁶

Schwartzman is leaving Mississippi. How soon, I do not know.⁸⁷ I do know that this attitude of his toward Schultz has been one of the [problematic] factors without question, because of the family connections in his Congregation and in Schultz's. . . . He says that he has been in correspondence with Dan Davis,⁸⁸ with

Balfour Brickner⁸⁹ and . . . that organized Reform Judaism is putting Schultz under an unofficial *cherem*. . . Schultz emphatically told me . . . [what] adds up to “to hell with the rabbis in Mississippi—he is the offended person. . . This means that this rightist rabbi, who, in my opinion, has been kept under some wraps for several months, will now identify himself completely for what he was. . . I do not want a deterioration into a *hillul haschem*, which just will not do the Jews of Mississippi any good.

The meeting at which Schwartzman refused to allow his signature to be next to Schultz’s took place in late October 1963. There was one agenda item: the invitation extended by the UAHC to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to be the keynote speaker at the coming Biennial Convention. This was seen by the Mississippi rabbis as an act that would alienate their congregants from their national organization and create serious problems for their members, who were trying desperately to keep a low profile as Jews. In the October 28 letter to Kaplan, Nussbaum explained that the Mississippi rabbis had after three and a half hours “finally agreed on the text of a telegram to be sent to [UAHC president Rabbi] Maurice Eisendrath,” only to have Schwartzman refuse to sign, which prompted Schultz to refuse to sign it as well. Furthermore, Schultz “says that now he has *carte blanche* to say and do anything he likes without reference to his colleagues.” Thus the petulant behavior of two of the colleagues meant that the letter would not be sent at all. Frustrated, Nussbaum ended his letter to Kaplan with the request that he convey to Eisendrath that he no longer saw any point in continuing as “a one man vocal defender of the Union.” In the light of a “completely unnecessary provocation,” said Nussbaum, “I am convinced that the Union has no regard at all for the security of the Jewish communities in this state.” Nussbaum had clearly run out of patience with more than just the rabbi from Clarksdale.

Was Schultz a Bigot?

Was Schultz a bigot? Did he look on the African American as a lesser human being, unworthy of equality? Or was he just so caught up in anti-Communist hysteria that he saw the issue of

black civil rights through the corrupting prism of the grand Soviet plan to divide and conquer? His testimony before the HUAC shows that he clearly bought into the southern and general racist perspective that the NAACP was a Communist organization and that the civil rights activism of the sixties was Communist inspired, if not Communist controlled.⁹⁰ But, possibly it was more than that. A defender, Samuel Abrahams, wrote with appreciation in the *Jewish Post and Opinion* upon Schultz's death that he "made the world aware of the oppression of Communism in Russia as early as 1946." But then, he continued, "I did not always agree with Rabbi Schultz, especially later when he assumed a pulpit in Clarksville [sic], Miss., and expressed vile anti-Black positions about fellow Americans of different pigmentation and color, but . . ." ⁹¹ Schultz surely would have disagreed, as he had done in a 1971 letter to Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, director of the American Jewish Archives, and there is good reason to believe his passionate denial.⁹² In the letter Schultz specifically referred to an article that appeared "a few years ago" in the *American Jewish Archives* journal that included "a damaging reference to me implying that I was somehow linked with the segregationists." The damaging reference was based on a quote from James Silver's *Mississippi: The Closed Society* and my brief commentary:

One other rabbi should be considered here. He is unique among his colleagues in that his utterances have been used by pro-segregationists in support of their position. "With a few clergymen in modest rebellion against the status quo," wrote James Silver in *Mississippi the Closed Society*, "the Citizens Council eagerly grasped to its bosom a strange new reinforcement in the person of Rabbi B. . . . S" who soon after his arrival in Mississippi "laid down the principles which could save America."

This rabbi finds little support for his view among his Southern colleagues. Though some men do not speak on civil rights or, on occasion in the privacy of the Jewish community, speak against certain aspects of the civil rights movement, no other man seems ever to have been even peripherally associated with the segregationist position in the eyes of his community, congregants, or colleagues.⁹³

Schultz explained to Marcus that his “America Needs More Mississippi” speech referred to Mississippi’s anti-Communism and that “there were no racial overtones to my pro-American appeal. My opposition to Federal usurpation, too, is part of a philosophy and is not ‘anti-Negro.’ Your author was wrong, but neither he nor Silver tried to get my explanation.” And, as proof of his lack of racial animosity, Schultz included an April 8, 1968, clipping from the local Clarksdale newspaper.⁹⁴

On April 7, 1968, an interracial memorial service for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was held at the city auditorium in Clarksdale with somewhere in the vicinity of fifteen hundred people in attendance.⁹⁵ Surprisingly, the April 8 *Clarksdale Press-Register* account indicated that Schultz delivered the eulogy. Curtis Wilkie, a young reporter for the newspaper, became deeply involved in the planning of that service. Wilkie later wrote a personal reminiscence of Mississippi in the sixties and subsequently became chairperson of the journalism department at the University of Mississippi.⁹⁶ In the newspaper article Wilkie explained that Schultz “noted that Dr. King ‘climbed almost to the top level of American society. He was an example of what America can do, and why we must value America and hold it together.’” Schultz praised King as a disciple of Gandhi: “He did not fight persons, he fought evil.” In a letter to the author, Wilkie commented concerning the service and Schultz’s role in it:

I was involved in the planning of the service, and we were determined to make it as ecumenical and integrated as possible. Even some conservatives in the white community were in shock over the assassination, and we felt if they wanted to make good faith expressions of concern and sorrow, they were welcome to do so. Rabbi Schultz surely fell in this category, and having a Jewish figure presiding over a predominantly Christian audience at the service seemed to be a public declaration that much of Clarksdale was united, regardless of color or religion . . . I recall him presiding with dignity . . . in all my dealings with him over my years as a young reporter there, it was obvious that he was very conservative vis a vis [*sic*] political ideology and extremely anti-communist (to the latter, almost obsessive). I never heard

him make any kind of racist remark or embrace segregation, *per se*.

Two years prior to this memorial service, state NAACP president Dr. Aaron Henry wrote the author, "Unfortunately I live in the hometown of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz. No doubt you have heard of him. . . . He has good warm relations with the White Citizens Councils and the John Birch Society. He poses as a 'professional communist hunter'. . . ."97 Nonetheless, Wilkie writes that even though "Aaron Henry did not trust him . . . Aaron was the key figure behind the memorial service for Dr. King, so he must have relented in his views or forgiven him in the spirit of the moment, for he would have had to approve of Rabbi Schultz for his role that Sunday in Clarksdale."

Even assuming, as the evidence suggests, that Schultz was not a racial bigot, he did not place the black cause high on his list of priorities. How else could he have said that the Communists "spend much of their time bewailing the disabilities of the Negroes . . . and inflating . . . [their] grievances beyond measure," and "The one sure thing about America today is that, through the democratic process, injustices are being gradually removed." More to the point, regardless of his anti-Communist motivation how could he have made "the speech" arguing that America needs more Mississippi, ending with a demand that "Northern preachers fight the Cold War . . . against Communism, even if it means less time to attack the South," considering what had been happening to blacks all around him?⁹⁸

Was Schultz a Good Rabbi?

Repeatedly in his correspondence with Sol Fineberg and Perry Nussbaum, Schultz remarked on how much his congregants loved him, and these comments cannot be easily dismissed. Many years earlier, before he wrote the three articles that catapulted him into the role of a professional Red-hunter, he had served eleven years with his Yonkers congregation. Prior to that, he had been assigned to a start-up congregation. Today, three-quarters of a century later, the short history on the web site of Temple Emanuel of Englewood, New Jersey, states that "under [the] part-time

direction of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz . . . the Temple began to come to life and thrive." Add to this the fact that he remained in Clarksdale for the rest of his career until his death, and that recent interviews with some of his Clarksdale congregants produced uniformly positive comments about their rabbi. Fineberg, in a backhanded way, corroborated this when he wrote Nussbaum that Philip Kantor was "one of the few [in Congregation Beth Israel] who is critical of Rabbi Schultz." One must take into account his problems with the Board of Trustees in Yonkers, but their dislike of Schultz was not shared by the larger congregation until the publication of the *World-Telegram* articles.

There can be no doubt that Schultz was highly respected in the non-Jewish community. Not only was he a sought-after speaker, he also was elected a district governor of Rotary—a singular honor for a congregational rabbi. The newspaper article that announced this states, "It would be difficult to choose . . . a better representative at the gatherings of District Governors when they meet at Rotary International Conventions." On the occasion of his tenth anniversary in the community, an article in a church bulletin recognized "the high tribute accorded to Rabbi Benjamin Schultz and Mrs. Schultz by Congregation Beth Israel, and many friends throughout the South, on the tenth anniversary of their outstanding and dedicated service to the area. . . . May they go 'from strength to strength,' always finding fulfillment in joyful services to their fellowman."⁹⁹

There is really little mystery why Schultz was so appreciated not only by the broader Clarksdale community, but also by the Jews of Clarksdale. Men like Nussbaum and Mantinband in Mississippi, or Burton Padoll in Charleston, South Carolina, may have occupied the moral high ground on the civil rights issue, but they were a constant source of unease to their congregants, who feared retaliation from the Citizen's Council or the Klan because of the words and deeds of their rabbis. Although Jews in Deep South communities were more likely to harbor guilt feelings regarding the status quo than were their Christian neighbors, in the vast majority of cases they kept this guilt to themselves, expressing it at

most only in the security of their own religious community. Some of the other Mississippi rabbis shared their feelings and beliefs on this matter within the confines of their synagogue, but honored their people's wishes and remained silent elsewhere. Even so, they almost certainly were more liberal on this issue than the Methodist and Baptist clergy that made up the vast majority of their non-Jewish colleagues. However, Schultz still remained *sui generis*, the only rabbi whose pronouncements were used by the Citizen's Council and by the southern media in support of their position on segregation.

Rabbi Harry Danziger, who retired after a distinguished twenty-two year career at Temple Israel of Memphis, confirmed much of this when he wrote: "He was beloved in Clarksdale and the area for the reason that he was not beloved by his regional colleagues. He was a staunch conservative and broad-brush anti-Communist, as I understand it. I never saw it but I came later." In Schultz's eulogy, Danziger expanded on this: "[It] was not his national posture in the turbulence of the 1950s that was the hallmark of Benjamin Schultz, but the day-by-day and week-by-week service to and teaching of his congregation as their rabbi and their friend."¹⁰⁰

One jarring note, however, came from Rabbi Solomon Kaplan, the director of the Southwest Region of the UAHC during the 1960s. In 1966 he said during a telephone conversation I had with him that, although "Schultz had quieted down somewhat, he is still much of a 'loner' in the southern rabbinate." My notes of that conversation continue: "And, surprisingly, he is not as strong with his own congregation as an outsider might believe. He is well enough respected as a rabbi; this is not the issue. What bothers some of his people [most likely his leaders, as in Yonkers] is their rabbi's overly conspicuous conservatism." Kaplan related that he had been approached by at least four members of the Clarksdale congregation, including the synagogue president who wrote the November 20, 1962, letter to other congregational presidents in Mississippi, asking "what can we do to shut our rabbi up" on political and civil rights issues? "Though not one of his congregants would disagree with their rabbi in public," Kaplan

said, “at least a few, and more likely than not, many, evidence disenchantment in private.”¹⁰¹

It appears that Schultz indeed did tone down his rhetoric and reduce his political speechmaking as the years passed, but this was not enough to win over the friendship of his Mississippi colleagues. When he died of a stroke on April 23, 1978, the only rabbi attending his funeral was the officiant, Harry Danziger, who had developed a relationship with the Clarksdale congregation during his years as the rabbi of Temple Israel in Memphis. Today, for those few outside of Clarksdale and Memphis who recognize his name, Benjamin Schultz is not remembered so much as a personable pastor or good speaker as he is for his lifelong crusade which eventually made him the darling of the forces of bigotry in the troubled South of the 1960s.

NOTES

¹ On June 1, 1958, a Montgomery, AL, judge prohibited the NAACP from operating in the state because it was “not properly registered.” A suspected Communist-front organization, the judge ordered it to submit its complete membership list to the Alabama attorney general (which would have put its members in great financial and even physical jeopardy given the climate of the time). In addition the judge assessed a fine of \$100,000, an amount guaranteed to bankrupt the organization. Other southern states followed this procedure, basically putting the NAACP out of business throughout most of the South until the United States Supreme Court ruled against Alabama and in favor of the NAACP eight years later. See, for example, “Banning NAACP In Alabama Voided,” *Winona (MN) Daily News*, June 1, 1964.

² Murray Friedman introduces a symposium on American Jewish political conservatism with these words: “It is a truism that American Jews are prototypical liberals. Jewish voting patterns and a considerable body of historical as well as popular literature supports this wider understanding. There is little reason to challenge this view. Even though the 90 percent Democratic majorities of the 1940s among Jewish voters have declined somewhat—reaching that figure only in the 1964 election when Lyndon Johnson defeated Barry Goldwater—Jewish support for Democratic presidential candidates has remained consistently high.” “Opening the Discussion of American Jewish Political Conservatism,” *American Jewish History* 87:2 (June, 1999): 101.

³ The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) for the Reform; the Rabbinical Assembly (RA) and United Synagogue of America (USA) for the Conservative.

⁴ Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley, CA, 2004), 277–281.

⁵ The names were Frank Chodorov, Eugene Lyons, Frank S. Meyer, Morrie Ryskind, and William S. Schlamm. George H. Nash, “Forgotten Godfathers: Premature Jewish Conservatives and the Rise of *National Review*,” *American Jewish History* 87:2 (June 1999): 123.

⁶ Murray N. Rothbard, *The Betrayal of the American Right* (Auburn, AL, 2007), 159, 161.

⁷ See Nash, “Forgotten Godfathers,” 126–138.

⁸ Fern Marja, “The Strange Case of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz,” *New York Post*, December 5, 1954. This was the first of five lengthy articles on Schultz that appeared from December 5 through December 10, 1954.

⁹ Schultz told the interviewer that from the time his mother said this, he never considered anything else. *Clarksdale Press Register*, October 8–9, 1977.

¹⁰ Marja, “The Strange Case,” December 6, 1954.

¹¹ History of Temple Emanu-El, <http://www.templemanuel.com/Public/ABOUTUS/History/index.cfm> (accessed December 25, 2008.)

¹² Marja, “The Strange Case,” December 6, 1954.

¹³ *New York World Telegram*, October 14, 1947; October 15, 1947; October 16, 1947.

¹⁴ When the *World-Telegram* agreed to Schultz’s proposal to write these articles they hired veteran anti-Communist reporter Frederick Woltman to help him. In May of that year Woltman had won a Pulitzer Prize for his exposure of U.S. Communists. According to Marja, “Woltman has since made no secret of his estimate of his former collaborator. The newspaperman has voiced regret that what he believes was a legitimate and worthwhile series should have catapulted Schultz into a position as a self-appointed spokesman for Jewish anti-Communists. Like many of those who were associated with Schultz during this period, Woltman has evaluated Schultz as a weak argumentative innocent who has developed no real grasp of communism . . . and who has helped set back the cause of anti-communism.” See <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,854746,00.html> (accessed May 9, 2010); and Marja, “The Strange Case,” December 7, 1954.

¹⁵ Marja, “The Strange Case,” December 7, 1954.

¹⁶ Quoted in Anne Fleming “Yankee Rabbi Finds the South Is ‘Home’,” *Clarksdale Press Register*, June 7, 1972.

¹⁷ *Jewish Post*, December 7, 1945, “Benjamin Schultz,” biographical nearprint file (hereafter cited as Schultz nearprint), Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (hereafter cited as AJA).

¹⁸ Marja, “The Strange Case,” December 7, 1954.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ He also wrote a column entitled “Uptown and Downtown.”

²¹ Schultz had agonized over the fact that the paper wanted to identify him as the rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in Yonkers. He was rightly worried that this would create problems

for him with his members. Thus he turned to his colleague, Rabbi Fineberg, for advice. Fineberg counseled him that identifying his congregation would not be prudent, yet Schultz made it clear that they would not print the articles without such identification. In the end Schultz and the paper agreed to a compromise offered by Fineberg that he simply be identified as "a rabbi of a Westchester congregation." "Southern Jews and National Jewish Organizations," Fineberg Collection 149, 5, 1, AJA.

²² "To Discuss the Rabbi's Case: Yonkers Congregation Will Meet Sunday on Ouster Charge," *New York Times*, October 22, 1947; "Southern Jews and National Jewish Organizations," Fineberg Collection.

²³ "Communist Stories Bring Rabbi Censure," *New York Times*, October 23, 1947.

²⁴ Actually the AJLAC was an idea Sokolsky had over a decade earlier; possibly Schultz's articles and the Jewish world's response was the catalyst that moved Sokolsky to action.

²⁵ It was Kohlberg who financed the AJLAC to the tune of \$800 per month for the first few months.

²⁶ Connecting Jews with Communism was a favorite canard of many antisemitic groups and individuals. "Jewish Unit Vows Communist Purge," *New York Times*, March 15, 1948. Lyons wrote a very sympathetic biography of J. Edgar Hoover that was published in 1948. The *Reader's Digest*, founded in 1922, was from the beginning conservative and anti-Communist. The *American Mercury* moved to the right under the aegis of Clendenin J. Ryan, who purchased the magazine in 1950. One of its writers was the young William F. Buckley, Jr., who went on to found the *National Review* in 1955.

²⁷ Marja, "The Strange Case," December 5, 1954.

²⁸ *Long Beach (CA) Independent*, May 2, 1948. Members of the subcommittee included chairman Alexander Wiley (R-WI), William Langer (R-ND), Pat McCarran (D-NV), Homer Ferguson (R-MI), Harley M. Kilgore (D-WV), Chapman Revercomb (R-WV), James O. Eastland (D-MS), E. H. Moore (R-OK), Warren G. Magnuson (D-WA), Forrest C. Donnell (R-MO), J. William Fulbright (D-AK), John Sherman Cooper (R-KY), and J. Howard McGrath (D-RI). The committee thus consisted of seven Republicans and six Democrats, with three of the latter being from the South. *Hearings of the Control of Subversive Activities Subcommittee*, United States Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, (Washington, DC: 1948), 422-425, <http://www.archive.org/stream/controlofsubvers1948unit> (accessed December 29, 2008) (hereafter referred to as CSAS Report). A hard copy of the report is in the *Americana* section of the Boston Public Library. Karl E. Mundt (R-SD) and Richard M. Nixon (R-CA) served in the House of Representatives from 1939 to 1948 and 1947 to 1950, respectively.

²⁹ CSAS Report, ii.

³⁰ CSAS Report, 361-366. Although the bill found support in the subcommittee, the Senate did not act upon it. Two years later an expanded version of it passed the House with an even larger margin but again got bogged down in the Senate. This led Pat McCarran to

introduce a third version, which did pass, and which was enacted into law when a veto by President Harry S. Truman was overridden.

³¹ *Long Beach Independent*, May 2, 1948; *New York Times*, August 14, 1948; *San Antonio Light*, November 3, 1948.

³² *New York Times*, January 14, 1949; January 21, 1949. The attempt to bar Shostakovich failed. The U.S. State Department opted to grant visas to him and twenty-two other Soviet citizens. *New York Times*, March 16, 1949; March 17, 1949.

³³ *Mansfield (OH) News Journal*, July 7, 1949; *Dothan (AL) Eagle* July 13, 1949; Arthur Herman, *Joseph McCarthy* (New York, 2000), 163.

³⁴ *Middletown (NY) Times Herald*, September 21, 1949; *Cedar Rapids (IA) Gazette*, December 5, 1949.

³⁵ Joseph Brown (J. B.) Matthews, a left-winger during the thirties, had associated with many Communist and Communist-front organizations. By the end of the decade when he saw the light, Matthews had amassed voluminous files on the American left—letterheads, mastheads from political journals, flyers, and press releases—“all displaying names of tens of thousands of left-wing individuals and many hundreds of organizations, indexed, cross-indexed, and recorded on file cards.” Matthews claimed that he had more than 500,000 names on file cards and a list of more than 2,500 organizations. Matthews’s list of subversive organizations included the ACLU, the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, the Americans for Democratic Action, and the NAACP. Matthews’s list of subversives included Justice Learned Hand, University of Chicago Chancellor Robert M. Hutchins, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter James Reston, and Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines. Robert M. Lichtman, “J. B. Matthews and the ‘Counter-subversives,’” *American Communist History* 5:1 (June, 2006): 1–36. The *Aldrich Family*, popular for years on radio, was set to appear for its first season on television. *Red Channels* was issued by the right-wing journal *Counterattack* on June 22, 1950. The pamphlet-style book names 151 actors, writers, musicians, broadcast journalists, and others in the context of purported Communist manipulation of the entertainment industry including Leonard Bernstein, Abe Burrows, Morris Carnovsky, Lee J. Cobb, Aaron Copland, Norman Corwin, Alfred Drake, Howard Duff, Jose Ferrer, John Garfield, Jack Gilford, Ruth Gordon, Morton Gould, Uta Hagen, Dashiell Hammett, Lillian Hellman, Judy Holliday, Lena Horne, Langston Hughes, Burl Ives, Sam Jaffe, Garson Kanin, Gypsy Rose Lee, Burgess Meredith, Arthur Miller, Zero Mostel, Dorothy Parker, Edward G. Robinson, Harold Rome, Norman Rosten, Robert St. John, Pete Seeger, Artie Shaw, William L. Shirer, Howard K. Smith, Louis Untermeyer, Sam Wanamaker, and Orson Welles. Even a cursory look at the complete list and the names added later shows a disproportionate number are Jews, likely to be a higher percentage than the percentage of Jews in the entertainment industry. The Joint Committee Against Communism was formed at the end of January at the call of American Legion national commander George Craig. Sixty national organizations met and a seventeen-member committee was appointed with Schulz at its head. See *Portland (ME) Press Herald*, January 30, 1950; *Charleston (WV) Gazette*, August 29, 1950; Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*

(New York, 1999); *Walla Walla (WA) Union-Telegram*, August 29, 1950; *Time*, September 11, 1950, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,813149,00html> (accessed December 5, 2008).

³⁶ *Kingston (NY) Daily Freeman*, August 30, 1950, 9; *New York Times*, September 7, 1950. Famous Jewish comedian Eddie Cantor, about to debut on his own television show on NBC, called Muir's dismissal "one of the most tragic things that ever happened in show business." *New York Times*, September 6, 1950.

³⁷ *Uniontown (PA) Morning Herald*, December 22, 1950.

³⁸ "Jewish Rabbi Raps Nimitz," *Centralia-Chehalis (WA) Daily Chronicle*, January 27, 1951.

³⁹ "Jewish Groups Assail Rabbi for Attacks on Marshall and Nimitz," (Washington, DC) *Sunday Star*, February 11, 1951.

⁴⁰ *Logansport (IN) Press*, February 25, 1951. Of the three major Jewish defense organizations, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), and the American Jewish Congress (AJCongress), only the latter, reflecting the long-time leadership of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, placed as much weight on civil liberties as it did on anti-Communism. As a result, the AJC and ADL were willing to accept limitations on civil liberties such as many found in the Mundt-Nixon bill while the AJCongress was not. See Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*; Marianne R. Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong: The American Jewish Committee, 1945–2006* (Waltham, MA, 2006); the testimony of AJCongress representative Aaron Lewittes in opposition to the Mundt-Nixon Bill CSAS Report, 337–361; Marja, "The Strange Case," December 10, 1954.

⁴¹ *New York Times*, February 20, 1952.

⁴² Wheeling is where McCarthy waved a sheet of paper and declared that here was a list of known Communists in the State Department. "McCarthy Gets Rabbi's Support," *Eau Claire (WI) Daily Telegram*, October 13, 1952.

⁴³ Fred J. Cook, *The Nightmare Decade* (New York, 1971), 408–09; *Oakland (CA) Tribune*, July 30, 1953.

⁴⁴ *Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune*, September 14, 1953. Remes (aka Julius Reiss) was a documentation clerk. "Remes" in Hebrew means "secret." See the *Executive Sessions of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations*, v. 3, Eighty-Third Congress, First Session, 1953, 1807–32, <http://www.gpo.gov/congress/senate/mccarthy/83871.html> (accessed January 28, 2009).

⁴⁵ *Time*, March 22, 1954.

⁴⁶ *Charleston (WV) Daily Mail*, October 11, 1953; "Roosevelt-Hiss Relations Subject of Rabbi's Talk," *Charleston Daily Mail*, November 1, 1953.

⁴⁷ "Rabbi Denounces 'Neutral' Leaders," *Charleston Gazette*, November 3, 1953.

⁴⁸ *New York Times*, November 11, 1953.

⁴⁹ *Time*, August 9, 1954, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,936247,00.html> (accessed January 27, 2009); *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*, July 29, 1954.

⁵⁰ *Fresno Bee*, October 5, 1954. See also *Santa Fe New Mexican*, October 5, 1954; *Charleston Daily Mail*, October 5, 1954; *Nashua (NH) Telegraph*, October 5, 1954; *Athens (OH) Messenger*,

October 5, 1954; *Valparaiso* (IN) *Vidette-Messenger*, October 30, 1954; *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, November 12, 1954.

⁵¹ Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate*, (Amherst, MA, 1987) 318. "McCarthyism" is described as "1. The practice of publicizing accusations of political disloyalty or subversion with insufficient regard to evidence. 2. The use of unfair investigatory or accusatory methods in order to suppress opposition." *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition (New York, 2001), <http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/McCarthyism> (accessed February 7, 2009).

⁵² *Lima* (OH) *News*, November 19, 1954.

⁵³ *New York Times*, April 21, 1955. See also "Denies Ties of Jews and Reds," *Waukesha* (WI) *Daily Freeman*, April 21, 1955; and the military paper *Stars and Stripes*, April 23, 1955. The McCarthy testimonial speech can be found in the Richard J. O'Melia Collection, Speeches IV, folder 5, Hesburgh Library, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN.

⁵⁴ *Lima News*, November 19, 1954; *Charleston Daily Mail*, November 17, 1954; *Jews Against Communism*, 10:2, 1; 12:1, 8, AJLAC, 1949-1972 and n.d., AJA.

⁵⁵ Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 149. Fineberg was not alone in his opposition to Schultz. Although the AJLAC initially attracted Jewish New Dealers, once it became associated with McCarthyism, these people dropped out, leaving behind only a "corps of right-wing extremists." Even Don Isaac Levine, surely a hard-line anti-Communist, dropped out, saying that "Schultz's alliance with the McCarthy [Westbrook] Pegler axis has set back the cause of anti-communism so far that Schultz has nullified the purposes to which he dedicated himself to at the start." Congressman Abraham J. Multer (D-NY) also resigned, complaining that "Schultz was just using the League to further his own interests," while Vivienne T. Wechter, then chair of the Women's Division of the Liberal Party in the Bronx left the AJLAC and described Schultz as a "handmaiden" of Kohlberg "who got his satisfaction out of seeing his name in print and feeling like a big shot." Marja, "The Strange Case," December 9, 1954.

⁵⁶ S. Andhil Fineberg interview, conducted by Isaiah Terman, April 19, 1974, Fineberg Collection 149, 5, 2.

⁵⁷ See, for example, "New Rabbi in Clarksdale Fighter Against Communism," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, September 12, 1962; *Clarksdale Press Register*, October 8-9, 1962, Perry E. Nussbaum Papers, 1947-1972, manuscript collection, AJA (hereafter cited as the Nussbaum Collection) no. 430, 3, 8.

⁵⁸ I am grateful to Elizabeth Wagner, an agent of Ogilvy and Mather, for communicating with James Rado on my behalf. Her e-mail to me on October 19, 2009, confirmed that Benjamin Schultz is mentioned in the first script of *HAIR*, but that Rado has no recollection of how or why. She continues "He believes that his writing partner, Gerome Ragni, may have been the one who included him in the script, but unfortunately Gerome passed away many years ago." See also Scott Miller, "HAIR—An analysis by Scott Miller," <http://www>

.orlok.com/hair/holding/articles/HairArticles/scottmiller.html (accessed January 29, 2009). Miller describes Schultz as a “high-profile Jewish political figure.”

⁵⁹ *American Jewish Year Book* (AJYB), 62 (New York, 1962), 72; Alvin Labens, telephone interview conducted by Allen Krause, July 2007.

⁶⁰ *Clarksdale Press-Register*, July 13, 1962, Schultz nearprint.

⁶¹ In 1944 Schultz married Charlotte (“Lottie”) Elkind, the executive secretary of his Yonkers congregation.

⁶² *Brunswick* (GA) *News*, August 18, 1961; *The Rotrygram*, 16:6, August 24, 1961, Fineberg Collection 149, Series A; correspondence, 1939–1974, box 4, folder 7, AJLAC, 1949–1972 and n.d. AJA.

⁶³ Reference is apparently to Lt. General Albert Coady Wedemeyer who served primarily in the Far East during World War II, where he became a strong advocate for Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist China. After retirement he became closely connected to the China Lobby. “Camden P.T.A. To Hear Noted Anti-Communist Speaker Tonight,” *Southeast Georgian*, November 2, 1961, Nussbaum Collection, 430, 4, 7. Schultz apparently did not write any books, although he did translate from the Yiddish a booklet written by Gregor Aronson, a Russian Jewish refugee.

⁶⁴ Fineberg Collection 149, 4, 7; *Brunswick News*, July 2, 1962; *Yonkers* (NY) *Herald Statesman*, July 21, 1962; Schultz nearprint.

⁶⁵ Curtis Wilkie, *Dixie: A Personal Odyssey Through Events That Shaped the Modern South* (New York, 2001), 113–115.

⁶⁶ James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York, 1994), 236.

⁶⁷ John Dittmer, “The Politics of the Mississippi Movement, 1954–1964,” in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, ed. Charles W. Eagles (Jackson, MS, 1986), 79.

⁶⁸ Steven F. Lawson, *In Pursuit of Power: Southern Blacks and Electoral Politics, 1965–1982* (New York, 1985), 21 as quoted in Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth*, 259.

⁶⁹ AJYB, 62, 5; 64, 72; Labens interview. Labens estimated that 95 percent of the Jews in Clarksdale around 1960 were merchants, and that Jews owned almost all the dry goods stores in town. Although business declined as a result of the reduction in the local work force, Main Street remained viable until Wal-Mart arrived in the mid-seventies.

⁷⁰ *Clarksdale Press Register* June 1, 1962; *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, June 1, 1963, Schultz nearprint. It was not unusual for the Memphis newspaper to cover events in Clarksdale, which is almost seen as a suburb of Memphis though it is seventy-one miles southwest of the metropolis.

⁷¹ *Clarksdale Press-Register*, July 13; *Clarksdale Press-Register*, August 23, 1962, Schultz nearprint.

⁷² *Clarksdale Clarion-Ledger*, February 10, 1963, Schultz nearprint.

⁷³ Nussbaum Collection, 430, 3, 8.

⁷⁴ *New York Times*, July 26, 1948; *Charleston Daily Mail*, July 13, 1949; *New York Times*, July 14, 1949.

⁷⁵ The high school youth groups connected to the Mississippi Reform synagogues all belonged to the SOFTY region of the National Federation of Temple Youth, an arm of the UAHC. In the 1960s SOFTY covered Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and West Tennessee (i.e. Memphis). They customarily gathered annually for a regional conclave and on other occasions for statewide “conclavettes” at member synagogues. See the Nussbaum Collection, 430, 3, 8, for all correspondence on this issue.

⁷⁶ Perry Nussbaum served as rabbi of Beth Israel Congregation in Jackson, MS.

⁷⁷ James Meredith integrated the University of Mississippi approximately seven weeks prior to Schultz’s controversial talk.

⁷⁸ Rabbi Charles Mantinband was the spiritual leader of B’nai Israel Congregation in Hattiesburg, MS. In the 1950s and 1960s. He and Nussbaum were the only rabbis in Mississippi who were activists on behalf of civil rights for African Americans. Nussbaum Collection, 430, 3, 8.

⁷⁹ The only non-Reform rabbi in Mississippi at the time was Samuel Lieb, who held the pulpit in a small Orthodox synagogue in Greenwood.

⁸⁰ Reference to a Rabbinical Placement Committee should not be given too much weight. It was not until 1964, when Rabbi Malcolm Stern was hired to be the first director of the joint CCAR/UAHC Rabbinical Placement Commission that either the CCAR or the UAHC had much influence on the placement of rabbis. Prior to that time rabbis either contacted the synagogues directly or were contacted by lay people inviting them to apply for an open position. For all practical purposes, each congregation enjoyed near total autonomy allowing each to hire whomever they wished.

⁸¹ Nussbaum Collection, 430, 3, 8.

⁸² James Wax interview, conducted by Allen Krause, June 22, 1966.

⁸³ Preventing their teens from attending youth events in Clarksdale was apparently the closest the other rabbis could get to ostracizing his congregation.

⁸⁴ *Greenville (MS) Delta Democrat-Times*, February 1, 1963, 2; *Jackson (MS) Clairion-Ledger*, February 1, 1963, Nussbaum Collection.

⁸⁵ At the UAHC Convention.

⁸⁶ I am not sure why Schwartzman reacted in this way other than to suggest that Schultz was a very emotional issue for him. In an April 16, 1963 letter to Irv Schulman, executive director of the New Orleans office of ADL, Schwartzman thanks Schulman for sending him a copy of the Citizen’s Council précis of Schultz’s speech and continues: “Birds of a feather certainly flock together. The article contained therein was the most terrible one ever made by a rabbi in the United States, as far as I know, and this is the statement for which I can never forgive the author.” Schultz nearprint.

⁸⁷ Schwartzman served in Greenville from 1960 to 1964 and served the Vicksburg and Lexington, MS, synagogues from 1966 to 1989. He had a brief interlude in between as rabbi of Temple Beth El in Flint, Michigan.

⁸⁸ Head of the UAHC’s New Congregation Division and a member of the CCAR Placement Committee.

⁸⁹ Brickner headed the UAHC's Commission on Religious Affairs and codirected its Commission on Social Action.

⁹⁰ Diane McWhorter discusses this in *Carry Me Home, Birmingham, Alabama: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York, 2001). See also Jack Salzman and Cornel West, eds., *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States* (New York and Oxford, 1997), 287; George Lewis, *The White South and the Red Menace: Segregationists, Anticommunism, and Massive Resistance, 1945-1965* (Gainesville, FL, 2004), 51-88.

⁹¹ *Jewish Post and Opinion*, June 2, 1978, 7.

⁹² Benjamin Schultz to Dr. Jacob Marcus, March 25, 1971; Marcus to Schultz, March 28, 1971, Schultz nearprint.

⁹³ P. Allen Krause, "Rabbis and Negro Rights in the South, 1954-1967." *American Jewish Archives*: 21:1 (April, 1969), 25-26.

⁹⁴ Schultz to Marcus, March 25, 1971. This letter and Marcus's brief response, in which he thanked Schultz for the "letter explaining your point of view and the clipping," and concluded saying that these documents would now be filed in the AJA "so that your side of the story is on record" are found in Schultz nearprint.

⁹⁵ I am grateful to Margie Kerstine for calling this article to my attention.

⁹⁶ Wilkie, *Dixie: A Personal Odyssey*.

⁹⁷ Wilkie to Allen Krause, July 22, 1966.

⁹⁸ *Delta Democrat-Times*, February 1, 1963, 2; *New York Times*, July 14, 1949.

⁹⁹ History of Temple Emanu-El; "Yankee Rabbi Finds The South is 'Home,'" *Clarksdale Press Register*, June 7, 1972. Telephone interviews conducted by Allen Krause: Dr. Alvin Labens, who praised Schultz as representing the congregation well in the non-Jewish community, being a good speaker and pastor, and being personable (July 2007); Irwin Kaufman, who succinctly summarized, "As far as I'm concerned, I think he did a good job." (July 2007). Aaron Kline added, "There was no problem—he got along very well," (October 28, 2008). *Clarksdale Press Register*, May 19, 1976; *The Torch*, (Summer 1972), Schultz nearprint.

¹⁰⁰ *CCAR Yearbook* (New York, 1979), 142.

¹⁰¹ P. Allen Krause, "The Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights," Part Two (rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, June, 1967), 304-305.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Leo Frank Revisited:
New Resources on an Old Subject

by

Sandra Berman*

Deathbed statement of William M. Smith, August 26, 1949
Letter to A. H. Ulm from Governor J. M. Slaton, September 7, 1915
Glass slide of the interment of Leo M. Frank, 1915
Letter to Adolph Ochs from Florence Bloch, August 27, 1915

On April 27, 1913, the body of thirteen-year-old Mary Phagan was found in the basement of the National Pencil Company in Atlanta. Leo Frank, the superintendent of the factory was arrested, tried, and convicted of the murder based on circumstantial evidence and the testimony of Jim Conley, the sweeper at National Pencil and the key witness for the prosecution. At trial, Conley swore that he had helped Frank dispose of Phagan's body following the murder. Two years later, following multiple denied appeals at the state and federal levels, Governor John M. Slaton commuted Frank's sentence from death to life in prison. Frank, who had been incarcerated in The Tower, the jail at the Atlanta police headquarters, was transferred to the State Prison Farm at Milledgeville. The commutation fired the passions of the leading citizens of Marietta, the town in Cobb County, Georgia, where Mary Phagan had lived. In the early

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morning hours of August 16, 1915, a caravan of cars carrying twenty-five vigilantes arrived at the prison farm, kidnapped Leo Frank without having to fire a shot, and drove him back to Marietta, where he was lynched.

From April 1913 to August 1915, the Leo Frank case was sensationalized in the press in Atlanta and across the United States and called attention to the societal tensions that accompanied American life in the early years of the twentieth century. The trial touched upon inequities in the work place, living conditions, race relations, and immigration, and inflamed the passions of citizens throughout the country.

Over the last ninety-seven years, the Leo Frank case has been researched and studied as the basis for a doctoral dissertation, numerous works of non-fiction, three feature films, several novels, a Broadway play, a PBS docudrama, and a major exhibition at The Breman Jewish Heritage and Holocaust Museum in Atlanta. The most recent work of non-fiction, *And The Dead Shall Rise* by Steve Oney, was published in 2005 and took over eighteen years to research and write. Researchers have examined archives across the country looking for new insight into the case that for some remains a "who done it?" The transcript from the trial that began in July 1913 and ended two months later has mysteriously disappeared. The autopsy reports of Mary Phagan as well as photographs of the bite marks on the victim's body and dental records of the accused have long since vanished. In 1922, Pierre Van Paassen, a young Dutch reporter working for the *Atlanta Constitution*, located the dental records at the Fulton County Court House. He was convinced that the bite marks on the body did not match Frank's dental x-rays and could thus prove his innocence. Warned to stay away from the case, he did not write about his findings until he included the information in his 1964 memoir *To Number our Days*.¹

Diligent scholars who have spent years looking for the elusive transcript of the trial and multiple autopsy reports have been confronted with numerous dead ends. The primary resources that have been studied, reviewed, and

commented on have been deposited at various archival institutions across the country. Court records, (e.g. the Brief of Evidence and appellate documents) relating to the case, as well as personal correspondence between Frank, his attorneys, family members, and friends can be found in numerous institutions including the Archives and Special Collections at Brandeis University, Georgia State University Archives, The Atlanta History Center, the American Jewish Archives, the Georgia Archives and Records Center, the New York Public Library, the Marietta Museum of History, and the Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives at The Breman Museum.

In 2007, The Breman Museum decided to develop *Seeking Justice: The Leo Frank Case Revisited*, an exhibition on the Frank case based on the museum's collection amassed over the last twenty-five years, as well as the documents and photographs known to be held at the various repositories mentioned above. As the museum archivist and curator of the exhibition, I held out a small measure of hope that new documents relating to the Frank case might yet be discovered. We had already located the family of Leo Frank, as well as relatives of Mary Phagan and many of the attorneys who had worked on the case. Archivists and historians often imagine unearthing another clue, the hidden letter, or a cache of journals that either lends support or challenges accepted historical arguments. The question always persists: Is there still something out there?

When I first began collecting material on the Frank case, I planned to interview Walter Smith, the son of William Smith, who had represented Jim Conley and prepared him for trial. Walter was not well when I made my initial contact, and although we established a relationship by telephone, I was never able to interview him in person. In one of our conversations, Smith informed me that although his father represented Jim Conley, he eventually came to believe that his own client was guilty of the murder and that Frank was innocent. He had already revealed this information to Steve Oney who was planning to devote a chapter of his book to

Smith's change of heart. I was also told that in 1949, when the elder Smith took ill, he wrote a deathbed statement in a shaky hand testifying to the innocence of Leo Frank. My excitement was quickly abated, however, when he further revealed that the note had long since been misplaced and the family had no idea where it was. Without the actual note, this was just an anecdote, a family story that was handed down from one generation to the next.

Over the years, I continued my relationship with the Smith family through William's grandson, Charlie. He, in turn, promised to look for the note. Almost a decade had passed since the death of William Smith when I received a telephone call from Charlie. The note did exist and had been found in an old copy of *Liberty* magazine, in the issue that contained an article written by Charlie's mother on the Frank case. The note has since been donated to the archives at The Breman.

Numerous clues to extant documents or photographs relating to the Frank case have come across my desk over the years. Many have led to an anecdote or to an object without provenance. A few have led to exciting new resources.

One such clue led The Breman to the grandson of Aaron Hardy Ulm, Governor John M. Slaton's secretary, who we were told was in possession of correspondence that related to the Frank case. I made contact with Ulm's grandson, who did confirm that the letters existed, but once again, he was not sure where they were. All of his grandfather's papers were in an attic, and the heat was too oppressive for him to stay there long enough to find the Slaton-Ulm correspondence.

Archivists must remain patient and resolute. Our priorities are not necessarily those of potential donors. For the next several years I called the grandson on a regular basis, and he, in turn, promised to look for the letters. Persistence finally paid off. The letters were produced and, on a trip to New York, donated to The Breman Museum.

These letters added new insight into the mindset of Slaton during the early days following the lynching. The

governor and his wife had planned a long trip after the completion of his term in office. The trip was fortuitous, as a mob had stormed the governor's mansion following his commutation announcement, and Slaton had to call out the National Guard for his own protection. The Slatons first stopped in California, and from there he wrote eleven letters and two telegrams to Ulm revealing how troubled he was about his reputation, his political future, and the disorderly conduct of some citizens throughout the state in the weeks following the lynching.

Los Angeles, California, September 7, 1915

Dear Ulm:-

Your telegram received and I am glad that matters are clearing up.

I think the Cobb County situation can be easily handled if managed with discretion. Fred Morris, representative from the county is my friend, so are Dobbs and Dorsey. Foster can be reached, so can Newt Morris. The McNeels are relatives and they could be a judicious use of influence to quiet the disorderly element in Cobb County and that source of apprehension could be relieved and when this occurred all thoughts of violence would be discouraged all over the State.

On Sunday I saw a number of Georgia people who had been attending a Masonic Convention. They told me that the papers of Georgia had not been fair to me in that they had failed to present my side, while Watson was attacking me every where.²

Ironically, the individuals mentioned in the letter – Fred Morris, E. P. Dobbs, John Tucker Dorsey, and Newt Morris – all helped plan the lynching.

Our research for new material on the Frank case also led to another resource in New York. Over the years, many historians writing about the Frank case have considered the role that Adolph Ochs, publisher and owner of the *New York Times*, played in Frank's ultimate fate. Was the involvement

of a New York newspaper a help or a hindrance to Frank's team of lawyers throughout the long string of appeals that were mounted from 1913 to 1915? Most historians concur that the pro-Frank editorials and articles appearing almost daily from February 26, 1914, until the days immediately following the lynching rallied supporters for Frank everywhere but in Georgia, the only state where the backing of the general population was critical. The *Times'* involvement stirred up latent sectionalism and anti-Jewish, anti-Frank editorials from Tom Watson, a former Populist politician and the owner and publisher of the *Jeffersonian* newspaper.

The involvement of Ochs and his newspaper motivated The Breman staff to investigate whether any papers were in the *New York Times'* archives relating to the case. The paper's archivist informed us that several document cases of unprocessed papers were marked the "Frank case." The discovery of these containers warranted a trip to New York to delve into the documents, which had not been studied in the ninety-seven years since Frank's death. We discovered multiple scrapbooks containing correspondence between Ochs and Frank, a series of photographs of Leo Frank commissioned by the *New York Times* for use in various newspapers, the only known original portrait of Jim Conley, and a report undertaken by a private investigator who was commissioned by the *Times* to try to prove Frank's innocence. The report was accompanied by a series of reenactment photographs that provide the only extant images of the interior of the crime scene in the pencil factory basement.

The document cases also held a letter that explained the reaction of the Jewish community following the lynching and supported the theory put forth by historians that the security and acceptance that the Jews of Atlanta had felt prior to the murder of Mary Phagan were shattered. Fear permeated the community. Discussion of the case became taboo and Jews stepped out of the limelight of public office and public affairs. What was not known until the discovery of a letter from Florence Bloch to her cousin, Adolph Ochs, on

April 27, 1915, was that the reaction of the community was a result, in part, of a decision made by the leading Jews in Atlanta.

August 27, 1915

Dear Cousin Dolph:

I am enclosing an extract from a letter which I just received from a very dear friend, Mrs. Victor H. Kriegshaber of Atlanta, whom I am visiting during July.

The conditions here in Georgia are depressing. A number of Jewish people, in smaller towns in the state have been boycotted and been ordered to leave and go elsewhere. A good number of such incidents all over the state are being reported to us. Tell Mr. Ochs to discourage all attempts at raising funds to apprehend the lynchers. It will make it only that much harder for the Jews of this State, to have outside forces at work. All the officials know full well who the perpetrators are, but they will never be punished by law, as they are from the county in which Mary Phagan lived, and no jury will ever find them guilty. You see, they would have to be tried in that county, and that they could even get a jury to try them seems out of the question. If they did get a jury, the probability would be, that some of the lynchers themselves would be on it. This attempt (?) to probe into the mystery (?) and find the guilty parties, is a farce of the biggest sort, because the sheriff and coroner, the newspapers, and even our state officials know who the leaders of that mob are, but it is worth their lives not to say so, and answer, "I do not know" to all questions, as they did yesterday at the investigation. We Jews, a mere handful in a community of prejudiced lawbreakers cannot do a thing, without making it harder for ourselves. We are hoping earnestly that this outrageous conduct will soon be over. The Jews had a meeting of one hundred prominent men at the Club the other day, and they agreed that there is nothing that they can do without aggravating conditions. They went over the situation and after earnest deliberation, felt that for the safety and good of our people, they had better not try to arouse the anger of the mob. For any attempt to bring the mob to justice, would be disastrous to themselves.³

These recent finds beg the question: What is still out there, perhaps in someone's basement, attic, or within an unprocessed collection in the stacks of an archive? Was the trial transcript actually thrown away, or was it scurried away to an unknown location along with the autopsy reports and dental records? Just recently a glass slide of the interment of Leo Frank was placed on sale on eBay. The Breman luckily won the bid, and we now own an extremely rare image of the actual burial of Frank. The discovery of new documents and photographs on the Frank case is not an anomaly. History and the interpretation of it will continue to evolve as new treasures are unearthed and made available.

-oOo-

Deathbed statement of William M. Smith, August 26, 1949

*(Courtesy of Cuba Archives of The William Breman
Jewish Heritage and Holocaust Museum, Atlanta.)*

**First two pages of Governor J. M. Slaton's letter
to A. H. Ulm, September 7, 1915**

*(Courtesy of Cuba Archives of The William Breman
Jewish Heritage and Holocaust Museum, Atlanta.)*

Glass slide of the interment of Leo M. Frank, 1915

*Glass slides were popular in the early part of the twentieth century.
This slide, purchased through eBay, may have been given away by the
People's Savings Bank as part of a set or used in a bank sponsored slide show.
(Courtesy of Cuba Archives of The William Breman
Jewish Heritage and Holocaust Museum, Atlanta.)*

Letter to Adolph Ochs from Florence Bloch, August 27, 1915

*(Courtesy of the Manuscripts and Archives Division,
the New York Public Library.)*

NOTES

¹ Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York 2003), 617-618.

² "Your telegram received and I am glad that matters are clearing up": Governor John M. Slaton to Aaron Hardy Ulm, September 7, 1915, Cuba Archives of The William Breman Jewish Heritage and Holocaust Museum, Atlanta.

³ "I am enclosing an extract from a letter which I just received from a very dear friend": Florence Bloch to Adolph Ochs, August 27, 1915. New York Times Company Records, Adolph Ochs Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

NECROLOGY

Solomon Breibart (1914–2009)

by

Janice Rothschild Blumberg*

Sol Breibart served as a guiding light for me from the moment I joined the Southern Jewish Historical Society. More importantly, he was a guiding light for the society. In his quiet, strong, but unassuming way, he inspired many of us to take active roles in bringing the organization from obscure infancy to the respected position it holds today.

My memory of Sol goes back to 1981 when the SJHS held its conference in Mobile, Alabama. He chaired the membership committee, representing South Carolina in a group of twelve men and women from nine southern states. Under his leadership that year the society doubled its roster to 330 members, not just from the South, but from eighteen states across America.

In those days relatively few dues-payers engaged in the work of the society and even fewer were trained historians. We were mostly aging aficionados interested in writing about our ancestors. Sol broadened our vistas as well as our membership, attracting younger, more serious amateur historians and an ever-increasing nucleus of recognized scholars. He was not alone, but his softly spoken suggestions and untiring actions were largely responsible for making it happen.

Throughout the eighties Sol edited the society's quarterly newsletter, routinely filling its four to six pages with interesting sketches on points of southern Jewish history in addition to news

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bulletins and reminders. He did this while serving as SJHS president for two years (1983 and 1984), compiling a bibliography of articles on southern Jewry found in the journals of the American Jewish Historical Society and the American Jewish Archives, compiling records and writing articles on Charleston Jewish history, and nurturing future presidents of SJHS. Thanks largely to his encouragement and support, my own term as president, which followed immediately upon his, proceeded successfully without noticeable trauma to the organization or to me.

Sol, a native and lifelong resident of Charleston, was surely one of its most worshipful sons and a major historian of its Jewish component. After graduating from the College of Charleston and UNC Chapel Hill, he taught high school for thirty-eight years, which included the difficult period of transition to integrated classrooms. He took early retirement in 1976 and then focused on his historic congregation, Kahal Kodesh (KK) Beth Elohim, beginning with research and writing on a much earlier member, the distinguished poet Penina Moïse.

Following this initial work, Sol expressed his ongoing passion for Charleston Jewish history in a variety of activities. He produced many articles for publication, now edited by fellow historian and archivist Harlan Greene, who compiled them into *Explorations in Charleston's Jewish History*.¹ Sol volunteered as a tour guide for his famous synagogue, going to such lengths in his quest for detailed information, according to Greene, as to crouch on his hands and knees looking under pews to determine which ones had been repaired after balcony-supporting columns were removed.² Precise and unrelenting in his search for truth, he kept Jewish burial records, not only for KK Beth Elohim's area of the Coming Street cemetery, but also for all of Charleston's Jewish burial places.³

In addition to his 1976 roles in reviving the SJHS and hosting its several annual conferences held in Charleston, Sol was instrumental in founding the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina in 1994. Furthermore he was largely responsible for the gift of congregation KK Beth Elohim's records to the College of Charleston's Special Collections in the Addlestone Library. He

*Solomon Breibart, Coming Street Cemetery, Charleston, South Carolina, 2000.
(Photo by Bill Aron, courtesy of the Jewish Heritage Collection,
College of Charleston Library.)*

then masterminded the agreement to deposit SJHS archives at the College of Charleston and recently contributed his own vast research files there as well. Historian Dale Rosengarten, curator of its Jewish Heritage Collection to whom he entrusted the treasure, describes him as one whose cause “was the chronicle of Charleston Jewish history, a subject he knew more about than an-

yone on the planet. And a field he advanced in the most concrete ways.”⁴

Solomon Breibart died on October 30, 2009, one day short of his ninety-fifth birthday. His legion of admirers and friends miss him greatly. On behalf of the Southern Jewish Historical Society we extend our deepest sympathy to his family, especially to his beloved wife, Sara, and their children, Carol and Mark. His memory lives as a blessing to us all and to all who may follow us in the pursuit of southern Jewish history.

NOTES

¹ Solomon Breibart, *Explorations in Charleston's Jewish History* (Charleston, SC: 2005).

² Harlan Greene, “Doing It Right: Sol Breibart (November 8, 1914–October 31, 2009),” *Charleston (SC) Post and Courier*, November 1, 2009.

³ For a full discussion of Breibart’s life and work see Harlan Greene and Dale Rosengarten, “In Distinguished Company: A Profile of Solomon Breibart,” *Southern Jewish History* 7 (2004): 1-26.

⁴ Dale Rosengarten, eulogy for Solomon Breibart, congregation Kahal Kodesh Beth Elohim, Charleston, SC, November 2, 2009.

Book Reviews

Screening a Lynching: The Leo Frank Case on Film and Television.

By Matthew H. Bernstein. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009, 332 pages.

I first learned about the trial and lynching of Leo Frank from my grandmother, Phyllis Benjamin, during the mid-1950s. A newlywed in 1914, she had just moved to Jacksonville, Florida, from New York City. The details of the case horrified her: a Jewish Atlantan had been unfairly convicted of murdering an employee, thirteen-year-old Mary Phagan. This was followed by Frank's incarceration, anti-Jewish rabble rousing, the kidnapping of Frank from prison, and his death by hanging (after the commutation of his death sentence). My grandmother recounted the story solemnly and concluded with a whisper, "people were afraid," meaning southern Jews, some of whom left Atlanta in fear. For a woman whose Jewish consciousness identified with the prosperous and secure "Our Crowd" families of Manhattan, the shock of Frank's death led her to question a future in the South. As time passed, however, she and other southern Jews, especially influential Atlantans, believed it best to keep the story quiet. "Nobody speaks about it any more," she said. I was then a teenager wholly unaware of religious animosity at the time, so I could not truly relate, at least not until two 1950s antisemitic outbursts—the Temple bombing in Atlanta and a frightening vandalism incident at our synagogue, Ahavath Chesed, in Jacksonville, Florida. Both episodes seemed to echo the Frank case and altered my innocent perception of southern Jewish history.

Since the 1915 lynching, the Frank case has inspired numerous books and articles by notable authors such as Leonard Dinnerstein, Harry Golden, and Charles and Louise Samuels. Each added more detail and speculation to the scenario. Steve Oney's massive 2004 work, *And the Dead Shall Rise*, a volume that

for the first time revealed the names of the lynch-party ringleaders, serves as the culmination of this literature. Many were prominent Marietta, Georgia, businessmen and politicians who snatched Frank from a prison cell and hanged him in their hometown. The incident directly led to the establishment of the Anti-Defamation League and conversely to a revival of the Ku Klux Klan, a group sworn to protect southern white womanhood.

While various publications detailed the case many times over, forming a consensus that Frank was undeniably innocent, films and television programs have been produced with a degree of caution, mirroring the reticence about which my grandmother spoke. Filmmakers have tended to fictionalize or leave out relevant facts, perhaps fearful of provoking incidents of anti-Jewish sentiment or legal action. Matthew Bernstein's *Screening a Lynching: The Leo Frank Case on Film and Television* is the first scholarly examination of the scenarios by which Hollywood has depicted the case and its aftermath. The story remains far more than a murder mystery, involving sectionalism, antisemitism, class antagonism, media exploitation and sensationalism, employee-management conflicts, racial tensions, and child labor—all key issues a century ago.

Screening a Lynching discusses four Hollywood treatments of the Frank case. Two are motion pictures: black filmmaker Oscar Micheaux's *Murder in Harlem* (1936) and Mervyn LeRoy's *They Won't Forget* (1937), and two television programs: the *Profiles in Courage* episode entitled "John M. Slaton" (1964), and a two-part NBC mini-series, *The Murder of Mary Phagan* (1988). Based on detailed research and insightful analysis, Bernstein probes each production fully from the screenwriting, acting, and direction through the marketing, distribution, and critical reactions. Throughout he compares how the films portray the principal characters—Frank, prosecutor Hugh Dorsey, Governor John Slaton, key witness Jim Conley, and the fiery populist Tom Watson, whose vitriolic newspaper fanned the flames of Jewish hatred—in terms of what is fictionalized, what is not, and why and how the characterizations evolved with each succeeding production.

Quite strikingly, Bernstein reports on two early cinematic representations of the Frank case: *Leo M. Frank and Governor Slaton* (1915), a sympathetic fifteen-minute documentary by writer-director Hal Reid made with the cooperation of Frank's family, which showed actual footage of Frank from prison. Reid's distributor capitalized on the ongoing press coverage by proclaiming to prospective exhibitors that the film "had millions of dollars of front page publicity." That same year the National Board of Review banned George Roland's five-reel feature, *The Frank Case*, because it advocated Frank's acquittal while his case remained under appeal. No prints of either film exist. Newsreels after Frank's death showed the lynch mob and his body hanging. The mayor of Atlanta and the city's censorship board instructed local theaters to cut out the portions concerning Frank, however, because "prominent officials and citizens" believed that it might upset the feelings of many people in Atlanta. Coincidentally, this was the heyday of the decade's most profitable film, D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, which glorified racism and southern white women. A Russian Jewish immigrant, Louis B. Mayer, distributed the film in New England and parlayed the resulting profits into a career as the powerful mogul of MGM studios in Hollywood. Indeed *Birth of a Nation*, in lockstep with the Frank case and the creation of the Knights of Mary Phagan, provided the impetus for the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan.

The Frank case was ripe for storytelling in the conventional Hollywood sense, but only up to a point. It is a detective story and courtroom drama, fraught with sensational journalism, which culminates in one extraordinary sacrifice from a politician, Georgia Governor John Slaton. The person most identified through the years as the likely murderer, Jim Conley, a janitorial employee of Frank's, put his mark on history as an African American whose testimony helped convict a white man, an almost unprecedented event in the Deep South. Through the lens of each film Bernstein provides a fascinating look at how the case was judged and marketed within a given era, factoring in a changing knowledge of the facts and the passage of time. For example, during the 1930s Bernstein notes that central lingering issues—Frank's Jewishness and

its role in his fate—were too hot to handle. The theatrical films made then fictionalize the roles and fail to identify the Frank character as being Jewish.

Micheaux, who was in Atlanta in 1913 and perhaps attended Frank's trial, wrote and directed the earliest of the movies. The case became a lifelong obsession for him. Financed by Jewish investors, he made *Murder in Harlem* from a black point of view and clearly incorporates similar characters and situations as the actual case, although it avoids many of its compelling points. Particularly excepting a white Frank and Phagan, nearly all the actors in *Murder in Harlem* are black, and tend to be portrayed sympathetically. Conley's character betrays an extreme fear of "the white man," which includes his own possible lynching; and the film offers various plot twists involving his participation along with Frank's allegedly unpleasant personal traits. Bernstein discloses that during the actual trial, black publications like the *Chicago Defender* cheered Frank's setbacks, while the NAACP magazine, the *Crisis*, fully endorsed his conviction. Conceivably Micheaux played on black/Jewish differences by portraying his Frank as a mendacious lecher, possibly guilty of perjury but ultimately not murder. *Murder in Harlem* ends with the guilt pinned on an unrelated character, a means by which Micheaux exhibited at least some empathy towards his otherwise offensive lead subject while exonerating Conley.

It is likely that the Warner brothers, Polish Jewish immigrants whose studio was known for provocative 1930s fare, empathized with the fears of the southern community about which my grandmother spoke, and therefore avoided stirring the pot of antisemitism at a time when popular radio commentators Father Charles Coughlin and Gerald L. K. Smith did so. Their studio's *They Won't Forget*, penned by Jewish screenwriters Aben Kandel and Robert Rossen, incorporates many details of the Frank case. But their protagonist is simply a northerner, an outsider in a region still simmering with Civil War resentment of Yankees. Based on Ward Green's novel, *Death in the Deep South*, the film remains a "veiled treatment, a powerful portrait of southern sectionalism and mob violence." Its stars include Claude Rains, in the

Hugh Dorsey role as the politically ambitious prosecutor, and Lana Turner, in her motion picture debut as Mary Clay (a.k.a. Mary Phagan). Green, who covered the original trial and aftermath as a reporter, felt that antisemitism did not act as a crucial factor initially in the case. He based his reasoning on the fact that five Jews served on the grand jury that indicted Frank. The film portrays Frank as a college professor, played by handsome contract actor Edward Norris, who seems unsettled among the town's residents and is possibly enamored with his student, the sexy Turner.

Even if studios were reluctant to characterize Jews at all on screen at that time (*The Life of Emile Zola* [1937] was an exception), a major hurdle for Warner Brothers and director LeRoy had nothing to do with southern Jewish feelings. The powerful Production Code Administration, a forerunner of today's Motion Picture Association of America and its rating board, maintained a policy of rejecting stories that dealt with ethnic bigotry. Bernstein ably notes the evolution and several revisions of the screenplay of *They Won't Forget* as the studio and the PCA ironed out objectionable story lines depicting "a stark perversion of justice, scenes of drunkenness, perjured witnesses, excessive brutality, and mob violence." The final version shows a man convicted, somewhat honestly, on circumstantial evidence and "revamps horrifying episodes into acceptable entertainment." The film, which opens with a group of Confederate Army veterans espousing the Lost Cause, uses sectionalism and the hatred of a man who has purportedly threatened southern womanhood as its principal themes. *They Won't Forget* ultimately blames the entire fictional town for the resulting events. Atlanta's censor therefore kept the film out of the city, with the support of local Jewish leaders. The latter remained afraid that a movie about the Phagan-Frank case might reignite antisemitism in a place that two decades hence would bill itself as "the city too busy to hate."

They Won't Forget concludes with a symbolic image of the hanging, a dangling mail sack at an empty railroad stop. While the victim's innocence is implied throughout the picture, the lynch mob gets away with the crime, just as it did in 1915, while the

murder itself stays unresolved. It ends with a reporter saying to the prosecutor, "I wonder if he really did it."

In 1964 NBC acted unafraid of using bigotry as a theme when it aired the television series, *Profiles in Courage*, based on John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning bestseller. The network previously featured episodes on the fearlessness of Frederick Douglass, Woodrow Wilson, and Louis D. Brandeis in the face of intolerance. "John Slaton" centers primarily on the Georgia governor's commutation of Frank's death sentence a day before his scheduled execution. Although Kennedy's book only portrays U.S. senators, NBC needed more episodes to fill out its season. Given JFK's and later his estate's approval of Slaton as an appropriate subject, the program and the series itself were partly intended to rebut FCC chairman Newton Minow's famous condemnation of broadcast television as a "vast wasteland." Written by veteran television writer Don Mankiewicz, who had contributed several scripts to the series including the Douglass program, "John Slaton" was directed by Robert Gist (*Peter Gunn*, *Route 66*, *Twilight Zone*) and painstakingly researched by Bernard Weintraub. Airing several years after the publication of Charles and Louise Samuels's *Night Fell on Georgia*, the program could finally revisit the horrible details of the case factually without fear of hostile reaction. As Bernstein notes of the era, "the notion that a mob could kidnap a white prisoner from state authority and lynch him might have seemed as historically remote as the Salem witch trials."

Bernstein astutely observes the difference in Slaton's characterization, from the portrait of the governor as a pessimistic protester in *They Won't Forget* to a "man embodied with inspiring selflessness" in *Profiles in Courage*. Slaton knew the risks of commutation, including a possible lynching, and expected a certain end to his political career. He had considered a senatorial run; and one definitive scene shows him at odds with Watson, whose newspaper helped inflame sentiment against Frank and "jew money." Whereas Slaton, played by the up-and-coming Jewish actor Walter Matthau, appears in virtually every scene, neither Leo Frank nor Jim Conley is depicted at all.

In 1965 veteran filmmaker Stanley Kramer optioned Golden's book, *A Little Girl is Dead*. Despite the financial clout Kramer no doubt wielded, however, the movie was never developed. It was assuredly a tough sell, I can now report, as an ex-*Atlanta Constitution* reporter and aspiring screenwriter named William Diehl learned. In 1975 he attempted to develop and finance his screen treatment based on the Leo Frank case. Diehl hoped to counteract the fictional nature of previous cinematic depictions with a treatment he wrote adhering strictly to the factual record. The prospects of funding any motion picture out of Atlanta were slim, and doing so with a story many important locals wanted buried forever proved impossible. At one point Diehl received an anonymous call from a man purporting to be descended from the family of Lucille Selig, Frank's spouse, who threatened that "anyone trying to make a movie about the Leo Frank case in Atlanta will be ruined financially." Since Diehl was close to being broke at the time, he laughed the call off. His treatment failed to come to fruition, but he later wrote successful action novels including *Sharky's Machine* and *Primal Fear*, both of which became major motion pictures.

NBC's 1988 two-part mini-series, *The Murder of Mary Phagan*, perhaps satisfied Diehl's and Kramer's vision of how the Frank case should have been depicted. This thorough five-hour dramatization was broadcast several months after Alonzo Mann, a former office boy at Frank's firm, the National Pencil Company, revealed, at age eighty-eight and dying, that he had seen Jim Conley carrying Mary Phagan's body to the cellar of the building. Conley had told him to keep quiet or else "I'll kill you." Mann stayed mum at the trial and then for another seventy-three years until he cleared his conscience. His testimony would at least have proven Conley a perjurer and perhaps set Frank free.

Inspired by Golden's book, producer George Stevens, Jr., and director Billy Hale brought A-team savvy to the making of *The Murder of Mary Phagan*. Beginning with a script from the Texas novelist Larry McMurtry, later to be revised by Emmy winner Jeffrey Lane, the mini-series boasts seasoned talent like Richard Jordan (Dorsey), Peter Gallagher (Frank), Charles Dutton (Conley)

and, most notably, Jack Lemmon as Slaton. James Stewart had turned down that gubernatorial role because the script was “a liberal tract.” The program strives for visual and historical authenticity without taking away from commercial potential. It examines an extraordinary number of incidents from the case and vividly displays for the first time on film the loud anti-Jewish sentiment from the crowd outside the courtroom. Moreover, *The Murder of Mary Phagan* fully considers the consciousness and impact of Frank’s religion as the story progresses. Lemmon’s character, earlier played by his *Odd Couple* partner Walter Matthau in the *Profiles in Courage* episode, sits at the heart of the production. Lemmon believed that you can “entertain, enlighten, and make people think” within the same framework. While Bernstein is surely correct in assessing *The Murder of Mary Phagan* as “the most nuanced and fullest account to date,” opposing views came from Atlanta amid generally positive national notices. Mary Phagan’s great-niece, Mary Phagan-Kean, who later published a book on the case, called the teleplay “not very factual or accurate at all.” Tom Watson Brown, the demagogue’s great-grandson, agreed, claiming “a factual error on every page” of the script.

Bernstein concludes with the hope that filmmakers will continue to return to mine the case. Ideally, he will add a chapter to a revised edition of his book by analyzing *The People v. Leo Frank*. This 2009 documentary film, which the stellar commentary of Steve Oney enhances, gives Phagan-Kean and Watson Brown a soapbox as well. Regardless, *Screening a Lynching* is an illuminating book, which contributes more layers to a haunting story and benchmark case in American law.

Repercussions of the Leo Frank case continue to spring forward in my own experience. In 2000, as an entertainment-oriented advertising executive representing an Atlanta theatrical producer, Theater of the Stars, I helped promote a series of plays. They included *Parade*, the musical written by Alfred Uhry based on the Frank story. Our agency routinely worked out mutually beneficial advertising promotions for each show with the *Marietta Daily Journal*. When I contacted the newspaper’s advertising vice president about our normal promotion in relation to *Parade*, he replied:

"Hell no, that story will remind everyone that our publisher's ancestor, Bolan Glover Brumby, was a leader of the lynch mob." Perhaps signaling a shift in Atlanta's acceptance of the case, *Parade* succeeded financially despite the newspaper's refusal to participate in the marketing of the musical.

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Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag during Reconstruction. By Benjamin Ginsberg. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. 219 pages.

If anyone remembers Franklin Moses, Jr., today, it's as South Carolina's Jewish scalawag and "Robber Governor" who led his state to "financial and moral ruin" (x) during Reconstruction. However, Benjamin Ginsberg, a professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University, positions Moses in the context of his time and place in order to reveal the man that Moses's enemies, who wrote the histories of his era, willfully neglected to see. Ginsberg finds a very mixed bag. Moses *was* indeed corrupt, but Ginsberg elucidates the rest of the story. In multiple ways, Moses was a century ahead of his contemporaries. He launched several modern-style social programs, including land redistribution, education reform, and the racial integration of state institutions. He formed a black militia and protected the freedmen's civil and political rights. And, most significantly, he honestly believed that blacks were his equal and acted accordingly. He advocated racial social equality. He was friendly with many freedmen and invited them to his home, extending a hospitality that was anathema to the white South. In short, he lived what Senator Charles Sumner, the Radical Republican from Massachusetts, preached. By flagrantly violating southern racial taboos, Moses lost everything.

Ginsberg skillfully narrates the history of South Carolina and the role of Jews in the state just prior to and after the Civil War.

His writing is clear and easy to follow without becoming simplistic or condescending. He explains how and why Moses started his political career as an ardent secessionist, yet ended up as an equally dedicated ally of the so-called Radical Republicans. The author deftly navigates his way through the complexities of the ever-shifting factionalism of South Carolina party politics during Reconstruction. And, because Moses's ultimate downfall resulted from the North's abandonment of Reconstruction little more than a decade after Appomattox, Ginsberg weaves in the impact on the state of national politics. The result is a rich and compelling picture of postbellum South Carolina.

Despite these contextual strengths, the story is less clear in its portrait of Moses. Very little has been written about him, and he appears to have left virtually no papers or letters. This book must rely on Moses's commentary and editorials in the *Sumter News*, his hometown newspaper, which he edited from 1866 until 1867, as well as his public record as a delegate to the South Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1868, as a representative in the South Carolina House, and as governor, covering the years 1868 to 1874. From then until his death in 1906 at the age of sixty-eight, essentially no records of the "Robber Governor" exist.

Historically the main source of information about Moses has been the Democratic Party-controlled press in South Carolina, as well as early twentieth century accounts of the Reconstruction period written primarily by white southerners. The journalists were his virulent enemies, who rarely if ever published anything positive about Moses, his policies, or his supporters. The latter were equally one-sided, viewing Reconstruction as a catastrophe for the region and depicting the return of white Democratic control as Redemption. Even modern historians gloss over Moses's achievements, according to Ginsberg. The major questions about Moses's life and motivations therefore remain open to conjecture. How corrupt was he? Why did he so ardently espouse the cause of the freedmen? Why did he ultimately fail so disastrously, losing everything—reputation, career, and family? And how did his partly Jewish origins affect his career?

Ginsberg concludes that Moses was no more corrupt than his contemporaries (thus damning him with faint praise), but his accomplishments well outweighed the negatives. Ginsberg adds that graft and corruption were two of the few tools open to the Republicans, who faced a better organized, more experienced, and, most significantly, frequently violent opposition. Thus Moses did not line his own pockets, but rather used the money to keep himself and the Republicans in power.

Why then was Moses so vilified and demonized? Ginsberg's thesis is that it was because he was partly Jewish and because he violated the South's most rigid social code: he fraternized with blacks. The combination was ruinous. The son of a Jewish father and a Protestant mother, Moses was raised as a Methodist. He married an Episcopalian and became a vestryman at his wife's church. Ginsberg offers no evidence that Moses ever thought of himself as Jewish. Yet his Jewish heritage marginalized him socially, especially as feelings toward Jews in South Carolina changed from general toleration to postbellum hostility. Moses's mother-in-law even refused to recognize her daughter's marriage to a Jewish "parvenu" and never allowed him into her home. Moses was a "court Jew," privileged and well-regarded, but not a member of aristocratic society — nor would he ever be. Ginsberg claims that such a status typically breeds resentment and ambition (22), which is exactly what happened with Moses.

Realizing that he had no chance of advancement in the Democratic Party, he espoused racial equality as a Republican. This accomplished three objectives for him. First, by aligning himself with blacks he created a powerful voter base that propelled him to the office of speaker of the South Carolina House and then governor of the state. Second, albeit unspoken, it paid the white Democrats back for rejecting him, his father, and his heritage. And third, he found the one group in South Carolina that would accept him without reservations; he had friends again.

Throughout *Moses of South Carolina*, one question remains unasked and unanswered. Although Moses did not see himself as Jewish, others most definitely did. Did this identification move Moses from a politically expedient alliance with blacks to treating

them as social equals? Ginsberg suggests that Moses foreshadowed later Jewish-black alliances based on a commonality of “allies at the margins” of American society (5). If this were true, then the answer to the question would be yes. But the connection is tenuous at best and not fully explored, and the evidence Ginsberg accumulates suggests that other factors played a strong role. Moses himself complicates the question. He said: “I wanted to be Governor. . . . I saw there was but one way – to make myself popular with the niggers . . .” If he stopped there, it would be a clear sign of hypocrisy. But he went on: “My life was ruined. I was made an outcast. I did not dare to go back to Sumter. I had to meet my own father in secret” (191). This is too high a price to pay to attribute merely to political expediency, personal ambition, and the vice of hypocrisy.

So the answer remains out of reach. Its resolution would be the subject of another fine book on South Carolina, its Jewish population, and the elusive but tantalizing Franklin Moses, Jr.

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Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina. By Leonard Rogoff.
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. 422 pages.

Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina tells the story of North Carolina Jewry and integrates that narrative within the broader American Jewish, southern Jewish, and North Carolinian experiences. Leonard Rogoff chronicles North Carolina Jewry from the Colonial era through the present day and emphasizes the similarities and differences between their experience and those of Jews elsewhere in America, concluding that it “is not unique among American Jews, but an argument can be made for its difference in degree if not in kind” (4). *Down Home* also contextualizes Jewish life within the larger growth and development of North Carolina, and suggests that “the Jewish rise from

immigrant poverty to middle-class prosperity, from marginality to the American mainstream, parallels the North Carolina story" (5). Ultimately, *Down Home* succeeds in not only compellingly documenting the narrative of the North Carolina Jewish experience, but also in setting it within these broader contexts.

North Carolina was seemingly a welcoming place for Jews in colonial America and the early republic, yet Rogoff notes that most Jews avoided the state because settlement would not further their economic interests. In its early days, North Carolina was "a polyglot immigrant society," and its many religious groups "made it welcoming to religious diversity even as its Protestant character led it to suspect those who did not share the faith" (1-2). Yet despite this potentially welcoming environment for Jews, Rogoff argues that North Carolina was "too economically backward" (16) and "lacked an economy that could sustain a Jewish community" (45). Colonial Jews were largely involved in commercial trade, and Rogoff maintains that because "few towns existed where a Jewish merchant could find customers for silk, crockery, and glassware" (45), growth was slow. This situation did not rapidly change, although in postbellum North Carolina, "as the economy expanded, growing numbers of Jews established themselves in the budding cities and mill market towns" (99).

The number of Jews in North Carolina grew rapidly, Rogoff demonstrates, only with the mass influx of eastern European immigrants in the late nineteenth century. While southern Jewish historians often emphasize earlier historical periods, Rogoff maintains that the arrival of eastern European Jews was a critical turning point in North Carolina. Moreover, he also underscores that the community they created in North Carolina looked very different from those they created elsewhere in America. While these new immigrants frequently worked in the sweatshops of large cities, North Carolina lacked a large urban center. Accordingly, those who came to the state were "fueled with ambition to be self-employed, not wage earners in a factory" (107), creating a very different economic profile. For example, Rogoff notes that 77 percent of Durham's Jews were self-employed in 1910, when over 70 percent of New York Jews were factory workers.

These eastern European Jews settled in North Carolina for economic reasons, “not in quest of Jewish community” (63), and as a result, institutional life took on a far different appearance in the state than elsewhere. New immigrants to North Carolina, Rogoff argues, “were breaking from Jewish community” (63), not seeking to create it, and institutional Judaism did not emerge until the 1870s—much later than in other parts of America. Cemeteries and benevolent societies were the first to appear, followed by congregations—a pattern typical to American Judaism. The early North Carolina congregations were Reform, yet, as elsewhere, the eastern European immigrants created their own orthodox synagogues. While there were contentious splits between German and eastern European Jews in other parts of America, Rogoff believes that “North Carolina communities were too small to factionalize, and synagogue finances were too precarious to let any Jew remain an outsider” (179). Throughout much of the twentieth century, “a common refrain among North Carolina Jews was—in contrast to the divisions that wracked northern, urban communities—Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Jews enjoyed unusual harmony” (347).

While much of *Down Home* emphasizes the similarities and differences between the North Carolina Jewish experience and that of American Jewry, Rogoff also compares the state’s Jews to their non-Jewish neighbors. “Jewish immigrants, with few skills and little capital, shared the southerners’ ‘collective history’ as a ‘people of poverty’ in a land of prosperity,” he argues, “but the ambition of North Carolina Jews was to rise out of the working class, not with it” (125). Moreover, though he details antisemitism and incidents of violence, Rogoff argues that “North Carolinians appreciated these honest, hardworking people, who, like themselves, were rising from poverty to prosperity, from old to new, from defeat to success” (190–191).

While much of *Down Home* is devoted to the historical origins of North Carolinian Jewry, Rogoff connects this history to the contemporary North Carolina Jewish community. “Just as the New South had welcomed the Jewish peddler, storekeeper, and industrialist, so, too, did the Sunbelt extend warm greetings to the

Jewish doctor, engineer, scientist, professor, and entrepreneur,” he maintains (304). Although he emphasizes continuities, he also accounts for the discontinuities between the present community and its past by connecting it to the larger trends in North Carolina. “If North Carolina Jewry is new and diverse, if its community is discontinuous with its past, so is the North Carolina they call home,” he believes (375).

By weaving the complex narrative of North Carolina Jewry into its broader context, Leonard Rogoff has made a valuable contribution to the study of Jewry in North Carolina, the American South, and in the United States more broadly. Rogoff’s work is engaging and is in many ways a bottom-up history of American Jewry told through the lens of North Carolina. His use of secondary sources is exemplary, and his primary sources include those gathered by the biographers of such important individuals as Aaron Lopez and Jacob Mordecai, as well as his own archival research. He offers a selection of primary documents interspersed in the work, strengthening the text and offering the reader clear examples of the arguments that he makes. Perhaps the primary weakness of this work derives from its greatest strength—it is at times difficult to discern between the American, southern, and North Carolinian Jewish experiences because Rogoff weaves the narratives together so effectively. Yet *Down Home* is a fantastic portrait of Jewry in North Carolina, and will undoubtedly serve as a model to those endeavoring to write southern Jewish history.

Michael Cohen

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We Were Merchants: The Sternberg Family and the Story of Goudchaux’s and Maison Blanche Department Stores. By Hans J. Sternberg with James E. Shelledy. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009. 141 pages.

On the surface, this book details the story of the rise and fall of a department store empire in America, which is fascinating enough. But the book offers far more. It is also the story of several generations of a Jewish merchant family, its escape from the Nazis, and its rise to success in America through hard work and adherence to family traditions and values. Written by the last family owner of the chain, the book succeeds as a family history, a business history, a history of American Jewish merchants, and a personal reflection on the impact of larger historical events and trends.

Beginning in the 1930s, two generations of the Sternberg family owned Goudchaux's and Maison Blanche department stores in Louisiana. In the 1980s they expanded into Florida to become the largest family-owned department store chain in the nation. By 1990, shortly before the enterprise was sold, the Sternbergs employed 8,800 full- and part-time employees in twenty-four stores, with annual sales exceeding \$480 million.

Headed by Erich and Lea Sternberg, the family arrived in America from Germany in the 1930s. The first three chapters discuss the family's two-hundred-year heritage as merchants in Germany and, faced with growing Nazi persecution, their difficult decision to leave family and business behind to make a new start in America. Their personal story illuminates how difficult it was, while enmeshed in unfolding events, to see that what appeared to be another round of hard times was actually leading to the tragedy of the Holocaust. The Sternbergs barely made it out in time; other members of the family did not escape. The act of emigrating to America was, in itself, fraught with danger. Their emigration required extended planning and subterfuge in order to escape with the capital that would allow them to start anew. How hard it must have been for Erich to leave his wife and young children behind until he was established. How thrilling it was to read of Lea's courage as she and the children made a hairbreadth escape from the Nazis snapping at their heels like hungry wolves.

Once in America, Erich's story mirrors that of many Jewish immigrants who tapped into networks of extended family to open doors and receive a hand up. Previously settled relatives in

Mississippi and Louisiana led Erich to the South and eventually introduced him to an opportunity he could make his own. Over a three-year period, Erich purchased the Goudchaux department store in Baton Rouge, a business with its own three-decade history. The middle chapters of the book focus on Goudchaux's growth and improvement under Erich from 1939 to the 1960s, as he built a reputation for high-end fashion, furs and bridal wear, as well as a solid commitment to customer service. As a family business, all members were involved in daily operations, including the children who began working at minor tasks when just five years old.

Reading these middle chapters made me long for the "golden age" of department stores in America, when customer service built loyalty and imparted a family feel, while specialty departments offered a wonderland of merchandise. I am dating myself to admit that I can remember the end of the golden age, when department stores carried such specialties as sewing and notions, stamps and coins, records and books, and had entire floors that might be devoted to toys, furniture, or appliances. For younger readers unable to relate to the concept, I suggest viewing the Marx Brothers movie *The Big Store* (1941) for a hint of what these department stores were like.

The final chapters follow the expansion of the business into a multi-state chain under the direction of Erich's sons, Josef and author Hans, as well as their diversification into insurance, travel agencies, and television and radio, ending with the personal and business trials that led to the sale. The story provides an insider perspective on the problems that beset large department store chains in the 1980s and 1990s, including an economic downturn, over-extended debt, and competition from large specialty stores able to undercut prices. Enlightening, too, was the detailing of high-stakes negotiations in buying and selling multi-million dollar businesses.

But none of this gets at the passion that imbues this book. It is difficult to convey in this short review how much more there is to this story than just a business or family history. For example, interspersed among the pages are reminiscences from customers and employees that bring to life the Sternbergs and the experience

of shopping in their stores. Snippets illuminate how the Sternbergs dealt with antisemitism and boycotts arising from the civil rights movement, or illustrate their aid to other Jews fleeing the Nazis or their later civic philanthropy. This interweaving of experiences is what enriches the story.

This handsomely designed book, well-written and edited, and illustrated with black-and-white photographs and quoted reminiscences, should appeal to many readers. Those interested in business history, the rise and fall of department stores, family history, and Jewish history will all find something of value. Hans Sternberg has successfully made the transition from a businessman to an author, but there is no doubt that the writing was a labor of love.

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The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas. By Bryan Edward Stone. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. 294 pages.

In recent years, the story of Texas and its Jews has attracted the attention of serious scholars. While their work has focused on narrow topics like the state's rabbis or the various subjects in the recent collection of essays, *Lone Stars of David*, no one has yet published a serious overall history of Texas Jews until now. Bryan Stone's *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* offers a fresh and unique description of the Jewish experience in a state that straddles the South and the West. Previous attempts at a general history have generally been filiopietistic and uncritical, focusing primarily on prominent Jewish Texans and their contributions to the state. Stone moves far beyond such provincial analysis and presents an insightful and rich, if not comprehensive, account of Jewish life in the Lone Star State.

Stone relies heavily on the metaphor of the frontier, common in western history, which he defines abstractly in terms of identity rather than in Frederick Jackson Turner's classic formulation. Stone conceives of cultural identity as a set of frontiers, and Texas Jews, according to Stone, have struggled to define themselves and negotiate a balance between being Jewish and being Texan. Living on the periphery of the Jewish Diaspora, Texas Jews defined themselves in contrast both to other American Jews and to their gentile neighbors. Stone compares the Jews in Texas to those in other frontier regions and finds much in common. He does not make simplistic claims of Texas uniqueness, as previous writers have done. Instead he shows how Texas Jews fit into the national context of American Jewish history. This does not mean Stone ignores the state's cast of colorful characters. He provides profiles of distinctive Texas figures including the country music singer and political raconteur Kinky Friedman; Waco's possum-eating rabbi, Berenhard Wohlberg; and Breckenridge's Charles Bender, the cowboy Zionist, who caused a stir when he visited Israel in his cowboy boots and hat.

Rather than a traditional survey, Stone offers a series of chronological vignettes that shed light on the theme of the frontier and how it shaped Texas Jewish history. Some are well known, such as the Galveston Movement, which sought to distribute Jewish immigrants around the country through the Texas port, and the Basic Principles controversy of Houston's Beth Israel, in which the leaders of the classical Reform congregation sought to exclude Zionists and traditional Jews from full membership. In other cases, Stone unearths new material that adds a fresh perspective on the subject, including Houston's Henry Dannenbaum and his conflict with national Jewish leaders in New York over supposed Jewish involvement in international prostitution rings, and the remarkable diary of Alexander Gurwitz, a devoutly Orthodox Jew and Hebrew scholar in San Antonio.

One of Stone's biggest achievements is to debunk several myths about the presence of Jews in early Texas that have often been based on assumptions about vaguely Jewish-sounding names rather than hard evidence of Jewish identity or ancestry.

Stone, for example, shows convincingly that Samuel Isaacks, often credited as the first Jew to settle in Texas, was not Jewish.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of *The Chosen Folks* is its analysis of how Texas Jews related to the Ku Klux Klan and the civil rights movement. Stone describes Ku Klux Klan Day at the Texas State Fair in 1923 as well as the curious involvement of prominent Jewish businessman Alex Sanger in the festivities. Caught in the middle between Texas governor Pa Ferguson and his Klan-backed opponents, Jews were forced to choose between identifying with the white majority of Texas or with their more narrow concerns as Jews. Stone argues that the rise of the Texas Klan highlighted the differences between Jews and other white Texans, making the clever and insightful point that "Jews were Anglos, perhaps, but they could never be Anglo-Saxons" (194).

The issue of southern Jews and the civil rights movement has been well trod by historians, few of whom have looked at Texas. But as Stone shows, Texas offers an interesting case study. He argues that Jews were "racial middlemen" (196), who used their difference from the white mainstream to take the lead in brokering compromises to avoid the violence of massive resistance. He describes how prominent Jews in Dallas, like Julius Schepps and Sam Bloom, argued that integration made economic sense and that resistance to federal authority would be disastrous. Jewish-owned department stores, like Neiman-Marcus, that had been staunch defenders of segregation, were the first to end discrimination when the federal courts had ordered integration of the city's public facilities. This active leadership role complicates previous portrayals of southern Jewish merchants as passive victims of larger social forces.

While Stone's method of focusing on symbolic events and fascinating characters makes his book a delight to read, it does prevent him from offering a comprehensive survey of the Jewish experience in the entire state. For example, after learning of the important role Jewish business elites played in bringing about peaceful integration in Dallas, the reader is left wondering whether similar events played out in Houston or San Antonio. Did small-town merchants differ in their approach to the civil rights

movement, and, if so, how? In addition, Stone spends most of a chapter looking at newspaper editor Edgar Goldberg and his Houston-based *Texas Jewish Herald*, but does not examine the other Jewish newspapers in the state, including Fort Worth's *Jewish Monitor*, which briefly had a Yiddish section.

Despite these omissions, *The Chosen Folks* offers the first substantive analytical history of Texas Jews. Southern Jewish historians will find its use of the "frontier" to be quite helpful and applicable to their own field. For students of American Jewish history, the book constitutes a worthwhile addition to the growing literature of hinterland Jewish communities. In the end, Stone makes a strong case that, however remote the frontier of the Diaspora where Texas Jewish history unfolded, its lessons strike deep in the heart of the American Jewish experience.

Stuart Rockoff

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Rabble Rousers: The American Far Right in the Civil Rights Era. By Clive Webb. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010. 301 pages.

In this well written, deeply researched, and often nuanced book, British historian Clive Webb analyzes the causes, characteristics, and consequences of far-right resistance movements in the South during the desegregation crisis of the 1950s and 1960s. Webb shows how right wingers' thoughts and behavior blended in with centuries-old cultural norms where whites assumed their innate racial superiority and African Americans "knew their place." For both whites and blacks there was no ambiguity about societal expectations.

These dynamics changed, however, after the Supreme Court declared segregated public education unconstitutional in 1954. The decision left white southerners shocked, aghast, and demoralized. It was the most serious attack on their way of life since the

abolition of slavery in the 1860s. Most southern leaders respected the law, however, and eventually tried to implement the court's order. On the other hand, there were many elected officials who dragged their feet and/or defied the new requirement. By conveying their opposition, whether articulated or not, community leaders encouraged outraged citizens to air their views.

In a series of carefully thought-out case studies, Webb focuses on the activities of four men – Bryant Bowles, John Kasper, Rear Admiral John Crommelin, and J. B. Stoner – and shows how they entered various communities, whipped up public passions, and encouraged opponents of desegregation to rally and demand retention of the status quo. These antics ultimately prolonged resistance to integrating the schools. To be sure, the four men were generally intelligent, even if they sometimes appeared deranged, and they expressed views held by hundreds of thousands of southerners. They articulated their belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ and attributed desegregation to an all-powerful “Jewish communist conspiracy.” Their followers and associates also included a disproportionate number of former military leaders with similar outlooks. In the South, most “right-thinking” people accepted Protestantism as the true faith and could not understand why Jews would not want to take Jesus into their hearts. Where the rabble rousers differed significantly from most others in the South was in their hysteria and their calls for vigorous and sometimes violent protests of the federally imposed order to desegregate public schools.

There were other southerners, however, who disliked the forced integration of the schools but recognized that they could protest in a dignified manner without attracting newspaper headlines. Again, their views did not differ from those of the right-wingers, but their methods were more subdued. In addition, forward-looking community leaders favored economic development and knew that bad publicity for their towns and cities would deter industrialists from coming in, creating jobs, and propelling growth.

What is particularly telling about Webb's account is how many southerners believed that their values and social order had

been ordained by God. Southerners are probably more devoted to their faith and church attendance than are other Americans. What one believes and where one worships are crucial aspects of southern acceptance in many areas of the region. As Webb notes, little has been written about the role of the white Christian churches in the desegregation years. Perhaps more important would be a study of Christian teachings and how they underlay most of the South's beliefs and traditions.

Rabble Rousers is a particularly insightful study of an era where events seem blatantly clear, while showing nuances and contradictions as the author peels the onion of layered levels of opposition to desegregation. Moreover, I am unfamiliar with any other account of desegregation and the civil rights movement that penetrates as deeply as this one does in showing how much anti-semitism existed in the South at the time and how few southerners opposed its dissemination. (There are exceptions to this, of course. In 1958, after the Temple was bombed in Atlanta, townspeople, community and church leaders, and elected officials came out in droves to denounce the act and to embrace their Jewish neighbors with warmth and sympathy.)

Clive Webb is to be congratulated for revisiting the southern school desegregation crisis. His analysis of how far-right rabble rousers discombobulated several communities in their efforts to prevent a major change in the southern way of life is a significant accomplishment. His book offers a window into an aspect of the desegregation years that had not been fully explored earlier.

Leonard Dinnerstein, University of Arizona

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Glossary

Achdus ~ unity

B'nai B'rith ~ literally, *children of the covenant*; Jewish social service fraternity established in 1855

B'nai mitzvah ~ (plural for **bar /bat mitzvah**) coming-of-age ritual for Jewish males reaching age of thirteen; and for girls reaching age twelve or thirteen, introduced in the twentieth century

Cherem ~ excommunication

Chevra kadisha ~ literally, *holy society*; Jewish burial society

Chillul HaShem (also **hillul hashem**) ~ a profanation of God's name

Daven ~ pray

Diaspora ~ Originating in the sixth century BCE with the Babylonian exile, refers to Jews living outside Palestine or modern Israel

Galitzianer ~ Jews who trace their ancestry to Galicia, formerly southeast Poland and parts of Russia

Haggadah ~ book read during the Passover seder describing the exodus from Egypt and related ritual and customs

Halacha ~ Jewish law

Hasidic - referring to **Hasidism**, a Jewish mystical sect founded in Poland in the mid-eighteenth century

Haskalah-- Jewish Enlightenment

Hazan ~ cantor; religious leader leading prayers/chants during religious services

Heder ~ a Jewish elementary school where children are taught to read the Torah and other Hebrew books; today may refer to a synagogue-based Hebrew school

High Holy Days ~ Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the two most important holidays on the Jewish calendar

Hillul hashem ~ see, **Chillel HaShem**

Keshet Shel Barzel ~ literally, *the iron link*; Jewish social service fraternity established in 1860

Lifnay darchay sholom ~ on behalf of peace

Mechitza ~ the physical separation, often a curtain or partition, between the men's and women's sections in a traditional synagogue

Melamed (plural: **melamdim**) ~ Jewish teacher

Minhag (plural: **minhagim**) ~ Jewish practice; **Minhag America** ~ Jewish ritual and customs according to American tradition

Mohel (plural: **mohelim**) ~ person who performs ritual circumcision

Moreh ~ one who teaches, guides, answers questions

Pilpul ~ method of Talmudic study through intense analysis and academic debate

Seder ~ ceremonial meal, usually held on the first and second evenings of Passover, commemorating the exodus from Egypt

Schmuser ~ a dialect term for **Shadchen**

Shadchen ~ a professional matchmaker

Shokhet ~ variant: **shochet** ~ ritual slaughterer, kosher butcher

Shomer shabbos ~ strict observance of the Sabbath according to Halacha

Shul ~ congregation or synagogue

Torah ~ Five Books of Moses; first five books of the Bible

Yichus ~ distinguished lineage; bloodline

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

Note on Authors

Sandra Berman earned a B.A. in history from Cleveland State University and an M.A. in history and archives from Case Western Reserve University. She previously worked as an archivist for the Western Reserve Historical Society where she established the Cleveland Jewish Archives. She was hired in 1984 by the Atlanta Jewish Federation to establish an archive for Atlanta's Jewish community, later named the Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives of The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum. Berman has curated and co-authored exhibit text and catalogues for numerous exhibitions at The Breman, one being *Seeking Justice: The Leo Frank Case Revisited*.

Robert P. Bloomberg earned a B.A. from U-Mass, Boston, and an M.A. from the University of Chicago where he pursued graduate studies toward his doctorate. His research centered on white, non-Protestant immigrants to the South from 1885 to 1925. The Quincy Historical Society published Bloomberg's article on Joseph Crell, founder of the Germantown section of Quincy.

Michael Cohen is the Director of Jewish Studies at Tulane University. Cohen received his A.B. with honors from Brown University and his Ph.D. in American Jewish history from Brandeis University. His forthcoming book, *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter's Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement* (Columbia University Press), argues that Conservative rabbis were largely responsible for creating the movement. Cohen also specializes in regional Jewish history, having worked both on New England and the American South.

Leonard Dinnerstein is Professor Emeritus, University of Arizona. He is Bronx born and bred and is the author of *The Leo Frank Case* (1968), *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (1982), and *Antisemitism in America* (1994), which won the National Jewish Book award for history in that year.

Robert Drake is an Assistant Professor of University Studies at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University. His Ph.D. in history with a cognate field in political science was received from the State University of New York at Albany. Drake has a forthcoming scholarship-of-teaching article titled "When Liking Your Students Empowers Them: A Case Study," which will appear in the journal *MountainRise*. Drake's next project will look at how the mainstream print press in the American South covered the 1936 Olympic games.

Anton Hieke, a native of Anhalt, Germany, holds an M.A. in history, English and American as well as Jewish studies from Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany, where he is currently writing his dissertation, "The German Jewish Immigrants of Reconstruction Georgia and the Carolinas." He works as a graduate assistant for the Zentrum für USA-Studien (ZUSAS)/Center for United States Studies of Martin Luther University and manages the ZUSAS/Leucorea library in Wittenberg.

Allen Krause has a Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters degree from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (1967) and has done graduate work in American history at the University of Chicago and the University of California, Berkeley. In spring 2005 he was the Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow at Harvard University. He is the author of "Southern Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement in the South" (published first in the *American Jewish Archives Journal* and then as chapters in two anthologies); "The Enigmatic Judah P. Benjamin" (*Midstream*, 1978); and "Charleston Jewry, Black Civil Rights, and Rabbi Burton Padoll" (*Southern Jewish History*, 2008). He is the Emeritus Rabbi at Temple Beth El of South Orange County and has been a part-time lecturer at the State University of California since 1972 in addition to teaching at the University of Santa Clara. He is currently working on a book on the role southern rabbis played in the civil rights movement.

Mary L. Kwas is a research associate with the Arkansas Archeological Survey at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville. She holds an M.S. in anthropology from the University of Wisconsin-

Milwaukee. Her article, "Two Generations of the Abraham and Fanny Block Family: Internal Migration, Economics, Family, and the Jewish Frontier," appeared in *Southern Jewish History*, 2009.

Vann Newkirk is the author of *Lynching in North Carolina 1865-1947* (McFarland, 2008). Currently, Newkirk serves as Associate Vice President and Associate Professor of History at Fort Valley State. He has also written more than a dozen journal articles and has presented at conferences across the nation. He has extensively researched the development of the NAACP in North Carolina and the subject of crime and punishment. Newkirk holds a doctorate in history from Howard University and master's degrees in library science and history from North Carolina Central University and Winthrop Universities, respectively.

Stuart Rockoff received a Ph.D. in American History from the University of Texas at Austin. He is currently the director of the history department at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life in Jackson, Mississippi, where he writes and edits the online "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities." He speaks around the country on the history of Jews in the American South.

Michael Rothschild received his BA degree in history from Tulane University. He is the owner of Landslide Records, a company he established in 1981 that specializes in producing and releasing roots-oriented, southern music. Although now a label executive and music publisher, he recently retired from a twenty-five year career in various areas of the motion picture business, including production, marketing, and distribution. During the 1980s he taught a jazz and blues history course at the Music Business Institute (now the Art Institute) in Atlanta, GA. He has also guest lectured on film and music subjects at the University of Georgia, Emory University, Georgia State University, and Loyola University of New Orleans. Rothschild serves on the board of the Amelia Island Jazz Festival.

Stephen J. Whitfield is Professor of American Studies at Brandeis University from which he earned a doctorate in the history of American civilization. His most recent book is *In Search of*

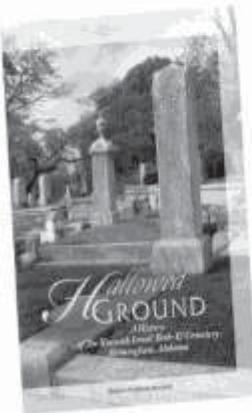
American Jewish Culture (1999, paperback ed. 2001). His most recent contribution to *Southern Jewish History*, "Commerce and Community: A Business History of Jacksonville Jewry," appeared in Volume 12 (2009).

ATTENTION: Authors and Publishers

Send review copies of new books for consideration to the Book Review Editor, Stephen J. Whitfield.,
3 Ewell Avenue, Lexington, MA 02421-7507.

Dr. Whitfield's email address is swhitfie@brandeis.edu

Hallowed Ground



This book, published in behalf of Temple Beth-El, in Birmingham, Alabama, features stories about early Jewish settlers who came to Alabama from across Europe, struggled to survive in new surroundings, using a language that in many cases they could barely speak or understand. They formed an orthodox synagogue, Kneseth Israel and developed their cemetery in 1890. When Temple-Beth was established by members of the conservative movement, the synagogues joined in the operation of what became known as the Kl/Beth-El Cemetery.

Author, Barbara Bonfield has provided what has been described as a "treasure trove of information" about the experiences of these early settlers and their descendants. Books may be purchased at a cost of \$25 for paperback and \$35 for hardback, from Temple Beth-El (205 933-2740) or from bbonfield@bellsouth.net.

Errata for Volume 12 (2009)

The following is a correction for an error found in *Southern Jewish History*, volume 12, published in 2009.

Page 263, full paragraph, line 7:

Change "North Carolina University" to "North Carolina College for Negroes (later, North Carolina Central University)."

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Award for Best Article

Recipients of the SJHS quadrennial prize for the outstanding article published in *Southern Jewish History*:

2001 (volumes 1–4) Scott Langston for “Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans” in volume 3.

2005 (volumes 5–8) Adam Mendelsohn for “Two Far South: Rabbinical Responses to Apartheid and Segregation in South Africa and the American South” in volume 6.

2009 (volumes 9–12) *tie result* Dianne Ashton for “Quick to the Party: The Americanization of Hanukkah and Southern Jewry,” in volume 12; and Leonard Rogoff for “Harry Golden, New Yorker: I ♥ NC,” in volume 11.

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“Ride ‘em Jewboy”: Kinky Friedman and the Texas Mystique,
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Synagogue and Jewish Church: A Congregational History of
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PERSONALITY PROFILE, Harry Reyner: Individualism and Community
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Mercy on Rude Streams: Jewish Emigrants from Alsace-Lorraine
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ish Foodways and Cultural Identity, *Marcie Cohen Ferris*

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