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JEWISH  
HISTORY**

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Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel B. Heimovics, *Managing Editor*

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# Southern Jewish History

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## *From the Editor . . .*

**D**iversity marks the backgrounds of the authors in this volume as it does the nature of the articles. Featured are an archivist/historian, a graduate student cum public school teacher, a librarian, two military aficionados, and a professor of American studies. The articles take the reader from the nineteenth into the twentieth centuries, treating the experiences of men and women in Florida, Texas, Virginia, and points in between and beyond. One article is of a genre introduced in volume 1: a Personality Profile. Included for the first time is a Notes-and-Documents article, in this case, providing excerpts from a memoir. In response to several requests for book reviews, we are initiating the review essay as an occasional feature.

Three of the articles in this volume focus on the immigrant experience. Hollace A. Weiner shows how a local agent and the immigrants themselves manipulated national agencies that were attempting to disperse immigrants into the hinterland. Using Fort Worth as a case study, Weiner argues that successful relocation was far more likely if the immigrant possessed needed skills and contributed to the community. At least equally important was the role of chain migration. Family members or friends from the same European community offered a support network by luring newcomers and cushioning their adjustment to the new home.

Although a number of studies have appeared concerning the impact of education on Jewish immigrants in northern cities, very little has appeared on the subject in the South. Even less has been written on southern Jewish women and education. Arlene Rotter presents the story of Hungarian-born Annie Teitelbaum Wise who succeeds in the public schools of Atlanta, first learning English and finally serving as an influential high school principal. Her upward struggle, aided by important mentors, can provide helpful insights for current immigrants and their educators.

Max White's experiences were quite different. As his memoirs illustrate, and Richard Sapon-White explicates, White ventured onto the frontier of Florida and into the cities of Tennessee to make his fortune during the Civil War era. White bought and sold a variety of goods and moved from location to location as hazards arose and opportunities arrived. White's life exemplifies the rootlessness and precarious existence of many young, mid-nineteenth-century Jewish peddlers and shopkeepers who dart in and out of local histories.

Although a high percentage of nineteenth-century Jewish men pursued commercial careers, a few aspired to military service. Robert Marcus and Jim Quinlan trace the career of David Mendes Cohen who rose through the ranks of the U.S. Marines. Cohen made difficult choices and distinguished himself, but he also came into conflict with several fellow officers. The authors draw insights by comparing and contrasting Cohen's experiences with those of selected Jewish contemporaries.

Albeit not based on a scientific count, I conjecture that as many books have appeared on southern Jewish history since 1996 as appeared in the two preceding decades. When I asked Steve Whitfield to write a review essay treating some of this literature, he graciously agreed and selected six random works from a list of nearly twenty. Whitfield's fertile imagination and wry humor take us beyond even the chosen volumes. Whitfield treats both academic history and historical fiction and suggests some present and future directions. Alas, contrary to (meek) protest, he chose two of this editor's works for inclusion.

Members of the editorial board have been of tremendous assistance in making recommendations and as peer reviewers. Their efforts are greatly appreciated. So, too, is the work of outside peer reviewers Selma Berrol, Cantor Brown Jr., Steven Brumberg, Sheldon Hanft, Joseph Newman, Robert Rosen, Louis Schmier, Lance Sussman, Ellen Umansky, and Bernie Wax. Bernie also graciously proofread the galleys. An endeavor such as this journal is impossible without a communal effort.

Mark K. Bauman

# Removal Approval: The Industrial Removal Office Experience in Fort Worth, Texas<sup>1</sup>

by

Hollace Ava Weiner

**T**he \$22 train tickets, doled out by New York's Industrial Removal Office (IRO) to transport Sam Zalefsky's penniless family to Texas in 1911, turned into a wise long-term investment. Zalefsky, a Russian immigrant eking out a living as a wallpaper hanger, gave little return on the money. But his ten-year-old son, who shortened his surname to Zale, channeled his immigrant drive and family ties into an enterprise that became the Zale Corporation, at one time the world's largest retail jeweler.<sup>2</sup>

Neither accident, nor luck, nor established placement criteria landed the Zalefskys in Texas. Yet they were among the seventy-nine thousand immigrants plucked by the IRO from New York's teeming streets and given a fresh start west of the Hudson River.<sup>3</sup> Despite the agency's goal of selecting "friendless refugees" and matching their job skills with out-of-town job opportunities, the Zalefskys fit another category.<sup>4</sup> Their move exemplified chain migration, whereby one person who relocates to a foreign city becomes a magnet drawing a procession of family and *landsleit* to the new locale.

The Zalefskys were far from unique. Many an IRO migrant dispatched to this Texas county seat nicknamed Cowtown did not precisely fit the agency's client profile. Of seventy-two IRO families who came to Fort Worth between 1903 and 1915, forty-one already had relatives or friends in the west Texas city, sponsors who vouched for their industry and reliability. Had the IRO not subsidized the journey, these individuals might have gotten there

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anyway. Their Fort Worth friends and relatives apparently understood the system. Much like modern-day applicants for government aid, they used the social service agency to full advantage. Parlaying their foothold in the hometown economy into influence in the Jewish community, they convinced the local IRO agent to send for their kith and kin.<sup>5</sup>

The IRO touted itself as the stimulus for migration, not a link in a process already under way.<sup>6</sup> David Bressler, the agency's general manager, often spoke about engineering an "artificial distribution" of Jewish émigrés who otherwise would remain in the "so-called New York ghetto."<sup>7</sup> Part of the agency's mission, Bressler wrote, was "to popularize . . . and to illumine the dark interior for the Jewish immigrant."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, a handful of the immigrants "artificially" transplanted to Fort Worth later sponsored the arrival of friends and relatives. By and large, however, those émigrés with pre-existing ties stayed longer, fared better, and recruited more relatives and friends than those lacking such connections. Yet within both groups there are heartwarming success stories and descendants still around to reminisce and recite kaddish in their memories.

This case study examines the origins and goals of the IRO, the implementation of its program in a city two-thousand miles from agency headquarters, and the pivotal role played by its Fort Worth agent. The article also illustrates the formative impact the influx of IRO immigrants had on Fort Worth's Jewish institutions. The lens for viewing the IRO is the cordial, eleven-year correspondence that developed between two contemporaries: German-born New York attorney David Bressler (1879–1942), the manager of the agency's headquarters, and Uriah Myer "U. M." Simon (1879–1954), an American-born Fort Worth attorney who labored to reunite families and bring worthy merchants and *menschen* to his hometown. The primary source materials are the brittle handwritten and typewritten letters, questionnaires, forms, and telegrams in the archives of the American Jewish Historical Society in New York. The impetus for this research was the chance discovery of copies of the Simon-Bressler correspondence in a storeroom at Fort Worth's Beth-El Congregation. Research into the

*Uriah Myer Simon, 1903, in his graduation photo from the  
University of Denver Law School, 1903.  
(Courtesy Beth-El Congregation Archives, Fort Worth.)*

names mentioned in that correspondence, coupled with visits to the American Jewish Historical Society, resulted in this essay. The materials provide colorful insights into both the IRO and the dynamics of Fort Worth, a city that in 1906 had forty thousand residents and, “roughly speaking . . . anywhere between five and eight hundred” Jews. The Jewish head count was, frankly, a guess. As Simon wrote Bressler, “No [Jewish] census has ever been taken and no one here has made any serious attempt to estimate our population.”<sup>9</sup> At least not until the IRO inquired.

#### *Origins of the IRO*

The IRO, which operated from 1901 to 1922, was a Progressive Era agency with a jarring impersonal name. It had its “intellectual roots” in the Baron de Hirsch experiments of the

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1890s when Russian Jews were resettled in the Argentine pampas.<sup>10</sup> Baron Maurice de Hirsch (1831–1896), a Munich financier and philanthropist, established a \$2.4 million fund to transplant eastern European Jews to the North American interior and to turn them into farmers and craftsmen. The fund's North American trustees, including New York banker Jacob Schiff, sought to redirect immigrants away from overcrowded seaports and urban slums that nurtured crime, disease, and radical politics. They hoped to improve their immigrant cousins' quality of life while curbing a source of antisemitism. The farm experiments had limited success. The fund's trustees, employing the jargon of the day, also tried "removing" selected immigrants to "industrial" areas beyond the big cities. Thus the agency's technical name.<sup>11</sup>

The philosophy behind these removal experiments was in tune with prevailing tenets of American social work that extolled the wholesomeness of rural America as well as the kindness of "fellow Christians" or co-religionists. In every big city, settlement houses and orphanages were overcrowded and overwhelmed. A change in environment seemed advisable. A prime example of this rural philosophy in action was the Orphan Train movement, which between 1854 and 1929 transported 150,000 unwanted, often unruly children from the streets of New York to places west. Like the Lower East Side's penniless Russian Jews, many of these abandoned children were foreign-born souls whose families had found American life harder than expected. The Orphan Train was the brainchild of Charles Loring Brace, a minister and former journalist who infused the endeavor with a religious and righteous component. His program was well organized with fastidious paperwork and permission forms signed and filed on each waif. Aiming to be both systematic and compassionate, agency employees lined up orphans at train depots where foster parents took their picks.<sup>12</sup>

The Industrial Removal Office also had an efficient filing and numbering system. It backed up its casework with reams of forms and correspondence. It aimed to be systematic yet compassionate when determining each client's destination. Bressler and others who touted the IRO's goals felt a nobility of purpose. Like many

social reformers of the day, they emphasized the constructive benefits derived from the “proper environment.” They were convinced that removing Russian, Polish, and Romanian Jews from New York City would enable these émigrés to develop their “inherent virtues” and become “a welcome addition to the Jewish communities of our land” and “an important factor” in the industrial development of the country.<sup>13</sup> The dark side of this progressivism was the leadership’s concern that squalid concentrations of inner-city immigrants were fanning antisemitism and anti-immigration legislation.<sup>14</sup>

The necessity of coaxing immigrants out of New York became most pressing to Jewish communal leaders in 1900 when hordes of Romanian Jews fleeing increasing oppression disembarked at Ellis Island. That June, the first National Conference of Jewish Charities convened in New York. At the gathering, social workers and philanthropists running New York’s United Jewish Charities implored communities nationwide to help shoulder the burden. These eastern European refugees, they reasoned, had not intended to immigrate to New York per se, but to America, and it was “incumbent on Jews all over the country” to absorb the overflow.<sup>15</sup>

Within a month of the conference, the Roumanian [*sic*] Relief Committee was created. B’nai B’rith, the Jewish men’s social service organization founded in 1843, had fraternal lodges across the nation and agreed to implement the placement effort. To motivate lodge members beyond the Northeast, New York’s Jewish establishment worked with Leo N. Levi, a Texan and the newly elected president of the International Order of B’nai B’rith. Levi’s executive committee issued bulletins to lodges throughout the South, the Midwest, and the Far West requesting that they activate resettlement arms. Many responded. By the time the Romanian flow ebbed late in 1900, pogroms in Russia had spurred more mass immigration. The refugee dilemma seemed endless. Wary American politicians, cognizant of rising crime rates and nativist sentiments, threatened to close the nation’s gates. Trustees of the Baron de Hirsch Fund believed that large-scale “removal” to less populous,

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lower profile locales could indeed relieve the problem. In February 1901 they helped establish the Industrial Removal Office to institutionalize and systemize the resettlement work under way.

### *Texas, Fort Worth, and Institution Building*

The call to help fellow Jews had special urgency among Texans because B'nai B'rith President Leo N. Levi, the IRO's first vice president, was one of their own. Born in the south Texas city of Victoria, Levi had been the longtime president of Temple B'nai Israel in Galveston, the state's Jewish capital. In 1888 Levi hired Galveston's rabbi, Henry Cohen, who became the state's best known, best loved, and ultimately its longest-serving spiritual leader. Personable and insightful, Levi later framed the international Kishinev petition protesting the 1903 Easter massacre of Russian Jews. Levi's plea to B'nai B'rith brethren to open their arms and their hearts to Ellis Island's immigrants moved an east Texas rabbi, Maurice Faber of Tyler, to write the IRO headquarters in May 1901:

In conversation with that peer of man, Mr. Leo N. Levi, I learned of the noble undertaking and gigantic work you have on hand, and I hardly need tell you that my heart and soul is with you, ready to help you in a small way, all I can. I promised . . . to make short trips in my vicinity and endeavor to place some of the men as soon after *Sh'buoth* as possible. We can use here a shoemaker; one who can repair neatly could make a good living. . . . I can also place two young men, one as a porter in a wholesale liquor store, and one as a driver on [a] beer wagon, wages \$5.00 per week.<sup>16</sup>

Leo Levi's leadership, stature, "zeal, patience and judgment"<sup>17</sup> were an inspiration. When this national figure suffered a heart attack on January 13, 1904, and died at age 46,<sup>18</sup> the same Texas rabbi wrote the IRO a note of mourning:

The irreparable loss the entire Jewry sustained in the untimely demise of Bro. Leo N. Levi will, I hope, not stop the wheels of the Removal Machinery; and the work, so nobly begun, will continue for the blessing of our poor brethren. The universal

expression of sorrow in all our communities throughout the land shows that the people understood and appreciated his work. May his spirit animate and urge us to continue and labor for the cause of humanity.<sup>19</sup>

Members of Fort Worth's B'nai B'rith lodge also expressed shock and sorrow over Levi's death and promised to redouble their efforts resettling the eastern European Jews.

Fort Worth Jewry had been slow to participate in the IRO. When the immigration agency was created in February 1901, Fort Worth had a small Orthodox synagogue but no Jewish fraternal lodge. During the summer of 1901, a local B'nai B'rith group was finally begun, spurred by a visit of regional representatives from Waco, ninety miles distant, and neighboring Dallas, forty miles away. The Fort Worth affiliate became Lodge No. 519, compared with Dallas's much older Lodge 197 founded in 1873.<sup>20</sup>

The Fort Worth lodge had forty charter members, merchants and professionals who in some measure reflected the city's Jewish demographic mix. A number of the "brothers" were eastern European immigrants, founders, and officers at the Orthodox congregation Ahavath Sholom. Other lodge members originally hailed from Tennessee, Indiana, Louisiana, and Germany. They were unaffiliated with any congregation. B'nai B'rith, as it had done in many cities across the Far West, integrated Jewish men without concern for national origin or denominational differences. It coalesced the city's leading Jewish merchants and *machers* into an identifiable religious organization, providing a "meeting ground" for social and charitable activities.<sup>21</sup> The lodge's elected leaders included Henry Gernsbacher, a New Orleans-born kitchen supply merchant, and Louis F. Shanblum, once a Warsaw law student and now a Texas scrap iron dealer. The common denominators among these men appear to have been Judaism and success in business.

Three months after the B'nai B'rith lodge got its start, Jeanette Miriam Goldberg, an organizer with the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) was traveling through Texas. Her visit to Fort Worth led to an October meeting at the Delaware Hotel and formation of a local NCJW chapter with twenty-six charter

members.<sup>22</sup> Unlike B'nai B'rith, with its mix of men from eastern European and American backgrounds, the local NCJW drew no one from the Orthodox community. Nationally, the NCJW appealed to educated American women, to the so-called "German-Jewish elite" with ties to Reform rather than traditional synagogues. NCJW, begun in 1893 in Chicago, exhorted women to take an assertive role in synagogue and community, a notion at odds with traditional Jewish practice.<sup>23</sup>

The creation in Fort Worth of both an NCJW section and a B'nai B'rith affiliate stirred a yearning among the more acculturated Jews for organized religious worship. As the High Holy Days neared in the fall of 1902, B'nai B'rith president Henry Gernsbacher called a meeting of Jewish men who desired to hold "independent" religious "services on the Reform plan." Three weeks later they reconvened, and forty-three men voted to charter Beth-El, a Reform congregation.<sup>24</sup> The NCJW chapter automatically functioned as the Beth-El auxiliary. The women taught religious school, recruited a rabbi, paid the temple choir, hosted potluck suppers during the city's annual Fat Stock Show, staged musicales, started an adult Hebrew class, launched a building fund, hosted a Hanukkah ball, and donated seventy dollars to out-of-town charities. The Council of Jewish Women had a full agenda.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, the B'nai B'rith lodge's first twenty-two months were largely social, with bimonthly meetings held Sunday mornings at the Knights of Pythias Hall.

This leisurely pace was to change. Following news of the Kishinev massacre, Fort Worth Jews on May 3, 1903, convened a "mass meeting" at Ahavath Sholom to protest the Russian pogroms. Those assembled collected two hundred dollars to launch the local lodge's involvement with the IRO.<sup>26</sup> One month later, Fort Worth's Jewish community welcomed its first IRO immigrants, a family of six: Alex and Gittel Foreman and their four sickly children. The family had fled Russia eight months before.<sup>27</sup> According to lodge minutes, "A B'nai B'rith committee was appointed to meet and greet them upon their arrival to our city. The committee also provided financial aid" to supplement the \$4.85 in "maintenance" money provided by the IRO.<sup>28</sup> The lodge found a

job for Alex Foreman, an unskilled émigré classified by the IRO as a “general worker.”

This immigrant family was also needy medically and emotionally. Ten days after the Foreman family’s arrival, thirty women from Ahavath Sholom formed a Ladies Hebrew Relief Society to administer bedside care and provide food, clothing, “friendship and sociability.” More immigrants arrived. Over the next twelve years, the Ladies Hebrew Relief Society grew to include 130 volunteers. Most, if not all, of the women were conversant in Yiddish and affiliated with the shul. They paid “membership monthly dues of 25 cents.” With that money plus “the proceeds of a ball or picnic,” the women channeled their charity toward the immigrants’ most basic needs. Recalled the group’s cofounder, Sarah Levy Shanblum:

Several sick women and children were restored to health and many hundreds of dollars paid out for hospital fees and doctors. . . . [We] assisted in sending consumptive people to Denver [location of B’nai B’rith’s National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives] and other places, so that they might be cured, or at least prolong their life. During the cold winter months, or when the heads of the families are out of work or sick, the families are provided with coal. . . . In all the work done, most of it is such that the men could not attend to.<sup>29</sup>

Fort Worth women active in NCJW did not immediately get involved with immigrant resettlement work, possibly because they did not speak Yiddish, possibly because the Orthodox women were filling that need. Officially, they denied that such a need existed. One of the NCJW’s early annual reports asserts, “We are not ripe for settlement work in our community. . . . No present necessity exists for this species of work.”<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere across the country and on Ellis Island, NCJW was providing immigrant assistance. It would take Fort Worth’s NCJW several years to decide upon its communal niche in the resettlement process.

#### *Welcome to Cowtown*

Just as the IRO resettlement work was getting under way, twenty-five-year-old U. M. Simon moved to Fort Worth fresh out

of the University of Denver law school. He joined B'nai B'rith and in 1904 was appointed IRO liaison. Among his early duties was to fill out a questionnaire describing his adopted city. The survey inquired about wages ("Factory hands: \$1.50 to \$4.00 per day"); about rents ("\$15.00 per month and up"), and about schools ("nine white schools, one high school").<sup>31</sup> It asked about transportation facilities ("a network of ten railroad lines") and about industries. The questionnaire gave Simon a reason to research the city's past history and to speculate upon its future.

Founded in 1849, the city had begun as a military fort, one of eight outposts between the Rio Grande and the Red River that protected Texas settlers from Comanche raids. Fort Worth prided itself on its frontier origins and its location on one of the Southwest's oldest cattle trails. The region's cattle-driving past made the city a logical place for the development of stockyards, packinghouses, and kindred industries that fueled the growth of a network of railroads.<sup>32</sup> The city was also a mecca for ranchers and cowboys seeking supplies and bank loans as well as recreation in the city's infamous red-light district, Hell's Half Acre. As Nat Washer, a Jewish merchant who moved to the city in 1882, reminisced:

The cowboys from the various ranches made semiannual pilgrimages to Fort Worth and after outfitting themselves with new togs they would use the balance of their six months' income to "light up" and take in the city sights, and after a hilarious . . . vacation, would go back to save up for another anticipated season of "dress and delight."<sup>33</sup>

Fort Worth may have been a magnet for ranchers and farmers, but not so for Jews. Historically, Jews have tended to be urban dwellers. Most Jews who moved to this arid region along the Trinity River gravitated to Dallas, which had begun as a commercial center rather than a military post. Dallas was more cosmopolitan, more populated, and more suitable for families than Fort Worth. By 1876, Dallas had a synagogue with an ordained rabbi who led Sabbath services and operated a nonsectarian school for the general community.<sup>34</sup>

Fort Worth's early Jewish settlers tended to be single males who were adventurers and risk takers. They were generally loners who sought out the marginality of the frontier. The city's first Jew, German-born Simon Gabert, arrived in 1856, then left during the Rocky Mountain gold rush, returning several years later when his mining claims failed to pan out. He became a cotton buyer.<sup>35</sup> The city's second Jew, Warsaw-born Jacob Samuels, enlisted in the Confederate cavalry when a unit was mustered on Main Street. After Reconstruction, he opened one of the first stores on the courthouse square and enjoyed camaraderie with the city's elite.<sup>36</sup> Isadore Carb, a New Orleans teen whose family farm was ravaged by the Union Army, ventured to Texas in 1871 in search of "vast ranges and ranches." His first stop was Dallas, which, he wrote home, was a disappointment: "There's no cowboys here and everybody rides slow like at home and don't make no noise." Selling his possessions to buy a horse and buckboard, he proceeded west to Fort Worth and wrote his mother:

I'm gonna stay right here. I sure like Fort Worth. It's got cowboys and everything. It's just like the books and people said. . . . There's buffaloes and bears and Indians and cowboys out there. . . . Mamma. You oughter see the cowboys loping up Main Street!<sup>37</sup>

French-born Isaac Dahlman, another of Fort Worth's early Jewish entrepreneurs, was more interested in cattle than cowboys. In 1889, he tried to ship ice-packed beef to England. The cargo spoiled.<sup>38</sup> Another early Jewish settler was Russian-born Sam Rosen who, to foil a competitor, stealthily constructed a trolley track during a midnight snowstorm.<sup>39</sup> His transportation line flourished.

These were the sorts of Jewish settlers who gravitated to Fort Worth. Judaism to them was secondary or tertiary. One Jewish clothing merchant, a mellow baritone, boasted of singing in the choir at the Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Catholic churches.<sup>40</sup> Flora Weltman Schiff, daughter of a pioneer Jewish saloonkeeper, wrote that the mere mention of a minyan was met with ridicule. "Fort Worth Jews were beyond redemption," she recalled.<sup>41</sup> As Sander Gilman observes in *Jewries at the Frontier*,

many a Jew elects to settle in a place like Fort Worth because it is perceived as a peripheral space where one may function alone, free of communal expectations.<sup>42</sup>

Fort Worth Jews did have their own cemetery, Emanuel Hebrew Rest. It was located on an acre of land donated to the "Israelites" of the city in 1879 by civic figure John Peter Smith who that same year set aside land for Protestant, Catholic, and African American cemeteries.<sup>43</sup> The Hebrew cemetery's origins indicate that Jews were an integral part of the landscape, yet were passive when it came to creating their own religious institutions.

The demographics of the Fort Worth Jewish community were to change. Half a world away, the assassination of the Russian czar, Alexander II, on March 13, 1881, unleashed violence against Jews. Pogroms erupted across Russia. Decrees, enacted in May 1882, authorized eviction of Jews from non-Jewish villages and, later, from Moscow and the Russian interior. Mass migrations to America began, averaging more than one hundred thousand refugees a year. A number of refugees trickled into Fort Worth. Previously, those eastern-European immigrant Jews (such as Samuels and Rosen) who had come to Fort Worth were full of wanderlust, independence, and devil-may-care enterprise. This new wave brought traumatized travelers, immigrants accustomed to communities where Judaic practices were part of the fabric of everyday life. They arrived speaking Yiddish. Among the first to reach Fort Worth were Rachel and Joseph Jacobs. After their nephew, thirty-year-old Moses Shanblum, made it to Ellis Island in 1887, he joined them in Texas.<sup>44</sup>

"When I came to Fort Worth in the year 1887, I found only six Jewish families who worshipped in a private house on the Holidays," Shanblum later recalled. A successful peddler, Shanblum soon opened a small store in town and organized a minyan that met in homes and in the backs of stores. Wearing his trademark black coat and black derby, a decidedly alien form of dress in west Texas, he went door-to-door, shop to shop, and peddler to peddler, persuading fellow Jews "that a synagogue was more important than a new buggy or suit." It was time to coalesce into a congregation. On October 9, 1892, Moses Shanblum, his uncle Joe,

and his brother Louis were among thirty-one men who gathered in another immigrant's living room to found Congregation Ahavath Sholom, commonly called "the shul." Within ten months, the charter members put five hundred dollars down on a thousand dollar lot. When the lot was paid in full, they used the land as collateral to borrow five-hundred dollars to build Fort Worth's first Jewish house of worship, completed in the fall of 1895.<sup>45</sup> The Reform congregation, which was organized in 1902 and referred to as "the temple," did not erect a building until 1908. Although the Orthodox immigrants were relative latecomers to the Fort Worth Jewish community, they organized their congregation a decade before the Reform Jews, many of whom were local pioneers.

This sequence of institutional development—an Orthodox shul followed by the creation of a Reform temple—is highly unusual. A more typical pattern, evidenced in Dallas and Galveston, was for the long-established Jews of German descent to charter a congregation pre-dating the eastern European migration wave. In many communities, such as Tyler and Houston, arrival of the refugees led to strife as both groups tried to worship within the same space.<sup>46</sup> In Houston, congregation minutes refer to a "cleavage" dividing the membership and to the theft of English-language prayer books.<sup>47</sup> In Tyler one faction voted to expel members who intermarried. The eastern Europeans resisted mixed seating of men and women, insisted that men wear prayer shawls and skull caps, and opposed the trend toward English translations of the liturgy. Eventually, as demographic historian Lee Shai Weissbach has documented, the eastern European Jews seceded from the pioneer congregations, "creating their own set of communal institutions and their own social milieu."<sup>48</sup>

Fort Worth experienced no such internal conflict or turmoil over religious ritual. The Orthodox Jews found no existing institutions to encroach upon. Orthodox and Reform Jews did not argue over how to pray. On Sabbath, they went their separate ways. Their interactions related more to commerce.

Certainly, each group harbored negative stereotypes about the other. The Orthodox mocked the Reform (and especially the

unaffiliated) Jews as goyim. Reform Jews viewed the immigrants as greenhorns, crude newcomers to put it mildly. "If you married outside your little group, it was almost like an interracial marriage," recalled a Gernsbacher descendant who had a number of cousins from "mixed marriages" between Orthodox and Reform.<sup>49</sup> As in a host of American cities cited by Weissbach, "a sort of uneasiness . . . defined the relationship between the two groups."<sup>50</sup> In Fort Worth, the divisions were less antagonistic than elsewhere because these two subcommunities had not clashed under the same roof nor attempted to change one another's liturgy or rituals. In future decades, it became comfortable for families to affiliate with both the temple and the shul. The fact that Jewish merchants and professionals worked well together in the business setting boded well for the immigrant resettlement movement.

#### *The Local Agent*

Young U. M. Simon was a good fit for the role of B'nai B'rith's IRO liaison. An American-born Reform Jew, he was the son of Orthodox immigrants of eastern European stock. He understood both sides of the immigrant equation. He felt empathy toward the newcomers yet discerned the discomfort they generated among his American-born neighbors. He saw the big picture in part because persecution had also driven his family from Europe. Simon's parents, Uriah and Hannah Goldsmith Simon, along with their daughter Sarah and several dozen relatives, had emigrated from Yanova, Lithuania, in 1873.<sup>51</sup> They settled outside Boston in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Simon's father became a peddler whose route took him and his family into the Deep South. By 1878, he was operating a grocery store in Bolivar County, Mississippi, across the river from Arkansas.

His son Uriah Myer, the fourth of six siblings, was born in 1879 in Moore's Landing, a Mississippi River town washed out of existence during an 1882 storm.<sup>52</sup> Forced to relocate, the Simons moved to Tyler, an east Texas county seat that had once served as a supply depot for the Confederacy. There the family made a living in the ice business. In 1887 the Simons were among fifty-three Jewish families to charter Tyler's

first Jewish congregation, Beth El, a synagogue that rapidly moved from traditional to Reform.<sup>53</sup> Five years after the synagogue's founding, the elder Simon died at the age of 49, leaving his wife, four daughters, and two sons to support one another.<sup>54</sup> The father's death reinforced in the children the strength of family ties.

U. M. graduated from high school in 1896 and enrolled at the University of Texas in Austin. Troubled with asthma, he moved to Colorado to study law at the University of Denver, finding relief in the Rocky Mountain region's dry climate. Denver was a one-day train ride from Fort Worth where U. M. frequently journeyed to visit his married sister, Sarah Simon Brown, her three daughters, and his older brother Ben, who lived in his sister's household.<sup>55</sup> When U. M. graduated first in his law school class in 1903, he moved to Fort Worth. The reasons behind the move were compelling: the climate was dry; the economy was booming with the recent opening of the Swift and Armour meat-packing plants; and he longed to be among family.<sup>56</sup>

Simon integrated quickly into his new hometown. His German-born brother-in-law, David Brown, an ice manufacturer, was a charter member and officer at Beth-El Congregation. Hattie Weltman, the tall, willowy, musically talented girl Simon began courting and later married, was the daughter of another temple founder. In short, Simon entered the inner circle of the community's Reform Jewish leadership. He also adapted with ease professionally. Soon after his arrival, Simon was hired, part-time, as assistant county attorney. In that position, his name became familiar to the city's 160 practicing attorneys, three of whom were Jewish.<sup>57</sup> Recognized as a young man of formidable intellect, Simon conveyed a cordial if patrician air. Despite his short stature—he was no more than five-feet tall—he projected a powerful, take-charge presence. "You never thought about his size," recalled his daughter-in-law.<sup>58</sup> A childhood ailment had left U. M. unable to turn his head or to drive a carriage or a car. (Nonetheless, he owned a succession of large black automobiles that his wife drove.) Given U. M. Simon's bearing, his background, and his eagerness to make a name for himself in new surroundings, it is

understandable why he stepped into the position of the B'nai B'rith lodge's IRO liaison.

Simon approached his IRO volunteer role as if it were a cabinet post or a salaried job. Initially, he surveyed the paperwork relating to IRO clients previously sent to Fort Worth. He surmised that up until then the lodge had welcomed any immigrant the New York agency opted to send. Among the arrivals had been two shoemakers<sup>59</sup> and two tailors, one of them a "weaver" and the other a "knitter of sweaters."<sup>60</sup> A number of the immigrants had difficulty adjusting and did not remain long. The lot of the tailor seemed especially hard. As one immigrant poet in Fort Worth observed: "He mends old coats with tireless thread/For coins to buy salt fish and bread."<sup>61</sup> Most of the immigrants were, in agency parlance, "direct removals," meaning they had no prior ties to Texas. Many of the men turned out to be, in Simon's words, "somewhat of a disappointment."

Among the failures was Hyman Altes, a tailor who had arrived during the summer of 1904 as Simon came on board. "He demanded much more than he was entitled to" and showed "little inclination to help himself," even when the lodge bought him a tailor shop.<sup>62</sup> Another tailor, Jake Weinstein, who was dispatched to Fort Worth with his wife, left for Oklahoma City after two months. When the IRO inquired about Weinstein, Simon replied that the tailor had fared no better in Oklahoma and was "probably working his way back to New York. So be on the lookout for him." A third IRO tailor, Feive Back, had a "good position while here," Simon wrote. But the man "drank a great deal" and "presumably left of his own accord" for Dallas. "I consider his case unsatisfactory."<sup>63</sup>

Immigrants who fared best were those with relatives and friends in Fort Worth. Simon indicated as such in a 1906 letter to New York headquarters. Recommending that the agency send an unskilled young man named Sigmund Patkoosky, Simon wrote: "In this case, as usual, . . . relatives here are willing that he should come and will take care of him here."<sup>64</sup> Another successful example of chain migration facilitated by the agency

*Libby Kruger Zalefsky  
with her children,  
William (left) and  
Morris Bernard, "M. B."*

*The brothers, who anglicized  
their name to Zale, operated the  
Zale Jewelry store chain.*

*(Courtesy M. B. & Edna Zale  
Foundation, Dallas.)*

was Charles Rubin, a tailor with a sibling in the same trade. He seemed content cleaning and pressing at his brother David Rubin's tailor shop at 205 East Twelfth Street.<sup>65</sup> Morris Antner, yet another IRO removal, had a sister in Fort Worth. He opened a popular restaurant, the Broiler.<sup>66</sup> A year after Antner's Texas arrival, he prevailed upon Simon to have the IRO send his brother-in-law, Isaac Freiman.<sup>67</sup>

Julius Kruger, brother of Main Street watchmaker Sam Kruger, was an IRO-sponsored immigrant who easily integrated into Fort Worth's mercantile scene. Within months of his 1906 arrival, he saved enough money to bring his wife, Manyes, and their son, Moishe, across the ocean from Russia.<sup>68</sup> In 1911, the Kruger brothers approached Simon about reuniting them with their sister Libby Zalefsky whose family had been in New York for several years. Simon assented. Objectively, the Zalefskys did not meet IRO criteria. Libby's husband, Sam Zalefsky, had few job skills. He had worked in New York as a wallpaper hanger and house

painter but preferred performing informal duties at a neighborhood synagogue. The Kruger brothers, with their jewelry store that catered to railroad employees and the carriage trade, could likely have saved money to cover train fare for their relatives.<sup>69</sup> But Simon evidently viewed the Krugers as hardworking, upstanding, religious-minded individuals who contributed to the commonweal. On January 31, 1911, in an overnight telegram to the IRO, Simon issued the following instructions:

Please send at once Sam Zalewsky [*sic*] and family, relatives able to provide work, but cannot contribute toward transportation. I understand Zalewsky [*sic*] has disposed of his household goods and is awaiting to be sent to FtWorth [*sic*]. If it is possible for you to send him I believe it will be desirable.<sup>70</sup>

Besides family ties, Simon gave weight in his recommendations to bonds of friendship. A baker, Albert Cromberger, arrived in 1906 with a fifteen-dollar-a-week position at Oscar Rubin's German Bakery. Within four years, this IRO veteran opened his own Cromberger Bakery at 303 South Jennings Avenue.<sup>71</sup> During the interlude when Albert Cromberger was establishing his bakery, the IRO appeared keen on sending yet another baker. This applicant, a thirty-two-year-old New Yorker, had ten years' residence in the United States and enough savings to "open up a bakery to cater to the Jewish trade." Simon kept this applicant dangling for two weeks while he surveyed the local "bread-baking" scene. In the end, he discouraged the New Yorker from coming, citing a surfeit of bakeries. He may well have been protecting Albert Cromberger from competition.<sup>72</sup>

In another instance, IRO headquarters recommended two peddlers, Israel Leder and Nachem Berman. Simon assented to Israel Leder because he was a friend of Nathan Ratner, "who is a successful fruit and vegetable peddler [and] tells me he will divide his route with Leder."<sup>73</sup> As for Nachem Berman, Simon wrote, "The immediate . . . small towns . . . generally are pretty well supplied with mercantile establishments . . . . If the man is active, I have no doubt that he can get along, but it is possible that some smaller community would suit him better."<sup>74</sup> The former applicant was sent. The latter was not.

*Telegram requesting assistance for the Zale family. (Courtesy the American Jewish Historical Society, New York and Waltham.)*

Having relatives and references in Fort Worth did not guarantee entrée. Another criterion by which Simon evaluated sponsors was whether or not they participated in local Jewish organizations. When a sister-in-law of Aaron Schiffer, a successful Fort Worth entrepreneur, appealed to the IRO to be placed in Cowtown, Simon vetoed the move. Nor did he mince words about the brother-in-law: "He does not contribute to any . . . charity . . . organizations of this city and I do not see why we should assist in bringing his sister-in-law to Fort Worth."<sup>75</sup> Simon was also disdainful of Joe Dworkin, a Fort Worth dry goods merchant whose brother-in-law, Louis Goldstein, requested IRO assistance. The Dworkins, Simon wrote, "are not particularly desirable citizens here. Unless he [the immigrant] shows a very clean record, I would not want him here under any circumstances." The brother-in-law never came.<sup>76</sup>

Simon vented his dislike of Sam Nathan, a tailor and haberdasher who had prospered in Fort Worth for six years, then

returned to New York City flush with \$2,200 in savings. Nathan rapidly lost his money in a New York business venture. By 1910 he and his family were begging to return to Texas at IRO expense. "He claims he can easily work himself up again in his old town, to wit: Ft. Worth," the IRO optimistically wrote the Fort Worth agent. "Case is urgent and we would appreciate it if you would send us your pleasure in this case by wire, collect." Simon, irate at the tailor's chutzpa, took his time responding. When he finally answered in writing a month later, he advised headquarters that Sam Nathan was *persona non grata* because "he did not contribute to Jewish organizations and was indifferent to our communal affairs." The local agent elaborated, "I do not feel that we ought to take it upon ourselves and especially upon the charity organizations here, of providing for him should he come here penniless. My recommendation is that you do not send him."<sup>77</sup>

Another measure by which Simon judged extended-family cases was the family's work ethic. When Rachel Oginsky asked the IRO to send her and her children to Fort Worth, where her husband was a banana peddler, the agency was reluctant. The IRO suggested that her Texas spouse underwrite all transportation costs. Simon successfully pleaded, "They are all poor people, but making good citizens, and we would be glad if you could see your way clear to send this family to Fort Worth."<sup>78</sup>

A number of "removals" who lacked familial connections were nonetheless welcomed. Simon's correspondence files show that cobblers, unlike tailors, fared well in Fort Worth, a reflection on a town where sturdy boots were more important than fine suits. Nathan Fuchs, a shoemaker who anglicized his surname to Fox, had been dispatched in 1904 to Gainesville, ninety miles north of Fort Worth, on the edge of Indian Territory. Seeking a town with more foot traffic, he moved on his own to Fort Worth and by 1905 had a shop at 1113 Main Street, three blocks from the train station.<sup>79</sup>

Another cobbler, Wolf Moses, a twenty-nine-year-old sent by the IRO in February 1906 as a "direct removal," worked for an established, non-Jewish shoemaker who paid him nine dollars a week. That seemed a princely sum until the Texas &

*Wolf Moses, 1926. The IRO  
placed cobbler Moses in Fort  
Worth in February 1906.  
(Courtesy R. D. Moses,  
Fort Worth.)*

Pacific Railway overcharged Moses \$9.04 for shipping his household goods, which arrived damaged. On the cobbler's behalf, Simon contested the bill of lading. It took more than a year of correspondence to straighten it out. Moses, a native of Minsk who had spent three frustrating years in Brooklyn, was grateful and worked hard. In less than a year, he became his employer's partner.<sup>80</sup> Later, he had his own shoe repair business at 107 East Belknap Street and still later at 108 West Ninth Street. His establishment became a gathering place for bus drivers, business people, and even ministers. Ironically, Wolf (or William, as "a lot of Gentile people called him,") detested the shoe repair business. He refused to teach the trade to his son, calling it "filthy" work. Despite that attitude, his work ethic was strong. Without requesting aid from the IRO, Moses sent for his wife, two children, two brothers, and two sisters.<sup>81</sup>

Teachers also fared well in Fort Worth. Simon, aware of Jewish communal needs, snapped up Hebrew educators. When he

learned that David Goldberg, a young Hebrew teacher related to some longtime local residents, was seeking transportation to Texas, he wrote the IRO, "Rabbi [Charles] Blumenthal [at Ahavath Sholom] . . . is ready to give Mr. Goldberg a position as assistant teacher. . . . If he makes good in the position offered him, he will be self-supporting."<sup>82</sup> Sam Resnick, another pedagogue with Cowtown kin, was notified by wire that the IRO had approved his move to Fort Worth.<sup>83</sup> Resnick, who had operated a Hebrew school in Russia, became a force in the local Zionist movement.

Simon sometimes overruled the IRO's judgment. In one such case, he asked the IRO to send Barnett Oppenheim, whose brother-in-law, Yankev Zager, was a Fort Worth peddler. The IRO had previously sent the Oppenheim family to Buffalo, New York, with disappointing results. The family had returned to New York City. The IRO had no intention of giving them a second chance at charity, particularly since they lived in a nicely furnished apartment. Simon was insistent, arguing that the man's unemployed daughter, a stenographer, could find a good position in Fort Worth. Ultimately, Simon helped raise twenty-five dollars toward transportation costs. The New York office relented, "Out of deference to your recommendation in the matter, we will accept it and pay the balance necessary."<sup>84</sup> Simon ultimately put Oppenheim's son, Hyman, to work in his office as a law clerk.<sup>85</sup>

Simon's instincts were not always borne out, at least not immediately. He gave the approval in 1910 for the IRO to send Susie Brecher to Fort Worth, where her husband, Sam, had "impressed [everyone] as a man who will unquestionably take care of his family." With that assurance, the IRO loaned Susie Brecher an additional fifty dollars, payable over three months. When the note came due, she had paid nothing. Simon sent "four or five letters to Mrs. Brecher, but she fail[ed] to respond." Finally, he gave up and told the New York office, "I have seen her husband on several occasions and I feel quite sure that he has nothing to pay this note with."<sup>86</sup> Simon was not about to embarrass or place financial demands on the family. The tone of his letters regarding the debt was firm and without complaint.

Simon's interactions with the national office, and presumably with immigrants, remained businesslike and polite. Even when describing negative encounters, he generally did not get irate nor vent exasperation. Because of his eastern European cultural background, he had a feel for who these immigrants were and what to expect of them. Judging from his academic success at the college and professional level, he also understood Progressive Era thinking. He could navigate between two worlds and negotiate between two ways of thinking. Essentially, Simon became a benevolent gatekeeper, deciding who among the IRO's immigrant pool could enter Fort Worth and who would not, who merited financial aid and who got not a cent. "It was in his blood to help people in a *paterfamilias* way," observed his grandson.<sup>87</sup> Simon's position proved critical in shaping his community. He summoned to Fort Worth individuals and families he believed would contribute to the commonweal and tried to insure that immigrants arrived with an emotional support system in place that could cushion the culture shock. For example, Simon once discouraged the IRO from sending a plumber<sup>88</sup> who lacked local ties yet welcomed a peddler who did. As Midwest historian Hal Rothman has observed, "When the newcomers were relatives, family ties assured a protected environment and rapid socialization."<sup>89</sup>

### *Traveling Agents*

Simon's measured tone and polite demeanor with the IRO were not replicated in every locale. Fort Worth's interactions with the New York agency proved far more positive and fruitful than the experiences of a number of other Texas Jewish communities. Simon's proactive involvement during the immigrant selection phase had much to do with his success. He never blindly agreed to receive a set quota of immigrants. Other towns did.

One of the IRO's placement strategies was to send a "traveling agent" into a region to visit targeted cities that had no history with the agency.<sup>90</sup> At each stop, the agent met with Jewish community leaders to drum up sympathy toward the immigrants and support for the IRO. The agent's goal was to convince each city to

accept a monthly quota of immigrants. Imbued with altruism, Jewish communities signed up. In many a Texas locale, the resulting culture shock, by both émigrés and townspeople, led to negative experiences, tension, acrimony, and severance of ties to the IRO.

For example in December 1904 the Jews of Marshall, a major railroad stop near the Louisiana line, agreed to resettle one family per month. Then they reneged six months later "after hard work and a good deal of trouble and expense."<sup>91</sup> Palestine, an east Texas county seat, also reduced its quota after agreeing to sponsor two refugee families per month. "We have received the one you have sent us and are having a great deal of trouble in finding any thing for him to do," wrote a local volunteer. "I am afraid we will have to send him off. Business is very dull here."<sup>92</sup> Jewish residents of Paris, Texas, provided more details when they withdrew from the IRO. "We regret to inform you that we have had a great deal of trouble with the people you sent here," the local liaison wrote. "[One client] misrepresented and made false statements both to you and to us. He is not married to the woman he came here with, she being his sister. . . . He and his sister quarreled, thereby creating a disturbance and scandal in public to our great sorrow and mortification."<sup>93</sup>

Houston's IRO liaison was more blunt, "Don't send us any more people." The Houston agent wrote that he had placed an IRO immigrant in a job that paid eighteen dollars per week. "He worked 3 weeks and left without saying goodbye."<sup>94</sup> Austin's Jewish community was likewise "disgusted." According to the secretary of the city's immigration society:

We have had enough experience with two families, for whom we have done everything in our power to start them out and make something of them, but regret to say that all our faithful work has been done in vain. The people are so disgusted the way the newcomers have done that I do believe should another family come, they would have to starve as the people have lost all faith and hope in them."<sup>95</sup>

Sherman, a farming and college town near the Oklahoma line, also backed out of its agreement to resettle "one family per

month for four or five months." After welcoming its first immigrant family, Sherman's representative wrote the IRO, "The weather is cold, and labor is scarce. We would advise you not to send any more families here for a while." The letter elicited an angry reply from New York: "If you were here with us today and saw the immense number of people that begged us for work, you would . . . give us free reign. . . . Terrible pressure is brought to bear upon us by the ever-increasing immigration." <sup>96</sup>

The tone of these letters and the tension between local and national headquarters was not uncommon. Jack Glazier, in *Dispersing the Ghetto*, and Robert A. Rockaway, in *Words of the Uprooted*, document ongoing clashes between community representatives and New York staffers. Glazier terms such discord inevitable, particularly since "the traveling agents said little or nothing about the [likelihood] of problem cases." He adds that the "dialogue between the main office and the cooperating communities frequently placed their self-conceived best interest ahead of the IRO's conception of an American Jewish commonwealth and the limits of local altruism,"<sup>97</sup> Rockaway notes the "rancor," "annoyance," "dissatisfaction," and sarcasm evident in some correspondence. In Champaign, Illinois, for example, the unscheduled arrival of unskilled workers who spoke little English placed a weighty burden upon the agent on the scene. He had to become meter, greeter, banker, and cultural broker.<sup>98</sup>

Simon, because he fostered chain migration, was not as responsible for meeting and greeting immigrants who missed train connections. He could delegate that responsibility and many others to the sponsoring families. He knew first hand how far blood relatives would go to help one another. He worked for family reunification knowing that *mishpocheh* would provide a safety net and come to the rescue far more often than an employer or a social worker.

During this period of American history, Jewish philanthropic leaders and social workers tended to be Jews of German descent who believed they knew best how to resettle and Americanize eastern European émigrés. Their experiences were not first hand. U. M. Simon may have been patrician, but he was not a German

patrician. He was self-confident and self-made. He was a role model to the immigrants, an example of what their American-born children could become. His success may have imbued the Fort Worth arrivals with added incentive and determination to do well in Texas.

Just as Simon's letters to New York lacked acrimony, the IRO's letters to him were polite. His track record shows he was not easily bluffed by emotional pleas from the agency or the immigrants. Whenever Simon delayed answering queries from New York, the agency gingerly inquired whether he had received previous letters on a particular client. Simon, in due time, would apologetically explain that he was "out of town," involved in legal work, still investigating local conditions, or awaiting figures from the board of trade. He was a reliable agent who generally followed through.

Toward the end of 1912, unanswered correspondence accumulated in Simon's office. The agency wrote asking if its letters "may have gone astray."<sup>99</sup> After seven weeks of silence, Simon responded, "I beg to say to you that the reason I have not replied to your letter sooner is because of the death of my mother . . . last week. She had been critically ill for some little time before that, and I had not given much attention to my business."<sup>100</sup>

With sensitivity, David Bressler wrote back, "I wish to convey to you my sincere sympathy in the irreparable loss you have just sustained. I can feel for you, the more deeply since my own beloved mother was laid to her eternal rest only a short time ago."<sup>101</sup>

### *The Galveston Movement*

Resettling immigrants on an individual basis was proving too slow to make a dent in New York's ghetto population. More than two million Jewish refugees had entered the United States between 1880 and 1907. More than seventy-five percent settled in the Northeast. This influx taxed city services and fueled anti-immigration sentiment.<sup>102</sup> Banker Jacob Schiff was impressed with the IRO's statistics: 29,513 Jews removed during the agency's first six years of existence, with eighty-five percent remaining in the

places to which they were sent.<sup>103</sup> Schiff, a godfather of American Jewish philanthropy, gambled that with a \$500,000 subsidy and a convincing public-relations campaign, boatloads of immigrants would choose the West over the congested Northeast if they could bypass New York. One German steamship line made regular trips to Galveston every three weeks. Schiff's grand plan was to divert "Jewish immigration from the Eastern seaboard . . . to the territory west of the Mississippi River with Galveston as the Port of Entry."<sup>104</sup> Rabbi Henry Cohen was in Galveston in a position to work with a new agency and to greet each immigrant at the dock. Thus in July 1907, the IRO opened the Jewish Immigrants' Information Bureau (JIIB) in Galveston. Terming the states west of the Mississippi "bureau territory," the JIIB utilized and expanded upon the network of small-town reception committees begun by the IRO.

The Galveston experiment lasted from the summer of 1907 to 1914, with ships carrying Jewish refugees from the North Sea to Galveston Bay. Some years as few as 126 refugees chose the southern route. In its peak years, up to three thousand eastern European Jews opted for Galveston. In all, ten thousand (less than four percent of total Jewish immigration for those years) disembarked in Galveston. Of these arrivals, three thousand remained in Texas.<sup>105</sup>

The Galveston Movement kept Fort Worth's B'nai B'rith lodge and its Ladies Hebrew Aid Society busier than ever. There was much overlap with the earlier and ongoing IRO work. Simon continued dealing with the IRO's New York office while serving on his city's JIIB committee. Some immigrants who arrived in Fort Worth via Galveston arranged for Simon to help bring relatives from New York. For example, in 1909 the IRO headquarters corresponded with Fort Worth about Hyman Ellison, an unemployed New York immigrant who asked to be sent to his Texas uncle, H. Abramowitz. Simon responded in the affirmative:

We brought Abramowitz to Fort Worth via Galveston from Europe and he is just now getting on his feet, which is saying a great deal as he has a large family. . . . I find Abramowitz

entirely worthy and dependable, although he is unable to contribute anything toward the transportation of Ellison. He and his friends . . . guarantee that Ellison and his family will be taken care of here. . . . I hope that you will find it possible to send this family here.<sup>106</sup>

Two years later, Ellison, who remained in Forth Worth until his death in 1917, sponsored another IRO immigrant, Louis Romashkin.<sup>107</sup>

During these years, the local Council of Jewish Women section began filling an important niche. In February 1907, five months before the first boatload of Jewish immigrants docked in Galveston, NCJW members opened a nonsectarian Americanization school with biweekly evening classes taught at the Tarrant County Courthouse. Describing the school's first four months of operation, NCJW president Polly Mack wrote:

Realizing that foreign immigration was on the increase in our city, and appreciating the fact that the struggles of these newcomers would be severe in the absence of some knowledge of English on their part, [we] resolved to organize a night school. The sessions were well attended and the scholars, aged from 14 to 45, manifested much interest in their work, and have thus far given every evidence of their ability to master the English language and to assimilate American ideals.<sup>108</sup>

As Galveston immigrants began arriving, the school expanded.

In November 1912, the IRO contacted Simon with an urgent request to locate Shiman Dunetz, a Galveston immigrant. Dunetz had sent his relatives in Kiev a letter bearing a Fort Worth postmark. New York's Kiev Society beseeched IRO headquarters to track down the man. Bressler in turn asked Simon to find the immigrant. Although Fort Worth's Jewish community was small and clannish, it took the local IRO agent over a month to find Dunetz, because by then the city's population exceeded seventy-three thousand. Finally, Simon located the missing man in a boarding house at 300 North Cherry Street. Simon assured the agency that the immigrant was "well, at work, and doing very well."<sup>109</sup>

The search for Shiman Dunetz, stretching from Kiev to Fort Worth via New York, is indicative of the widespread attention

given the Galveston Movement. It captured the imagination and the headlines. It was a dramatic undertaking heralded with more fanfare and publicity than the IRO's placement program. Yet, during the life span of the Galveston immigration movement, from 1907 to 1914, the IRO's New York office was far more successful than its Gulf Coast offshoot. During the same seven-year period, the IRO resettled four times as many Jews as the Galveston movement: 40,186 clients compared with 10,000 who went west via Galveston. Working case by case instead of by the boatload, the IRO's numbers were much higher, its politics less complicated, and its transportation costs significantly lower.<sup>110</sup> The comparison illuminates why the Galveston movement was short-lived.

*Personal and Institutional Postscripts*

When the Galveston Movement ended, the work of the IRO went on, albeit at a slower and slower pace. The outbreak of World War I in Europe disrupted immigration. In 1914, the IRO placed 3,501 clients across the nation; in 1915 the number dropped to 1,821; in 1916 it dipped to 1,434, and in 1917 to 1,006.

Although the work of the IRO was winding down, the immigrants' lives went on. Many of Fort Worth's seventy-two IRO cases stood the test of time. Nineteen of these families, or twenty-six percent, were still in business or in residence in 1920, according to the local city directory. This percentage is remarkably higher than retention rates in cities similarly scrutinized. Robert Rockaway's study of Detroit reports that of eighty-one men the IRO resettled in 1905, "ten left within the year and 85 percent of those remaining left within three years." Out of another 101 men sent to Detroit in 1907, "only thirteen were located in the city in 1909."<sup>111</sup> Jack Glazier, focusing on Indianapolis, also charted a dramatic decline, "The number dropped from forty-five in a 1907 sample to eight by 1908 and six in 1909."<sup>112</sup> Marc Lee Raphael, tracking IRO immigrants sent to Columbus, Ohio, found only five of twenty-four men assigned there in 1905 still listed in subsequent city directories up to 1910.<sup>113</sup> Glazier, Rockaway, and Raphael conclude that the IRO's boast of a seventy-five to ninety-four percent retention rate is exaggerated. The Fort Worth

numbers, while higher than those in Detroit, Indianapolis and Columbus, bolster the contention that the IRO inflated its retention rates.

City directories are far from comprehensive and not always a reliable way to track foreign-born arrivals. Many immigrants anglicized their names. Others left the first town to which they were sent but remained west of the Mississippi. Indeed, four IRO clients gravitated to Fort Worth from other cities: two from Gainesville, one from Houston, and another from Austin. The names of additional IRO families not listed in Fort Worth's 1920 directory show up in other sources such as Jewish newspapers, synagogue records, and Texas tombstones in Wichita Falls, Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas.<sup>114</sup>

The columns of the *Jewish Monitor*, Fort Worth's weekly paper, flesh out many an immigrant's life and provide further evidence of acculturation and *tzedaka*. Nathan Fox, for example, is listed in 1919 among the \$10 donors to the Kobrina Relief Fund.<sup>115</sup> Manyes Kruger, Julius's wife, teamed up with a fellow immigrant to raise \$75 for the "war sufferer's fund."<sup>116</sup> The family of Wolf Moses, the shoemaker who detested his trade, pledged a dollar a month to the local Hebrew Relief Committee.<sup>117</sup> Today, Wolf Moses' seventy-two-year-old son conducts oral history interviews for the Fort Worth Jewish Archives. His grandsons operate one of the region's largest glass-installation businesses.

Sam Resnick, the immigrant Hebrew teacher, proved such a popular instructor that the *Jewish Monitor* profiled him in 1915, noting that he was orphaned as a youth and studied at Lithuania's famed Slobotka and Telz yeshivas. By 1920, he was secretary of Fort Worth's Zionist Victory Celebration.<sup>118</sup> David Goldberg, the other Hebrew teacher who arrived with a job awaiting him, enlisted in the Army during World War I. Profiled on the pages of the *Monitor*, "Private Dave Goldberg" was lauded as the top "pastry chef" in his division. According to the newspaper, "Goldberg was so inspired by the gefillete [*sic*] fish served at the Pesach Seder [in Fort Worth] that he made some for the Remount

*Julius Kruger (left) with brother Sam Kruger and unidentified woman.  
Sam, a jeweler, sponsored Julius's 1906 IRO placement in Fort Worth.  
(Courtesy Bert Kruger Smith, Austin.)*

[Depot's] men. . . They had several fights to see who would get it first."<sup>119</sup> Susie Brecher, who in 1910 defaulted on a fifty-dollar note, became upwardly mobile. During the summer of 1915, her daughter Etta was mentioned in the *Monitor's* social columns among the guests at an engagement party.<sup>120</sup> Susie's husband, Sam Brecher, served as a building committee member of the Agudath Achim sick benefit lodge.<sup>121</sup> The Brechers, according to an advertisement in the 1920 city directory, became proprietors of a ladies' ready-to-wear store "where women and style get acquainted."

Another case of upward mobility was Abraham Jacob Cooles, whom Simon described in 1910 as "struggling but reliable."<sup>122</sup> Cooles' wife and four children, who reached Fort Worth with

train fare paid by the IRO, worked in the family furniture and hotel supply business. A daughter, Fanny, married Meyer Gernsbacher, whose father had cofounded the B'nai B'rith lodge and the Reform temple.<sup>123</sup>

The Kruger/Zale story is well-known throughout Texas. This extended family left Fort Worth for Wichita Falls, the county seat of a west Texas region rich in newly discovered oil. Jeweler Sam Kruger had been offered that city's Hamilton watch franchise. His nephews, Morris Bernard, or "M. B.," and William Zale branched off on their own, opening a jewelry store in 1924 that offered the innovative option of installment buying. The Zale families became pillars of the Wichita Falls Jewish community as well as retail jewelry giants and philanthropic leaders. Today, the M. B. & Edna Zale Foundation, which began in 1951, has assets of \$34 million. It donates about \$1.8 million annually, primarily to institutions that shelter the homeless (including Atlanta's Genesis Shelter for newborns and their families), feed the hungry, and provide medical care. In its first decade, the foundation pioneered efforts to award college and medical school scholarships to minority students. According to the Institute for Texan Cultures, the Zale Foundation was created because "two immigrant youths from Russia never forgot how it feels to be poor" and to be strangers in a strange land.<sup>124</sup>

Last but not least, U. M. Simon, B'nai B'rith's volunteer placement agent, continued his Jewish community involvement. He chaired the city's United Jewish Campaign and served twice as temple president and once as B'nai B'rith lodge president. He organized the Fort Worth branch of the American Jewish Relief Committee, which distributed funds to European Jews suffering during the war.<sup>125</sup> At home in Fort Worth, the war stimulated the local economy, creating a bumper crop of jobs. As the High Holy Days of 1915 approached, Simon took out a half-page advertisement in the *Jewish Monitor* to broadcast this public appeal:

As all of our Jews in Fort Worth are prospering, do not forget the thousands, nay hundreds of thousands of coreligionists who are

left without shelter and food and who are praying these holidays in the fields and woods not knowing where to go next.<sup>126</sup>

### *Conclusions*

Was the IRO a success in Fort Worth? The answer is a resounding *yes* by multiple measures. A history of the city's Jewish institutions written in 1915 asserts that each of the IRO immigrants remaining in Fort Worth had become "self-sustaining."<sup>127</sup> Earlier that year, Simon requested several copies of the U.S. Constitution translated into Yiddish. The agency mailed him six bilingual copies, printed in booklets appended with "questions and answers appertaining to citizenship." For some removals, the IRO's goal of Americanization was nearly at hand.<sup>128</sup>

The IRO also proved to be a catalyst for the creation of Jewish institutions. Fort Worth's Orthodox women developed the Ladies Hebrew Relief Society to assist the new arrivals; the Reform women launched an Americanization school; and in 1907 local Jewish men established a Hebrew Free Loan Association. Through the latter institution, immigrants seeking business financing could receive an interest-free loan so long as two fellow Jews co-signed. This lending institution, also known by its Hebrew name, *Gemiluth Chasodim*, continues its work today. Among its officers are descendants of those who received loans early on.

The Ladies Hebrew Relief Society, begun in 1903, disbanded in the summer of 1915 as the flow of new immigrant arrivals ebbed and as earlier immigrants became self sufficient. The group reconstituted itself later that year as the Auxiliary to the Hebrew Institute and today continues actively functioning as the Congregation Ahavath Sholom Ladies Auxiliary. During the auxiliary's initial years, it became involved with beautifying Ahavath Sholom's sanctuary, upgrading its Sabbath School (located next door in a building called the Hebrew Institute), and raising money through lawn parties and rummage sales for the Red Cross and for Jewish causes.<sup>129</sup>

The NCJW's Americanization School, started in 1907, continued between the world wars and during the post-World War II era. Some of its volunteer teachers were called back into service to

assist Soviet families who settled in Fort Worth during the 1970s refusenik era.

Prior to the IRO's presence in Fort Worth, the local B'nai B'rith was primarily a social organization. It, along with the Jewish community collectively, maintained a low profile. By the outbreak of World War I, the lodge was quick to assert itself publicly and politically if the need arose as it did in early May 1915. At that time, many immigrants sold fruits and vegetables on city street corners, undercutting grocers' prices. This practice may have been commonplace in New York, but not in small-town Texas.<sup>130</sup> An association of butchers and grocers lobbied city officials to prohibit sidewalk vendors. According to a news account, "The police commissioner, Mr. Mord Hurdleston, issued an order driving these men off the streets."<sup>131</sup> Outraged, a B'nai B'rith committee came to the defense of the peddlers who were "flabbergasted . . . that they would not be allowed to earn their bread even by the sweat of the brow."<sup>132</sup> The B'nai B'rith delegation "immediately went to see [the police commissioner] . . . . [A]fter explaining that these men were engaged in honest efforts to make a living and that many of them would be thrown upon charity if this means of livelihood were taken from them, the commissioner withdrew the order."<sup>133</sup> Clearly, by 1915 B'nai B'rith lodge members had political clout and were not too timid to use it to assist fellow Jews. Such assertiveness was a direct, if unanticipated consequence of IRO resettlement efforts.

Another way to measure the IRO's work in Fort Worth is to categorize immigrants under three headings the same way the New York agency did. Twenty-eight of the immigrants who reached Fort Worth had relatives already there. In bureaucratic parlance, these were "family reunification cases." Thirteen had friends in Fort Worth requesting their presence. Twenty-seven others were "direct placements," meaning strangers matched with job opportunities. The latter group, the agency's priority population, comprised but 37.5 percent of the total. The Fort Worth figures are at variance with IRO rhetoric. Surprisingly, these figures mirror percentages buried in IRO statistics. The IRO Executive Committee's 1910 progress report includes a table

showing that, nationwide, only 38 percent of the agency's clients were direct removals.<sup>134</sup> "Original cases regularly comprised less than half the annual total," Glazier observed. "The IRO had greater success even in . . . economic slowdowns, in helping people reunite with kin or friends in interior communities."<sup>135</sup> The agency's own statistics point up the difference between rhetoric and reality.

Had the IRO turned into an agency stressing family reunification, its numbers might have been greater, its retention rates higher, and its image more positive and personal. Instead, it chose as its objective jobs, which were subject to economic downturns and varying prerequisites. U. M. Simon grasped what worked best and shrewdly used the IRO as a vehicle to reunite families. It was not hard for him to see that immigrants fared better when surrounded by supportive relatives. His family history was proof of that premise.

The nature of Fort Worth, Texas, itself may have encouraged Simon's assertive stance toward the New York agency. Fort Worth, with its frontier mentality and its view of itself as peripheral to the mainstream, was a city accustomed to operating by its own rules and forging its own patterns. This maverick mindset, which lured many of its pioneers, did not disappear as the city grew. The independent spirit was evident among Jewish residents, from the early merchants who resisted any impulse to start a synagogue to the B'nai B'rith committee that leaped to the defense of street corner vendors. U. M. Simon, also marching to a different drummer, administered the IRO's immigrant resettlement program as he wished, adapting the agency's guidelines to suit his community. He took the initiative and made a success of an immigrant placement program that could easily have faltered and failed. The result was a resettlement effort that nurtured new arrivals, shaped Jewish institutions, and reaped benefits beyond the New York agency's expectations.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The author acknowledges research assistance from Esther Winesanker, who typed note cards on each immigrant, proofreader Donna Levine, Dr. Richard Selcer, and the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, which awarded a fellowship that enabled her to begin writing this essay.

<sup>2</sup> U. M. Simon to IRO (night telegram), January 31–February 1, 1911, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection, American Jewish Historical Society, New York (hereafter cited as IRO Collection). The Zale family's original name is spelled several different ways on IRO documents. However, both the 1920 U.S. Census and the *Fort Worth City Directory* from 1914 to 1932 spell the family surname "Zalefsky." By 1935, it is spelled Zale. Sam Zalefsky is best remembered in Fort Worth for having painted the synagogue. Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Tarrant County, Texas, Enumeration District 92, Sheet 12, Line 56.

<sup>3</sup> Robert A. Rockaway, "I Feel as if Newly Born": Immigrant Letters to the Industrial Removal Office," *American Jewish Archives* 45 (Fall/Winter 1993): 159–192.

<sup>4</sup> David M. Bressler, "Distribution," in Charles S. Bernheimer, ed., *The Russian Jew in the United States: Studies of Social Conditions in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, with a Description of Rural Settlements* (Philadelphia, 1905), 367, 369.

<sup>5</sup> The IRO compiled state-by-state totals but not city statistics. It dispatched 1,560 removals to Texas. The figures for neighboring states are 261 to Arkansas, 680 to Louisiana, and 311 to Oklahoma. Jack Glazier, *Dispersing the Ghetto: Relocation of Jewish Immigrants Across America* (Ithaca, 1998), Appendix, Table 1, 196; figures for the number of immigrants sent to Fort Worth were compiled from IRO ledgers, forms, and correspondence.

<sup>6</sup> David M. Bressler, "What Is the Removal Office?" paper to National Conference of Jewish Charities, May 27, 1904, Microfilm #2500, Klau Library, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

<sup>7</sup> Bressler, "Distribution," 367, 369.

<sup>8</sup> David M. Bressler, "Report of the Executive Committee of the Industrial Removal Office for the Year Ending December 31, 1910," 11, Box I, folder 5, IRO Collection.

<sup>9</sup> Simon to IRO, March 28, 1906, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>10</sup> William Toll, "The Double Revolution of Modern Jewry," *Reviews in American Jewish History* 12 (June 1984): 230–235.

<sup>11</sup> Glazier, *Dispersing the Ghetto*, 15–28; *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1972), s.v., "Baron de Hirsch Fund," "Hirsch, Baron Maurice de"; Robert A. Rockaway, *Words of the Uprooted: Jewish Immigrants in Early Twentieth-Century America* (Ithaca, 1998), 18–30, 205–209.

<sup>12</sup> Orphan Trains, <<http://www.outfitters.com/~melissa/ot/ot.html>> [accessed January 12, 2001]; Orphan Train Heritage Society of America, <[http://www.maquoketa.k12.ia.us/orphan\\_train.html](http://www.maquoketa.k12.ia.us/orphan_train.html)> [accessed November 1, 2000]; The Orphan Trains, <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/orphan/>> [accessed November 1, 2000]; Orphan Trains of Nebraska, <<http://www.rootsweb.com/~neadoptn/Orphan.htm>> [accessed January 12, 2001]; see also Stephen O' Connor, *Orphan Trains: The Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children He Saved and Failed* (Boston, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> David M. Bressler, "The Removal Work, Including Galveston," paper to National Conference of Jewish Charities, May 17, 1910; Bressler, "Report of Executive Committee," 1910.

<sup>14</sup> The socially concerned founders of the IRO, like those involved in the Orphan Train movement, shared the Progressive Era conviction that a great and growing country could resolve all problems posed by the industrial age. The "modern city," despite its pockets of squalor, presented not problems but opportunities for remedial action. In reference to the dark side of progressivism, Teddy Roosevelt, a leading symbol of the era, believed that widespread antisemitism could be curbed if only Jews developed their "Maccabee or fighting side" and participated "more conspicuously in rough and manly work." J. Leonard Bates, *The United States 1898-1928: Progressivism and a Society in Transition* (New York, 1976), 66; see also William L. O'Neill, *The Progressive Years: America Comes of Age* (New York, 1975), and Van Wyck Brooks, *The Confident Years: 1885-1915* (New York, 1952).

<sup>15</sup> Bressler, "Report of Executive Committee," 1910.

<sup>16</sup> Maurice Faber to IRO, n.d. (probably May 1901), Box 64-A, Tyler folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>17</sup> "By the death of Leo Levi, we have lost a friend . . . and an associate whose zeal, patience and judgment were of incalculable value and continual inspiration to renewed effort. . . . It was largely due to his effort that the work of this committee was instituted. His life, though short in years, was complete in usefulness and his memory, to all who cherish it, will be an incentive to good works." IRO Executive Committee Minutes, January 16, 1904, Box 1, Removal Committee Minutes 1903-1917 folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>18</sup> Natalie Ornish, *Pioneer Jewish Texans* (Dallas, 1989), 265-266.

<sup>19</sup> Maurice Faber to IRO, February 2, 1904, Box 64-A, Tyler folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>20</sup> "About 40 of our prominent Israelites assembled at the Knights of Pythias Hall and under the auspices of Mr. Charles Sanger of Waco and Mr. Waldstein of Dallas assisted by Messrs. A. Weber, L. Hirschhorn and Jules Dreyfus of Dallas, effected the organization of a lodge of the independent order of the B'nai B'rith. The name selected was Elias Sanger Lodge." "Fort Worth, Texas," *Southwestern Jewish Sentiment*, August 2, 1901. Later that month, B'nai B'rith representatives organized new lodges in Gainesville, eighty miles north of Fort Worth, and Texarkana, three hundred miles east. Texas' earliest B'nai B'rith Lodges include Dallas, founded in 1873; Waco, 1873; San Antonio, 1874; Victoria, 1874, Tyler, 1884; Austin, 1875; Galveston, 1875; Kilgore/Marshall, 1876; Corsicana, 1877; Houston, 1894, and El Paso, 1901. Information researched by Barbara Pittman, B'nai B'rith Texarkoma Regional Administrator, Houston; Fort Worth's first experience with B'nai B'rith was in 1876 when "brothers" from Waco and Dallas took the train there and helped charter Lodge 269. During an economic downturn several years later, the lodge disintegrated. When a new lodge was organized in 1901, none of the members were aware of the earlier effort. See *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, November 21, 1876.

<sup>21</sup> Portland, Los Angeles, and San Francisco exemplify places where B'nai B'rith brought together diverse elements of the Jewish community. William Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class: Portland Jewry over Four Generations* (Albany, NY, 1982), 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> "On Tuesday last, at the parlors of the Delaware Hotel, the organization of [National] Council of Jewish Women was perfected with a membership of twenty-six. The following are the officers: Mrs. N. Brann, president; Mrs. M. Schloss, vice president; Mrs. L. E. Cohn,

secretary; Miss Sara V. Carb, treasurer." "Fort Worth, Texas," *Southwestern Jewish Sentiment*, November 1, 1901.

<sup>23</sup> Joyce Antler, *The Journey Home: How Jewish Women Shaped Modern America* (New York: 1997), 1-4.

<sup>24</sup> Founding Documents Box, Beth-El Congregation Archives, Fort Worth (hereafter cited as Beth-El Archives).

<sup>25</sup> Polly Mack, "Annual Report, Fort Worth Section, [National] Council of Jewish Women," May 6, 1907, NCJW Box, Annual Reports folder, Beth-El Archives.

<sup>26</sup> "Sketch of Jewish Institutions of Fort Worth," *Jewish Monitor*, September 10, 1915.

<sup>27</sup> Alex Foreman, age 41, Case No. 4857, is listed as a general worker from Russia. The agency paid \$65.10 for train tickets plus \$11.50 for freight and expenses. Removal Record Ledger, January 1903-July 1904, 160, Box 7, IRO Collection.

<sup>28</sup> "History of B'nai B'rith," in Max Kaye Scrapbook, No. 2, p. 51, Ahavath Sholom Library, Fort Worth; Removal Record Ledger, 160, Box 7, IRO Collection.

<sup>29</sup> Mrs. L. F. [Sarah Levy] Shanblum, "Ladies Hebrew Relief Society," in "Sketch of Jewish Institutions of Fort Worth," *Jewish Monitor*, September 10, 1915.

<sup>30</sup> Mack, "Annual Report, Fort Worth Section, [National] Council of Jewish Women," May 6, 1907.

<sup>31</sup> "Data Showing Conditions of Jewish Life in Small American Cities," Fort Worth Survey, Demographic Surveys Box 123, Surveys Small Towns folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>32</sup> Caleb Pirtle III, *Fort Worth: The Civilized West* (Fort Worth, 1980), 61, 73-74, 87, 102; "Fort Worth, TX," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/FF/hdf1.html>> [accessed January 12, 2001]; Fort Worth Survey, Bureau of Information and Advice, April 9, 1912, IRO Collection; Demographic Surveys Box 123, Surveys Small Towns folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>33</sup> *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 21, 1932, "Washer, Nat" envelope, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington.

<sup>34</sup> Fort Worth's relationship to Dallas can be compared with Portland's position subordinate to San Francisco. See Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class*, 8. For Dallas's early Jewish history see Gerry Cristol, *A Light in the Prairie: Temple Emanu-El of Dallas 1872-1997* (Fort Worth, 1998); Hollace Ava Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and Their Work* (College Station, Texas, 1999), 82-84, 221-222.

<sup>35</sup> Flora Weltman Schiff, "History of the Jews of Fort Worth," *Reform Advocate*, January 24, 1914; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Tarrant County, Texas, Enumeration District 85, Sheet 5, Line 90; Founding Families Box, Gabert folder, Beth-El Archives.

<sup>36</sup> "Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served Organizations From the State of Texas," *Waller's Cavalry*, Microfilm R-Z; Julia Kathryn Garrett, *Fort Worth: A Frontier Triumph* (Fort Worth, 1996), 205; J. C. Terrell, *Reminiscences of Early Days of Fort Worth* (Fort Worth, 1906) 58-59; Juliet George Dees, "Panther City Patriarch: Jacob Samuels, 1836-1906," B. H. Levy graduate student essay competition, July 1989, box 4, folder 19, Southern Jewish Historical Society Archives, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

<sup>37</sup> David Carb, *Sunrise in the West* (New York, 1931), 328, 342-343.

<sup>38</sup> Dahlman, who came to Texas by way of Louisiana, was initially a clothier working with his brothers Henry and Aaron. Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Tarrant County, Texas, Enumeration District 89, Sheet 11, Line 18; Families Box, Dahlman folder, Beth-El

Archives; University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures, *The Jewish Texans* (San Antonio, 1984), 12.

<sup>39</sup> Families Box, Rosen folder, Beth-El Archives.

<sup>40</sup> *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 21, 1932, Families Box, Washer folder, Beth-El Archives.

<sup>41</sup> Schiff, "History of the Jews of Fort Worth," *Reform Advocate*.

<sup>42</sup> Sander L. Gilman, "Introduction: The Frontier as a Model for Jewish History," in Sander L. Gilman and Milton Shain, eds., *Jewries at the Frontier: Accommodation, Identity, Conflict* (Urbana and Chicago, 2000), 18. See also Seth Wolitz's essay, "Bifocality in the Jewish Identity in the Texas-Jewish Experience," in *Jewries at the Frontier*, 185–208.

<sup>43</sup> Application, Texas Historical Marker, Cemetery Box, Emanuel Hebrew Rest Historic Marker file, Beth-El Archives.

<sup>44</sup> Fort Worth Business Box, Fort Worth Jewish Archives, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Fort Worth; Moses Shanblum, "History of Fort Worth Jewry," *Jewish Monitor*, December 11, 1925.

<sup>45</sup> *Congregation Ahavath Sholom: 5741–1980* (Fort Worth, 1980), 10–15, 20, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Hollace Ava Weiner, "The Mixers: The Role of Rabbis Deep in the Heart of Texas," *American Jewish History* 83 (September 1997): 312–315.

<sup>47</sup> Anne Nathan Cohen, *The Centenary History of Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas, 1854–1954* (Houston, 1954), 8–11, 23, 30–31.

<sup>48</sup> Lee Shai Weissbach, "East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South," *American Jewish History* 83 (September 1997): 243. In Fort Worth, Ahavath Sholom purchased land for an Orthodox cemetery in 1908. By then Emanuel Hebrew Rest included the graves of several non-Jewish spouses, an Orthodox taboo.

<sup>49</sup> Janis Scarlet Meyerson, telephone interview conducted by Hollace Ava Weiner, October 26, 2000.

<sup>50</sup> Weissbach, "Image of Jews in Small-Town South," 243; see also Leonard Rogoff, "Synagogue and Jewish Church: A Congregational History of North Carolina" *Southern Jewish History* 1 (1998): 43–82.

<sup>51</sup> According to family lore, an entire village, perhaps as many as seventy people, fled together to the United States. Henry W. Simon Jr., interview conducted by Hollace Ava Weiner, May 30, 2001; "Goldsmith Family Tree," Henry W. Simon Jr. personal papers, Fort Worth; the family's immigration date is in the Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Smith County Texas, Enumeration District 97, Sheet 4.

<sup>52</sup> *Who's Who in American Jewry: a Biographical Directory of Living Jews of the U.S. and Canada* (New York, 1928), s.v. "Simon, Uriah Myer"; Henry Simon interview; Florence W. Sillers, "Overflows of the Mississippi River," in Wirt A. Williams, ed., *History of Bolivar County, Mississippi* (Spartanburg, SC, 1976), 184–185.

<sup>53</sup> Rabbi Harvey E. Wessel, "A History of the Jews of Tyler and Smith County, Texas," in Robert Glover and Linda Brown Cross, eds., *Tyler and Smith County, Texas: An Historical Survey* (Tyler, 1976), 203, 254.

<sup>54</sup> The father died May 26, 1892, and is buried in Tyler's Oakwood Cemetery. Gertrude M. and Donald L. Teter, *Texas Jewish Burials: Alphabetically by Name* (Baytown, TX, 1997), 373. The four oldest Simon children were Sarah, born 1867 in Russia; Leila, born 1876 in Louisiana; Bernard (or Ben), born 1878 in Mississippi, and U. M., born 1879 in Mississippi. David Brown, the German immigrant who later married Sarah Simon, lived with the Si-

mons in Mississippi and worked in the family grocery store. Descendants believe he was a cousin. Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Bolivar County, Mississippi, Enumeration District 142, Sheet 46, Line 17; The Simons' two youngest children were Mamie, born 1881 in Mississippi, and Ida, born 1884 in Texas. Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Smith County, Texas, Enumeration District 97, Sheet 4.

<sup>55</sup> Simon's nieces were Bessie, Ida, and Pearl Brown. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Tarrant County, Texas, Enumeration District 18, Sheet 4, Line 2; Bessie Brown married Meredith Carb, son of Fort Worth pioneer Isadore Carb.

<sup>56</sup> *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 24, 1954, clipping in Founding Families Box, Simon folder, Beth-El Archives; *Who's Who in American Jewry*, 1928, s.v. "Simon, Uriah Myer"; B. B. Paddock, *History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest* Edition III (Chicago and New York, 1922), 42–43.

<sup>57</sup> Theo Mack, Sidney Samuels, and Max K. Mayer practiced law in Fort Worth. *Fort Worth City Directory 1905–06*, microfiche, Genealogy Room, Fort Worth Public Library.

<sup>58</sup> Natalie Simon, telephone interview conducted by Hollace Ava Weiner, May 30, 2001.

<sup>59</sup> Julius Heslein, 30, Hungarian, Case No. 4953, June, 1903; B. Goldman, 33, Russian, Case No. 5263; Heslein's wife (Flora) and child, Case No. 6784, arrived in Fort Worth December 1903. Removal Record Ledger, January 1903–July 1904, 163, 169, 200, Box 7, IRO Collection.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, Louis Cohen, 32, Case No. 6263, 50.

<sup>61</sup> Fania Feldman Kruger, "Reb Berrel in America," *All Seeds Blended* (Austin, 1995), 33. Kruger, a widely published poet in her day, married watchmaker Sam Kruger, who brought his brother and sister to Fort Worth via the IRO.

<sup>62</sup> Simon to IRO, October 14, 1904, handwritten note on Placement Record Form, Appendix I, Placement Records/Cities, 1904–1906, Texas folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>63</sup> Simon to IRO, March 22, 1906, handwritten note on Placement Record Form, Appendix I, Placement Records/Cities, 1904–1906, Texas folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>64</sup> Simon to IRO, March 28, 1906, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>65</sup> Simon to IRO, June 1, 1910, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection; *Fort Worth City Directory 1907*, lists David Rubin at Rubin Tailors, 205 E. 12th Street.

<sup>66</sup> IRO to Simon, February 9, 1914, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>67</sup> Simon to IRO, May 4 and May 8, 1915, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>68</sup> U. [Julius] Kruger to IRO, August 17, 1906, and IRO to Mr. N. [sic] Kruger, August 21, 1906, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>69</sup> Tommy W. Stringer, *Zale Corporation . . . from the beginning*, (Dallas, 1985), 7.

<sup>70</sup> Simon to IRO (night telegram), January 31–February 1, 1911, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection; Donald Zale telephone interview conducted by Hollace Ava Weiner, October 26, 2000.

<sup>71</sup> Placement Record form, December 3, 1906, Appendix I, Placement Records/Cities, 1904–1906, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection; *Fort Worth City Directory 1913*.

<sup>72</sup> IRO to Simon, June 13, 1911; Simon to IRO, June 27, 1911, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>73</sup> Simon to IRO, September 17, 1910, and August 26, 1911, Box 64, Fort Worth folder. The IRO sent Nathan Ratner to Fort Worth at the request of his elderly father, A. Ratner, who in 1888 had helped the community acquire its first *Sefer Torah*. "Sketch of Jewish Institutions of Fort Worth," *Jewish Monitor*, September 10, 1915; Removal Record Ledger, April

1908–December 1911, 101, Box 10, IRO Collection, lists Israel Leder, 35, Russian, Case No. 31202, no trade, sent to Fort Worth September 1911.

<sup>74</sup> Simon to IRO, October 3, 1912, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>75</sup> Simon to IRO, November 11, 1910 Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>76</sup> Simon to IRO, September 25, 1912, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection. Simon's negative attitude toward the Dworkins is puzzling. The Dworkins met Simon's usual screening criteria. Longtime congregants at Ahavath Sholom, they were involved in a variety of business enterprises. Joe Dworkin operated Dworkin's Café at Main and Fourth streets, and Hayman Dworkin worked at Dworkin Brothers Shoes at 117 East Exchange Avenue, according to merchant lists compiled by the Fort Worth Jewish Sesquicentennial Committee. See "City Directory Lists," Sesquicentennial Box, Beth-El Archives. Gary Dworkin, a third-generation member of the family, recalled that there were two Joe Dworkins in Fort Worth in 1912. One was his grandfather, a dry goods merchant whose given name was Keshel. The other was a twenty-four-year-old cousin, also in the dry goods business. Gary Dworkin was unfamiliar with U. M. Simon or with any in-laws named Goldstein. Gary Dworkin telephone interview conducted by Hollace Ava Weiner, May 12, 2001.

<sup>77</sup> IRO to Simon, August 16 and September 7, 1910; Simon to IRO, September 9 and September 17, 1910 Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection,

<sup>78</sup> Simon to IRO, November 15, 1910, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>79</sup> Placement Record Form, April 11, 1905, containing handwritten note dated April 15, 1905, from Mrs. I. Cohen, Gainesville, in Appendix I, Texas folder, IRO Collection. Of three people sent to Gainesville, located on the Texas side of the Red River, two gravitated to Fort Worth. Nathan Fuchs was described as "doing well" and is listed in *Fort Worth City Directory 1907, 1907–1908, 1909–1910*.

<sup>80</sup> Placement Record form, April 23, 1906, listing Wolf Moses includes handwritten note of April 26, 1906, from Simon: "Parties are doing very well at present time." Appendix I, Texas folder, IRO Collection; Simon to IRO, March 28, 1906; Simon to IRO, January 15, 1907; IRO to Simon, January 22, 1907; Simon to IRO, January 31, 1907, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection; *Fort Worth City Directory 1906, 1914*.

<sup>81</sup> Wolf Moses' descendants recall his friendship with U. M. Simon. R. D. Moses interview conducted by Hollace Ava Weiner, Fort Worth, December 9, 2000.

<sup>82</sup> Simon to IRO, November 5, 1909, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection. Charles Blumenthal (c. 1871–1957), a native of Lithuania, was rabbi at Ahavath Sholom from 1908 to 1913 and 1916 to 1919. He also served in Savannah, Buffalo, Shreveport, El Paso, and Waco. He returned to Fort Worth in 1945 and served until his retirement in 1956. "Chronology of Rabbi Charles Blumenthal" Baylor/Texas Collection, Waco.

<sup>83</sup> "Have investigated in regard to Sam Resnick. He has a position offered here as assistant teacher in the Hebrew school as soon as he gets here. You may send him without delay." Simon to IRO (wire), November 5, 1914, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>84</sup> IRO to Simon, June 15, 1914, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>85</sup> *Fort Worth City Directory 1920*.

<sup>86</sup> Simon to IRO, August 26, 1912, and January 18, 1913; IRO to Susie Brecher, November 25, 1912; IRO to Simon, November 25 and December 10, 1913, January 14 and January 22, 1913, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>87</sup> Henry Simon interview.

<sup>88</sup> Simon to IRO, October 21, 1913, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>89</sup> Glazier, *Dispersing the Ghetto*, 199.

<sup>90</sup> Rockaway, *Words of the Uprooted*, 39.

<sup>91</sup> Jos. Newman to IRO, June 11, 1905, Box 64-A, Marshall folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>92</sup> W. M. Klein to IRO, January 18, 1905, Box 64-A, Palestine folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>93</sup> A. Goldman, S. Goldman, and William Franks to IRO, April 18, 1905, Box 64-A, Paris folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>94</sup> Sol Schoenmann, May 7, 1906, handwritten note scribbled on Placement Record Form, Appendix I, Placement Records/Cities, 1904–1906, Texas folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>95</sup> Max Snaman to IRO, August 31, 1905, Box 64, Austin folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>96</sup> Assistant Manager IRO to I. Kirchmer, January 23, 1905, Box 64-A, Sherman folder, IRO Collection; Order No. 83, December 28, 1904, Box 15, folder 8, IRO Collection.

<sup>97</sup> Glazier, *Dispersing the Ghetto*, 25, 142–145, 150–151, 179.

<sup>98</sup> Rockaway, *Words of the Uprooted*, 81, 107, 109.

<sup>99</sup> IRO Cashier to Simon, January 14, 1913, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>100</sup> Simon to IRO, January 18, 1913, *ibid.* Hannah Goldstein Simon died January 7, 1913, at age 65 and is buried in Fort Worth's Emanuel Hebrew Rest. Teter, *Texas Jewish Burials*, 372.

<sup>101</sup> IRO to Simon, January 22, 1913, Box 64, Fort Worth Folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>102</sup> *American Jewish Yearbook* 16 (1914–1915): 352.

<sup>103</sup> Bressler, "The Removal Work," Report of the Executive Committee of the Industrial Removal Office for the Year Ending December 31, 1913, 2, Box 1, folder 5, IRO Collection.

<sup>104</sup> Bressler, "The Removal Work."

<sup>105</sup> See Bernard Marinbach, *Galveston: Ellis Island of the West* (Albany, NY, 1983); "Rabbi Cohen on Immigration Work," *Texas Jewish Herald*, April 22, 1915; Henry Cohen, "The Galveston Movement: Its First Year," *B'nai B'rith* [Los Angeles] *Messenger*, April 16, 1909, reprinted in *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 18 (January 1986): 114–119.

<sup>106</sup> Simon to IRO, April 26, 1909, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, Simon to IRO, April 3, 1911.

<sup>108</sup> Polly Mack, "Annual Report, Fort Worth Section, [National] Council of Jewish Women," May 6, 1907, NCJW Box, Annual Reports folder, Beth-El Archives.

<sup>109</sup> IRO to Simon, November 15, December 5, 12, 19, 1912; Simon to IRO, December 9, 17, 1912, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>110</sup> Jacob Schiff deemed the Galveston movement a failure, as have many historians. The reason is that percentage-wise it brought relatively few immigrants to the Gulf Coast port. Marinbach, writing in 1983 with a broader perspective, credits the Galveston movement with placing immigrants across the Midwest and Far West to places where no Jew had ever lived, a circumstance that led to "recognition of Judaism as one of the three great religious groups in the United States." He also credits the newcomers with spiritually strengthening some faltering synagogues. Marinbach, *Ellis Island of the West*, 181–195.

<sup>111</sup> Robert A. Rockaway, *The Jews of Detroit: From the Beginning, 1762–1914* (Detroit, 1986), 118, n. 49.

<sup>112</sup> Glazier, *Dispersing the Ghetto*, 204–205, Appendix, Table 8.

<sup>113</sup> Marc Lee Raphael, *Jews & Judaism in a Midwestern Community: Columbus Ohio, 1840–1975* (Columbus, 1979), 154, n. 20.

<sup>114</sup> Teter, *Texas Jewish Burials*.

<sup>115</sup> *Jewish Monitor*, May 14, 1919.

<sup>116</sup> "Local Items," *Jewish Monitor*, August 27, 1915.

<sup>117</sup> "Contributors to the Local Relief Committee," *Jewish Monitor*, August 20, 1915.

<sup>118</sup> *Jewish Monitor*, May 14, 1919 (Nathan Fox), September 10, 1915 (Kruger), May 14 and June 2, 1920 (Resnick).

<sup>119</sup> "Stories About Our Soldier Boys in Camp and Abroad," *Jewish Monitor*, April 25, 1919.

<sup>120</sup> *Jewish Monitor*, July 1, 1915.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, July 29, 1915.

<sup>122</sup> Simon to IRO, August 16, 1910, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection; *Fort Worth City Directory 1920*; burial records, Ahavath Sholom, Fort Worth.

<sup>123</sup> "Myer was one of the richest men in town until the Depression," according to his great niece. Meyerson interview.

<sup>124</sup> Zale interview; M. B. & Edna Zale Foundation, 1999 Annual Report; Stringer, *Zale Corporation . . . from the beginning*, 7-15, 61-62; University of Texas Institute for Texan Cultures, *The Jewish Texans*, 20-21; Ormish, *Pioneer Jewish Texans*, 166-168.

<sup>125</sup> Simon remained a high-profile civic figure until 1941 when he and his law partner were accused of misappropriating money from the Texas Christian University trust fund, which they helped administer. Simon was found guilty in a civil court trial, fined, and suspended from the bar for one year. "Simon, U. M." envelope and "Mary Coutts Burnett Trust Case" envelope, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 8, 1941-June 27, 1945, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection*, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington. Once Simon's law license was reissued, he helped out in his sons' law office, quietly continued his volunteer work, and rarely stepped inside the courthouse. Frances Weltman interview conducted by Hollace Ava Weiner, October 15, 2000. Descendants acknowledge that there were violations of fiduciary trust. They assign much of the blame to Simon's senior law partner, W. H. Slay, who was also found guilty and who had helped create the university's Mary Coutts Burnett Trust. Henry Simon interview.

<sup>126</sup> *Jewish Monitor*, September 10, 1915. The American Jewish Relief Committee was one of the groups that merged into the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

<sup>127</sup> *Jewish Monitor*, September 10, 1915.

<sup>128</sup> Short on funds, the IRO asked Simon to "kindly refund to us, at your earliest convenience, forty eight cents, our outlay in the matter." He sent a forty-eight-cent money order along with a note: "I thank you for your kind interest and attention to this matter, and wish to assure you it is appreciated very much." IRO to Simon, October 18, 28, 1915; Simon to IRO, November 5, 1915, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO Collection.

<sup>129</sup> "Auxiliary Due to Mark Date," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 26, 1965; *Congregation Ahavath Sholom, 5741-1980*, (Fort Worth, 1980) 52. The city's Jewish federation began in the mid-1930s.

<sup>130</sup> Observation based on conversations with Fort Worth historian Dr. Richard F. Selcer, author of *Hell's Half Acre: The Life and Legend of a Red-Light District* (Fort Worth, 1991).

<sup>131</sup> *Jewish Monitor*, May 6, 1915.

<sup>132</sup> "History of B'nai B'rith," Max Kaye Scrapbook, No. 2, 51, Ahavath Sholom Library, Fort Worth.

<sup>133</sup> A *Jewish Monitor* (May 6, 1915) editorial stated, "We commend Commissioner Hurdleston for his humanness. . . . These men and their families need to live at the present. We

hope that the Commissioner will continue to use good judgment in cases where the lives and welfare of many are concerned. Men need friends at all times, and the men who have friends are those who have earned them. Those who have been benefited by Commissioner Hurdleston's withdrawal of the order will not forget him."

<sup>134</sup> Report of Executive Committee 1910, Table No. 7; Report of Executive Committee of IRO, 1913, Table No. 9, Box 1, folder 5, IRO Collection.

<sup>135</sup> Glazier, *Dispersing the Ghetto*, 199.

Climbing the Crystal Stair:  
Annie T. Wise's Success as an Immigrant  
in Atlanta's Public School System (1872-1925)<sup>1</sup>

by

Arlene G. Rotter

**A**nnie Teitlebaum Wise was a prominent figure in the early years of Atlanta's public school system. Born in Eperies, Hungary, on March 26, 1866, Annie was the daughter of Maurice and Mary Pollak Teitlebaum.<sup>2</sup> The family immigrated to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1871, where Annie's father secured work as a bookkeeper for the Atlanta City Brew Company.<sup>3</sup> In November 1872 Annie Teitlebaum entered the Walker Street School unable to speak a word of English.<sup>4</sup> She learned quickly, however, completed grammar school, and attended Girls' High School. In 1885 Mrs. Wise began teaching as a supernumerary at the Walker Street School. Over the next forty years she had an exemplary career as teacher and administrator for the Atlanta Public School System.<sup>5</sup> Little has been written about Annie Teitlebaum Wise to date, but the accolades she earned depict the ways in which a child of immigrants became a successful figure in Atlanta's educational arena. Delineating her accomplishments provides a means of analyzing the degree of social and political success afforded one of Atlanta's first female Jewish immigrant high school graduates.

*The Historical Setting*

Although Jewish immigrants resided in the South since colonial times, in 1850 only twenty-six Jews lived in Atlanta, comprising one percent of the total 2,572 inhabitants and seventeen percent of the city's foreign-born population.<sup>6</sup> A decade later Atlanta's population grew by 270 percent, but the Jewish population

within the city limits only doubled. Many of Atlanta's foreign-born residents settled in the South after initially arriving in northern ports. Those who moved took advantage of advertisements they read and stories they heard indicating that those willing to take a risk could develop lucrative businesses in Atlanta and other southern towns. Almost all Jews who chose Atlanta were of German descent. They were young adults seeking a means of making money as proprietors of small businesses.<sup>7</sup> Even though the Jewish community comprised a small percentage of the total population throughout the nineteenth century, Jews tended to settle in certain wards of the city in a pattern that has been described by historians as "ethnic clustering."<sup>8</sup> From antebellum days to the late nineteenth century, many German Jewish arrivals in Atlanta found economic success as proprietors of dry goods businesses. By the 1880s Russian Jewish immigrants entered the city, escaping the pogroms rampaging their homeland. They soon outnumbered the central European group, but they took decades to achieve the degree of economic success experienced by the German Jews.<sup>9</sup>

Although some Jewish immigrants left Europe to escape anti-semitism, not all were welcome in Georgia. In Decatur, a city adjacent to Atlanta, school leaders created a policy designed to control access to public education. From Decatur's public school inception in 1902 until 1932, schools were in session from Tuesdays through Saturdays. Compulsory Saturday attendance made this city an unfavorable residence for Jews who would not have allowed their children to attend school on the Sabbath.

The Rittenbaums were the only family recorded as residents of Decatur during this time, and they lived incognito as Greeks.<sup>10</sup> The Rittenbaum girls reminisced that their Jewish ancestry remained a secret throughout their years in Decatur's public schools. Historian Tom Keating wrote that the unfavorable attitude towards Jews remained in Decatur for years.<sup>11</sup> Decatur's history depicts how school policy impacted the immigrants' entrance to or exclusion from educational and economic opportunities. Some of the Jews living in Atlanta, however, had a different experience.

*Annie Teitlebaum Wise*

*(From James B. Nevin,  
Prominent Women  
of Georgia,  
courtesy Georgia State  
University Library.)*

Historian Mark K. Bauman investigated the political and economic influence of Atlanta's Jewish immigrants during the latter half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> He corroborated Steven Hertzberg's findings that a small group of central European Jews came to Atlanta prior to the Civil War, established businesses, amassed assets, and became politically active.<sup>13</sup> Several were appointed to Atlanta's board of education, such as David Mayer who served from the inception of the board in 1869 until his death in 1890.<sup>14</sup> Mayer has been credited with protecting the needs of Jewish students. For example, he fought to allow these children to be excused from school for Jewish holidays, a practice that continued in Atlanta's public schools until Mayer's demise. After he died other Jewish men filled his spot on the board of education, but none of them was as influential as Mayer had been.<sup>15</sup> Bauman explained that the small cluster of central European Jews gained power by assimilating enough to develop liaisons with influential white leaders while simultaneously developing ethnocentric Jewish organizations. He and other researchers have depicted how Jewish men attained

wealth and power in Atlanta, but little has been published illuminating the role immigrant women played in shaping the city's growth.

*Public Education and Atlanta's Immigrant Jewish Women*

Some studies have examined the connection between female upward mobility and educational opportunities. Historian John Rury found that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American high schools predominantly served white, middle class, native-born individuals and excluded most others.<sup>16</sup> Almost thirty years ago Timothy James Crimmins wrote a dissertation refuting the theory some educators expounded that, since its opening in 1872, Atlanta's public school system functioned as an enabler for upward social mobility for all children living within the city.<sup>17</sup> Like Rury, Crimmins found that the schools served as a means by which children of the white upper-middle class and wealthy elite furthered their academic endeavors, while lower class children failed to attend. Furthermore an extremely disproportionate number of immigrant children attended the public schools. Crimmins wrote, "The surprising element in the composition of Girls' High in 1881 was its large ethnic concentration: one quarter of the girls had an immigrant parent, a fraction which was double their proportion of the city's white population."<sup>18</sup> Left unanswered by Crimmins is the degree to which the female immigrant students were able to succeed socially, politically, and economically once they graduated high school. Excelling academically in an educational system is one major step up "the crystal stair" but not the final one. Conversely, determining the graduate's accomplishments might reveal the degree of success afforded such an individual beyond the institutional setting. Many female immigrants may have completed a high-school education, but how many achieved success in their later endeavors?

Children of central European Jews living in Atlanta comprised a high percentage of foreign-born students or those of immigrant parents attending Boys' High School and Girls' High School in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In some years they accounted for more than twenty percent of the graduating classes.<sup>19</sup>

Hertzberg suggested that the preponderance of Jewish students in the schools illustrates the commitment their parents made to public education, believing that a good education was the key to rapid advancement in the host culture and to ultimate success. Traditionally many Jews have held a high regard for learning. Selma Berrol wrote, however, that in the urban North a love of learning alone did not assure that immigrant parents would support educational endeavors for their children. The economic status of the family and the degree to which the children were needed to support business endeavors also influenced school attendance and matriculation.<sup>20</sup> Hertzberg reported that in 1850 ten percent of the Jewish families living in Atlanta had gained economic stability as proprietors of dry-goods stores and other businesses that served the needs of Atlanta's populace.<sup>21</sup> Their successors continued to develop the family businesses that served the needs of Atlanta's residents before and after the Civil War.

*Josephine Joel Heyman: Exemplar of the  
German Jewish Female Experience in Atlanta*

The biography of Josephine Joel Heyman (1901–1993) exemplifies the achievements of a daughter of affluent German Jews in Atlanta. The Joel family moved from the south side of town, where many Jews lived, to the north side where most of their neighbors were Christian. As a result Josephine grew up with Christian and Jewish friends. Jo attended Tenth Street School and Girls' High School. Her diary depicts mixed encounters with her gentile schoolmates, but she never hid her Judaism as the Rittenbaum girls did in Decatur. Bauman described the Joel family's reaction to the Leo Frank case, which fueled an outbreak of anti-semitism in Atlanta. Frank was an Atlanta Jewish businessman who was convicted of murdering a thirteen-year-old female employee in 1913. He was given a death sentence that was later commuted to life in prison. Bauman wrote, "Fearful of rioting, the women and children of the Joel family were sent to Birmingham at the time of the commutation."<sup>22</sup> In 1915 Frank was lynched by an angry mob.

When the incident died down, the Joel family returned to Atlanta, and Josephine continued her education. Teenaged Josephine struggled with her wish to marry and become a proper Jewish wife, and with her subsequent desire to utilize her Smith College degree to enter a career worthy of her intellect. She decided on matrimony and had a long, presumably happy marriage. Her somewhat tumultuous relationships with her Christian classmates at college influenced her to become active in the Temple, as the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation was known, and its sisterhood after graduation. Although she did not work, Jo did become involved in Jewish organizations as well as civil rights groups. According to Bauman, "As her diaries and letters illustrate, Jo experienced what sociologists call conflicts of marginality. German, Jewish, southern, female, and affluent, Josephine Joel fit into each of these circles, yet none of them fully defined her."<sup>23</sup>

The diary of Josephine Joel Heyman illustrates many of the dilemmas surrounding life choices of Jewish daughters of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century central-European immigrants. First, their foreign and religious status hindered their ability to attain high social status. Second, prejudice against their gender limited their monetary and political potential regardless of their educational feats. Women in the late 1800s and early twentieth century did not often hold prominent positions outside the home. Crimmins depicted limited goals for typical upper middle-class girls attending high school in nineteenth-century Atlanta: they were trained for traditional vocations in education or secretarial/bookkeeping positions. Others believed they would acquire an education fitting them to become wives of prominent businessmen. Immigrant female attendees had the same aspirations. Those who went to school had the advantages of the non-immigrant girls: they were affluent, white, and came from influential families residing in Atlanta. Many of their parents and perhaps grandparents had built lucrative businesses and gained political clout. The children of these predominantly central-European Jews found an educational niche at Girls' High School.

*Josephine Joel Heyman, Confirmation picture.  
(Courtesy the Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives,  
The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta.)*

*Annie Teitlebaum Wise: A Hungarian Jew's Atlanta Education*

Unlike Josephine Joel Heyman, Wise was not from Germany, but was born in Hungary. As Hertzberg has written, most of the Hungarian and Russian Jews residing in the South in the late nineteenth century initially had difficulty reaching the economic success of the German Jews. Wise was an exception, perhaps because her family arrived prior to the large flux of Russians and Hungarians who settled in Atlanta after the civil unrest in their indigenous countries beginning in 1881. When Annie's family arrived, the small number of non-German Jewish immigrants were

not a threat to the German descendants because they could be assimilated quickly into American culture.

The Teitlebaums moved into a section of town where more affluent people resided, rather than into a neighborhood that had a large concentration of immigrants. They did not live in the North before moving south. For unknown reasons, this family chose Atlanta as its new home. In November 1872 Annie entered the Walker Street School.<sup>24</sup> Before becoming principal of Boys' High School and Superintendent of Atlanta's Public Schools, William F. Slaton was a private tutor, who took Teitlebaum under his wing, teaching her English and acclimating her to American culture.<sup>25</sup> Apparently Slaton was a good teacher and Annie an excellent student. Annie was isolated in a class of non-speakers of English but learned quickly. By June 1873 the youngster spoke English so proficiently that she led her classmates in an exam that tested their language skills. She excelled throughout her elementary education, and twice while attending Walker she was promoted two grade levels within a single year.<sup>26</sup> Like Josephine Joel Heyman, Annie attended Girls' High School where she also excelled academically. "She not only led in literary pursuits, but had a marvelous social ability that made her the leader on the playground, in the Literary Society, and in all the social activities of the school."<sup>27</sup> Members of the Slaton family helped both girls succeed. Jo received mentoring from Mattie Slaton, W. F. Slaton's daughter, who was a French teacher at Girls' High and who, according to Heyman, favored Jewish students.<sup>28</sup>

After completing Girls' High School in the early 1880s, Annie Teitlebaum attended several universities, thus illustrating academic opportunities available to graduates of Atlanta's public secondary institutions. Like Heyman, Annie's immigrant status did not curtail her ability to acquire higher education. After becoming a teacher and assistant principal in the business department at Girls' High School in 1894, she attended the Sorbonne in Paris during summer vacations. She also took two English courses at Columbia University during the 1901 summer session.<sup>29</sup>

Wise also achieved entrance into institutions of higher education once only available to males. In 1917, dissatisfied with her previous college experiences, which she believed did not sufficiently enable her to improve her technological and business education teaching abilities, Annie enrolled in a commercial education program at Georgia Tech.

At the university level, progressive educational leaders were developing plans to introduce commercial programs into their institutions. This occurred during Kenneth Matheson's presidency at Georgia Tech when a night school was opened on March 2, 1908. Five years later the School of Commerce provided two programs. The first was designed to meet the needs of businessmen who wished to continue their education after work when classes were offered between six and eight p.m. The second provided engineering students with commercial training in business affairs through courses that were conducted during the day.

By 1916 the board of trustees had created a bachelor of science degree in commerce for graduates of the day program. Graduates of the night program earned a bachelor of commercial studies degree by attending courses for two years and completing two years of practical business training. Given Georgia Tech's reluctance to provide purely vocational coursework, enrollees in these four-year programs were also mandated to take Spanish, mathematics, and engineering courses. In the fall of 1917 female students were admitted to the evening school. Annie T. Wise took advantage of this program, and in 1919 she became the first female graduate of that institution, receiving a bachelor of commercial studies degree from the School of Commerce.<sup>30</sup> The following year Wise became the first female instructor at Georgia Tech. No other woman held a faculty position at Tech until 1960.<sup>31</sup>

Wise's decision to receive a degree from Georgia Tech was self-motivated. In 1915 the rules of the board of education were altered to require certification of all principals and teachers working in Atlanta public schools. However, the new legislation was not made retroactive to educators already occupying positions in the school system. Nonetheless Annie Wise "declared that she would fill no position for which she was not qualified by the most

rigid rules the board could adopt."<sup>32</sup> Wise continued taking courses throughout her professional career.

Wise's academic accomplishments epitomize the upward climb in social status available to Girls' High School graduates as described by Crimmins. Her biography also confirms Bauman's depiction of the ways in which social connections outside the Jewish immigrant society enabled one to excel. Her relationship with Slaton afforded her initial academic success, and association with members of the Slaton family continued during much of her professional career.<sup>33</sup>

#### *Wise's Career*

Wise's professional accomplishments, too, exemplify the success that many Jewish women attending Girls' High School achieved.<sup>34</sup> In 1885, after her graduation from Girls' High, she became a supernumerary at the Walker Street School. As a single woman, Annie Teitlebaum taught first and third grades at Walker Street during the next two years. Her experience was not unusual. Hertzberg reported that by 1896 single Jewish women graduates of Girls' High School taught in seven of Atlanta's seventeen public schools.<sup>35</sup> During the same period, a higher proportion of women served in administrative positions than ever before. From 1887 to 1890, she did not teach in any of Atlanta's schools, but in 1891 she reappeared in the personnel directory as Annie T. Wise, an assistant at the Night School. Not only was Annie married, but she also had a son, Leonard Wise.<sup>36</sup>

In 1892, when Wise began her administrative career at Girls' High, thirteen out of sixteen schools served Atlanta's white children. In 1910 when the business education section of Girls' High School became a separate institution (English Commercial High School), Annie Wise was hired as its principal, a position she held until she resigned due to ill health in 1925.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that a woman aspired to the position of principal is also not unusual for the time period. Jackie M. Blount wrote that the early twentieth century represented a time in which women held a significant percentage of teaching jobs and many acquired leadership roles.<sup>38</sup> However female administrators did not have

*Girl's High School,  
Atlanta, 1895.  
(Courtesy the  
Atlanta History  
Center.)*

the autonomy of their male counterparts. At the time women began filling these positions, the status of school superintendents also rose. Predominantly male, the superintendents kept reign over female administrators, removing many of the decision-making powers held by their male counterparts.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore many teachers and administrators were hand-selected by male superintendents who hired educators that they knew and trusted to carry out their objectives. Annie was hired by her mentor, William F. Slaton, and worked for him and later his son, William M. Slaton, who became superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools after his father retired from that office. Wise climbed the crystal stair to a high educational position, but one with limitations in autonomy.

Annie Wise moved up the administrative ranks and displayed exemplary organization and implementation skills. As the department of business began to develop at Girls' High School, Wise was appointed head of the stenography, bookkeeping, and business practice division.<sup>40</sup> After her appointment as principal of

English Commercial High School, she continued to demonstrate her acumen. "Her ability to adapt herself to any situation and to control and direct the affairs of an institution stamped her as an administrative leader," according to a memorial resolution adopted by the school board.<sup>41</sup>

Wise developed a curriculum that incorporated academic courses with business classes. Students were required to take English, foreign language, math, and science as well as electives in sales merchandising, commercial law, accounting, and office practices. In 1922 the curriculum received Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation during her tenure as principal.<sup>42</sup> The Atlanta Board of Education credited Wise with making Commercial High School a world-class institution for business education. She was considered a leading figure in the shaping of Atlanta's public school system in having had the insight to develop a vocational technology curriculum that fostered achievement in traditional academic courses as well as commercial ones. However her curriculum was not out of line with the wishes of the Atlanta Board of Education, which advocated the combination of classical and vocational coursework for students. This mixture reflected the same progressive educational philosophy that guided the leaders of Georgia Tech in developing curriculum for the night program Annie attended.

Although the superintendent and his council heavily monitored her role as administrator, Wise demonstrated her influence over the board of education on at least two occasions. In 1910 English Commercial High School separated from Girls' High School when space was rented in the deanery of St. Phillips Church at 16 Washington Street. By 1912 the school housed over three hundred students. The board added space by renting rooms at an adjacent office in the Episcopal Diocese. However the enrollment continued to increase until it was necessary to move the school to a larger facility. The school was transferred to the abandoned Crew Street Elementary School. At a board meeting in 1912, Annie complained of inadequate facilities at Crew Street and requested a new building to house English Commercial High School. Three years later, the board was still discussing the

crowded conditions. At the June 19, 1915, meeting, a board member presented a motion to build an annex to the Crew Street School for English Commercial High and make the school coeducational. Mayor Woodward was against the annexation but favored erecting a new structure to house male and female high school students. He thought that an addition would require spending money to help a few students, while a new building could serve many boys and girls. Annie Wise and her colleague, Miss Jessie Muse, principal of Girls' High, addressed the board, adamantly opposed to creating a coed institution. Wise said:

There are psychological and medical reasons which I might mention. To bring boys and girls of that age together would be a fatal mistake. It would be disastrous, besides the psychological reasons, the course of study in the two schools is so different that they could not be taught together.<sup>43</sup>

A board member questioned whether girls between the ages of eight and fourteen could fall in love, and Wise answered, "Yes." Muse and Wise successfully derailed the all-male board of education and the influence of Mayor Woodward, and stopped the unification of boys' and girls' commercial education in Atlanta. However, Wise's success was only temporary. In November 1915 the school was moved to 232 Pryor Street where the Boys' High School business department was added to the institution and the name was changed to Commercial High School. Annie T. Wise was appointed principal of the new facility, the first coeducational high school in Atlanta.<sup>44</sup>

The struggle to keep Commercial High an independent school exemplifies another time Wise influenced the board. In 1922 the Atlanta Board of Education looked for ways of conserving finances to support its ever-growing system. A survey of its schools recommended that Girls' High School and Commercial High School unify. Wise and the Commercial High School's Alumni Association, an organization that Wise founded, successfully blocked the move. The agendas for the two schools were markedly different, and Commercial High wanted to keep its reputation as a training ground for future businessmen and women.<sup>45</sup>

As alumnus Joseph Cuba observed, Annie had a vision of Atlanta as “rapidly becoming the office and distributing center of the south.” Accordingly, Commercial High School served as an institution that could train “office assistants and future executives.” Cuba credited Wise with sensing “a growing need for business workers,” and thus “dedicated her life to commercial education.”<sup>46</sup> In addition, Wise demonstrated her interest in promoting business education by teaching commercial courses at the Southern Shorthand and Business University (located on Whitehall Street in southwest Atlanta, 1890–1925) and the Eastman School of Commerce.<sup>47</sup>

Fulfilling the need to promote business education in Atlanta directly impacted immigrants like Wise. Louis Geffen reported:

Many of our contemporaries and many of the children of Jewish immigrant families went to this Commercial High School. And they were able at this school to get business training, shorthand, typing, some accounting. . . .And as a result, they developed a knack for business and for commercial enterprise, many of them. And then they broadened on top of that. They developed their commercial acumen, and built up very fine businesses in the community here.<sup>48</sup>

Wise also found ways to help those who had not attended regular day school. In 1916 the city’s three night schools, Boys’ Night School, Girls’ Night School, and Capitol Avenue Night School, were consolidated as Central Night School and housed at Commercial High. Capitol Avenue Night School had begun as the Jewish Alliance Night School.<sup>49</sup> Combining the night educational institutions and housing them at Commercial High School placed Jewish children directly under Wise’s supervision. Under her leadership the program was expanded to offer courses for illiterates and former school dropouts. Graduates received regular high school diplomas. The University System of Georgia accredited the night school, enabling graduates to attend state institutions of higher education.<sup>50</sup>

Although Wise demonstrated an interest in helping other immigrants, none of the records depict her stand on segregation or equal educational opportunities for African Americans.<sup>51</sup> She

grew up in and most likely accepted a racially divided school system in which children of immigrants received educational opportunities afforded to children of the white elite.<sup>52</sup>

*Wise and the Professional Organizations*

Wise's activities with several educational organizations reveal some of the issues she addressed. As previously noted she initiated the Commercial High Alumni Association, which at one time was one of the largest in Georgia. The main goal for the association was to sponsor economically disadvantaged students in danger of dropping out but who demonstrated potential to complete their secondary education. The organization asked educators to identify such students. The association gave monetary awards to those selected to defray some of the school textbook and supply fees.

From 1907 to 1925, Wise was a member of the Atlanta Public School Teacher's Association (APSTA).<sup>53</sup> In 1919 APSTA became Local 89 of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). It remained one of AFT's strongest and largest affiliates for over thirty years. More than ninety percent of Atlanta's public school teachers belonged to the organization that practiced "bread and butter unionism" by focusing on economic issues: raising salaries and improving working conditions.<sup>54</sup>

One of the organization's greatest battles developed during the school board presidency of Robert Guinn (1914-1918). Guinn, an opponent of the Slaton faction in Atlanta politics, replaced William M. Slaton as superintendent. In an attempt to cut operating costs of a struggling Atlanta school system, Guinn called for the implementation of summer schools, a twelve-month rather than a ten-month salary schedule for teachers, and double sessions for students. Teachers were outraged, seeing Guinn's measures as a way to run year-round schools without compensating them with additional pay. Newman wrote, "Teachers suspected that they were paying for Guinn's progressive reforms out of their own pockets."<sup>55</sup> In June 1915 Guinn further alienated educators by implementing a merit pay system, which replaced seniority salary schedules with pay scales based on

teacher evaluations in four areas: "scholarship, preparation, experience, and efficiency."<sup>56</sup> A committee comprised of the superintendent, community members, and administrators classified teachers into six categories to determine salary schedules.

In May 1918, Boys' High School Principal Dykes, a member of APSTA, denounced Guinn in an interview published in the *Atlanta Constitution*. Mayor James L. Key, a Guinn supporter, appointed a Committee of Five from the city council to investigate the allegations. From June 12 to June 24, 1918, the committee heard from fifty-two witnesses, including Annie T. Wise. As a result of the investigation, Guinn resigned during the sessions. The Committee of Five issued a report favorable to the demands of the teachers that included eliminating merit pay, replacing Superintendent Warlaw who had been handpicked by Guinn, reducing the city council from seven members to five, and increasing teachers' salaries. The city council agreed to all suggestions except to firing Warlaw and changing the council's structure. In October 1918, Warlaw resigned.

In January 1919, members of APSTA became incensed when they had not received their promised raises. At a February 1919 meeting, APSTA realized that they needed help to fight for their issues. APSTA President Phillips appointed a committee to investigate the efficacy of the organization joining the American Federation of Teachers. She balanced the three-member group by selecting pro-labor, anti-labor, and neutral representatives. Wise represented the pro-labor camp and was appointed chairperson of the committee. Newman stated that Annie Wise was respected as principal of Commercial High and for giving strong testimony against Guinn in 1918. Charlotte Stopfer represented the neutral party and Mary C. Barker was the anti-labor committee member. Newman stated that Wise wished to gather information on AFT for a presentation to APSTA scheduled in May. The data compiled by the threesome was so powerful, that Barker, who would become president of Local 89 in 1921 and president of AFT in 1925, changed her stance and became pro-labor.<sup>57</sup> On May 12, 1919, Wise introduced L. V. Lampson, vice president of AFT responsible for organizing locals nationally, to APSTA. Following Lampson's

convincing speech, Annie read a letter from the absent Mayor Key, expressing his support for the teachers' organization joining the union. Key received strong labor support during his most recent campaign for mayor and wished to sustain union advocacy. Members of the group passed a motion to join the union and APSTA became Local 89 of AFT with only two dissenting votes.<sup>58</sup>

Atlanta's teachers' union denied membership to black teachers. In May 1921 Wise served as chairperson of a special committee appointed to look into plans for salary changes that would eventually lead to pay raises for black and white teachers. The white educators feared that raises for black teachers would be achieved by taking money from the white school budgets during summer meetings of the board of education. To appease Wise's committee and APSTA, the board of education promised to send out teachers' contracts by June 10, 1921, so that educators could see their salaries were in place before any other budget changes were made. APSTA, therefore, did not get involved in racial issues *per se*, but did favor an inequitable salary system in support of its members' monetary advancement. In October 1921, Annie Wise was elected vice president of APSTA. She continued to play an active role in the organization, serving on the publicity committee that was responsible for writing articles depicting union viewpoints on educational issues for major newspapers and for disseminating information to organization members.<sup>59</sup>

APSTA and the Commercial High School Alumni Association were typical educational political organizations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that were quite conservative in nature. They served primarily as adjuncts of the board of education rather than opponents of it, and they did not want to challenge the boards that had the power to hire and fire educators. Organizations such as APSTA concentrated on the economic issues and avoided confrontations regarding political reform and educational policy.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore the alumni association at Commercial High was not involved in controversial political movements. Instead it focused on supporting the education of needy students. Politically, therefore, Annie Wise achieved

leadership roles in organizations limited in their ability to promote radical changes in the status quo.

*Wise's Social Achievements*

Socially the Jewish immigrant's ability to penetrate elite private clubs was practically nonexistent, but Wise may have been an exception to the rule. Hertzberg reported that although Jews were associated with most of Atlanta's charities, they were barred from belonging to Christian organizations such as the YMCA. Aaron Haas helped initiate the Gentlemen's Driving Club in 1887 (which became the Piedmont Driving Club in 1895). However no Jews have been members since Haas's involvement. The Commerce Club began in 1892 with two hundred members, ten of whom were Jewish. The latter organization, affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce, included a token number of Jewish businessmen who played crucial roles in the development of Atlanta.<sup>61</sup>

Annie Wise may have fared better than most Jews at infiltrating social organizations. She successfully bridged the cultural gap between affluent Jews and Christians. Wise was a member of the Atlanta Woman's Club and the Alliance Francaise of Paris. The Alliance promoted French culture in various cities throughout the world. In 1923 J. Pierrepont Morgan's daughter, Anne, appointed Wise as a "good will delegate" to France, representing the United States contingency of the Alliance.<sup>62</sup> On January 10, 1924, *Daily Woman's Magazine* reported that Annie Wise attended a social event hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Elsas who introduced a musical protégé, Margaretta Morris of Athens, to Atlanta society.<sup>63</sup>

Atlanta's Jewish women often became involved in groups associated with synagogues. As previously mentioned, Josephine Joel Heyman was active in the Temple and its sisterhood. Although Annie's mother joined the Temple, there are no records indicating Annie became a member. It appears Wise may have refrained from religious associations and dedicated her life to educational pursuits where she helped many children of diverse backgrounds.

*Wise's Accomplishments and Her Milieu*

Left unanswered is how this Hungarian immigrant Jewish woman rose up the educational ladder to an administrative position at a time when most European Jews did not succeed and when antisemitic sentiments pervaded the South. She was principal of Commercial High School during the Leo Frank case, yet her Jewish background did not keep Wise from either maintaining her position or successfully acquiring better accommodations for the school. Her successes in many ways parallel those of Victor H. Kriegshaber, a Jewish citizen who played an important role in the development of the city after David Mayer died. At the time of the Frank episode, Kriegshaber became president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. Bauman wrote that Kriegshaber's election might have been a way of conciliating prominent Jewish businessmen who were unnerved by Frank's lynching and the antisemitic reverberations that ensued.<sup>64</sup> Moreover Wise and Kriegshaber may have been successful because they were highly capable and presented an image similar to those of non-Jewish prominent individuals who also held positions in education or politics. They represented a Jewish presence while also depicting the philosophies of those in power. They succeeded because they were dedicated, hardworking, and shared New South values.

Other Jewish individuals were not as fortunate as Wise or Kriegshaber. Rhoda Kaufman was born to German immigrant parents in Columbus, Georgia, in 1888. Like Wise, Kaufman received a good education, which in the latter's case included a degree in English from Vanderbilt University. At the time Wise was developing her educational career, Kaufman ascended the ranks as a social worker to become the executive director of Georgia's Department of Public Welfare. However, pressure from the Ku Klux Klan led to Kaufman's resignation in the late 1920s. Kaufman used the time to acquire a graduate degree from Emory University. Eventually she worked with the National Conference of Social Work under the Hoover Administration. The Klan did not completely ruin Kaufman's career, but it successfully curtailed her position in the state.<sup>65</sup>

Wise's connections to the Slatons and other prominent gentiles might have helped her ward off antisemitic sentiments. Moreover Wise sustained her position even after Slaton lost his position as superintendent. In 1921 she prevailed as school administrator and vice president of APSTA at a time when Carl F. Hutcheson and Walter A. Sims, who both had close connections with the Ku Klux Klan, held seats on Atlanta's board of education.<sup>66</sup> Her expertise at creating an outstanding educational institution was lauded in Atlanta's newspapers and held credence with important community members who believed the educator's abilities outweighed her ethnic or religious background.

*Wise's Elusive Personal History*

Annie Wise died at the home of her sister in Birmingham, Alabama, where she had resided since her retirement from the Atlanta Public School System. Upon her death on May 12, 1929, Annie was buried at West View Cemetery in a Jewish ceremony presided over by Rabbi David Marx of the Temple. Pallbearers included prominent members of the school board, such as H. Reid Hunter, as well as Superintendent Willis A. Sutton. Additional school board members along with administrators from various schools and members of the Commercial High School Alumni Association served as honorary escorts.<sup>67</sup> After her death the Alumni Association of Commercial High School honored her with the creation of an Annie T. Wise Cup, an award presented to deserving, needy students attending the school.<sup>68</sup> Demonstrating that she was loved by educators in general, on March 26, 1930 (the anniversary of her birth), a memorial service was held for her at the First Christian Church in Atlanta. Sutton spoke at the commemoration. He stated, "She received much from her city and her state, but she gave more. Thousands loved her, but she loved tens of thousands."<sup>69</sup> Funeral and commemorative services for Wise illustrate that even in death she was honored in both Jewish and gentile circles.

Wise's elusive history did not end with her interment. On December 12, 1930, family members had her body exhumed from

West View and reinterred at Crest Lawn Memorial Park in Atlanta. She rests in a family mausoleum next to Morris Teitlebaum (who died June 30, 1918), Mrs. Mary Teitlebaum (who died March 27, 1925), Dr. Eugene Jacobs (who died January 1, 1932), and her sister, Ethel T. Jacobs, who died in 1934. According to Crest Lawn Cemetery records, Dr. Eugene Jacobs, Annie's brother-in-law, bought the mausoleum on November 7, 1929. A year later he had the bodies of Morris, Mary, and Annie moved to the family crypt. Annie's death certificate reveals that her husband was Sam Wise.<sup>70</sup> However he is not mentioned in any of her obituaries, nor was any space provided in the mausoleum for his remains. Furthermore no future provisions were made for Annie's son, Leonard, or for her brothers and their families. The circumstances surrounding Annie T. Wise's burial, her exhumation, and reinterment remain a mystery. She served Atlanta's public school system for over thirty years, yet little is known about the personal life of one of Atlanta's first immigrants to attend and succeed in the public school system.

Annie T. Wise surmounted gender, immigrant, and religious barriers to become a successful student, teacher, and administrator. Amazingly the achievements of this prominent figure in some of Georgia's first public educational institutions have remained virtually hidden from public view. Yet her determination, achievements, and professional longevity offer insight into the state of the public school system in Atlanta from its inception into the twentieth century.

#### *Current Applications for Wise's Story*

Immigrants still inundate Atlanta's public school system and those throughout the United States at phenomenal rates. The non-English speakers of today still struggle with desires to sustain their ethnic origins while assimilating into American culture. Determining appropriate ways to educate these students confound boards of education not only in Atlanta but also throughout the nation. Analyzing their degree of success has become paramount among educational researchers. Like Annie T. Wise and her peers, today's children of immigrants face diverse reactions.

Some politicians welcome their presence in American schools, and others fear too much money is being spent on these “foreigners” who require unending time and effort of America’s teaching force. Those who succeed often have strong mentors within the system, such as Wise had with the Slaton family.

Studying the history of Annie T. Wise and those who assisted her educational and professional goals adds insight into one of the best ways to help today’s immigrant students trying to achieve in the public school system. Her Commercial High School curriculum offered a comprehensive, diverse course load featuring academic and vocational classes. Wise improved Atlanta’s public educational system and overcame personal roadblocks to a successful career. She is a figure worthy of investigation and can offer insight into how a Jewish female immigrant climbed the crystal stair, succeeded in her endeavors, and helped Atlanta’s public school system develop an outstanding educational program.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The author thanks Sandra Berman, archivist, William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum; Cathy E. Loving, historian/archivist, Atlanta Public Schools; and Laurel Bowen, archivist, Pullen Library, Georgia State University, for their help in finding elusive primary sources, and Wayne Urban and Mark Bauman who provided nurturing and inspiration to stick with this project. The author dedicates this article to the memory of her father, Melvin A. Greitzer, a child of Jewish immigrants, who knew the power of a good education.

<sup>2</sup> Certificate of Death for Annie Teitlebaum Wise, File Number 13488, Alabama Bureau of Vital Statistics.

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Teitlebaum is listed in the Atlanta, Georgia Directories, 1889–1890, as a bookkeeper for Atlanta City Brew Company. The family resided at 184 South Forsyth Street. Mary Teitlebaum became a member of the Temple in 1892. The Temple Records (1892), MSS 59, at the Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Community Archives and Genealogy Center of the William Bremen Jewish Heritage Museum (hereafter cited as Cuba Archives).

<sup>4</sup> The Walker Street School opened on Wednesday, February 21, 1872. Henry Reid Hunter, *The Development of the Public Secondary Schools in Atlanta, 1845–1937* (Atlanta, 1974), 18; “Mrs. Annie Wise, Beloved Teacher, Taken by Death,” unidentified obituary, Janice Rothschild [Blumberg] scrapbook, Wise 138-L, Atlanta Public School Archives, (hereafter cited as “Wise, Beloved Teacher” and Wise 138-L, respectively).

<sup>5</sup> Walter Bell, *Personnel Directory 1870–1900, Atlanta Public Schools* (Atlanta, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald H. Bayor, “Ethnic Residential Patterns in Atlanta, 1880–1940,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 64 (Winter 1979): 435–446.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Bauman, “Factionalism and Ethnic Politics in Atlanta: The German Jews from the Civil War through the Progressive Era,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 82, (Fall, 1998), 534; Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience 1876–1980*, (New York, 1989), 138–140.

<sup>10</sup> Tom Keating, *Saturday School: How One Town Kept Out the “Jewish” 1902–1932*, (Bloomington, IN, 1999), 29.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>12</sup> Bauman, “Factionalism and Ethnic Politics in Atlanta.”

<sup>13</sup> Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> The Board of Alderman elected members of Atlanta’s Board of Education on December 10, 1869. David Mayer was a member of this group with his first term expiring in December 1873. The schools, however, did not open until 1872. Hunter, *Development of the Public Secondary Schools of Atlanta*, 15. Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 18–25. Bell, *Personnel Directory 1870–1900*.

<sup>15</sup> Serving consecutive terms, Aaron Haas, Jacob Elsas, Joseph Hirsch, and Oscar Pappenheimer replaced Mayer. In 1899 Pappenheimer proved to be less influential than Mayer and was unable to block the school board’s decision to disallow religious absences. When Pappenheimer’s term expired in 1904, no seat went to another Jew until 1913, when Walter Rich was appointed for a three-year term. Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 164.

<sup>16</sup> John L Rury, *Education and Women’s Work: Female Schooling and the Division of Labor in Urban America, 1870–1930* (Albany, NY, 1991), 60.

<sup>17</sup> The term *crystal stair* was used by Crimmins to refer to the fact that the public school system in Atlanta did not give equal opportunity to all. It was especially difficult for anyone who was not privileged, white, and middle-class to rise in the system. Timothy James Crimmins, “The Crystal Stair: A Study of the Effects of Class, Race, and Ethnicity on Secondary Education in Atlanta, 1872–1925,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1972).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, ii.

<sup>19</sup> Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 163.

<sup>20</sup> Selma Cantor Berrol, *Growing Up American: Immigrant Children in America, Then and Now* (New York, 1995), 33.

<sup>21</sup> Some prominent Jews of the decade included Jacob Haas, Henry Levi, Herman Haas, M. Oppenheimer, Simon Frankfurt, David Mayer, and Mark and Isaac Greenbaum. Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Mark K. Bauman, “The Youthful Musings of a Jewish Community Activist: Josephine Joel Heyman,” *Atlanta History*, 39: 2, (Summer, 1995), 48.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>24</sup> The Walker Street School opened on Wednesday, February 21, 1872. Hunter, *Development of the Public Secondary Schools in Atlanta*, 18; “Wise, Beloved Teacher.”

<sup>25</sup> “Wise, Beloved Teacher.” William F. Slaton taught at the Sam Bailey Institute and worked as a private tutor before the Atlanta Public School system hired him in 1874. Slaton

was the principal at Boys' High School beginning in 1874. Biography of W. F. Slaton, Atlanta Public School Archives.

<sup>26</sup> Exhibit "C," Resolutions in Memory of Mrs. Annie T. Wise, Adopted by the Board of Education, Atlanta Georgia, July 9, 1929 (Biography, Wise 138-L) (hereafter cited as Exhibit "C").

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Bauman, "Youthful Musings," 48.

<sup>29</sup> One of the unidentified newspaper reports stated that Wise attended Georgia Tech first and then went to the Sorbonne and Columbia University. However, Exhibit "C" clarifies that she attended Georgia Tech after going to the other institutions, so that she could strengthen her technological teaching skills. See Wise 138-L. The transcripts department of Columbia University confirmed that Annie T. Wise was registered for two English courses during the summer of 1901. They found no other records indicating she took more courses at their institution. Teachers College at Columbia University, records of the registrar, could find no records indicating Wise ever received a teaching degree from the college. However, their microfiche dates back only to 1900. Both her obituaries and her biography state that she held a degree from Columbia University. See "Wise, Beloved Teacher"; James Nevin, ed., *Prominent Women of Georgia* (Atlanta, 1928), 121.

<sup>30</sup> Wise received a degree from the School of Commerce at Georgia Tech according to a biography created by the Alumni Society of Commercial High School. Nevin, *Prominent Women of Georgia*.

<sup>31</sup> Robert C. McMath, Jr., Ronald H. Bayor, James E. Brittain, Lawrence Foster, August W. Giebehaus, and Germaine E. Reed, *Engineering the New South: Georgia Tech, 1885-1985* (Athens, GA, 1985), 124. The General Assembly gave permission for coed evening courses in the school of commerce at Georgia Tech through a legislative act in 1917. A newspaper article appeared in *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 6, 1979, "Knew Mrs. Wise?" written by Associate Dean of Georgia Tech, Richard D. Teach. He requested any information regarding Annie T. Wise and questioned how she enrolled at Georgia Tech in 1915, two years before women were admitted into the university. What he failed to discover is that Annie was a student in the evening program. She began taking courses in 1917, after women were admitted into the program and completed the four-year degree under the two-year coursework/two-year practical business experience program. Since she was already an acting principal of Commercial High School, she more than met the two-year practical experience requirement.

<sup>32</sup> Exhibit "C".

<sup>33</sup> Annie T. Wise attended school under William F. Slaton, was a teacher and principal while Slaton and his son William M. Slaton were superintendents of the Atlanta school system, and was a co-worker of Mattie Slaton at Girls' High School. Hunter, *Development of the Public Secondary Schools of Atlanta*, 27; Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 164; Bauman, "Factionalism and Ethnic Politics in Atlanta," 548.

<sup>34</sup> According to Urban and Wagoner, "Girls were admitted to the common school without prejudice, where they sat alongside boys and pursued the same curriculum without apparent incident . . . This view of the common school as a 'nurturing' institution allowed women to become an increasingly important presence in its teaching force," Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner Jr., *American Education: A History*, 2nd ed., (Boston, 2000), 116.

<sup>35</sup> Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 91-97.

<sup>36</sup> "Wise, Beloved Teacher."

<sup>37</sup> At the time Annie Wise became a supernumerary at Walker Street School in 1885, two out of the nine schools for white students in Atlanta had female principals. One, Miss S. McKinley at Girls' High, was single and the other, Mrs. Echols at Calhoun Street School, was either married, divorced, or widowed. Five of the thirteen female administrators in 1892 were either married, divorced or widowed. Bell, *Personnel Directory 1870-1900*.

<sup>38</sup> Blount wrote, "Many women administrators either refused to marry or assumed their duties once their marriage ended." She used Chicago Superintendent of Schools, Ella Flaggy Young, as an example. Jackie M. Blount, *Destined to Rule the Schools: Women and the Superintendency, 1873-1995* (Albany, NY, 1998), 94; Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 36-38.

<sup>40</sup> Exhibit "C"

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> William Douglas, "Memories of Commercial High Grow Dearer and Fonder," *The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution*, Sunday, January 29, 1984, 12-F.

<sup>43</sup> "Education Board Evenly Divided on Co-Education," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 19, 1915.

<sup>44</sup> Hunter, *Development of the Public Secondary Schools of Atlanta*, 28.

<sup>45</sup> In 1922 Superintendent Sutton called in two experts, George D. Strayer and N. L. Engelhardt, both from Columbia University's Teachers College, to make recommendations for a building program for Atlanta's overcrowded schools. George D. Strayer and N. L. Engelhardt, *Survey of the Public School System of Atlanta, Georgia*, 2 vols., (Atlanta, 1922). Opposition by the Commercial High School Alumni and administration is reported in Hunter, *Development of the Public Secondary Schools of Atlanta*, 187.

<sup>46</sup> Cuba Archives.

<sup>47</sup> Nevin, *Prominent Women of Georgia*. No other information could be found regarding the Eastman school.

<sup>48</sup> Louis Geffen was the son of Rabbi Tobias Geffen, spiritual leader of Atlanta's Orthodox congregation Shearith Israel. He was an Emory University graduate and an attorney as well as a member of the Atlanta Board of Education, 1935-1938. Oral history of Louis Geffen in Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye, and E. Bernard West, *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948* (Athens, GA, 1990), 255.

<sup>49</sup> In 1913 the name of the Jewish Alliance Night School was changed to Capitol Avenue Night School. Hunter, *Development of the Public Secondary Schools of Atlanta*, 60.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Wise may have had similar racial beliefs as Heyman. Josephine Joel Heyman wrote in her diary that when questioned by a history instructor about equal rights, Jo responded that she believed in democracy but did not believe the Negro ought to be enfranchised because that would be breaking with southern tradition. Heyman supported black rights in later decades. Bauman, "Youthful Musings," 55.

<sup>52</sup> White teachers in general wished to preserve racial segregation. Cremin, *A History of the Atlanta Public School Association*, 4.

<sup>53</sup> The Atlanta Public School Teacher's Association began in 1905. APSTA became the Atlanta Education Association (AEA) in 1967. Wise may have been a member of APSTA since its inception. However, 1907 was the earliest date recorded in which she paid dues.

*Atlanta Education Association Records, 1905-1971*, Minutes of APSTA Meetings, 1906-1911, Box 103-I-3, Georgia State University Libraries, Pullen Archives (hereafter cited as *Atlanta Education Association Records*).

<sup>54</sup> Joseph Whitworth Newman, "A History of the Atlanta Public School Teacher's Association, Local 89 of the American Federation of Teachers, 1919-1956," (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgia State University, 1978), 10.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>56</sup> *Atlanta Education Association Records, 1905-1971*.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Wayne J. Urban, *Why Teachers Organized* (Detroit, 1982).

<sup>61</sup> Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 168-172.

<sup>62</sup> Nevin, *Prominent Women of Georgia*; *Daily Woman's Magazine*, *Atlanta Constitution*, January 10, 1924.

<sup>63</sup> *Daily Woman's Magazine*, *Atlanta Constitution*, January 10, 1924.

<sup>64</sup> Bauman, "Victor H. Kriegshaber, Community Builder," *American Jewish History*, 79 (Autumn, 1989), 94-110.

<sup>65</sup> Patricia E. Smith, "Rhoda Kaufman: A Southern Progressive's Career, 1913-1956," *Atlanta Historical Bulletin* 18 (Spring-Summer, 1973), 43-50.

<sup>66</sup> Newman, "History of the Atlanta Public School Teacher's Association," 83-85.

<sup>67</sup> Exhibit "C"

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Certificate of Death for Annie Teitlebaum Wise, File Number 13488, Alabama Bureau of Vital Statistics.

*PERSONALITY PROFILE*

David Mendes Cohen, Beleaguered Marine<sup>1</sup>

by

Robert Marcus and Jim Quinlan

**D**avid Mendes Cohen was a fifth-generation American, whose Sephardic-Jewish forebears earned an enviable reputation serving in the United States military. Eager to follow family tradition, Cohen served as a commissioned officer in the United States Marine Corps, demonstrating great valor and ultimately rising to the rank of major. Yet along the way he suffered the deep humiliation of three courts-martial.

Some of Cohen's family made significant contributions to the country's early development. Jacob I. Cohen, a great uncle, achieved distinction in military, business, civic, and religious affairs. Jacob volunteered for the Continental army, as one of twenty-six Jews in the Charleston Regiment of Militia under the command of Captain Richard Lushington.<sup>2</sup> Cohen received a commendation from his superiors for his actions at the Battle of Beaufort, South Carolina. After his capture and escape from the British, he settled in Philadelphia and became active in Mickveh Israel, the city's venerable Jewish congregation. The synagogue's leaders strongly opposed his marrying Ester Whitlock Mordecai, a widow and a convert to Judaism. The couple married, relocated to Richmond, and helped found Beth Shalom, that city's first congregation.<sup>3</sup>

Jacob I. Cohen had a business relationship with the famous frontiersman, Daniel Boone,<sup>4</sup> who surveyed vast tracts of land on Cohen's behalf. Virginia's governor and future president, James Monroe, appointed him inspector of the state penitentiary.<sup>5</sup> In

1794, Cohen served as one of the trustees of Richmond's Masonic Hall under John Marshall. Cohen received frequent mention in the Madison Papers.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, he settled in Baltimore where the Cohens achieved prominence.

During the War of 1812, David's father, Philip, and uncle, Mendes I. Cohen, volunteered to defend Baltimore against the British. They both were engaged in the heroic defense of Fort McHenry during the British bombardment when Francis Scott Key was inspired to pen the lines to the Star Spangled Banner.<sup>7</sup> In later life Mendes I. Cohen achieved fame as a world traveler and a leading collector of coins and medals. His numismatic holdings were donated to Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Joshua I. Cohen, another uncle, collected perhaps one of the largest Jewish book collections ever assembled.<sup>8</sup>

The Cohen brothers who settled in Baltimore assumed leading roles in the vigorous efforts to obtain Jewish rights in Maryland.<sup>9</sup> Jacob I. Cohen Jr., later president of a railroad and an insurance company, directly challenged the Maryland legislature in attacking the state's blatant discriminatory laws. Through the persistence of the Cohens and others, the famous "Jew Bill" was enacted into law in 1826. More accurately, this was an amendment to the Maryland constitution which allowed "those professing the Jewish religion" to hold public office and practice law. With passage of the legislation, Jacob I. Cohen Jr. was elected to Baltimore's city council.<sup>10</sup> The Cohen brothers continued to assail laws that discriminated against Jews in Maryland until after the Civil War. The Cohens of Baltimore were traditional Jews who observed the Sabbath. The family, however, did not join any of the city's established synagogues. Instead they helped organize a Sephardic congregation that existed briefly from 1856 to 1858.<sup>11</sup>

After the War of 1812, Philip settled in Norfolk, an expanding seaport city located on the Virginia Tidewater. On January 25, 1826, he married Augusta Myers, thereby uniting two of Virginia's leading Jewish families. Rabbi Isaac B. Seixas of Richmond's Beth Shalom officiated.<sup>12</sup> Augusta was the daughter of Moses Myers, an important early developer of Norfolk.

*David M. Cohen. (Courtesy George H. Menegaux.)*

As a young man, Moses Myers had been active in New York and Philadelphia synagogues. In March 1787, he married Elizabeth Judah Chapman, a young widow, in New York. The ceremony was performed by G. M. Seixas, the patriot rabbi of Revolutionary War fame and son of Rabbi Isaac B. Seixas. Interestingly, a business feud with Israel I. Cohen determined that Myers should not settle in Richmond, and he chose Norfolk as his home. Myers is credited with playing a key role in the development of Norfolk as a major seaport. He served as a major in the Virginia militia and had been a personal agent for Thomas Jefferson. President James Monroe appointed him customs collector.<sup>13</sup> His portrait was painted by Gilbert Stuart.<sup>14</sup> Two of Moses Myers's sons served in the War of 1812.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to unions with the Mordecai and Myers families, the Cohens married members of the Lopez, Etting, Levy, and Minis families.<sup>16</sup> Such ties between the first families of American Jewish history during the nineteenth century were typical.

America's pioneer Jewish families became well acquainted with each other in America, and there simply were not that many eligible Jewish partners from the same social-economic class available. Thus considerable intramarriage was inevitable.

Born on December 7, 1826, in Norfolk, David was the first of Philip and Augusta's eight children. In 1833, Philip moved his expanding family north to join his four brothers in Baltimore, where the family was already well-known as pioneer railroad promoters, doctors, bankers, engineers, and community leaders.

Little is known of David Cohen's early life, but, as early as 1846, he sought a commission in the United States Marine Corps, but to no avail. On January 20, 1852, in an attempt to assist Cohen, Samuel Watts, a member of a prominent Baltimore seafaring family, wrote a laudatory recommendation on his behalf to William A. Graham, Secretary of the Navy.<sup>17</sup> Watts mentioned a number of accomplishments of David's family members. "The inclinations of young Mr. Cohen are entirely and prominently military; they correspond with his taste and genius. He is ardently fond of the 'profession of arms'; and his aspirations are suited to the office he seeks," Watts glowingly wrote. With no appointment forthcoming, Cohen instead enrolled in the Norfolk Naval Academy and, upon graduation, again sought entrance into the Marine Corps. Finally on October 8, 1855, with the approval of Congress and appointment by President Franklin Pierce, David Cohen was commissioned a second lieutenant.<sup>18</sup> He served his country as a United States Marine for fourteen years before placement on the retired list on October 12, 1869.

During the early period of Cohen's military service, the United States continued to flourish as a nation and expand its influence to all corners of the globe. Marine detachments were posted to almost every major American warship. Initially reporting to the Marine Barracks, at Washington, D.C., in February 1856, Cohen's orders assigned him for duty aboard the newly commissioned steam frigate, USS *Merrimack*. There he served his first tour of sea duty as the junior Marine officer, visiting the Caribbean and Europe. A little over a year later, after serving aboard the USS *Roanoke*, he was reassigned to the USS *Merrimack*.

*The Myers House, Norfolk, home of David M. Cohen's maternal grandfather. (Early twentieth-century postcard from the collection of Robert Marcus.)*

Between 1858 and 1859, Cohen experienced the typical career path of a junior officer. His assignments included sea and administrative duties, such as sitting as a member of a court-martial board. These assignments kept Cohen primarily on the East Coast. When not serving aboard ship, he drew garrison duty in stations from Norfolk and Washington to the important naval yards at New York and Boston. While assigned to New York, he met James F. Harrison, a naval officer and ship's doctor from Prince William County, Virginia. The two southerners quickly became close friends and often set out together to see the sights of New York. Cohen even took Harrison to visit a New York synagogue.<sup>19</sup> After a short tour aboard the steamer *Westernport*, Cohen received orders to report as commander of the Marine detachment aboard the USS *Memphis*. However, as a result of an illness that was recorded as a hemorrhage of the lungs, which may have been a bout with tuberculosis, Cohen was unable to report as ordered. In April 1859, after a period of medical recuperation and being found fit for duty, Lieutenant Cohen reported to Norfolk, where he was

assigned as commanding officer of the Marine detachment aboard the sloop USS *John Adams*.

On March 15, 1861, with the approval of Congress and newly elected President Lincoln, Cohen was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant. Less than thirty days later the country went to war. David Mendes Cohen was one of many Jews already serving in the United States military at the outbreak of the Civil War. With war, citizens and members of the military became divided between state and federal government loyalty. Most of the senior officers were rooted to the South. Yet family and business ties, besides military allegiance, could make individual decisions painful. The American military men of the Jewish faith shared the identical dilemma of Robert E. Lee and countless other Americans in the early months of 1861.<sup>20</sup>

One southern Jew, Alfred Mordecai Sr., of Warrenton, North Carolina, graduated at the head of his class at West Point in 1823.<sup>21</sup> He rose to the rank of major and became a renowned authority in the field of ordnance. Mordecai was greatly disheartened with the outbreak of the war. Despite great pressure from his family to serve the Confederacy, the preservation of the Union was his foremost goal. He painfully concluded that his resignation from the army would best serve his goal of reconciliation between the North and South. The fact that Mordecai's wife and children had close ties to the North added greatly to his dilemma.<sup>22</sup> In keeping with family tradition, Alfred Jr., his son, graduated from West Point, class of June 1861. The prospect of bearing arms against his son was no doubt a major factor in Mordecai's decision to leave military service. His published works in the field of ordnance became bibles to both the Union and Confederate armies.

There are striking comparisons between the Mordecai and Cohen families in America. Both Sephardic families had been established for generations and were deeply rooted in the South. Mordecais and Cohens had shouldered arms in the American Revolution and War of 1812, and they continued this tradition proudly into the Civil War. Each family achieved respect and success within their communities in a number of diverse endeavors. Both clans spread to the North through business ventures and

*View of Norfolk, Virginia.* (Harper's Weekly, April 19, 1862.)

marriages. To the Mordecais and Cohens, close family members would become enemies at the outbreak of the Civil War.

Abraham C. Myers of Georgetown, South Carolina, graduated from West Point in 1833.<sup>23</sup> He received the rank of brevet major for heroism during the Mexican War. An officer within the quartermaster department, most of Myers's assignments were in the South. He commanded the quartermaster department in New Orleans at the outbreak of the Civil War. Myers cast his lot with the rebellion. He transferred the stores and supplies under his control to the Louisiana government and resigned his federal army commission. Within the year, he became quartermaster general of the Confederate army with the rank of full colonel.<sup>24</sup>

The long and tempestuous career of Commodore Uriah Phillips Levy has become better known in recent years. Levy was born in Philadelphia in 1792 and served in the United States Navy beginning with the War of 1812. His efforts resulted in the abolition of flogging in the navy. He ultimately attained the rank of commodore, then the highest naval rank. Prior to the Civil War, Levy was commander of America's fleet in the Mediterranean Sea. Nearly seventy when the Civil War broke out, Levy was regarded as too old to assume a command at sea.<sup>25</sup>

Out of great admiration for Thomas Jefferson, and strong encouragement from President Andrew Jackson, Levy purchased Monticello in 1836. He restored the decaying mansion and worked the land on the estate. For the next quarter century, Levy became deeply involved with the operation of Monticello. When the Civil War broke out, Levy wholeheartedly supported the Union. As a result of his loyalty, the Confederacy confiscated Levy's beloved plantation. Newspaperman Frank Leslie reported, "we are sure that an officer who has remained so faithful and useful to his government and country, and who has sacrificed pecuniarily so much for the 'Stars and Stripes' of his lifelong idolatry, will not now be forgotten, and as Monticello was taken from him because he belonged to the 'Lincoln Navy.' Certainly no officer in the army or navy has been so victimized by the Rebels."<sup>26</sup>

Cohen, distantly related to Mordecai, Myers, and Levy, found himself compelled to decide what course of action to take. With strong family ties to the Old South, he nonetheless chose to abide by his oath of allegiance to the Federal government. Edward Cohen, a first cousin, on the other hand, served in the Confederate army. Mendes, Edward's brother, was a delegate to the state peace convention, a secessionist meeting.<sup>27</sup>

In June 1861, the Marine Corps had only sixty officers, and Colonel John Harris served as its commandant. Reflecting his seniority, David Cohen was number 10 on the list of 20 first lieutenants on active duty. He was promoted to captain on April 1, 1862. Most of that first year of the war proved uneventful for him, with garrison duties at the naval yards in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia.

On August 1, 1862, Captain Cohen reported to Major Addison Garland for duty at the Marine barracks, Brooklyn, New York, doubtless believing his assignments, remote from the fighting then raging on Virginia's peninsula, would allow him little chance to see action. However, within weeks a bizarre event erupted that pitted Union soldiers against each other.

Elements of the Empire Brigade under the command of Brigadier General Francis B. Spinola, a New York politician who had organized the unit, were encamped near the Marine barracks.

*CSS Alabama as seen from the deck of the Mail Steamer Ariel.  
(Carte-de-Visite photograph from the collection of Robert Marcus.)*

Spinola later proved himself an inept commander and was forced to resign his commission.<sup>28</sup> On August 23, a riot erupted in New York when a number of soldiers in Spinola's command got drunk and rampaged through the streets. The New York City police, unprepared for such an occurrence, decided not to intervene. Instead, Captain Cohen, in charge of a detachment of fifty-five Marines, was dispatched from the navy yard to quell the riot. With bayonets fixed, order was quickly restored. At Spinola's request the Marine detachment remained as a camp guard at the Empire Brigade for five days before returning to the navy yard. The incident could well have proven an embarrassment for the Marines had not Captain Cohen handled it so decisively.

The threat of Confederate attacks against United States property and commercial shipping on the West Coast prompted Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, to send in the Marines. Commandant Harris ordered Major Garland with a detachment of Marines to the Pacific Squadron with instructions to protect naval and public property in the vicinity of Mare Island, California, and to establish a permanent West Coast barracks.<sup>29</sup> Garland's detachment included Captain Cohen, 5 lieutenants,

14 noncommissioned officers, 4 musicians, 112 privates, and 4 laundresses for an aggregate strength of 140 personnel.<sup>30</sup>

On December 1, 1862, the Marines boarded the mail steamer *Ariel* at New York harbor and departed for the West Coast. They expected an uneventful trip to the first port of call at Aspinwall in the Isthmus of Panama. Instead, they encountered the most feared ship in the Confederate navy, the CSS *Alabama*.

On December 7, at 2:15 p.m., the big side-wheeler *Ariel* was sighted by the *Alabama's* lookout off the port beam. The *Alabama's* captain, Raphael Semmes, issued the order to build up steam and began the chase that would yield the Confederate raider its twenty-first prize. At 2:45 p.m. the *Alabama* lowered the Stars and Stripes she had flown as a deception and, in its place, raised the colors of the Confederacy. The *Ariel*, giving little heed to an enemy warning shot, attempted to outrun the rebel vessel in a desperate dash for safe haven. Semmes, an experienced seaman, was not about to lose his prize. He ordered two of his deck guns to aim and fire at the *Ariel's* smokestack.<sup>31</sup> The first round missed. However, the second found its mark on the foremast only feet above the passengers' heads, sending passengers and crew scurrying for safety. Captain Albert J. Jones of the *Ariel* realized further resistance was futile and would risk the lives of his civilian passengers, so he struck his colors in submission.<sup>32</sup>

At the first sign of trouble, orders had been issued for the Marine detachment to draw weapons and form for action. Conflicting accounts note that either Cohen or Major Garland commanded the Marines. Regardless of who the commander was, the detachment stood defiant as the *Alabama's* boarding party demanded that the Marines surrender their weapons. Confederate Lieutenant Arthur Sinclair later stated that Captain Cohen presented a vigorous protest to the *Ariel's* captain when ordered by the Confederates to have his Marines stack their arms. Captain Jones reminded Cohen of the *Alabama's* numerous gun ports poised to fire on and sink the *Ariel*. Reluctantly, Cohen ordered his Marines to capitulate and stack arms.<sup>33</sup>

Captain Semmes planned to sink the *Ariel* after transferring the captured passengers to a second vessel he had also pursued.

*Attack upon the Ariel by the CSS Alabama.*

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, January 10, 1863.

After failing to capture the second ship, Semmes considered taking the prisoners to Kingston, Jamaica. Those plans were foiled when it was discovered yellow fever had broken out on the island. Ultimately, Semmes released the *Ariel* under a ransom bond payable on cessation of hostilities. After surrendering their weapons and signing paroles indicating they would not take up arms against the Confederacy until properly exchanged, the Marines were allowed to continue to California.<sup>34</sup>

Garland, Cohen, and the detachment arrived at Mare Island on December 27, 1862. Although Admiral Charles Bell had requested a Marine presence at Mare Island, the relationship between the navy and Marines assigned to the post was strained at best.<sup>35</sup> Captain Cohen did little to ease the growing tensions. On May 19, 1863, at a social function held in honor of the officers assigned to Mare Island, Cohen was offended by the actions of Edward A. Selfridge, the son and secretary of Captain Thomas O. Selfridge, the naval commandant of Mare Island. Cohen alleged Selfridge looked at him in an offensive manner in the presence of ladies. The next day Cohen dispatched First Lieutenant William B.

McKean with a note to Selfridge demanding a full apology or suffer the consequences. Selfridge immediately informed his father of Cohen's challenge to a duel. Captain Selfridge wasted no time in directing Major Garland to have Cohen withdraw his challenge. When Cohen refused, he and his emissary, Lieutenant McKean, were placed under arrest and brought under court-martial proceedings.<sup>36</sup> Both were charged with "scandalous conduct tending to the destruction of good morals." Cohen immediately sent a telegraph to the commandant of Marines, Colonel Harris, informing him of the charges. Cohen asked Harris to delay action until he received Cohen's letter of explanation.<sup>37</sup> Despite Cohen's request, the court-martial was convened. Cohen and McKean were found not guilty of the charges. However, they were found guilty of one specification, "that on the 20th of May Captain Cohen did send a message to Edward Selfridge in the nature of a challenge." The court determined that the punishment for Cohen, to be meted by the Secretary of the Navy, was to be an official reprimand while McKean was to receive an admonishment.<sup>38</sup>

Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, upon review, disapproved of the findings of the court on the basis that if Cohen and McKean were found not guilty of the charges brought against them, they could not be found guilty of any specifications deriving from those charges.<sup>39</sup> Although Cohen was able to escape the punishment of a court-martial, he was now under the continual scrutiny of Captain Selfridge, the Mare Island commandant. Admiral Bell diffused the situation by having Cohen transferred to sea duty. Thus, only seven days after Welles's disapproval of court-martial proceedings, Cohen received orders to Bell's flagship, the USS *Lancaster*.

Assignment to the *Lancaster* did not end Cohen's strife with the navy. Almost immediately upon reporting for duty as commander of the Marine detachment, Cohen was at odds with the ship's captain. Although Marine detachments aboard ship were primarily assigned sentry duty, aboard the *Lancaster* they were assigned the extra duty of conducting gun drills with the ship's main guns. Cohen immediately protested up the naval chain of command to no avail. In desperation, he filed a complaint with the

Commandant of the Marine Corps but received little sympathy from Colonel Harris. In no uncertain terms Harris accused Cohen of dereliction of duty and emphasized that Marines should actively seek combat roles aboard naval vessels. Cohen was rebuked and told it was his duty to ensure the Marines were better trained at handling the ship's guns than even the ship's crew. Severely admonished, Cohen complied, and his Marines began gunnery instruction.<sup>40</sup>

On November 10, 1864, Henry K. Davenport, commander of the USS *Lancaster*, with the assistance of Cohen and a few of the *Lancaster's* crew, foiled a desperate plot by the Confederate navy to commandeer the American steamer *Salvador*. Captain Douglas of that vessel informed Rear Admiral G. F. Pearson that a number of suspicious passengers were planning to embark on the *Salvador* at Panama Bay, and that he was concerned for the safety of his ship and the welfare of his passengers. Because Panama Bay was under Colombian jurisdiction, the United States Navy could do little to prevent the suspicious passengers from boarding the *Salvador*. Unable to act in foreign waters, Pearson ordered the *Lancaster* to wait offshore. As the *Salvador* entered international waters, a party from the *Lancaster* was to board the *Salvador* to protect its passengers and crew against any trouble. Once in international waters, Davenport, Cohen, and their men quickly boarded the *Salvador*. Under the pretext of examining tickets, the passengers were gathered into a room where Cohen and others took the suspicious passengers into custody. Seven passengers proved to be members of the Confederate navy, who were attempting to slip aboard the *Salvador* and eventually place it under the flag of the Confederacy. In a dispatch to Pearson, Davenport recounted the *Salvador* incident mentioning Cohen's name first among those to receive favorable notice for their actions.<sup>41</sup>

Cohen served aboard the *Lancaster* for the remainder of the war. During March 1866, the ship put into Mare Island for repairs and resupply. Requesting a new assignment, Cohen received orders that detached him from the *Lancaster* on April 5, 1866, and assigned him once again to the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Cohen's penchant for confrontation did not end with the close of the Civil War. On July 13, 1866, while in temporary command of the recruiting station on Bowery Street, New York, Cohen began a correspondence with Major William B. Slack, quartermaster of the Marine Corps that led to his second court-martial.

Although the reason is unclear, on July 13, Cohen sent a request to Headquarters, Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., asking for a supply of blank "Individual Clothing Account" forms. When the quartermaster questioned the purpose for the forms, Cohen took it as a personal attack upon his honor and responded with a fiery letter. Paying little attention to military customs and courtesies, Cohen questioned Slack's capability to properly function in his position, and charged the quartermaster department with dereliction and the inability to support the needs of the corps. Cohen ended the letter with an accusation that Slack's own act of involving the commandant was evidence that the major could not perform his responsibilities.<sup>42</sup>

Upon receipt of Cohen's letter, Slack showed it to Colonel Jacob Zeilen, commandant of Marines, who agreed that the letter was contemptuous and disrespectful. He directed Slack to make his complaint in the form of "charges and specifications" to be forwarded to the Secretary of the Navy.<sup>43</sup>

On July 25, 1866, six Marine officers were sworn in and sat as members of a court-martial for Captain David M. Cohen. The court addressed two charges. The first was "Treating with contempt and using disrespectful language to a superior officer while in the execution of his duty," and the second was "Conduct unbecoming of an Officer,"<sup>44</sup>

Cohen's lawyer called two primary defense witnesses, Captain George W. Collier and Sergeant George M. Brown, both of whom attested that Cohen should have been issued clothing forms in conjunction with his responsibilities at the recruiting station. Neither witness could address the charges against Cohen. The key witness for the prosecution was the testimony of the commandant, Colonel Zeilin. Once Zeilin stated that Cohen's letter was disrespectful and that Major Slack was Cohen's superior officer, the case was over. On August 4, 1866, the court presented

a verdict of guilty on all counts. Cohen was sentenced to be suspended from rank and duty for a period of two years and to receive no compensation from the United States government for the same period of time beyond his pay of sixty dollars per month.<sup>45</sup>

On March 12, 1868, the Senate approved Cohen's promotion to the rank of major. The effective date of rank was retroactive to December 5, 1867. That previous August, Cohen was ordered to Norfolk, the place of his birth. As what was to happen repeatedly, the government reneged on the original sentence.

Cohen's third and final court-martial occurred while he served as commanding officer of the Norfolk Marine detachment. On September 24, 1868, the proceedings convened at the Norfolk Navy Yard, with Colonel Matthew R. Kintzing presiding. The formal charge read, "scandalous conduct tending to the destruction of good morals." The specification stated that Cohen "did indulge in the use of intoxicating liquors to such extent as to require medical treatment for delirium tremens." Cohen pleaded "not-guilty."<sup>46</sup>

Cohen boarded at the Ocean House in nearby Portsmouth, a popular residence for military officers and businessmen. In early August 1868, he suffered from high fever and chills and was unable to leave his quarters and report for duty. Jacob S. Dungan, a naval surgeon with whom Cohen already had strained relations, examined him in his quarters.<sup>47</sup> Dungan reported that Cohen indulged in eight to ten drinks each day. The surgeon testified later under cross-examination that he did not actually see Cohen drink, however, he did smell alcohol on the Marine's breath. He further testified, Cohen was of "highly nervous temperament, greatly agitated, and exhibited the classic symptoms resulting from the withdrawal of heavy alcohol consumption." He had prescribed a treatment of laudanum, or opium. Dungan's report filtered upward through the naval chain of command and resulted in formal charges against Cohen and the subsequent court-martial.

In early August, entirely unaware that he would face a court-martial, Cohen departed Norfolk by ship for New York seeking specialized medical treatment for his illness. After successful

treatment under the care of James R. Leaming, the doctor provided Cohen with a written statement explaining the doctor's diagnosis and the treatment the major received for typho-malarial fever. His health improved, Cohen returned to Norfolk to resume his duties. Upon his arrival, he was shocked to learn of the impending court-martial.

George E. Harmon, first class apothecary, and Dungan were the first prosecution witnesses. Both men offered damaging testimony alleging that Cohen had admitted to having been a heavy drinker for much of his life. The defense produced sixteen witnesses on Cohen's behalf including two doctors who testified that other substances, such as quinine or opium, could readily have produced or exacerbated Cohen's symptoms. They further testified other misdiagnosed illnesses may have caused his disorders. Officers and enlisted alike, joined by fellow residents of the Ocean House, and his servant, Henry White, unanimously testified that Cohen was not a heavy drinker. A parade of defense witnesses followed, all of whom assailed Dungan's character and veracity.

On October 5, the court reached a guilty verdict. Cohen was suspended from rank and command for three years, with forfeiture of all allowances and reduction of pay to eighty dollars per month. Two days later, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles returned the court record for an explicit statement as to the intent of the sentence. In its clarifying reply, the court stated Cohen was to be deprived of "advancement in his own grade of major and of promotion to a higher one," and, further, he "shall remain the junior major of the Marine Corps for three years without rank and without command."

However, on March 2, 1869, just six months later, outgoing President Andrew Johnson relieved Cohen from suspension and ordered him to report for duty to the commandant of Marines. Finally, on July 10 he received orders to report to Pensacola, Florida, as commanding officer of the Marine detachment, and three months later he was placed on the retired list. After fourteen years, a somewhat turbulent, but distinguished military career came to an end, and Major Cohen settled in New York City.

David's mother had moved to New York from Baltimore in 1853 following the death of her husband.<sup>48</sup> She was accompanied by Eliza and Adeline, her surviving daughters. No doubt this influenced David's decision to reside permanently in New York. In 1872 Adeline married David Stern, a New Yorker of Prussian birth. David Stern's younger sister, Mathilde, was nineteen years younger than David Mendes Cohen. On December 5, 1879, two days before his fifty-third birthday, Mathilde and Cohen were married. Within the year Matilda gave birth to their only child, a daughter, Lillie. The Cohen family resided in Harlem, a fashionable neighborhood that included many prominent Jewish families in the late nineteenth century. Census reports and New York City directories of the period reported Cohen's occupation as "U.S.N.," indicating he most likely supported his family from his military pension. There are no indications that he was actively affiliated with any veterans or religious organizations in his later life.

On May 28, 1891, David Cohen died of a spinal ailment. His funeral services were held at Temple Israel in Harlem. He was laid to rest in Cypress Hills Cemetery of Congregation Shearith Israel (New York City) where Commodore Uriah P. Levy and other Jewish notables are also buried.<sup>49</sup>

Intriguing comparisons can be drawn from the military careers of David Mendes Cohen and the better-known Navy Commodore Uriah Phillips Levy. Both men, of distinguished Sephardic lineage, devoted themselves to the service of the United States military. Each attained high rank and clear distinction in their respective branches of the armed forces. Both had strong ties to the South, Cohen by birth and Levy as the proprietor of the historic Thomas Jefferson mansion and lands of Monticello. Yet each remained loyal to the Union throughout the Civil War. Each man demonstrated a combative personality that embroiled him in controversy throughout his career.

Levy often found it necessary to defend his Judaism during a long and distinguished career in the United States Navy. The authors found no concrete evidence of antisemitism in their research of Major Cohen, although they did come upon some curious testimony of his made during the third court-martial. In a written

rebuttal to the findings of the court, Cohen wrote, “the subject of the charge should be determined, or rejected, according to the established and acknowledged morals of the Christian world . . . (F)or the most limited intellect will perceive at a glance that if such a charge were declared just, the most upright gentleman and Christian soldier might lay himself liable to be court-martialed.”<sup>50</sup> Those passages tend to cloud his complicated personality. It can only be speculated that Cohen was insinuating that if he were Christian such charges would never have been presented to a court, or perhaps this was his way of saying that the charges had no merit.

It is doubtful that Cohen was plagued by antisemitism during his military career, and although court-martialed on three occasions, none of his defense testimony made claim to persecution for his religious beliefs. On the contrary, military historian Norman Flayderman suggests that David Cohen’s rise to the rank of major, when the commandant of the Marine Corps was a full colonel, fully demonstrated that “Cohen must have had something on the ball as a Marine, regardless of his religion.”<sup>51</sup> Flayderman’s point about Cohen’s achievement may have additional importance when considering that the Marine Corps has a long-standing reputation as an elite corps. Although we support that view, it is possible that Cohen rose in rank and had his sentences ignored because his services were needed. Indeed, in 1855 the corps consisted of only 53 officers and 1,338 enlisted men, a number soon diminished by those who left to support the Confederate cause. Throughout the Civil War, the corps never exceeded 3,900 Marines. Whatever the case, the rise to high rank surely indicates an officer had qualities that were a credit to both himself and to the United States Marine Corps.

Antisemitism and its effect on the careers of Jewish military officers during the early to mid 1800s will continue to be a topic of great debate. Although not known for a martial tradition, a minority of American Jews selected the military as a career. The lives of Cohen, Levy, Myers, and Mordecai Sr. clearly demonstrate that they had the opportunities to rise to senior positions within the United States military. They also felt sufficiently secure to stand

their ground and speak out when they felt their honor was challenged. Like fellow southerners, the Civil War forced them to make difficult choices. The war clearly divided Jews as it did the nation.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Norman Flayderman and Benjamin Shapell.

<sup>2</sup> Myron Berman, *The Last of the Jews?* (Lanham, MD, 1998), 4–6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> In late 1781, Cohen and his partner commissioned Daniel Boone to locate ten thousand acres for them in Kentucky. Melvin L. Urofsky, *Commonwealth and Community: The Jewish Experience in Virginia* (Richmond, 1997), 11–12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot and Citizen* (Philadelphia, 1895), 47.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769–1976, Shabbat in Shockhoe*. (Charlottesville, 1979), 12–13.

<sup>9</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica* 5 (Jerusalem, Israel) C–DH, 663–664.

<sup>10</sup> Berman, *Richmond's Jewry*, 13

<sup>11</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 663–664.

<sup>12</sup> Louis Ginsberg, *Chapters on the Jews of Virginia, 1658–1900* (Richmond, 1969), 28.

<sup>13</sup> Jacob R. Marcus, *Early American Jewry: The Jews of Pennsylvania and the South 1655–1790* II (New York, 1953), 215.

<sup>14</sup> Urofsky, *Commonwealth and Community*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Wolf, *American Jew*, 70.

<sup>16</sup> Malcolm H. Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 3rd ed., (Baltimore, 1991), 32.

<sup>17</sup> A transcript of the letter is included in Cohen's surviving military file at the National Archives in Washington, DC.

<sup>18</sup> In a letter to Henry May, a Baltimore attorney, President Pierce wrote, "I have just signed Mr. Cohen's commission as Lieutenant of Marines." Benjamin Shapell Collection.

<sup>19</sup> James F. Harrison Diary, September 30, 1858, Robert Marcus Collection.

<sup>20</sup> Robert N. Rosen insightfully addresses the issue of this most agonizing and difficult decision of Alfred Mordecai, Abraham Myers, and others in *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, 2000), 43, 89, 91–92.

<sup>21</sup> William A. Gordon, *A Compilation of Registers of the Army of the United States from 1815 to 1837*, (Washington, DC, 1837), 260.

<sup>22</sup> Berman, *Richmond's Jewry*, 76–77.

<sup>23</sup> Gordon, *Compilation*, 502.

<sup>24</sup> Harry Simonhoff, *Jewish Participation in the Civil War*, (New York, 1963), 207–208.

<sup>25</sup> Urofsky, *Commonwealth and Community*, 31–32.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Leslie's [New York] *Illustrated Weekly*, February 8, 1862, 182.

<sup>27</sup> Isaac M. Fein, *The Making of an American Jewish Community: The History of Baltimore Jewry from 1773 to 1920* (Philadelphia, 1971), 100.

<sup>28</sup> The Empire Brigade consisted of two New York infantry regiments (132nd and 158th) and four Pennsylvania infantry regiments (158th, 168th, 171st, and 175th). Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines, IA, 1908), 333

<sup>29</sup> David M. Sullivan, *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War – The Second Year* (Shippensburg, PA, 1997), 160.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Semmes was keen to capture the *Ariel*, as she was the property of Cornelius Vanderbilt. At one time Vanderbilt made a gift of a steamer to the Union in the hope that it would be used against "rebel pirates." Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States* (Secaucus, NJ, 1987) 530–535.

<sup>32</sup> Charles G. Summersell, ed., *The Journal of George Townley Fullam*, (University, AL, 1973), 61–65.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur Sinclair, *Two Years on the Alabama* (Boston, 1895), 50–54. Sullivan writes that Captain Louis Sartori concurred with Major Garland that resistance was useless. Thus it is implied that Garland and not Cohen commanded the Marines aboard the *Ariel*. Sullivan, *U.S. Marines, Second Year*, 161.

<sup>34</sup> Sullivan, *U.S. Marines, Second Year*, 163.

<sup>35</sup> The Marines were sent to Mare Island to replace soldiers who were sent back to the war in the east. Summersell, *Fullam Journal*, 65.

<sup>36</sup> David M. Sullivan, *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War – The Third Year* (Shippensburg, PA, 1998), 134–135.

<sup>37</sup> David M. Cohen to John Harris, May 25, 1863, telegram, David M. Cohen Collection, Marine Corps Historical Branch, Washington, DC.

<sup>38</sup> General Order No. 22, Navy Department, Washington, DC, October 17, 1863; Review of Court-Martial by Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, Cohen Collection.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Sullivan, *U.S. Marines, The Third Year*, 295–296.

<sup>41</sup> Naval Official Records Serial I, Volume 3, 352–355.

<sup>42</sup> Records of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department, 1799–1867, April 23–August 14, 1866, Microcopy M-273, Roll 177, Records of the National Archives, Washington, DC.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Records of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department, 1799–1867, September 24–October 7, 1868, Records of the National Archives, Washington, DC, for this and following paragraphs.

<sup>47</sup> First Lieutenant E. C. Saltmarsh testified he had confronted Dungan demanding to know why Dungan was "so opposed to Cohen." According to Saltmarsh's testimony, Dungan retorted, "I've made up my mind either Major Cohen or myself must leave this station very soon." Saltmarsh accused Dungan of making a number of false reports concerning Cohen.

<sup>48</sup> Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 32.

<sup>49</sup> David and Tamar De Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World, Portrait of Shearith Israel*, (New York, 1955), 305. Cohen's obituary was carried in the *New York Herald*, May 30, 1891. Shearith Israel was also known as the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue.

<sup>50</sup> Records of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department, 1799–1867, September 24–October 7, 1868, Records of the National Archives, Washington, DC.

<sup>51</sup> Norman Flayderman to Robert Marcus, c. 1994.



*NOTES AND DOCUMENTS*

A Polish Jew on the Florida Frontier  
and in Occupied Tennessee:  
Excerpts from the Memoirs of Max White<sup>1</sup>

by

Richard E. Sapon-White

**I**n the late 1850s, few young Jews recently arrived in the United States from Poland chose to live in Florida. Fortunately, one who did, Max White, wrote his memoirs of those years, leaving us a remarkable, personal account of life on the Florida frontier as well as a description of his visit to Union-occupied Tennessee during the Civil War.

White's account is impressive for several reasons. First, he experienced the South as an outsider. As such, he was able to observe and record events without the biases of those caught up in the issues of the day. He had his own convictions, of course, but by and large kept them to himself, perhaps because he recognized that these views often differed from those around him. His opinions about sport hunting and, more importantly, his negative view of slavery could stir up very strong emotions against him.

Second, his narrative goes beyond recording observations to incorporate his moods and fears. He nearly jokes about the terror of the coming yellow fever epidemic, referring to it as Mr. Yellow Jack, "a grand old visitor." He stands in awe of his own calm in the face of rampant violence, and reports his depression on being swindled by a casual acquaintance. By providing this evocative account, the reader is given more than a dry retelling of events. White's memoirs provide a living, breathing sense of those critical times.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, personal accounts of Tampa and Key West prior to the Civil War are few in number,

especially those providing the perspective of recent Jewish immigrants. His brief encounters with notables of the day, including Winfield Scott, Andrew Johnson, and Judah P. Benjamin, also add to the value of the document.

Max A. White was born Avraham Mordechai Weiss in Kalisz, Russian Poland, on March 16, 1835.<sup>2</sup> The son of a tailor, he was apprenticed to a tailor at a young age. According to his memoirs, his impending conscription into the czar's army prompted his family to leave Kalisz around 1851. After living in Hull and London, England, for about three years, he sailed to the United States, arriving in February 1854.

Applying the skills he learned as an apprentice in Poland, White worked as a tailor and clothing storeowner throughout his life. Like many other Jewish immigrants, his early business ventures involved his immediate and extended family, including his father, uncles, and an uncle's brother-in-law. Although many young immigrant entrepreneurs began their careers as peddlers,<sup>3</sup> Max started work in the United States as a tailor, selling the suits he made to shop owners, first in New York and then in Boston. After earning enough to pay back his Uncle Fishel<sup>4</sup> for his steamship ticket, he set to work earning enough to bring his siblings, father, and stepmother from England. Because Max's two uncles preceded his arrival in the United States, they were able to provide him with the financial and social support that enabled him to adjust to life in a new country. Some Jewish families, such as Salomon and Nathaniel Guggenheimer of Lynchburg, Virginia, also skipped peddling as an initial step toward business success, because they arrived in the United States with sufficient funds to begin businesses.<sup>5</sup>

From his arrival in the United States until the 1890s, White sought places where business opportunity seemed best. He wandered to Boston, New York City, Tampa, Key West, Memphis, Baltimore, and Rochester, New York, and eventually settled in Newark, New Jersey, in the 1890s.

In terms of religious observance, White wrote of the importance of keeping kosher and his search for a synagogue where he could attend weekday morning services while visiting another

city. He often referred to famous rabbis, the Talmud, and the *Tanach*. He was an early member of the Rochester Jewish community from the late 1860s to the mid-1880s. In the 1908 addendum to his memoirs, he mentioned that his son arranged for him to stay at kosher hotels on at least two occasions. Although he described himself as “not religious,” he clearly was well educated in Jewish law and lore and, at least in his later years, adhered to Orthodox practice.

White was married to Anna Lewin (or Lewine) in 1862. He fathered six children: Rose, Henry (also known as Harry), Jacob, Joseph, Gussie, and Lazarus. About 1890, while living in Rochester, Anna and Max began to quarrel, mostly over religious issues. According to Max, atheism and anarchism “took root in her,” and she refused to keep a kosher home any longer. Emma Goldman also lived in Rochester during this period while she worked in the garment industry and read the anarchist newspaper *Die Freiheit*.<sup>6</sup> Possibly the same factors influencing Goldman also impacted Anna. Certainly, Anna’s animosity to religion influenced her children, as Max bemoaned that in later years his children were “not religious.” Max and Anna finally separated in 1894 despite efforts by their older children to have the two reconcile. After leaving his wife, White moved in with his widowed sister, Cecilia, in Newark. He died there in 1919.<sup>7</sup>

Several of Max White’s children achieved prominence in their fields. Henry (born 1867) may have learned the tailoring trade from his father. Rather than going into business, he became active in the needle trade unions, serving as general secretary of the United Garment Workers of America from 1896 to 1904, and editing the *Clothing Trade Weekly* and similar publications for many years.<sup>8</sup>

Max’s youngest, Lazarus (1874–1953), was a noted civil engineer and first president of the American Society for the Technion. Where Max still had great reverence for Jewish tradition, Lazarus exhibited the distance from such roots that the children of immigrants often show (perhaps not surprising given his mother’s attitudes about religion). He became a trustee of the Society for Ethical Culture. Lazarus was an inspector with the Army Corps of

Engineers in 1897–1898 in Key West. During the Spanish-American War, he worked on the construction of a gun and mortar battery there. Coincidentally, he was about the same age that his father had been during the latter's 1860–1861 stay in Key West. It is not known if Lazarus had any choice in being sent to Key West. Later, he went into business with John D. Rockefeller's nephews, forming the engineering firm of Spencer, White, and Prentis. The firm built foundations and underpinnings around the world, including renovating the foundation of the White House in the early 1950s.<sup>9</sup>

Joseph (1870–1921) was an engineer and inventor who also showed an affinity for the Society for Ethical Culture.<sup>10</sup> Joseph's daughter, Margaret Bourke-White (1904–1971), was one of the most famous photojournalists of the twentieth century. By marriage, Max White was also the great-uncle of the American composer Richard Rogers.<sup>11</sup>

#### *About the Memoirs*

In the introduction to his memoirs, Max White explained the circumstances under which they were written. After leaving Kalisz, he kept a diary for more than thirty years. At some point, however, his wife disposed of his writings, thinking them "so many old papers in a trunk." Encouraged by his children, he decided to record the history of his life. With an apology for forgetting specific dates, White wrote more than two hundred pages, beginning with stories about his grandparents and parents, and ending with his situation in 1896. He followed with an addendum in 1908. Appended to the memoirs are a number of essays on religious themes as well as short biographies of his father and two uncles.

The location of the original manuscript is unknown. However, Lazarus White's son, Robert Emelin White<sup>12</sup>, and daughter, Felicia Gossman<sup>13</sup>, have photocopies, as does the American Jewish Archives.

Following are two excerpts from Max White's memoirs relating to time that he spent in the South. The first<sup>14</sup> records events from December 1857 through the spring of 1861. During this time,

Max lived in Tampa and Key West where he operated clothing stores and struggled to deal with such frontier hazards as yellow fever, mosquitoes, outlaws, and economic panics. During this period, he was in partnership with his paternal uncle, Fishel White, and Fishel's brother-in-law, Samuel Cline. According to White, his return north was not prompted by the onset of the Civil War, but rather by a monetary dispute with his uncle. Advertisements in Tampa's newspaper, the *Florida Peninsular*, mention Samuel Cline, Phillip White, and W. C. Brown, but not Max White.<sup>15</sup> Although his account of the enterprise makes him seem to be an equal partner, he may have actually been in a subordinate role. All of his future business ventures, according to the memoirs, were pursued without other family members.

The second excerpt<sup>16</sup> relates his other sojourn in the South. This included a brief visit to Nashville and then a stay of a few months in Memphis, presumably during the summer of 1862 just after Union forces had taken over the city.<sup>17</sup> Although brief, it is included because he writes of his audience with his fellow tailor, the military governor of Tennessee and future president, Andrew Johnson. Here, as elsewhere in his memoirs, White displays no interest in the war. His only interest is in business and whether or not it is good. This probably reflects the fact that, as an immigrant, he still felt outside American society. Its conflicts only provided a backdrop for the true focus of his life, making a living. This attitude stands in contrast to those Jewish families who had lived in the South for some time, many of whom were active in civic life and became staunch supporters of the Confederacy.<sup>18</sup>

The excerpts are written in broken English with little regard for proper punctuation or capitalization, and include novel spellings for many words. Nevertheless, White's word choice reflects the flowery language one might expect in a nineteenth-century educated man's writings. Although self-taught in the language, White clearly was well-read. He cited or quoted such works and authors as *Robinson Crusoe*, Shakespeare, and Goethe. Undoubtedly, his reading interests influenced his use of language.

*Historical Settings*

Florida in the mid-nineteenth century was a sparsely populated frontier state. In 1860, it boasted a population of 140,424, including 2,981 in Hillsborough County (where Tampa is located).<sup>19</sup> The state's small population engaged in a variety of agricultural pursuits including cattle grazing in the pinelands surrounding Tampa, the soil being too poor for raising many crops.<sup>20</sup> The state as a whole, and Tampa in particular, struggled against a number of obstacles to settlement and economic development. Max White made note of many of these during his years in Tampa.

Foremost among the factors hindering development was Tampa's isolation from the more populous markets in the northern part of the state. Roads were few and poor, and no rail line was built to Tampa until 1884.<sup>21</sup> Efforts to build such a railroad, however, began as early as 1853. Tampans tried to persuade Florida's senator, David Yulee, to support a western terminus at Tampa for a proposed rail line across Florida. Yulee, a Jew by birth, kept quiet his plan to construct the line to Cedar Keys, where he had extensive land holdings. Arranging financing for construction dragged on for years, but the final straw came in November 1858, when Yulee's designs became public. Tampans reacted by burning him in effigy in the courthouse square.<sup>22</sup> White makes no mention of this event. It may have occurred when he was recuperating from yellow fever and had other things to worry about.

A second impediment to development was the series of wars with the Seminole Indians (1817-1818, 1835-1842, and 1855-1858). As a result of the First (1817-1818) and Second (1835-1842) Seminole Wars, many Seminoles had been deported to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). Some, however, refused to leave their villages in Florida, especially southern Florida, where many continued to hide in the Everglades and surrounding areas. As white settlers continued to encroach on Seminole villages, tensions rose leading to armed conflict. The Seminoles were led by Chief Holatter Micco, known to the army as Billy Bowlegs, hence the other name

*Map of Tampa Bay and south Florida circa 1860.  
The map shows the extensive wilderness in south Florida  
when Max White lived in Tampa and Key West.  
(Courtesy University of Tampa Press.)*

for the third Seminole conflict: the Billy Bowlegs War. Most of the conflict occurred much further south than Tampa. Tampa nevertheless served a crucial function in the war since it was the site of Fort Brooke, established in 1824 for the protection of settlers. The fort was home to the largest force of soldiers at the beginning of the war and served as a major supply depot.<sup>23</sup>

The Tampa community supplied the army with food, clothing, and munitions, and served the social needs of soldiers and volunteers. The presence of the war was, therefore, a contradiction of sorts. It provided an economic base for the locals, including attracting businessmen like White, but also negatively influenced the settlement of the region. While some, such as Max White and his business partners, saw the conflict as a business opportunity, few saw the economic danger in relying on the presence of the soldiers and the flow of federal funds. When the war ended in 1858 and soldiers were discharged from duty, the town collapsed economically. Its social fabric was in shambles. White's recollections reflect this change when he comments that "business quietened down" and his partner had to seek another locale for trade.

Tampa became a lawless town and was filled, according to White, with "outlaws gamblers roughs robbers cutthroats & lewd women." A significant cause of this social problem was the absence of pay for those volunteer troops in the service of the state. When the militia forces were mustered out of the army in March 1858, at the end of the Third Seminole War, only the volunteer companies in federal service received compensation.<sup>24</sup> With so many unemployed, armed, young men on the streets, crime including theft rose considerably. As a reaction, a vigilante group was organized, the Regulators. White himself was pressed into service. He patrolled the streets at night even though he had never held a gun in his life. Although the Regulators' patrols were supposed to restore the rule of law and order, violence perpetrated by the vigilantes themselves soon caused a reign of terror in town.<sup>25</sup>

The Regulators' rule continued through 1858 until the advent of a yellow fever epidemic. Yellow fever, nicknamed yellow jack, visited the inhabitants of the southern United States periodically

during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When rumors of the arrival of yellow fever spread among the local populace, White exhibited the typical response: he deserted the town. Records of the day state that the town was nearly empty during the epidemic except for the ill and those caring for them. Its victims tended to be male adults, skipping over the very young and old, as well as female adults, a pattern that White confirmed. African Americans tended to have a lower morbidity rate as a result of some genetic resistance to the disease. White claims to have contracted the illness twice, once in Tampa in 1858 and again in Key West in 1860. He was extremely lucky to have survived since the mortality rate from the disease was usually very high.<sup>26</sup>

Key West stood in sharp contrast to Tampa. Key West's economy was founded on fishing and wrecking. The establishment of Fort Taylor on the island in 1845 ensured a flow

*From the Florida Peninsular,  
February 26, 1860. (Courtesy  
Special Collections, University of  
South Florida Library.)*

of federal funds that also helped to sustain local merchants. So long as ships continued to wreck on the surrounding keys and the fort operated, the local economy blossomed. The cosmopolitan population of the city included "Englishmen, Bahamans, Irish, Dutch, Swedes, Norwegians, Hindoos, Russians, Italians, Spaniards, Cubans, Canary Islanders" and others in numbers great enough to make Key West the largest city in the state for many years.<sup>27</sup> In addition to being a military post and a thriving port, the city housed the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida. This made it a good home for lawyers such as Ossian Bingley Hart, later the governor of Florida during Reconstruction.<sup>28</sup>

White and his business partner Cline were enumerated in Key West in the 1860 census as merchant tailors born in Russia and housemates of the U.S. District Attorney, John L. Tatum.<sup>29</sup> Tatum was active in local politics, serving as secretary at a meeting of local Democrats on May 23, 1860, and speaking in favor of secession from the Union at a meeting at the county courthouse on December 12, 1860.<sup>30</sup> Whether he ever discussed issues with his housemates is unknown, because White's concern seems to have been business only. On this subject, White repeatedly comments on how good business was in Key West, whether he was selling the clothing shipped to him from New York or hawking watermelons he had brought from Tampa. Mark A. White, as the census takers recorded his name, had a personal estate valued at \$500.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, there were hazards in such a thriving, bustling community. In addition to the wealthy merchants and lawyers, there was a constant parade of sailors with their "bibulous lifestyle and less-than-strict morality."<sup>32</sup> Also, unscrupulous persons could easily take advantage of greenhorns like White, and, indeed, White describes just such an encounter with a swindler.

Since Memphis fell to Union forces on June 12, 1862, it can be deduced that White's visit to Tennessee took place that summer. At the time, Andrew Johnson was the military governor of Tennessee. White recounts almost nothing of the war being conducted in or around the state. His only interest is his lack of business success during the few months that he lived there.

*The Hillsborough County Courthouse (built 1855) was a center of activity when Max White lived in Tampa. (Courtesy University of Tampa Press.)*

During the war, there was an influx of northern Jews into Memphis and Nashville, including Union soldiers and merchants. The Jewish merchants catered to the needs of the occupying militia. In 1863 as many as fifteen sold uniforms and military clothing in Memphis. There were also several grocers.<sup>33</sup> White stayed in Memphis only four months, bemoaning that he was too late to compete with those already established there. He probably left prior to General Grant's Order Number 11, which sought to expel Jews as a group from the Department of Tennessee (which included parts of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Mississippi).<sup>34</sup>

During his years in Florida, White mentions only one other Jew aside from his business partners. This is not surprising, given that Florida's Jewish population was very small and mostly unorganized during the antebellum period. At the time that Florida achieved statehood in 1845, less than one hundred Jews lived in the state, most of them in the north. Even as Jewish immigrants from Europe arrived in Florida in the aftermath of the 1848 European revolutions, most settled in northern communities such as

Pensacola, Jacksonville, and Tallahassee. The first Jewish institution in the state, and the only one prior to the Civil War, was the Jacksonville Hebrew cemetery, founded in 1857.<sup>35</sup>

The Jewish presence in southern Florida dates to the period of the Seminole Wars in 1835–1842 and 1855–1858. Jewish soldiers fighting in those wars included Leon Dyer, David Camden de Leon, Samuel Noah, and Abraham Charles Myers. Fort Myers was named after Abraham C. Myers by his future father-in-law, Major General David Emanuel Twiggs. Both Myers and De Leon went on to serve in the Mexican War and the Confederate Army.<sup>36</sup> In terms of permanent Jewish settlement in Tampa, Brown mentions only Emmaline Ouentz Miley living near Tampa in the antebellum era.<sup>37</sup> The most prominent Jew during the second quarter of the nineteenth century was David Levy Yulee, Florida's first senator and the first United States senator of Jewish descent. His sugar plantation was situated near the Homosassa River, about sixty miles north of Tampa.<sup>38</sup> Tampa's first congregation was not founded until 1894.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, a significant Jewish presence in Key West dates to the late 1880s, during the great influx of eastern European Jews.<sup>40</sup>

Although it is hazardous to draw conclusions on the basis of negative evidence, it would appear that Max White encountered few Jews in Florida and that any observance of Jewish ritual was done by himself. He states that he was not religious (and perhaps in those youthful days he was not) in spite of his obvious commitment to kashrut and daily prayers later in life. According to White, his partner, Samuel Cline, was "irreligious" and evidently spoke out against observance; the possibility that he joined White in any holiday or Sabbath celebrations seems remote.

Jewish life in Memphis was somewhat more established, with Congregation B'nai Israel having been founded there in 1853.<sup>41</sup> Again, White makes no mention of other Jews during his stay in Memphis, either because he did not participate in communal activities or because he did not choose to note them.

While perusing the following excerpts from Max White's autobiography, the reader should keep in mind the rootlessness of single male Jewish immigrants during the mid-nineteenth

century. Virtually self-selected by the processes of immigration and migration, these young men, with their inclinations toward business derived from their European backgrounds, contributed to the development of the United States by filling important economic niches. Always seeking the places that promised the greatest opportunity, they exhibited both geographic and economic mobility, along the way forming as well as breaking partnerships often with extended family. They took risks, some more than others, because for them the American frontier provided freedom, hope, opportunity, adventure, and a new life, albeit one founded on the old. White's memoirs make these daily experiences come alive as few documents do.

*Max White's Memoirs: Tampa and Key West, 1857-1861*<sup>42</sup>

September 1857 after keeping the store a few months that memorable year came a great panic all the Banks failed and the paper money was hardly worth anything.<sup>43</sup> and we could not do any business and it was the first Panic that we ever heard of So we thought we will all be starved to death So partner Samuel Cline said there is nothing else for us left to do but to go South. and he ... knew that not far from St. Augustine Fla. where he lived before there is a city by the name Tampa Fla. and there is war with the Indians and people doing good business there – and to keep from starving in this terrible Panic althoug[h] we was afraid to go there on account of that much dreaded yellow fever. –but business is business and to die of starvation is something to be dreaded too! So we finally made up our minds to go. Partner Cline and I to go South with the Clothing and uncle to stay in N.Y. and if we will sell we will send uncle the money and he will manufacture other Clothing and send it to us we two were not married. So we packed up our Clothing in boxes and put them aboard a sailing vessel a schooner and we two went on the same schooner. So in December 1857

Off we went sailing and left Mr. Panic and starvation behind. it was fine beautiful sailing sometimes a little rough but did not mind that. only that Captain of that vessel was the most volger man. he called me his girl passenger because of my feminine appearance having smooth face and I looked younger than I actually was I was

then 24<sup>44</sup> years old and I run away when he begun to speak so vulgarly and he said to my partner he will bet any amount of money that I am a girl in mens Clothes. and used to relate of what cruelties he inflicted on sailors with such satisfaction and that he even threw a sailor over board. It made me and my partner shudder the Lord forbid to be in such company

December 27, 1857 we arrived in Key West Fla. a new scene appeared before me in mid winter as warm and bright as north in mid summer and such pleasant warmed. and such clear brightness and such busy thriving little Town. I was Enchanted with that Isle. I felt like one of those individuals of which I read in the Arabian nights stories with those Enchanted beautiful Isles.

what say you, I said to my partner, let us stay right here and not go to Tampa. I think we can do good business right here it looks to be such a lively little business place. "what" says my partner this place is a regular yellow fever nest! he will not stay here for all the money in the world. So the next day we sailed for his great Tampa. and the following morrow we arrived in Tampa. and a different Scene appeared before my young Eyes. gloom of glooms. Oh what a Change. – it seemed to me like going into a dungeon I did not like that place at all, at all but for business you must do a great manythings they all say. Well we are here and we started a clothing store and business was rushing and for all that I did not like to stay there not for all the money in creation. I felt so terrible lonely. but in a few weeks I got somewhat used to it – and such a wild sights. there was war, war war with the wild Indians. and the white people were much wilder than the Indians. in the whole Town was not quite 500 inhabitan<sup>45</sup> but there was out-laws gamblers roughs robbers cutthroats & lewd women all congregate to cheat the poor ignorant volunteers and soldiers out of their money. and such rough Floridian crackers and Georgeon hoosiers as they call them were employed as volunteers<sup>46</sup> and when they got paid off about 150.00 for every 6 months they thought they have an inexhaustible treasure but in a few days it would be all gone in horseracing in gambling in drink and in evry thing that is bad. fighting with those long bo[w]ie knives and shooting with pistols. Several times walking in the streets I was caught right amongst them shooting and slashing at each other with those bo[w]ie knives and I looked on.

and strange to say I never got excited in the least. one time a man came in my store and picked himself out a suit of clothes amounting to 30.00 and he said you will trust me for a few days. Says I my dear man I don't know you – you might be very good but I don't know you. out comes pistol. and I was not excited in the least and keped my hands in the pants pockets and looking defiently in his face. so he quickly run away. and I asked the man that was in store. what is the matter with him that he run away so suddenly. and they said because you had your hands in the pockets and looking so defiently so he thought you have a revolver in your pocket and I showed the men that I have none. and we had a good laugh. and what more he was a brave Captain of th[e] Floridian volunteers. at last it grew so bad with those outlaws that the citizens had to form themselves into a vigilant comm[ittee?] which they called Regulators. Yes Regulators. and what you think of that, and I had to be one of those Regulators. I could not regulate myself nor the Regulators themselves could regulate themselves. however I had to be a Regulator. and I had to patrol once a week a whole night with a gun on my shoulder and I never had any fire arms in my hand before. and could not hit a house if I would take aim at it so I had to do things of which I never dreamt of. but I never had the occation to use any fire arms. and one time when I rouse in the morning and looked out of the window I saw a long tall man hanging on a tree he was Regulated for Ever. and as many was regulated ... we made money for a short time. but when we were there about 3 months the war came suddenly to an End.<sup>47</sup> the Government compromised with the Indians each Indian is to get \$600.00 and the Indians did not want to take any other mony but Silver Dollars. now is a party which don't want silver : men woman and each child must get \$600. in Silver Dollars and must go out West in the Indian reservation for Ever. the name of the tribe Semenoles and the name of the Chief Billy Bowleg the whole tribe was not a thousand souls men women & children and made the Government so much trouble had 3 years war with them and cost the government many millions of Dollars.<sup>48</sup>

So the army of volunteers and soldiers was discharged. and everything pertaining to it went with it and quietened down. and business quietened down also and my partner said he must go and look for a nother business place. and I stay here until he finds a better

business place and so he went. we done considerable business but nothing like before. the good business kept on only 3 months if that business would have kept on 3 years we would be rich. So I was left alone business slow so I occupied my spare time to study English reading and writing of which I knew very little then. So another 3 months rolled around and I was quite accustomed to the place. And would not change for N.Y. to be a tailor there in N.Y. the tailoring world was no world for me any more although I loved to work at the tailoring whenever I got a chance to get a custom suit to make in my store. I had cloth for custom suits and I made quite considerable of it. but I would not like to be a tailor north. I thought it is worst than Slavery. yes, reminding me of slavery at that time Emancipation of Slavery was little thought of. although I did not like the Slavery of the black people in the South. I thought they are better of than the poor working people north. I expressed myself in favor of Emancipation of Slavery so I got myself in great trouble I almost got killed for it before I found out how strong they were for Slavery of the Negro.<sup>49</sup>

and now I was living quite contentedly peaceably and serenely. and I was thinking of my father<sup>50</sup> and sister<sup>51</sup> in Boston. and of my brother<sup>52</sup> in London Eng. So I wrote a letter to my Esteemed father and sister and one letter to my brother in London Eng. Encouraging him to come to America as I did 2 years previously wrote to him that I want to send him money to come and he did not want to come I wrote him here is a great big wide extensive country here he can work himself up that he need not work all his life time at the tailoring as I am not working at the tailoring. as he also was a tailor. I was at that time 23 years old and my brother Isaac 18 years old and that letter had a great effect on him. that in 2 years after that letter he came to america too.<sup>53</sup> And staid in N.Y. city all his life time and after a good many years became quite wealthy.

now I will return to my previous subject where I was living in Tampa Fla. quite contentedly peaceably and serenely. So all at once a report. Yes a great report came and what of that report. You will soon hear what was reported around Town must not tell so suddenly for fear you might be overjoyed. Yes it was reported that a grand old visitor is comming. Yes he is comming. and by that grand Tyranious name Mr. Yellow Jack. So Mr. Yellow Jack is comming and he Y.J.

wants to do some business too. but the people did not care to do business with Mr. Y. Jack. So a good many want to leave the Town and let Mr. Y. J. do business by himself. and I thought so too. to go away from my business for a while until Y.J. has paid his visit and was satisfied to his heart's contend and left the place.<sup>54</sup> So I with a company of nice fellows hired a nice little schooner to go to some of those Floridians beautiful Enchanting Islands.

So off we went Sailing Sailing Sailing. From one Isle to the other Isle. O Isle Isle Isle Isle most beautiful Isles and Enchanting Isles. All occupied by the most beautiful winged Inhabitence. And also by the most homely and most ugly ones too. all born Americans. Such as I would never dream of. if I would see those birds in a dream I would say what funny birds I have seen in my dream. of the most beautiful Birds were the Pink Flamingos<sup>55</sup> walking around those Isles like an army of English Soldiers. and of the most ugly ones is the Pelicans and the men in our schooner would follow those Pink Flamingos around those Isles for a good many days. to get a shot at them to kill some of them to take them home as a great prize but those beauties was as wise as they were beautiful. and none of the men could get one of those beauties. So they were mad and I was glad. but dare not let them know it. but those ugly homely wistful looking Pelicans they did not bother at all.

and we kept on sailing one early morning the ever Southern Sun shining brightly but not in the least too hot we came to a large spacious bay round as if made with a compass. in the middle an Isle also round as if artificially made full with winged inhabitence. no human being ever lived there for many miles around since the world was created to mar the beauty of it. I was enchanted. appeared to me as it were the portal to Paradise. and I heard a mighty strong roaring comming from a short distant. So I asked what is that roaring and they said it is the sea the tide rushing in so I said would very much like to go there and see how it is and what causes it to make such a thundering noise and they went with me. we sailed out of the bay and we came to an open sea fringing with a broad beach and we wend a little ways out the open sea. we dared not venture very far out in our little craft. So we turned back. I said to the men I would like to stay on the beach a little while and they complied with my wish and rowed me

to the shore as near as we could and I rolled up my pants and pulled off my shoes and Jumped in the surf and waded about 10 feet and I reached the beach. I said to my companions you can sail around for a few hours I will walk around the beach by myself and I noticed that they have no desire to stop there So they saild away out of my sight and I walking along the beach alone and observing the Sea.

and when I became Somewhat tired I sat down on the beach about 15 feet from the water edge and amused myself looking of the rushing of the tide.

and as I was sitting there quietly. there came out of the Sea myriads of beautiful little crabs all of one color pink and all of one size and the shape of them I never saw before they were in the shape of little tables with 4 legs walking little pink tables I thought myriads of them and fairly made, a pink border around the white sandy beach and danced quadrill like or Jiggs quick movements forwards & backwards without ever turning around and seemed to indicate we are happy with our lot & with our habitation! Yes. that is more than we humankind can show of

And I sat there musing & musing watching those nice little creatures and observing the beautiful scenery until my companions come back for me. but after a while it struck me if those men would not have come back. . .I would have to be another "Robinson Crusoe". . .but like everything Else in this world good and Evil. Since Adam & Eve ate from the Tree that is good & Evil. So it is with every thing else good mixt with evil. but some has mixt in a little to much Evil.

So like everything Else in this world it had its great Evil and drewback. there was those little birds what they call by that beautiful petname mosquitos that tickles you to death I have visited and seen the most beautiful Islands with fine houses on it abandoned and given over to those little pests.

we were out about 4 weeks and we hardly could endure it any longer on account of mosquitoes. and as we heard of no yellow fever being there so we turned back. and we came to Tampa there was no yellow fever as yet. So we were in good hopes that it will not come. but in a few weeks it commenced to rage at a fearful rate! people dropping of like flies in autumn north. and all youngmen and young-women. it remin[d]ed me of the Cholera<sup>56</sup> in the old country. and I

kept on well for a goodwhile and I was most sure that I will Escape it. but one time I begun to feel a little pain around my Eyes. and as I was walking in the Street I met a Doctor and I said doc, what is the matter with me. and this Doctor looked at me and said go to bed I will come around in a little while. it is not much but you must take care any how. and Strange to say I was not frightened in the least. I was not in the least afraid of death. I had not the least fear for myself. but I went to my boardinghouse and went to bed. and in a little while the Doctor came and tended me and got a good old negro to tend to me and I got the fever in the grand old style vomiting and dierhea. and when the Doctor came again I said to the doctor Doc will I kick the bucket. and the Physician said don't fear you will get over it and I begun to feel worse and worse. and I said to the negro, Oh I feel so bad. And the good old negro said I believe you I believe you Oh massa massa massa. – and wept

in about 3 weeks I recovered and when I thought that I was strong enough I went out of bed but I was so weak I could not stand upright. So the good old negro had to lead me around for another week. and when I got quite strong I commenced at my business again. but some of my best customers of which some were also my comrades were laying under the Sod! I done considerable business but I was woefully missing those good comrades and splended customers no more such good customers and such fine comrades! and I thought I would rather have died than they. truely and conscientiously for I thought they have more to live for than I. they were rich good and handsome youngmen!

but especially youngmen to quickly forget of what the Earth covers up. that was in the month of November 1858. and the months rolled around to slow for me. So in the month of January 1859 I went to New Orleans to see if I can do some business there but did not give up my business in Tampa but left it in care of a trusty man and went to New Orleans and I was in New Orleans a little over a month could not do enough business there. but I got a bargain there. on auction a great Book the History of the World by Choch.<sup>57</sup> I can say that Book cost me over a hundred Dollars in Expenche I had on it. and lent it to a relative and that relative lent it to his relative and so it got lost I was sorrow for it. going back to Tampa on a steamer I had the

satispection to get the acquaintance of that Grand Old General Gen. Windfield Scott<sup>58</sup> he was at that time 80 years of age and a grand looking man Even at that age at that time he was the pride of the nation but now forgotton he was tall Erect and a well built man and I had the honor to seat almost opposite at the dinner table. and the General handed a dish to a lady. And the young lady says to the General ah ha the General is throwing Eyes yet on ladies So the Gen. answerd. I was always kind to the ladies if I was rather hard on men.

So I settled down in Slow Tampa again Slow in everything Except in yellow fever and time creeping slowly on and So another 4 months passed out of sight.

And as I was seating on the front of my store steps gazing up and down on the Empty Sandy Streets, and again to the Sky, and the Sky was very clear, and looking across the Gulf of Mexico, I almost could percieve a Ray of the bright Southern Sun falling on my first Enchanted Isle by the name Key West that very same Isle of which I had the occation to speak of once before. quick as lightning I resolved to go to my first Enchanted Isle So I hired a little schooner and packed Clothing in trunks and went sailing to my first Enchanted Isle Key West. I and the owner of the little Craft, and a steep breeze was blowing and the Gulf of Mexico was pretty rough and you ought to see us bobbing up and down like a little Speck Every minute you would think we are ingulfed and that is the last of us. but I Enjoyed it immensely immensely and we arrived safe and sound. *and people on the wharf watching us with dread they said* and I obtained a nice little Store with a pretty little garden in the rear, and the Bananas growing into my back door. and what more business beyond my Expectation. and O how I gathered together those Golden Eagles and Spanish Doubloons until it was to heavy for me to carry in a belt arou[n]d my body. and in a few weeks I sold out all the goods I had. and went back to Tampa to fetch all what is saleable in Key West although Key West is not far from Tampa must have different clothing in Key West in Key West is much warmer and dryer brighter weather. for instance I and a great many others was dressed in white the whole year around vest pants & coat all white. I did not suffer much from the heat. So I went back to Tampa to fetch other goods and sent all the money to my uncle in N.Y. and filled the trunks again with clothing

and went again the second time to my first enchanted Isle. Key West in the same little vessel with the owner of the little craft. and as I was on the wharf I saw a farmer with a lot of watermelons. and I was in good mood I said to the farmer, how much you want for your lot of watermelons says the farmer if you take the whole lot I let you have them very cheap there is 200. I let you have them for 20.00 they ar[e] very large. all right says I put them aboard this vessel and I will help you and we did and I gave him a Golden Eagle 20.00. that is 10¢ each large and small. I had some Idea that watermelon is dear in Key West. I got from 50¢ to 75¢ a piece I made over \$100.00 on that little fun. I arrived Safe and Sound the Second time to my Enchanted Isle to gather more of those Golden Eagles and those Spanish Doubloons. but not dreaming for whom I was gathering that gold—and all these tim[e] my partner Samuel Cline as I stated before left me to take care of the business alone and also to fight the Yellow Jack alone he would not stay there over one summer not for all the money in creation but he did not mind it in the least of me staying there. And he was scuring around the whole U.S. to find a place of business and could not find any and lost money Enough and I was living on my Enchanted Isle very peaceably and gathering old the gold I could possibly gather. and Spending as little as I almost could. my whole Expenche was 5.00 or 6.00 per week and I was perfectly satisfied but as usual something happened to break my peace: there came in my boarding house a man with his arm in a sling. he said he came from Havana Cuba, that he fell on the steamer and brook his arm and said he is a wholsale Tobacco merchant of maiden lane N.Y. and must stay in Key West until his arm is cured. and he stayed there about 4 weeks and got well aquinted with me as he also was an Israelite and as Israelites then and there was very few. and I thought he was a mighty fine fellow and refind Educated man and what he said was the perfect truth. and he saw I have a good deal of money although I never showed him any and kept the money concealed of everybody but was saying how hard it is to get a draft, and in Key West was only gold no paper money. and my very stingy Partner when he was together with me the first 5 months he always sent paper money in letters, and there was only one other way to sent by Adams Express and he said that cost to much. Only after when my partner came to

Key West the first money he sent 200.00 in a letter and was lost and never heard of it that what you have of being to stingy. So I was saying how hard it is to get the money down to N.Y. So that N.Y. maiden lane Tobacco merchant said he can give me a draft. So I said give one of 500.00 *I don't know how come to say that he should give me a draft of \$500.00* I had about me about 1500.00 in gold. and I can tell you it is pretty heavy to carry it about you so he relieved a little me of my burden *I had that gold in a belt around my waist* and the next day I did not see him any more. then I knew what is up but it was to late. he went off with the steamer. and at that time only once in two weeks a steamer came and left. So I had to wait two weeks and by that time he can be in H. – and would not like to follow him there. I took it quite hard but I ought not for I could make five hundred Doll. easier then than now five Doll. But I was just begining to make a little money. well he was not the only one. but the others was more in a business like way. well I soon got over that Swindle. and in a month after I went to New York to tell my two partners what can be done in Key West and what kind of Clothing should be manufactured for that peculiar place. and staid in N.Y. about a month and paid a visit to my Esteemed father and sister in Boston. After that everything ready I and one of my partners S. Cline started for my first beloved Enchanted Isle.

So off we went, and I thought I will dream a better dream. and I will stay on the Isle a good long time. Until we make a good handsome fortune. Very little did we know then what a fortune is. if would mention Ten Thousand Dollars or the highest Twenty Thousand we would exclaim

Fabulous Fabulous Fortune!

when will we ever come to that. never no not I. not one of us not one of our relations or even one of our acquaintance and so we are like one awoke from a dream first I thought if I could only be a Tailor a Tailor O a good Tailor, a fine Tailor. A great Tailor. then I will be Alexander or Maximilian the Great. and now I awoke and it is a bad and sad dream! No no a thousand times no. I do not like no I don't want to dream that dream again not for the whole world. and so we go on dreaming until we dream no more!

and I thought now I will dream a better dream. I traveled now in great magnificent Steamer with great Dining Saloons! O Lord where

am I. And what am I. Aladin with the wonderful Lamp. Even if I had Aladins wonderful lamp I would not know to wish such splendor. And Such. Yes such Edibles!! And the good genii by my side inquiring of me what I only wish with such courtesy and complements. So that I was revolving in my mind whether that genii knows to whom he is speaking to. maybe genii thinks he is speaking to a English Lord or to a German Graf or to a Polish Nobleman maybe Genii is a better man than I. and it distresses me to see a superior bow before an inferior. or even before his Equal I think I will let him know that I am only Maxy a simple tailor. but before I had time to tell him, he disappeared. but in a second appeared again and sating before me all the good and great things with great courtesy and complements and I was thinking when I was a little boy I was wishing for Aladins wonderful lamp. So I would give one rub and a genii will appear and bring me all I whis [sic]. but now I found out that I don't need Aladins wonderful lamp all I need to ring the American Golden Eagle. One Squack of her will have more effect than all the singing birds in all creation.

And we were steaming along grandly in 5 day we arrived at our destination. to soon, good things don't keep on long, but my Enchanted Isle looked as Enchanting to me as Ever and the Gulf of Mexico like a great mirror shining in the Southern pleasant winter sun.

Now I and partner started a big Clothing Store. A big Store for Key West not for N.Y. and settled down for a good long time not for Ever. And business was flowereshing.

So that winter passed away almost like in Paradise so sweetly peaceably and serenely. and no wife to bother my life only to paddle my own canoie and even thinking nor dreaming of one that was good dreaming if it would only continue so for Ever and Ever.

But the summer. The summer is not so pleasant. First a little to hot the heat I could endure tolerably well. Then comes those nice little birds what they call them by that beautiful pet name mo[s]quito a little different mosquitoe than the northern mosquitoe. they call them gallon nippers some times they have to make a big Smoke in the house in order you should be able to eat your meal I could over come that too then comes the third plague. yes the third plague of which the hardhearted Pharaoh King of Egypt could not endure. that was his

tenth plague the slaying of the firstborn death. So it is down South the yellow fever! as I said several times before that my partner would not stay over a summer not for all the money in creation. So he went to N.Y. in the month of August. it is always safe to stay south till August. So my good partner went and I remained. and sure enough I got it again but in a milder state than I had it in Tampa Fla. in two weeks I was well again.<sup>59</sup> in October my partner came back. I had no great love for him but I never had any harsh words with him. he was a honest fellow enough but he was very selfish and irreligious although I must confess I was not religious myself but I could not bear to hear any speak against religion. So I staid again with my partner that winter and the next summer and my partner went again to N.Y. and I remained. but that summer I did not get the Yellow Jack or the Yellow Jack didn't get me. one of the two. I was not in dread of the fever in the least. I somehow was hardhearted I was not afraid of death. And I would have stayed with him a good many years if it was not for one thing. my father moved from Boston to N.Y. and my brother came from London, Eng. to N.Y. and my father wrote to me that he needs a little help of me and my brother needs 50.00 to buy a sewing machine and I wrote to uncle he shall give it to them. and my uncle answered me which was all my aunts selfish will every word of it. that my father don't need it. and my brother is so bad. which I knew it was not so. So I got so mad that I resolved not to stay there any longer. and suddenly desolved partnership and left for good.<sup>60</sup>

I was to settle with my most confedintial uncle in N.Y. and I had a hard battle with my uncle before I could get a couple of thousand Dollars. Which I ought to get it least five thousand.

My uncle and partner kept on the business and kept a clerk on my place. and as partner never would stay over a summer there and had to trust the whole business to the clerk so the clerk was selfish enough to take enough for himself in one year that he could start a business for himself and another with the same result. but when I was with them I can swear that I did not take the least thing or money such a thing never even entered my mind I considered all is mine and all theirs as we were like one person. but when they did not let me give my father & brother a few miserable Doll. It grieved me and I thought if I cannot do with my rightful hard earned money and which I

risked my life then it is time to quit and uncle after several trials with strangers sent there his own son 22 years old and when his son was there but 3 weeks he contracted the yellow fever and died!

So they did not keep on the business much longer in Key West and moved away from there entirely. Uncle's partner thought they were rich enough to do business in N.Y. City. they ... made there about one hundred thousand Dollars and put up a wholesale Clothing warehouse and bought properties and lost and lost at his warehouse and at the properties and lost all in a shorter time than he made it and died very poor and so fate has it!

[Following his return to New York City, White became engaged to Anna Lewin. A short while later, on hearing of business opportunities in the occupied areas of Tennessee, he decided to head to Memphis.]

*Max White's Memoirs: Nashville and Memphis, 1862*

Although my future father in law said business is no object. yes business business is the greatest object So I bought up cloth and manufactured ready made clothing to go South to sell them there so as to gather together those green backs as they called the mony then, that took me about 2 months. at that time was the Southern rebellion and Nashvill Tenn. and Memphis was just captured by the northern army and because those Cities were blockaded a long time. So I and a good many others thought like good and charitable people they will be sadly in need of all kind of goods. So we charitable merchants hurried up with the greatest of speed to reach them and I was not fast enough when I came there they didn't need my Charity any more. those Cities was overflowing with those Charitable merchants. and I could not get a suiteble place or store to distribute my undesirable Charity. So I and a bad many others couldn't do much in Nashvill. So I want to go to Memphis Tenn, and I had to get a permit from the Governor. at that time was Governor Johnson afterwards President Johnson. and as he also was a Tailor<sup>61</sup> So I was tribly honored to speak to first to a "Tailor" Second to a "Governor" and third to a "President." and I spoke with him privately in his parlor I wanted he should give me a permit to go to Memphis it was in the war time and

had to have a permit at that part of the country but he did not give me a permit to go to Memphis he said to me in 2 or 3 days you all will be allowed to go there without permits. there was soldiers guard in front of his house and and even inside in his parlor. I did not like Nashvill it looked dull and gloomy to me in a few day I went to Memphis without a permit I staid in Memphis about 3 months I liked Memphis very much a very lively city rather a little to hot but I didn't mind the heat much I would have settled there but could not get a suitable store. So I sold my Clothing in wholesale and made some profit. and I was absent about 4 month from my apparently beloved bride and strange to say my heart did not crave any for my Kalah/bride. And I returned to N.Y.

*Max White's Memoirs: Nashville and Memphis, 1862 (Marginalia)*

Pres. Johnson was a tailor in his young days and had no litrary education but his wife was highly educated and from her ... he received his litrary education. He was a smart man. I heard him speak publicly a good many times one man was calling out from the crowd when you was a tailor did you make your work as good as you are making speeches. And he answered when I was a Tailor and put on a patch on a pair of pants I made it as good as could be made and another thing of what he said I well remember that was in 1863 in the time of the rebellion he was speaking of one senator of La. . . . Benjamin at that time Sec. of State of the Southern Confederacy and then Gov. Johnson of Tenn. was speaking most ashamedly about Senator Benjamin being a Jew that traitor . . .of Judas Iscariot that . . .Christ a man stood at the side of me remarked he is down on the Jews <sup>62</sup>

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The editors thank Canter Brown Jr. for his assistance in locating and obtaining the images that illustrate this article. The map on page 99 and picture on page 103 appear in Canter Brown Jr., *Tampa: Before the Civil War* (Tampa, 1999) and *Tampa: In Civil War and Reconstruction* (Tampa, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> This and all subsequent information about White and his family is based on internal evidence in his memoirs unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Philip and his father, Abraham Samuel Dzialynski, in Jacksonville, who were peddlers in the 1850s. Canter Brown Jr., "Philip and Morris Dzialynski: Jewish Contributions to the Rebuilding of the South," *American Jewish Archives* 44 (1992): 517-539.

<sup>4</sup> Fishel (Phillip) White, brother to Max's father David S. White (born c. 1820, Kalisz, Russian Poland; died 1893, New York City).

<sup>5</sup> Richard Hawkins, "Lynchburg's Swabian Jewish Entrepreneurs in War and Peace," *Southern Jewish History* 3 (2000): 45–81.

<sup>6</sup> Candace Falk, Stephen Cole, and Sally Thomas, "Emma Goldman: A Guide To Her Life And Documentary Sources," <<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/Guide/chronology6900.html>>

<sup>7</sup> Robert Emelin White to Richard E. White, January 1977.

<sup>8</sup> Henry was lauded for his union activities by Jack London in *War of the Classes* (Chicago, 1905), 15. *Who's Who in America* (Chicago, 1908), 2037.

<sup>9</sup> *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (Clifton, NJ, 1891–1984), v. 47, 440–441.

<sup>10</sup> Vicki Goldberg, *Margaret Bourke-White: A Biography* (New York, 1968), 7.

<sup>11</sup> R. E. White letter.

<sup>12</sup> The author thanks Robert E. White for lending a copy of the memoirs that serves as the source of this transcription.

<sup>13</sup> Goldberg, *Margaret Bourke-White*, 371n.

<sup>14</sup> Pages 68–91 in the original manuscript.

<sup>15</sup> Phillip White is undoubtedly Max's uncle, Fishel. *Florida Peninsular*, January 2, 1858; February 12, 1859; December 17, 1859; January 14, 1860. The author thanks an anonymous reviewer for calling his attention to these citations.

<sup>16</sup> Pages 101 to 102 in the original manuscript.

<sup>17</sup> John S. Bowman, ed., *The Civil War Almanac* (New York, 1982), 102.

<sup>18</sup> Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, DC, 1864), 54.

<sup>20</sup> John Solomon Otto, *The Southern Frontiers, 1607–1860: Agricultural Evolution of the Colonial and Antebellum South* (New York, 1989), 105–106; 113–114.

<sup>21</sup> Canter Brown Jr. "Tampa and the Coming of the Railroad." *Sunland Tribune*, 17 (November 1997): 13–18.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> James W. Covington, *The Billy Bowlegs War: 1855–1858, The Final Stand of the Seminoles Against the Whites* (Chuluota, FL, 1982).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>25</sup> Canter Brown Jr., "Politics, Greed, Regulator Violence, and Race in Tampa, 1858–1859," *Sunland Tribune* 20 (November 1994), 26.

<sup>26</sup> John H. Ellis, *Yellow Fever and Public Health in the New South* (Lexington, KY, 1992), 31.

<sup>27</sup> *Population of the United States in 1860*, 54.

<sup>28</sup> Canter Brown Jr., *Ossian Bingley Hart, Florida's Reconstruction Governor* (Baton Rouge, 1997), 68 ff.; Jefferson B. Browne, *Key West: The Old and The New* (Gainesville, 1973), 78, 174.

<sup>29</sup> Population schedule for Key West, Monroe County, Florida, 1860 U.S. Census, 387 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M653, roll 108); Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>30</sup> Tatum served as district attorney from March 1, 1858, to April 5, 1861. Browne, *Key West*, 91, 130, 211.

<sup>31</sup> Population Schedule for Key West, p. 387.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, *Ossian Bingley Hart*, 71.

<sup>33</sup> Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 262–263.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>35</sup> Henry Alan Green and Marcia Kerstein Zerivitz, *Mosaic: Jewish Life in Florida* (Coral Gables, FL, 1999), 10, 12

<sup>36</sup> Green and Zerivitz, *Mosaic*, 10; Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 91-93.

<sup>37</sup> Canter Brown Jr., *Jewish Pioneers of the Tampa Bay Frontier* (Tampa, 1999), 8-11.

<sup>38</sup> Brown, *Jewish Pioneers*, 11-16; Leon Hühner, "David L. Yulee, Florida's First Senator," in Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson, eds., *Jews in the South* (Baton Rouge, 1973), 52-74.

<sup>39</sup> Mark I. Greenberg, "Tampa Mayor Herman Glogowski: Jewish Leadership in Gilded Age Florida," in Mark I. Greenberg, William Warren Rogers and Canter Brown Jr., eds., *Florida's Heritage of Diversity* (Tallahassee, 1997), 66.

<sup>40</sup> Browne, *Key West*, 170.

<sup>41</sup> Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 29.

<sup>42</sup> The excerpts presented here are an exact transcription, including all punctuation, spelling, and capitalization errors. White rarely used capitals at the beginning of sentences, but does capitalize occasional words within sentences. At times, it is difficult to tell whether or not a word was meant to be capitalized, since certain letters (such as "s") seem to be consistently capitalized when they appear as the initial letter of a word. I have attempted to be consistent in transcribing such initial letters as lower case unless they occur at the beginning of a sentence.

Words that are divided by hyphens at the ends of lines in the text have been reunited in the transcription. White only rarely indented his paragraphs, but in the transcription I have taken the liberty of indenting in those instances where it seemed appropriate. To make the text more readable, bracketed spelling corrections have occasionally been made.

Because transcription was made from a second-generation photocopy, a few words were illegible and are represented by ellipses. Marginalia exist on some of the pages but were illegible and most have not been transcribed. The one exception to this is the marginalia relating to Andrew Johnson, which appear after the second excerpt. White also added headings to the top of most pages, reflecting the subject matter on each page. These have not been transcribed. In three places in the text, White added comments between lines. These have been transcribed in italics following the sentences above which they were written.

<sup>43</sup> The Panic of 1857 began in earnest on August 24 with the announcement of the failure of the New York branch of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company. George W. Van Vleck, *The Panic of 1857: An Analytical Study* (New York, 1967), 64. By the end of September, interest rates had risen to 24 percent and one hundred fifty banks failed in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Rhode Island, and Virginia in the last four days of the month alone. Charles P. Kindleberger, *Manias, Panics and Crashes: A History of Financial Crises* (New York, 1989), 128.

<sup>44</sup> White was actually 22.

<sup>45</sup> Tampa's population numbered about 500 in 1853, with a "pre-Civil War high of 885." Brown, *Tampa and the Coming of the Railroad*, 13-14. Brown also estimates that Tampa may have contained "upwards of 1,000 inhabitants" in 1858. Canter Brown Jr., *Tampa Before the Civil War* (Tampa, 1999), 148.

<sup>46</sup> Florida governor James Broome organized companies of volunteers in January 1856 to supplement federal troops. By March, south Florida had two hundred and sixty state troops in federal service, plus another four hundred men in state service, as well as eight

hundred federal troops. The volunteers were poorly disciplined. In 1856 Secretary of War Jefferson Davis complained that "volunteers when mustered into service take advantage of their organization to indulge in idleness, intoxication and lawless depredation upon those they were supposed to protect." When so-called boat companies (each outfitted with a flat-bottomed boat) were organized in 1857, an eyewitness referred to the men as "a sorry-looking set of rag-a-muffins." Covington, *Billy Bowlegs War*, 37-38, 54, 65-66. White's term for some of the volunteers, "hoosiers," is used in the sense of "an ignorant rustic."

<sup>47</sup> The Third Seminole War was declared officially ended on May 8, 1858. See Covington, *Billy Bowlegs War*, 80.

<sup>48</sup> There are varying accounts of the monetary arrangements negotiated with the Seminoles. Peters records that the payment was sixty-five hundred dollars for Holatter Micco, one thousand dollars apiece for subchiefs, five hundred dollars for each warrior, and one hundred dollars for each woman and child. Covington states that Holatter Micco was offered five thousand dollars plus another two thousand five hundred for cattle he lost, plus payments for warriors, women, and children as above; no mention is made of subchiefs being offered any separate amount. The Seminoles demanded to see the payment in cash and the army's chief negotiator agreed to such. This probably explains White's mention that they wanted to be paid in silver dollars. White's estimate of the number of Seminoles deported is inflated. Only 165 traveled to Oklahoma. Virginia Bergman Peters, *The Florida Wars* (Hamden, CT, 1979); Covington, *Billy Bowlegs War*, 78-79.

<sup>49</sup> White may have witnessed a relatively less-harsh type of slavery in Tampa and Key West than what was commonly found elsewhere in the cotton-farming South. In Key West, slaves were allowed to hire themselves out on their own time. In Tampa, "whites and blacks often worked side by side and, at times, worshipped together." A white man might even live openly with a black woman, as was the case with Tampa City clerk William Ashley and Nancy Ashley. Brown, *Ossian Bingley Hart*, 108.

<sup>50</sup> David Solomon White (born c. 1810, Kalisz, Russian Poland; died 1881, Newark, NJ).

<sup>51</sup> Tzirl (Cecilia) White Abrahams (born 1837, Kalisz, Russian Poland; died 1925, Newark, NJ).

<sup>52</sup> Isaac White (born 1840, Kalisz, Russian Poland; died 1903, New York, NY).

<sup>53</sup> The immigration of the White family in stages was typical of many Jewish immigrants to the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chain-migration consisted of older siblings or fathers migrating first, then sending for or encouraging spouses with children, younger siblings, more distant relatives or landsman to follow suit. Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914* (New York, 1994). Max's uncles arrived in the United States first, followed by Max in 1854, Max's father, stepmother, and sister around 1860, and Max's brother around 1862. The author's personal files show that other White relatives from Kalisz continued to arrive in the United States until at least 1871.

<sup>54</sup> There had been a previous outbreak in Tampa in 1853. The one described here began at the end of September, 1858, subsiding somewhat by mid-January, 1859, with some lingering cases still being reported at the end of that February. Tampa's board of health did not realize it may have abetted the outbreak by recommending that dry ponds around town be filled with water, thereby encouraging the growth of the local mosquito population. Brown, *Tampa Before the Civil War*, 148-150. It was not until 1881 that Carlos Finlay proposed the mode of transmission of the disease, via the bite of *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes,

although proof came much later when Walter Reed and colleagues conducted their experiments in Cuba in 1900. Margaret Warner, "Hunting the Yellow Fever Germ: The Principle and Practice of Etiological Proof in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 59 (Fall 1985): 361–382.

<sup>55</sup> Since sightings of flamingos along the west coast of Florida during the mid-nineteenth century were rare, either White's sailing took him south to Florida Bay, where flocks of flamingos are known to have migrated seasonally from the Bahamas, or what he saw were not flamingos. White's trip presumably took place in late summer or early autumn, coinciding with the time when flamingos were in greatest concentration in Florida Bay. If, however, his journey did not go as far south as that, it is possible that the birds he saw were roseate spoonbills. Spoonbills were (and are) mistaken for flamingos due to their pink color and water-related lifestyles. See Robert Porter Allen, *The Flamingos: Their Life History and Survival*, (New York, 1956), 39 ff.

<sup>56</sup> Earlier in his memoirs, White mentions that his mother, Golde Shamell Weiss, and uncle, David Shamell, died in 1848 in a cholera epidemic in Kalisz.

<sup>57</sup> Efforts to identify this author and title have been unsuccessful. It might be George Alexander Cooke's *Modern and Authentic System of Universal Geography*, published in several editions in the United States in the early nineteenth century. It has a subtitle that includes "a complete and universal history and description of the whole world."

<sup>58</sup> In January 1859, Scott had headed south to escape the rigors of northern weather. He spent two months in Franklin, LA, with his nephew and grandnephew and visited New Orleans and other towns. "In the spring he was back in New York..." Charles Winslow Elliott, *Winfield Scott: The Soldier and the Man* (New York, 1937), 664.

<sup>59</sup> Since it is generally accepted today that those who have had yellow fever develop a lifelong immunity, White may have misidentified this supposed second bout of the illness.

<sup>60</sup> Although Florida had seceded from the Union in January 1861, the presence of Fort Taylor, which was in Union hands, was a major deterrent to the pro-Confederate populace from participating on the side of the Confederacy. In April 1861, Major William H. French arrived with troops from Texas to ensure that the island would remain in federal hands. Commerce with the north continued throughout the war. See Browne, *Key West*, 90 ff. This might explain how White was able to head back to New York City when he wanted, without concern about crossing lines between warring parties.

<sup>61</sup> Hans L. Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson: A Biography* (New York, 1989), 25 ff.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 414. Trefousse reports that Johnson referred to Judah P. Benjamin as belonging "to that tribe that parted garments of our Savior and for his vesture cast lots" and as "a sneaking, Jewish, unconscionable traitor." Benjamin had been senator from Louisiana before the war. He then held a series of positions in the Confederate cabinet, including secretary of state. Bowman, *Civil War Almanac*, 44.

REVIEW ESSAY

In the High Cotton

by

Stephen J. Whitfield

Bauman, Mark K. and Berkley Kalin, eds. *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997.

Bauman, Mark K. *The Southerner as American: Jewish Style*. Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1996.

Greene, Melissa Fay. *The Temple Bombing*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996.

Mamet, David. *The Old Religion*. New York: Free Press, 1997.

Suberman, Stella. *The Jew Store: A Family Memoir*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 1998.

Uhry, Alfred. *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1997.

The historical study of southern Jewry may have entered its high phase. To be sure the number of first-rate monographs has not yet reached a critical mass; nor is the number of academics and other professionals whose work is devoted to the southern Jewish past as big, say, as any department of history on the main campus of any state university. No work of synthesis has yet topped the insight, charm, and evocative power of *The Provincials* (1973). It was published so far back in the Pleistocene Age that, for the twenty-fifth anniversary edition, Eli N. Evans revised it for the end of the last millennium.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the signs of heightened interest in this subject are unmistakable; southern Jews are no longer treated primarily as exotica, as objects of astonishment. The questions that the Mississippian Quentin

Compson is asked by his Harvard roommate remain relevant: "What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all."<sup>2</sup> The answers admittedly differ from Faulkner's, and they are now coming with a momentum that is by no means spent.

The vital signs include major exhibitions and museums, especially the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (which was dedicated in 1989) and an associated unit, the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. In 1998, when the museum sponsored an exhibit, "Alsace to America: Discovering a Southern Jewish Heritage" in Jackson, Mississippi, the show was newsworthy enough for *U.S. News and World Report* to devote three pages to it. A piece ran in the *New York Times* as well. In 1994 the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum was established in Atlanta—where the two most shocking events in the internal history of southern Jewry occurred. Both entailed antisemitic violence. The conviction and lynching of Leo Frank in 1913–1915 is the subject of David Mamet's novel, and the bombing of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation on Peachtree Street in 1958 is recounted in Melissa Fay Greene's monograph. A third work among the six under review, Alfred Uhry's play, is also set in the metropolis that called itself, as the tempo of civil rights agitation accelerated, "the city too busy to hate." To the updated edition of *The Provincials*, Evans added a chapter on communal growth in the region over the last three decades. But he focused on Atlanta, which in that span of time more than quadrupled its Jewish population. From six synagogues in the late 1960s, the number spurted to twenty-four at the end of the 1990s. Atlanta is poised, Evans predicted, "to become . . . one of the major centers of Jewish life in America."<sup>3</sup>

In 1997 Richmond mounted an exhibition on "Commonwealth and Community: The Jewish Experience in Virginia." Writing in conjunction with the exhibition, historian Melvin I. Urofsky underscored how integral Jews have been to the Old Dominion, "sharing the ups and downs of Virginia for nearly four centuries. . . . They have done so not as a despised minority cravenly seeking tolerance but as proud citizens of the state." In another characteristic note in the historiography of southern Jew-

ry, Urofsky added: "Aside from their religious beliefs, there is little to distinguish Virginia Jews from their Christian neighbors."<sup>4</sup>

Miami, however, is quite different. So many northern and midwestern urban Jews arrived there as tourists (now, commonly, as residents) that Hispanic hotel employees reportedly nicknamed their place of work "Casa Hadassah." In Miami the director of the new Sanford L. Ziff Jewish Museum of Florida, Marcia Zerivitz, has asserted, "If you have Jewish memories, you'll always be Jewish, so what we're doing is creating, renewing or bringing to the front the Jewish memories that will give Floridians a basis on which to pass on their heritage."<sup>5</sup> She was undoubtedly speaking for many others—lay and professional—who find buried treasure in the past of southern Jewry and discern in its legacy a way of guaranteeing its future.

Much more evidence can be adduced. The Southern Jewish Historical Society has been revived, and its annual journal has become a forum for the work of younger researchers in particular. The Public Broadcasting System recently presented Mike DeWitt's 1998 documentary on Mississippi's *Delta Jews*. An academic press (the University of Tennessee's) has announced a series devoted to southern Jewry. Courses have been offered on the topic at Hebrew Union College (by Gary P. Zola, the biographer of Charleston's Isaac Harby) and at the College of Charleston (by Dale Rosengarten and Jack Bass). An alumnus of that college, Ludwig Lewisohn, became the subject in 1998 of an enormously meticulous, fascinating two-volume biography by Ralph Melnick. That an academic publisher (Wayne State University Press) would commit itself to so massive a study testifies to more than mere respect for Melnick's energies as a researcher and his insight into Lewisohn's psyche. There is something representative about Lewisohn as well. He happens to be the only southern white portrayed in one influential analysis of what was once called "race," in Werner Sollors' *Beyond Ethnicity* (1986). Lewisohn realized on graduating from the College of Charleston that "my name and physiognomy were characteristically Jewish." Yet descent could not easily be reconciled with consent: "I could take no refuge in the spirit and traditions of my own people. I knew little of them.

My psychological life was Aryan through and through."<sup>6</sup> Later, outside South Carolina, in the Northeast and in Europe, he would retrace the labyrinth of his own past and construct an affirmative Jewish identity. Whether such haunted Jews might have balanced their twin heritages more evenly while remaining in the region is among the intriguing mysteries that historians of southern Jewry are challenged to solve.

Those who want the Jewish variant on the regional history to be better known and understood have reason to be exultant or, as southerners themselves would phrase it, to feel in the high cotton. For the above list can easily be augmented by memoirs and by congregational and communal histories, which continue to appear and put a twist on the injunction of Quentin Compson's roommate—"tell about the South"—by showing how its Jews fit in. The half-dozen works under review suggest this heightened interest. This tiny sample is no more intended to imply that they represent the only worthy efforts, however, than this review essay should in any way be taken as comprehensive.

All of these books share a sense that Jews believed that they had adapted more or less successfully to a peculiar region. All of these works testify to the faith of Evans's "provincials" that integration had occurred, that Judeophobia was usually no worse than annoying. Such Jews had little sense of the estrangement that so often has been ascribed to the Diaspora. Indeed it is the virtual totality of that acculturation that must impress the historian. "One cannot say there is a distinctive Jewish community in New Orleans," one of its Reform rabbis observed in 1941. "There is rather a distinct New Orleans culture of which the Jewish community is a part." The city's most famous playwright was Lillian Hellman. She was also the most honored Jewish playwright to emerge from the region prior to Alfred Uhry and Tony Kushner, and in 1952 she assured the House Committee on Un-American Activities: "I was raised in an old-fashioned American tradition," which included the values of honesty, neighborliness, civic allegiance. "I respected these ideals of Christian honor."<sup>7</sup> (They weren't antithetical to Judaism either, of which she seemed unaware or indifferent.)

In seeking acceptance, southern Jews were quick to realize that they should not push their luck. They should not generate friction, because resentment and hate might be just below the surface. In 1931 Faulkner's Clarence Snopes was presumably not speaking only for himself when he proclaimed, "The lowest, cheapest thing on earth aint a nigger: it's a jew. We need laws against them. Drastic laws."<sup>8</sup> Oppression was fully codified and implemented against the second lowest and cheapest thing on earth; Jim Crow was fully embedded in the legislative and juridical structure of the region. But antisemitic laws could gain no traction and could not be effectuated; there was simply no way for the power structure to single out Jews as targets of persecution. Nevertheless the young publisher of the *Chattanooga Times*, Adolph Ochs, advised his co-religionists in the city to keep a low profile: "Don't be too smart. Don't know too much."<sup>9</sup>

The Classical Reform that seemed almost indigenous to the region gave American Judaism a southern accent. When Ochs's beloved nephew Julius Adler died, the daughter of the deceased was mystified to discover that the funeral rites at their Reform temple did not allow for a rendition of Adler's favorite song, which was "Onward, Christian Soldiers." While Malcolm Stern served as a rabbi in Norfolk, from 1947 to 1964, "the groom never broke a glass at a wedding because Classical Reform disapproved." A predecessor, Rabbi Simon R. Cohen, even wore an Episcopal collar. What made Stern eligible to serve Congregation Ohel Sholom? It wanted "a rabbi who is not a Zionist."<sup>10</sup>

Further evidence of the limitations of southern Judaism can be extracted from the honors thesis of a Princeton senior, whose cousin is the wife of the author of this essay. By interviewing elderly relatives who lived virtually their entire lives in Richmond, Virginia, Savannah, Georgia, and Jacksonville, Florida, Catherine A. Wilkinson recorded the anxiety of acculturation, especially as a few rituals were reasserted after the 1960s. (Wilkinson disguised her relatives by giving them pseudonyms.) "When we were in public places," Georgia Rosen recalled, "conversation was consciously directed away from anything that would let the people around us know that we were Jewish." By blurring the difference

between Protestant and Jewish worship, Classical Reform promised safety (though her conversational concern hardly signifies self-assurance). While serving as president of Congregation Ahavath Chesed in Jacksonville, Rosen's father, the eighty-four-year-old Joshua Vlach, allowed no candles to be lit in their home for Hanukkah or the Sabbath. Neither was a seder conducted, nor any other Jewish holiday ever celebrated in their home.<sup>11</sup>

The arrival of Jews from eastern Europe, who established a Conservative synagogue (The Center) in Jacksonville, was disconcerting. Seventy-four-year-old Mark Jacobs remembers feeling "embarrassed to bring any of my Christian friends over there and say that this was my religion." Another old-timer from Congregation Ahavath Chesed, Caroline Safer, recalled, "My parents would rather me have dated a gentile than someone from The Center." Its "Jewishness . . . was foreign to me. I felt more comfortable among Christians." Savannah's Betsy Klein could summon similar memories: "I think in my family, it would have been far better to marry an outstanding Christian . . . The worst thing I could have married was a Russian Jew. That would have been the end—that wasn't even in the discussion." Her husband "can't stand to see the rabbi with a tallis. He can't stand to see the rabbi with a yarmulke. . . . I don't think he would care if they did it in their bedrooms, but he doesn't want his rabbi walking down the street with a yarmulke and a beard. He doesn't want him to represent him that way in this community."<sup>12</sup> The rabbi was expected to be an emissary whose personality and character would accelerate the exit from the ghetto.

But in the past three decades, this version of Reform has withered, and rituals that had been discarded were reintroduced by Jews who cared less for a faith palatable to gentiles. Or perhaps earlier generations had underestimated the regional capacity for tolerance and change. When a newer sort of Reform Jew was elected president of Congregation Ahavath Chesed, Leonard Glantz, age seventy-four, "was outraged . . . [He] wore one of those skullcaps on the pulpit . . . inflicting his opinion on the rest of us. I never went to Temple during the two years that he was president. I recognize that he had the right to wear it as a regular

member, but I felt that his wearing it in his official capacity as president was an affront to the 95–98 percent of those of us in the audience who were bare-headed.” Glantz refused to “go to Temple any more. If I wanted [to join] a Conservative or an Orthodox temple [*sic*], I would go there.” He was “an unreconstructed rebel and proud of it. I am more proud of being a Southerner than of being just an American.”<sup>13</sup>

These Jews resisted the notion of peoplehood. They spurned what their fellow Germans—with their flair for combining nouns—called an *Abstammungsgemeinschaft* (a community of common descent). Down-playing their ethnicity, most southern Jews fancied themselves as a religious minority stripped of other attributes that might distinguish them from their neighbors. Instead of membership in an intact historical minority within Christendom, pride of place in their southern pedigree was stressed. The thrust of southern Jewish history has not been the cultivation of dissidence or the effort to legitimize pluralism. Southern Jews have typically believed in the compatibility of the two traditions that they could inherit and invoke. But that reconciliation has usually been achieved by minimizing or abandoning a Jewish heritage, by hoping to validate the architectural dictum that “less is more.”

The extent of assimilation is personified in Alfred Uhry, the only playwright ever to win the writer’s triple crown—a Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for *Driving Miss Daisy*, an Oscar for adapting that play to the screen two years later, and a Tony for his second non-musical play, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. In 1867 his family had helped found Atlanta’s Temple, as the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation was later commonly known. His mother’s uncle owned the National Pencil Company, where Leo Frank served as superintendent.<sup>14</sup> Confirmed at the Temple, Uhry had not become bar mitzvah. Nor did he ever attend such a *simcha*, which would have befuddled him, his family, and his peers about as completely as the formalities of a Balinese cockfight. Until he went to study at Brown University, he had attended only one seder. What animated the German-American Jews of his class, he believed, was the fantasy of turning Episcopalian, and he would get very close, by

marrying one. Their four children, Uhry told an interviewer, “all [became] goyim, I’m afraid. I just didn’t give them a spiritual identity. I had none to give. I was deprived; so are they.”<sup>15</sup> Such was the terminus of an historical process and of an ideological impetus. What started in central Europe as *yiddishkeit* was reduced to a religion that was itself limited mostly to ethical precepts, but instead of becoming stronger, Judaism became weaker. The sole marker of identity was neither cultivated nor explored. Bereft of emotional or historic authority, Judaism was instead left helpless against the larger pressures of assimilation. Nonetheless, others of Uhry’s generation remained active in the Temple and the Jewish federation and did not push the envelope of full integration.

His play, set in December 1939, is a poignant depiction of Atlanta Jewry’s upper crust as it prepares for the two-day social event that occurs annually at Christmastime. These dances, barbecues, debutante celebrations, and, finally, the cotillion bring acceptable young men and women together from throughout the region. Excluded from the upper reaches of gentile society, these Jews have to settle for partying and pairing off among their own (which include a scion of so prominent a family as “the Louisiana Weils”). Snobbery means excluding more observant Jews of eastern European stock, keeping them out of the Standard Club, treating them as the Other. Among them is Joe Farkas, who has moved down from New York City and who notices in the living room of the bustling, Ballyhoo-driven Freitags a Christmas tree that is bare at the top. Boo Levy, the sister of his employer, Adolph Freitag, explains the decorative omission: “Jewish Christmas trees don’t have stars.” In this family Passover is not only ignored, the holiday is also very dimly known, which compels Farkas to inquire: “Are you people really Jewish?” (pp. 6, 49). They are, of course. But that accident of birth is a source of shame, a frustration in their efforts at social climbing; and Boo cannot refrain from calling the personable but very ethnic Farkas a “kike” (p. 26).

*The Last Night of Ballyhoo* effectively recaptures a certain epoch, when *tout* Atlanta was thrilled to host the premiere of *Gone With the Wind*, and when even Jews wanted to forget about what

Adolph Freitag calls "this Hitler business in Poland" (p. 34). But the play is not entirely satisfactory, because it prefers to make the Freitags into objects of satire rather than endow them with full credibility. Veering a bit uncertainly between realism and mockery, Uhry's drama withholds too much sympathy to allow all of its major characters to be intelligible, inevitably limited by their time and place. The final scene violates what has come before, a dream of *teshuvah* that collides with how the self-satisfied Freitags have defined themselves. The Christmas tree has disappeared; the family has gathered at the dinner table. Sunny Freitag, the Wellesley-educated daughter, is central to this fantasy, as she recites the Hebrew blessing over the Sabbath candles, and all join in saying, "Shabbat Shalom" (p. 99).

Were they deluded in their feeling of security in the South? Were they right to assume that their neighbors would be tolerant so long as religious differences were very minor, and so long as no other assertions of Jewish identity would be advanced? The point of Mameť's novel is to discount such belief, to explore the penalties of denial. The jailed Leo Frank realizes that bigots "would always [make him] be a Jew. And that all his ratiocination regarding assimilation was, to them, pathetic" (pp. 148-149). What had begun in the Old World as emancipation was to end with a rope and a knife. Mameť's most famous plays have portrayed businessmen, and other works have mourned the loss of authentic Jewish identity. Here he tries to combine them by locating a problem in the past. But his themes are undermined by his method. Presenting itself as an historical novel, *The Old Religion* opens with a prefatory note: "In 1915 a young factory girl was killed . . ." (p. xi). In fact Mary Phagan had been murdered two years earlier. Soon Frank is admiring a glass crafted in what the text calls Czechoslovakia (a nation that did not exist until after World War I). He is asked about the Ku Klux Klan, which was revived only after the protagonist of this novel was lynched (p. 5). Such anachronisms, though minor, do not inspire confidence that the author has thought himself back into the period. He evokes little sense of time or

place, preferring to get inside what might have been Frank's subjective life.

This is a literary mistake. Mamet is acclaimed of course for his dialogue, his uncanny manipulation of the vernacular, especially when unleashed as coarse, furious invective by competitive, swaggering men. (This reviewer once attended the author's public reading of *The Old Religion*; and a member of the audience, refusing to credit the creative resources that Mamet could summon from his own imagination, asked where he might have heard what he then put in the mouths of his characters. Was it in cafés, and which cafés? "If that *were* the way I write," Mamet told the nudnick, "do you think I would tell *you*?") But in this novel, the flair for dialogue is untapped; the introspective voice given to Leo Frank does not ring true. His thoughts and fears lack verisimilitude.

The historical element of this novel is largely absent, but the consequences of mob rule can be noted here. The virulent anti-semitism that the Frank case exposed seemed to highlight the precariousness of the Jewish condition. The need became all the more urgent: to strip Judaism of its distinctiveness (and therefore of its integrity) for the sake of peace, to fit seamlessly into a racist region without challenging injustice, and to define the rabbinical vocation not in terms of scholarship but rather of diplomacy. That an innocent Jew could be lynched thus led to redoubled efforts to be absorbed into the southern way of life. Frank had been a member of the Temple as well as the elite Standard Club and president of the B'nai B'rith lodge. Yet not even he was safe. His vulnerability to antisemitic violence traumatized Atlanta Jewry in particular.

The remedy was silence. Among the close friends of his widow was the family of Janice Oettinger, who learned about the case only when she was a freshman at the University of Georgia. Only when her mother was obliged to inform her that "Miss Lucille" was Lucille Frank did the future wife of Rabbi Jacob Rothschild make the link that no one wanted to remember or mention. In 1958 she and her husband would experience a dreadful scare of their own, when the bombing of the Temple he served seemed a harbinger of the horror that their community would have to relive

all over again. Janice Rothschild Blumberg recalled that story in a splendid, touching memoir, *One Voice* (1985).<sup>16</sup> That account is now amplified and enlarged in *The Temple Bombing*, which closely examines the perpetrators of the old ultra-violence, such as the Confederate Underground and the National States' Rights Party. Drawing extensively on interviews as well as court records, Greene has produced a riveting work that is unlikely to be superseded. Five creepy racists were charged with the crime. Prosecuted twice, they got a mistrial and then an acquittal. (Their attorney worked the night shift as Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan.) *The Temple Bombing* constitutes a rebuke to civics textbooks: the jurors who granted the defendants their freedom would hardly elicit trust in the judgment of ordinary citizens.

To trace historic continuity with the Frank case would be an error. The factory superintendent was innocent, a hapless victim of a terrible miscarriage of justice. From the pulpit and beyond, Rabbi Rothschild was conscientious, articulate, and brave in his denunciation of racial injustice. He knew the risks he was taking in battling segregation. Nevertheless the power structure of the city rallied behind him and the Temple. Mayor William Hartsfield, who had coined the phrase "the city too busy to hate," rushed to the scene of the crime, lent his full public support, and offered reward money. Rewards were also posted by the First National Bank of Atlanta, by the governor of the state, and by the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*. In expressing its editorial outrage as well, the newspaper blamed such violence on a larger climate of lawlessness that segregationist officials were stoking. For such editorials Ralph McGill would earn a Pulitzer Prize. Even President Eisenhower, in a curious statement, condemned the bombers for traducing "the good name of the Confederacy" (p. 246). By a unanimous vote the Atlanta Board of Education offered school facilities to the Temple. In planting fifty sticks of dynamite under this house of worship, the conspirators acted without any civic sanction whatsoever. They were isolated, beyond the pale of respectability. The vicious Judeophobia that surrounded the trial of Leo Frank had evaporated.

But neither the shock nor the ramifications should be underestimated. Learning of the bombing of the Temple, "Miss Daisy" tells her chauffeur how baffling the choice of target is: "I'm sure they meant to bomb one of the conservative synagogues or the orthodox one. The Temple is reform." Those whose roots had sunk deepest in southern soil often betrayed the greatest insecurity. In the immediate wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Rabbi Rothschild realized that "scions of old, established families well settled in the South for generations . . . ran for cover first," according to his widow. "It was they who claimed to be completely accepted by the gentiles in their communities and they who insisted that for them Judaism was a religion only."<sup>17</sup> Having been summoned to Atlanta only in 1946, Rothschild had less of an emotional investment in the compatibility of Judaism with the southern way of life. In the year of the explosion at the Temple, he replied to a southern rabbi who had urged prudence, "How can we condemn the millions who stood by under Hitler or honor those few who chose to live by their ideals . . . when we refuse to make a similar choice now that the dilemma is our own?" (p. 189) He added, "When you—and many others in the South—seek to silence those who would speak out, then you really do more than just remove yourselves from the battle. You also seek to deny the right of those who want to act with courage to do so."<sup>18</sup>

The official support that the Temple enjoyed can be compared with the response a decade later in Mississippi. When Rabbi Perry E. Nussbaum received the news of the bombing in Atlanta, he wrote his colleague: "What can one write to you from Jackson, Mississippi?" In the attack on Rothschild's Temple, Nussbaum had a premonition of the fate of Beth Israel: "I doubt if my own Congregation will escape" (p. 262). He was right. Nine years later both the temple in Jackson as well as Nussbaum's home would be bombed. Mississippi's Governor Paul Johnson was indignant: "It is almost unthinkable that this kind of cowardly assault on a house of worship could be carried out in this civilized state among our civilized people." He had never bothered to decry the destruction of black churches. In the *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*, one angry columnist offered no principled opposition to violence in his

warning to the night riders: "You've bombed churches before, but never one where white people worship. This is Mississippi and we've had enough."<sup>19</sup> By 1967, a barrier had been crossed, and tolerance for the dynamiting of houses of worship clearly had its limits. White Christian ministers suddenly found their voices in condemning the desecration of a building in which to pray, as they had not done when those abruptly bereft of such an edifice were black. The white skins of Jews still conferred advantages.

Rothschild and Nussbaum were perhaps the most prominent southern rabbis to champion civil rights. Greene herself mentions nine others: Julian Feibelman in New Orleans; Emmet Frank in Alexandria, Virginia; Alfred Goodman in Columbus, Georgia; Charles Mantinband in Hattiesburg, Mississippi; William Silverman in Nashville; Malcolm Stern in Norfolk; Allan Tarshish in Charleston; James Wax in Memphis; and Louis Youngerman in Savannah (p. 178). Her list warrants comparison with the rabbis profiled in *The Quiet Voices*, which has chapters on Rothschild (by his widow), Nussbaum, Mantinband, and Wax; and Stern provides a memoir. The anthology, which Bauman and Kalin have very skillfully edited, portrays an earlier generation that confronted Jim Crow: Max Heller of New Orleans, Morris Newfield of Birmingham, and William Fineschriber of Memphis. Also included are Milton Grafman of Birmingham and two Texans: Sidney Wolf and David Jacobson. Myron Berman's memoir of Richmond completes the list of individuals, although there are also chapters on the clash between northern and southern Jews over the tempo of desegregation (by Marc Dollinger), on Arkansas Jewry (by Carolyn Gray LeMaster) and on Jewry in Durham and environs (by Leonard Rogoff). Bauman provides a valuable introduction, and a father-son team (Howard Greenstein of Jacksonville and Micah Greenstein of Memphis) appeal at the end of the volume for a continued commitment to the prophetic vein in Judaism. This volume of essays merits praise for its richness of texture, its coherence of outlook, its blend of biography and social history, and its contribution to knowledge of Reform Judaism in the region. Indeed *The Quiet Voices* is probably the most important book ever published on Judaism in the twentieth-century South. (Because Bauman also

edits the journal that thus disseminates such praise, he may be forced to be embarrassed in public, an act that, according to the Babylonian Talmud *Baba Metsia* 59a, deprives the perpetrator of a place in the world to come. Such are the risks that a reviewer must occasionally run.)

An anthology like *The Quiet Voices* also presents an historical test case of the Pittsburgh Platform (1885), which the Reform movement had enunciated to confine the destiny of a people to ethical precepts and to a mission of social justice. Judaism was a way for its subscribers to make the world better through righteousness. The Pittsburgh Platform was rather well timed. It was formulated on the cusp of the ugliest injustice from which blacks were suffering since their emancipation. Soon they would face systematic terror, persecution, and hostility. As the promises of the Fourteenth Amendment and the Fifteenth Amendment were scuttled, the law segregated and degraded the freed men and women, especially in the South. There, by the end of the nineteenth century, about three blacks a week were lynched and subjected to revolting sadism. Those who escaped the mobs endured poverty, misery, and hopelessness, which flight to the North or the West did little to alleviate. The movement that hammered out the Pittsburgh Platform, it is safe to conjecture, did not consider the urgency of smashing white supremacy. But in the succeeding decades, the Reform rabbis who served in the South could not elide the discrepancy between the cruelties inflicted on their black neighbors and the ideals of social justice that Reform Judaism taught.

How that disjunction was confronted (or evaded) is the subject of *The Quiet Voices*, which evokes the plight of such congregations and the rabbis who served them seven decades after the drafting of the Pittsburgh Platform. Sympathy should come easily. Fears were warranted, although there was in fact little pattern to the retribution that violent racists exacted. Some bombs went off where neither rabbis nor other Jewish leaders advocated civil rights. In Nashville one rabbi had denounced racial segregation. His synagogue, Janice Blumberg points out, was spared. The rabbi of another Nashville synagogue remained silent. His syna-

gogue was bombed. Nevertheless, the dilemma of these clergymen was awful. How might the safety of Jews be balanced against the right of their black Christian neighbors to be free from the oppression of their white Christian neighbors? How were the profits of merchants whose prosperity kept these synagogues alive to be weighed against the message of Prophets who had elevated Judaism itself? At a Union of American Hebrew Congregations convention in Birmingham in 1956, one Alabama rabbi bluntly opted for one side of this dilemma: "I wouldn't risk one hair on the head of one of my members for the life of every *shvartzeh* in this state."<sup>20</sup>

*The Quiet Voices* focuses on other rabbis, and makes an emphatic claim on their behalf. There was "a far more widespread activism on the part of southern rabbis in the modern civil rights movement than has been acknowledged" (p. ix). Take Mississippi, where probably the most terrible pressure was applied, where white racism was most vivid, and where the capacity to resist it was most threatened. Yet Mantinband managed to serve Temple B'nai Israel in Hattiesburg for over eleven years (from 1951 until early 1963), while also serving on the board of the liberal Southern Regional Council, based in Atlanta. Synagogue board members urged him to curtail his habit of publicly condemning white supremacy. On one occasion, according to Clive Webb, "Mantinband listened quietly as he was told that he had no right to jeopardize the security of Hattiesburg's Jews by acting as he did. Then, smiling graciously, he replied that he would gladly comply with the board's demands. Asked when, he continued: 'The day I die'" (p. 223). Yet the rabbi was not fired, perhaps because Hattiesburg, consisting of fifty Jewish families, was probably not where graduates of the Hebrew Union College were most eager to live and work. Mantinband was nearly irreplaceable. He was nevertheless quick to accept the offer of a pulpit in Longview, Texas. Hattiesburg gave him a farewell banquet, at which the mayor presented Mantinband with the key to the city. Also paying tribute were business, civic, and academic leaders as well as other clergymen. But members of Temple B'nai Israel were absent.

Mantimband's closest ally was Nussbaum, an outsider raised in Toronto, a maverick who suspected that congeniality was overrated as a rabbinical virtue. Nussbaum preferred to counsel Freedom Riders and to criticize racial discrimination from his pulpit in Jackson. He tried to make Mississippi a less closed society, where he lived from 1954 until 1973. Only a hundred families belonged to Beth Israel, which, Gary Zola notes, was "one of the few religious buildings in the white community to house interracial gatherings." After the synagogue was bombed, the board of trustees prohibited such meetings without its prior approval. Nussbaum "bitterly resented" this "vote of no-confidence in his moral leadership" (p. 254). But he stuck it out until the worst was over.

South Carolina is not represented in this collection. Nor is Florida, though one rectification is Raymond A. Mohl's essay on the postwar fight for equality in Miami.<sup>21</sup> Texas, on the other hand, gets two separate profiles, by Karl Preuss and by Hollace Ava Weiner. In San Antonio, Jacobson had an important ally (and friend) in the local archbishop, and met no vocal opposition from within Temple Beth-El in his adroit efforts to desegregate public facilities peacefully and without fanfare. Achieving integration, he once told Preuss, "wasn't a big deal" (p. 150). In Corpus Christi, less than one half of one percent of the populace was Jewish. No disparagement of Wolf's effective battles for desegregation is intended by noting that the black population was only five percent. Jacobson and Wolf lived among Texans who were less obsessed with race than were Deep Southerners. Visiting a tiny west Texas town that had voluntarily integrated early in the 1960s, a journalist expressed surprise. He was told, "We only had a couple colored families, and the kids went to a one-room school, and one of the boys weighed 210, did the 100 in 10.1, kicked fifty yards barefoot, so we integrated."<sup>22</sup>

Another relatively benign locale was Durham and vicinity, the subject of Rogoff's meaty essay, which recounts not only the admirable efforts of rabbis but also of other Jewish residents to make race relations more egalitarian. His account manages to wriggle out of the trap of local history by making his cast of char-

acters genuinely interesting even to those who did not know them. Especially wrenching was the challenge that Grafman faced in Birmingham, the site of Martin Luther King's most important victory. Jews constituted less than one percent of the city's population, Klansmen over nine percent. Believing that King's mass demonstrations were denying a change in city government a chance to work, Grafman became one of the addressees of King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," which expressed keen disappointment with racial moderates among the local white clergy. Such criticism, Terry Barr argues, was unfair in the context of Grafman's six-decade-long career at Temple Emanu-El.

The demands on such rabbis would have been formidable even if they did not challenge racial injustice. The congregants to whom these rabbis ministered tended to be *amei-ha'arets*, not only ignorant of Judaism but ignorant of why learning is so integral to it. The limited cultural and social horizons that bounded small towns in an earlier era need not be belabored. Enlightened allies were not likely to be available. Above all the conservatism, timidity, and wariness of congregants, whose wellbeing depended on the good will of their gentile neighbors, imposed a huge, often insurmountable, barrier to rabbinical heroism. Under such circumstances what may be more noteworthy is not how few rabbis exhibited the sort of courage that shows up more often in history books than in history. What may impress the historian is that such rabbis operated in the South at all.

That they faced such crises of conscience testifies to the distinctiveness of the region. Nowhere else did their colleagues put themselves at such peril, or fear dynamiters and night riders who might with impunity demolish a synagogue. Unarmed segregationists might boycott the chief financial backers of the congregation itself and bankrupt such merchants. The civil rights era thus underscored how the South diverged from the rest of the republic. But how fully had the congregants of these rabbis internalized the way of life that permeated the region? Mark Bauman is dubious about claims that such Jews were southerners first, and, in a pamphlet that builds on a paper he delivered at the Southern Jewish Historical Society in Charleston in 1990, Bauman deftly

challenges the conventional wisdom. The South is distinguishable from the rest of America, he concedes; but he also argues that southern Jews themselves were pretty much like other American Jews. Living for nearly three centuries in the South, this minority was "influenced by the regional subculture in a relatively marginal fashion" (p. 5). Peripheral to "the myths of southern gentility, or of the Lost Cause" (p. 9), Jews tended to be merchants in an agrarian economy, businessmen among rustics who harbored suspicions of capitalism. If regional values exerted such an impact on Jews, Bauman asks, why then did blacks regard them as different from other whites and expect to "receive better treatment from them"? (p. 15). If the central themes of American Jewish history are adaptation to particular settings and the alteration of religion itself, then the South, he insists, is merely one of the regional variants, as are the Northeast and Far West too. Jews adapted smoothly to the South, and often became successful and prosperous. But so did Jews elsewhere. The "differences with the North were of minor degree rather than of substance" (p. 26).

Bauman is correct to assert that emphasis rather than absolute division should guide historians; what this debate is about is degree rather than kind. *The Southerner as American* elevates this interpretive conflict to a more sophisticated level (and also offers thick slabs of endnotes that provide in themselves a superb instruction in historiography). The likely resolution will take the following form: In some ways Jews of the South resembled gentile neighbors more than northern co-religionists. But it is not illogical to add that the Jews of the South were not mere facsimiles of southern gentiles; differences persisted, as Bauman rightly insists. Probably no aspect of Jewish life in the South has been unique, unknown elsewhere in the United States or, for that matter, in the Diaspora; and assimilation is as ancient as the worship of the Golden Calf, even as the moral law was being transmitted on Mount Sinai. But without the numbers or the will to form a vigorous and cohesive culture that could sustain itself except by later waves of immigration, southern Jews were especially susceptible to the regional pride and mores that, beginning in the nineteenth century, were so pervasive and intense.

Surely it matters to what sort of subculture Jews adapted and whether resistance might be detected. It is hard to imagine, for example, a counterpart elsewhere to Charles Bloch, an attorney who fervently championed states' rights and white supremacy. These principles he enlarged into a sort of ideology. Clive Webb, a British historian, has recently portrayed Bloch with wry even-handedness. In the conspicuous force of his convictions, in the intensity with which he propelled himself from the heritage of Isaiah and Amos, Bloch "saw himself as the Judah P. Benjamin of the New Confederacy," according to his liberal opponent in Georgia, attorney Morris B. Abram, a member of Atlanta's Temple. Bloch's strident participation in the massive resistance to desegregation was rare, indeed freakish, among southern Jews. But he merely pushed to extremes their own widespread acceptance of the racial mores of the region. His good twin was a wealthy Jewish businessman from Savannah, David Rabhan, who piloted gubernatorial candidate Jimmy Carter all over Georgia, facilitating the latter's victory in 1970. In gratitude the incumbent asked Rabhan what he wanted in return. "I want you to say in your inaugural address that the time to end racial discrimination in the South is upon us." The advisors to the moderate Carter were dubious; such a declaration would be "political suicide." But in 1971 Carter took the plunge and announced in Atlanta: "The time for racial discrimination is over." That inaugural address made him nationally famous, as the best representative of the New South.<sup>23</sup> Bloch made himself into the compleat southerner; Rabhan made himself an agent of subversion. Neither was perfectly representative of southern Jewry. But the careers of both testified to the enduring effect of race in the mind of the South.

Vocational patterns reflected American Jewish history more than they mirrored the southern economy. Southern Jews were less likely to be planters or farmers or laborers or soldiers. White gentiles were too bellicose to honor Isaiah's plea to "beat . . . swords into plowshares and . . . spears into pruning-hooks," but Jews preferred to plow their shares of businesses into investments. In many a hamlet, these wanderers settled down to operate "the Jew store," the title of Stella Suberman's memoir (with fic-

tional elements embedded in it). Aaron Bronson, the immigrant father of the narrator, heads the only Jewish family in "Concordia," Tennessee. There he has established residence, but it wasn't completely his home. "Having in Russia been tormented, chased and attacked by Cossacks, having in New York been insulted and ignored, whatever maltreatment he had endured in Concordia was minor league." So parochial and conformist a village could not be satisfying, and he refused to sentimentalize it. But he discovered that Klansmen were bluffing when they menaced him, and even they realized that for Concordia "a Jew store" was "a good thing" (pp. 286-287).

Suberman's book will not make readers reach for comparisons with Flaubert. But it offers a slice of social history and shows how pivotal enterprise was to such a family. In such a town, in such a store, the Bronsons put their hopes and their faith in fair treatment. ("The Jew store" does eventually go under, thanks to the Great Depression.) Bronson's Low-Priced Store adopts an ambiguous policy toward black customers, who were not allowed to try on clothing before deciding to make a purchase. That was the custom. But unlike other merchants, Bronson was willing to accept returns, and "would at least meet a Negro customer at the back door and arrange there for a return or exchange" (p. 63). Though hardly uncritical, Suberman's memoir collides with the withering description in *Meridian* (1976) of the owners of a Mississippi delicatessen, "making money hand over fist because they could think of nothing more exciting to do with their lives," Alice Walker wrote. "Making money to send their Elaines and Davids to law and medical school, without a word of official Hebrew, except when they visited in synagogues in the North where they also felt like strangers."<sup>24</sup>

The intense religiosity of the region is also distinctive and has proved to be a mixed blessing. Eli Evans remembers joining his father, who served six terms as mayor of Durham, at an official welcome for an evangelist under the big tent. The preacher introduced him as follows: "Mayor Evans is here to greet us. Now, ya'll listen to the Mayor 'cause he's the same religion as our Savior." Jacksonville's Rabbi Greenstein observed that southern

fundamentalists “have a curiosity and respect for the Jews as God’s chosen people. We are intriguing to them because of our place in the Old Testament,”<sup>25</sup> in a section that has been so God-intoxicated that the bumper stickers asking other motorists to “Honk If You Love Jesus” are as familiar as the gun racks mounted on pick-up trucks.

Perhaps it helped that Judaism and Christianity have been so historically intertwined. Here Jews had an advantage denied to practitioners of other minority faiths in the most completely Protestant part of the Western Hemisphere. In 1997, when South Carolina’s board of education considered a requirement to post the Ten Commandments in public schools, an objection was raised in behalf of religious dissidents, to which one irate member, Henry Jordan, exclaimed, “Screw the Buddhists and kill the Muslims! And put that in the minutes!” Explaining that his goal was “to promote Christianity as the only true religion,”<sup>26</sup> he personified a stance that distinguished itself primarily for its candor and its ferocity, in a homogeneous region where noticeable differences in worship might be disturbing. Because Jews have continued to disagree with their neighbors about the Resurrection, an equivocal status is probably the best that can be achieved if the verities of Christianity are taken seriously.

Making sense of that status should continue to challenge historians, and it is a pleasure to report that most of the works under review have gallantly helped to clarify the southern Jewish experience. These authors have not given, nor can they give, the last word on a subject that cannot be securely confined to the past. They seem to have grasped the mixed message conveyed in the sensible injunction of the *Pirkei Avot* (2.21). “It is not thy duty to complete the work,” Rabbi Tarfon proclaimed, “but neither art thou free to desist from it.”

- <sup>1</sup> Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York, 1997).
- <sup>2</sup> William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York, 1972), 174.
- <sup>3</sup> Evans, *Provincials*, xvi.
- <sup>4</sup> Melvin I. Urofsky, *Commonwealth and Community: The Jewish Experience in Virginia* (Richmond, 1997), viii.
- <sup>5</sup> Quoted in Maya Bell, "Historical 'Mosaic,'" *Chicago Tribune*, March 13, 1994.
- <sup>6</sup> Ludwig Lewisohn, *Up Stream: An American Chronicle* (New York, 1922), 103, 122; Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York, 1986), 195–207.
- <sup>7</sup> Julian B. Feibelman, *A Social and Economic Study of the New Orleans Jewish Community* (Philadelphia, 1941), 133; Lawrence N. Powell, *Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, the Holocaust and David Duke's Louisiana* (Chapel Hill, 2000), 367; Lillian Hellman, *Scoondrel Time* (Boston, 1976), 93.
- <sup>8</sup> William Faulkner, *Sanctuary* (New York, 1958), 258.
- <sup>9</sup> Quoted in Susan E. Tifft and Alex S. Jones, *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind The New York Times* (Boston, 1999), 25.
- <sup>10</sup> Malcolm Stern, "Uncles, Goats, and Family Trees," *Reform Judaism* 11 (Fall 1982): 44.
- <sup>11</sup> Interview with Georgia Rosen, February 26, 1989, in Catherine Anne Wilkinson, "To Live and Die in Dixie: German Reform Jews in the Southern United States" (senior thesis, Princeton University, 1990), 37, 58.
- <sup>12</sup> Interviews with Mark Jacobs, March 14, 1989, with Caroline Safer, March 13, 1989, and with Betsy Klein, January 4, 1990, in *ibid.*, 51–52, 57, 95–96, 99.
- <sup>13</sup> Interview with Leonard Glantz, in *ibid.*, 1, 106, 108.
- <sup>14</sup> Sandee Brawarsky, "Sons of the South," *Hadassah Magazine*, 80 (October 1998): 19, 21; Dan Hulbert, "Uhry Brings Back 'Ballyhoo,'" *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, August 11, 1996, L8.
- <sup>15</sup> Quoted in Thane Rosenbaum, "Southern Discomfort," *Forward*, February 28, 1997, 9, 10; Brawarsky, "Sons of the South," 21; Alex Witchel, "Remembering Prejudice, of a Different Sort," *New York Times*, February 23, 1997, II, 5, 27.
- <sup>16</sup> Janice Rothschild Blumberg, *One Voice: Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild and the Troubled South* (Macon, GA, 1985), 79–110.
- <sup>17</sup> Alfred Uhry, *Driving Miss Daisy* (New York, 1987), 30; Blumberg, *One Voice*, 68–69.
- <sup>18</sup> Quoted in Blumberg, *One Voice*, 76–77; Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 221.
- <sup>19</sup> Quoted in Jack Nelson, *Terror in the Night: The Klan's Campaign Against the Jews* (New York, 1993), 58.
- <sup>20</sup> Blumberg, *One Voice*, 68.
- <sup>21</sup> Raymond A. Mohl, "'South of the South?': Jews, Blacks, and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, 1945–1960," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 18 (Winter 1999): 3–36.
- <sup>22</sup> Quoted in Willie Morris, *North Toward Home* (Boston, 1967), 246.
- <sup>23</sup> Clive Webb, "Charles Bloch, Jewish White Supremacist," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 83 (Summer 1999): 267–292; Morris B. Abram, *The Day is Short: An Autobiography* (New York, 1982), 94; Douglas Brinkley, "What It Takes," *New Yorker*, 72 (October 21–28, 1996): 78.
- <sup>24</sup> Alice Walker, *Meridian* (New York, 1986), 180.
- <sup>25</sup> Evans, *Provincials*, 137–138; Interview with Howard R. Greenstein, March 12, 1989, in Wilkinson, "To Live and Die in Dixie," 43.
- <sup>26</sup> Quoted in Joan Delfattore, "Politicizing the Commandments," *American Jewish Congress Monthly* 67 (July/August 2000): 14.

## *Glossary*

**amei-ha'arets** ~ unlearned

**bar mitzvah** ~ traditional coming-of-age ritual for Jewish males usually reaching age of thirteen

**chutzpa** ~ gall, effrontery, brazen nerve, presumptuous arrogance

**gefilte fish** ~ poached, minced fish ball (usually whitefish, pike or carp) mixed with bread crumbs or matzo meal, eggs, and onion

**gemiluth chasodim** ~ literally, Hebrew for acts of loving kindness  
~ name for a free burial society

**goyim** ~ plural of *goy*; gentiles, people who are not Jewish

**High Holy Days** ~ Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the two most important holidays on the Jewish calendar

**Hanukkah** ~ variants include Chanukah, Hanukah ~ Feast of Lights, eight-day holiday commemorating victory of the Maccabees over Syrian rulers, 167 B.C.

**kaddish** ~ the mourner's prayer

**kashrut/kosher** ~ Jewish laws governing food

**landsleit** ~ plural of *landsmann*; people from the same hometown in Europe

**macher** ~ mover and shaker, a big wheel, someone with connections

**menschen** ~ plural of *mensch*; upright, honorable, decent human beings

**minyan** ~ quorum of ten adult males traditionally required for public worship; some congregations now count adult women

**mishpocheh** ~ family, including extended relatives

**nudnick** ~ simpleton; fool

**Pesach** ~ Hebrew for Passover

*Pirkei Avot* ~ *Ethics of Our Fathers*; Jewish ethical wisdom

**seder** ~ literally, Hebrew for order; the Passover service and meal

**Sefer Torah** ~ variant of Torah; first five books of the Bible

**Shabbat shalom** ~ traditional Sabbath greeting; Sabbath peace or welcome

**Shabuoth** ~ variants include Shavuoth, Sh'buoth, Sh'vuos ~ Festival of Weeks, or Pentecost, occurring fifty days after the second day of Passover; anniversary of receiving Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

**shul** ~ synagogue

**shvartzeh** ~ black; refers to African Americans sometimes with negative connotation

**simcha** ~ blessing; blessed event

**tallit** ~ variants include tallith, tallis ~ prayer shawl

**Talmud** ~ collection of post-biblical ancient teachings justifying and explaining halacha or Jewish law; compilation of *Mishna* (code of Jewish religious and legal norms) and *Gemara* (discussions and explanations of *Mishna*)

**Tanach** ~ Torah, Prophets, and writings; twenty-four books of the Bible

**teshuvah** ~ repentance

**tzedaka** ~ righteous giving; charity

**yarmulke** ~ skullcap

**yeshiva** (plural: **yeshivas**) ~ rabbinical seminary

**yiddishkeit** ~ having to do with Yiddish culture

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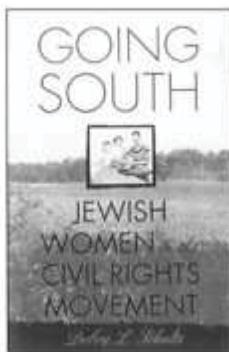


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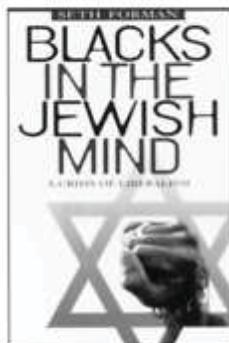
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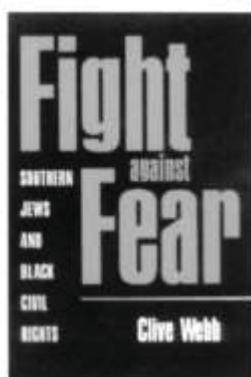
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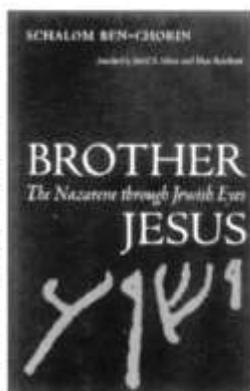
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