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Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Dana M. Greene, *Book Review Editor*

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Book Reviews

Jews of South Florida. Edited by Andrea Greenbaum. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 2005. 236 pages.

If every Jewish community deserves its history, the third largest group of Jews outside of Israel certainly deserves theirs. In this anthology, Andrea Greenbaum brings together authors with a wide divergence of interests, backgrounds, and historical approaches to fashion an eclectic book on the Jews of South Florida.

Justification for the study comes in Greenbaum's introduction. "Several features distinguish South Florida Jews from other Jewish communities in the United States," she writes (xiii), including high numbers of northeastern and midwestern migrants, retirees, Holocaust survivors, and Hispanic and Middle Eastern Jews. In all, according to Ira Sheskin, about 10 percent of American Jews lived in South Florida c. 2000, defined as Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. Sheskin's demographic history (1940–2000) reveals a dramatic Jewish migration northward from Miami-Dade and southward from the Northeast and Midwest to Broward and Palm Beach Counties. His analysis of "spatial variations in key indicators of demography, geography, and 'Jewishness'" (3) include common census categories plus intermarriage rates, JCC membership, even whether a person participates in a Passover seder, lights Sabbath candles, has a mezuzah on the front door, or has donated to a Jewish charity. In the end, Sheskin finds a Jewish community unlike any other in history.

South Florida Jewry's cultural heritage receives treatment from one of America's most astute cultural historians. In a splendid piece of prose and analysis that explores the "enfeeblement" of Jewish legal codes and ethical ideals under the influence of

unbridled individualism, Stephen Whitfield cites the Talmud, Book of Genesis, Sigmund Freud, Tacitus, and professional football player Jim Brown. He weaves marvelously crafted phrases with biting sarcasm: “Before the city [Miami] could cater to the nation’s dope fiends, it would attract hope fiends, optimists, and high rollers yearning for a big score” (41). South Florida’s ability to “help another generation to discover for itself the buried treasure of its heritage” may require the rejection of “a lavish commitment to the pursuit of happiness” and a return to Judaic tradition (48-49).

The high quality of Whitfield’s study is evident again in “*Yiddishkeit* on South Beach.” A skilled ethnographer, Joel Saxe documents how South Beach’s Jewish widows and widowers collectively used speech and song to craft their own version of a short-lived Yiddish “utopia” in the 1960s and 1970s. Gary Monroe’s evocative photographs, relegated to a separate chapter, ably echo Saxe’s themes.

Several other essays deserve attention for their scholarship and contributions to American Jewish and Florida history—least of all because they include citations and/or a bibliography. Henry Abramson addresses antisemitism in South Florida and finds a powerful strain most commonly seen in the urban Northeast. He argues for the significant role that the tourism industry initially played to produce a silent marginalization of Jews from resorts and hotels, and he notes the region’s dubious distinction as home to the first (but by no means only) Internet hate site.

Jack Moore presents an excellent biographical sketch of Meyer Lansky, “the Jewish criminal most associated with Miami and South Florida history and myth” (148). Fully versed in his subject, Moore ably places Lansky within South Florida’s criminal underworld and separates fact from fiction in the many oft-told Lansky tales. “Meyer Lansky was a real person and criminal, but also a creature fabulated in the public imagination through insistent presentation in the media. . . . Fac-toids—nonfacts generally accepted and parading as facts—reinforced one another and became accepted gospel” (156). From Moore’s nuanced interpretation, readers might even lament

Israel's refusal to grant the elderly "wise-guy" the Right of Return in the early 1970s.

Henry Green's piece on Miami Beach rabbi Leon Kronish rounds out the anthology's significant chapters. As spiritual leader of the Conservative Beth Sholom Center and then the Reform Temple Beth Sholom from 1944 until 1984, Kronish played an important role in supporting racial integration, nuclear disarmament, the separation of church and state, the centrality of Israel in American Jewish life, and religious pluralism in Israel.

With its iconic cover photograph of a tallit-draped Torah perched on a seaside beach chair, *Jews of South Florida* will surely capture attention on bookstore shelves. The image speaks to South Florida Jewry's uniqueness and to the importance of place in Jewish history, themes explored in this anthology.

Mark I. Greenberg

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Two Covenants: Representations of Southern Jewishness. By Eliza R. L. McGraw. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005. 194 pages.

"Everyone's memory is tricky," the playwright Lillian Hellman confessed, "and mine's a little trickier than most." Indeed, Hellman was criticized for the inaccuracy of her memoirs, but as Eliza McGraw reminds us, factuality is not the most important element of personal narrative. The "trickiness" of Hellman's memory "also indicates a complicated version of self-representation" as she imaginatively reshapes the contours of her own southern Jewish experience (38). As a compendium of historical facts about her life Hellman's memoirs may be unreliable, but as narratives they open a window onto a creative mind at work in the field of identity construction. Similarly, McGraw notes the frequent appearance in southern narratives of an iconic story: Jewish shopkeepers assert power over bigotry by

identifying hooded Klansmen, often by the shoes or sheets they sold them. This story, which recurs in fictional and nonfictional works by Jewish and non-Jewish writers, resonates far beyond the simple historical explanation that it probably happened a lot. "The reformulation and recouching of this image," McGraw writes, "demonstrates a central narrative at work. There is a southern Jewish story" (36-37). This is an important insight that straight historical analysis could not attain, and it justifies McGraw's "studies" method, her interdisciplinary analysis of "cultural moments" created through a variety of texts (9).

McGraw outlines this central narrative in an insightful and inventive collection of essays about how southern Jewishness has appeared in fiction, memoir, journalism, film, and other genres. In her best and most original chapters, she examines how Jewishness and antisemitism played a role in determining the ownership of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello; how Southern Baptists shaped a self-serving understanding of Jews in their effort to proselytize them; and how reviewers have misinterpreted *Driving Miss Daisy* by viewing it as a facile story about race without adequately considering its Jewish complexity. McGraw wants to show that Jewishness is not a footnote to southern life, nor simply "an opposition (i.e., not northern and not non-Jewish)," but an integral part of identity in the South. She seeks to reveal southern Jewishness as a "hybridized identity in which the existence of more than one culture within one individual . . . becomes productive of identity" and which "contend[s] with the problems and inconsistencies of the identities that it attempts to enumerate" (2).

McGraw's close textual analysis can be numbing, as can her reliance on postmodern jargon, and her conclusions are often lost in the welter of examples. In her survey of what must be *every* representation of southern Jews in *every* literary work, she seems more anxious to be exhaustive than penetrating. Still, she has done valuable research in locating a southern Jewish presence both in familiar works (*Gone with the Wind*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*) and unfamiliar ones (the journalism of David Cohn and the fiction of Louis Rubin), and in giving classic writers in the field like Eli Evans and Alfred Uhry the close critical attention they deserve.

She also has uncovered Jewish themes in works by African-American writers including W. E. B. DuBois, Charles Chesnutt, and Alice Walker. McGraw's perceptive analysis reveals deep and provocative links between southern black and southern Jewish experience, including a sense of social alienation, the complicated self-awareness DuBois called "double-consciousness," and the temptation to "pass" out of one's own culture into the mainstream. McGraw sometimes squeezes too much meaning out of minor references, but her chapter on black writers presents many compelling ideas.

Two Covenants fails, however, to achieve its most ambitious goal for southern Jewishness, to prove that "this so-called footnote is in fact integral to an understanding of difference within the twentieth-century South" and to show "how present and ingrained Jewishness has been in the South" (4, 9). McGraw's title, after all, advances a distinction rather than a totality, as does a chapter arrangement that segregates works by Jews from those by non-Jews. And there are telling absences in the essays. McGraw's review of southern novelists who have written about Jews, for example, includes some prominent names (Walker Percy, William Styron, Harper Lee) but neglects others (William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty) who seem not to have noticed the "present and ingrained" Jews among them. Representations of southern Jews, furthermore, seem to occur either in minor works by major writers (Robert Penn Warren's *Flood*) or in major works by minor writers (Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*), but never in major works by major writers. Southern Jews make notable appearances, to be sure, but only at the peripheries. For all her comprehensiveness, then, McGraw still plays around the margins of something important without quite striking it. Her interdisciplinary method points toward a potential new area of inquiry "putatively called Southern Jewish Studies" (9), but more work like this is needed—if in fact there are any more texts to discover—before we can announce its arrival.

Bryan Edward Stone

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The Hand of Esau: Montgomery's Jewish Community and the Bus Boycott. By Mary Stanton. Montgomery: River City Publishing, 2006. 194 pages.

Mary Stanton's study of Montgomery's Jewish community continues her fine work chronicling the relatively unexamined figures of the civil rights movement in Alabama. As her previous books on Viola Liuzzo, Bill Moore, and Juliette Hampton Morgan have demonstrated, Stanton tells a wonderful story. So it is with *The Hand of Esau*. Her interest in Montgomery's Jewish community originated from her research on Morgan, a white gentile librarian who had dated a member of Temple Beth-Or, the city's Reform congregation. The product of this interest is a study that illustrates not only the rich and diverse heritage of Montgomery's Jews, but also the integral role that they played in Montgomery's history and how they responded to the acute social upheaval produced by the bus boycott.

Readers of *Southern Jewish History* will find the story familiar. Much of *The Hand of Esau* appeared in her article, "At One with the Majority," in 2006. With the exception of the depth to which Stanton explores early Montgomery, vividly illustrated with anecdotes and photographs, there is little that *The Hand of Esau* adds to her argument that Montgomery's Jewish minority differed little from the white gentile majority in response to black civil rights. For those who have not read "At One with the Majority," the book offers a fascinating look into a thriving and vibrant Jewish community in the Deep South, and how that community navigated the strictures of Jim Crow society.

Although Stanton's focus is on the Bus Boycott of 1955-1956, much of *The Hand of Esau* details the history of the diverse Jewish community in Montgomery. Her story begins with the small German Jewish settlement in the mid-nineteenth century, marked by the arrival of two families, the Weils and the Lehman, who thrived in the antebellum cotton economy. The growing German Jewish community also thrived, dominating retail sales on Dexter

Avenue, the main boulevard downtown. In 1849, they established Kahl Montgomery, renamed Beth-Or in 1874 when the congregation adopted the Reform ritual. By the 1880s, Eastern European Jews began to arrive in the Capital City, setting up shop as grocers or dry goods vendors, largely catering to African Americans on Monroe Avenue, the black retail district of old Montgomery. In 1906, they established an Orthodox synagogue, Agudath Israel. That same year, Ralph Cohen arrived, leading a Sephardic influx into the city. They established a third synagogue, Etz Ahayem, in 1912. This diverse Jewish community coexisted and cooperated peacefully with one another, and they played an important role in the growth and prosperity of Montgomery. Despite the close cooperation between the congregations, class distinctions were apparent as the German Jewish families remained the most successful and the most prominent. As one wry wit observed, "one was either a Weil, a Greil, or a Schlemiel" (91).

Turning to civil rights, Stanton uses the career of Rabbi Benjamin Goldstein of Temple Beth-Or to illustrate the danger Montgomery's Jews, or any white liberal, faced in speaking out against Jim Crow. In the 1930s, Goldstein supported the Scottsboro Boys' defense and was the only white clergy to visit them at Kilby Prison. His position on the Scottsboro case and his zealous advocacy on issues of racial justice resulted in his removal from Beth-Or's pulpit in 1933. Stanton, who briefly touches on the participation of attorney Samuel Liebowitz and the communist International Labor Defense (ILD), does not address the intense antisemitism that "outsiders," northern Jews such as Liebowitz, produced in Alabama at the time (although she does address northern Jewish agitation during the Bus Boycott). Moreover, Stanton's assertion that "progressives were considered radical by this time" is just not so (70). Grover Hall, Sr., the editor of the *Montgomery Advertiser* who urged the swift conviction of the Scottsboro defendants, was considered Alabama's leading liberal by none other than the Southern Conference for Human Welfare. Nevertheless, Goldstein's radical actions threatened the racial status quo and impinged upon the time-worn custom of segregation. It was a lesson that many would not forget.

Stanton moves quickly from the 1930s to the civil rights struggle in the 1950s, and in the process she ignores the impact World War II and the Holocaust had on the Jewish community and on civil rights. With the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 and the Bus Boycott in 1955, Montgomery became a hotbed of racial intolerance. The White Citizens' Council led the charge against integration and civil rights, and "dissension became dangerous" (99). The city's Jewish community responded with silence, with only a few exceptions. At Agudath Israel, Rabbi Seymour Atlas, a native southerner, had befriended Martin Luther King, Jr., and urged support of the boycott. His outspoken position incurred the wrath of the trustees who voted Atlas out of the pulpit. His friend and colleague, Beth-Or's Rabbi Eugene Blachsclager, who had replaced Goldstein in 1933 and subsequently embraced a gradualist position on race and integration, thought Atlas to be hurting the Jewish community and refused to publically support him. Such silence by Montgomery's Jews surprised King. Shortly before his death, King stated that "there are Jews in the South who have not been anything like our allies in the civil rights struggle, and have gone out of their way to consort with the perpetrators of the status quo," and specifically cited Montgomery as an example (166).

In the aftermath of the boycott, anti-black and antisemitic rhetoric spewed from the likes of Admiral John Crommelin, causing anxiety and fear amongst many in the Jewish community. Interestingly, Crommelin explained to one of Etz Ahayem's members that his rhetoric about "Jews conspiring with communists and blacks" was directed at northern Jews, not southern Jews. Nevertheless, such social discomfort caused a few, including Etz Ahayem's Rabbi Solomon Acrish, to leave Montgomery. In *The Hand of Esau*, there is little to define Montgomery Jews as profoundly different from the white gentile majority. With the exception of a few, Montgomery's Jews either openly supported Jim Crow segregation, tacitly agreed with it, or refused to raise a voice against injustice. In this sense, they were indeed "at one with the majority viewpoint" (108).

The Hand of Esau is popular history; it is a narrative rather than an analytical study. The lack of sources will undoubtedly irritate academics, although probably not the general reader. It is a captivating read, but at roughly 150 pages, it is only a brief examination of Montgomery's Jewish history, and Stanton acknowledges this limitation. There are, however, questions that are left unanswered.

In summarizing the plight of Montgomery's Jewish community in the aftermath of the Bus Boycott, Stanton argues that "In the end, how Jews reacted or failed to react to preserving segregation made little difference in how they were treated. Apoplectic segregationists who'd been unable to break the Boycott demanded scapegoats. Jews suffered, even in Montgomery, where they had worked productively with gentiles for over 150 years" (158-159). Yet, Stanton does not address how they suffered. Apart from Rabbi Atlas, Victor and Ann Kerns, or Rabbi Acrish, who faced expulsion or ostracism, Stanton uses the examples of Olive Andrews, a gentile, and Majorie Levi Smith, originally of Beth-Or but a converted Episcopalian, to illustrate the repercussions from white supremacists. What of the larger Jewish community? What of the Weils or Greils? Was the exclusion of Jews from the Montgomery Country Club one of the only concrete examples of antisemitism in the city, or was this more of a perception than a real threat? In the end, did not Atlas, the Kerns, or Acrish face the same pressure or discrimination that liberal white gentiles faced? The answers, unfortunately, are not clear.

Stanton also missed the opportunity to explain the critical role that World War II and the Holocaust played in regard to both the Jewish community and civil rights. In her Introduction, Stanton recounts how southern Jewish attitudes toward white supremacy frustrated northern Jews, "who warned that such accommodation had encouraged the Nazis" (21). Nazi persecution and the mass killings of Jews in Europe affected southern Jews just as it did northern Jews. Why did Montgomery's Jews not make the same connection?

Despite the shortcomings, Stanton has written an enjoyable and informative history of the Montgomery Jewish community.

The Hand of Esau is a valuable contribution to local and state history, as well as to an important chapter in the civil rights movement. Stanton's book is highly recommended.

Dan J. Puckett

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Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History. By Deborah R. Weiner. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006. 234 pages.

In her meticulously researched and well-written book, *Coalfield Jews: an Appalachian History*, research historian and scholar Deborah R. Weiner addresses the question of regionalism among those Jews who settled in Appalachia between the 1880s and the 1930s. Beginning first with the age-old question, "there are Jews in Appalachia?" and ending with the conclusion that the Jews who resided in the Appalachian coal mining towns derived from their experiences uniquely defined identities that made them *both* Appalachian (a distinct mountain identity) and Jewish, Weiner's remarkable text is accented by vignettes that shed light on the qualitative and personal experiences of Jews living in these environs.

The story is the classic tale of upward Jewish mobility couched in socio-historical terminology that enables the reader to trace clearly shifts in socio-economic status, questions of assimilation and acculturation, relationships with white Christians, adaptation to a southern mentality, and, most of all, issues of adaptability and flexibility as many of the experiences that Weiner deftly notes mirror those of shtetl life in eastern Europe. Thus, Weiner's volume is a true complement to Lee Shai Weissbach's, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: a History*, an impressive study that draws together the fragmented histories of triple-digit Jewish communities in the United States. Whereas Weissbach depicted national trends, Weiner offers an original case study that provides direct insight into a group of southern Jews who are not thought

about often: those in the Appalachian coalfields. How did Jews happen upon the Appalachian coalfields? Could Jewish life flourish in the region? Could Jewish culture and identity persist in such a different and challenging environment?

Weiner begins her five chapter book with an extensive history of the migration of eastern European Jews to Appalachia and notes the similarities between shtetl life and the agrarian lifestyle found in the coalfields. In this first chapter, Weiner lays the groundwork beautifully for how the Jews were able to make the initial transition not to city life following immigration to the United States, but to life in the small coal mining towns of rural Appalachia. As Weiner depicts the history behind Jewish immigration to Appalachia, her text is accented nicely with anecdotes documenting the experiences of individuals and families as they were transitioning to life in the region. These historical anecdotes drive home the important socio-historical distinctions relating to migration patterns, economics, and religious and socio-cultural pressures that Weiner highlights with her overview of the history of Appalachian Jewish life.

The real "meat" of Weiner's argument is highlighted in the second, third, and fourth chapters. Here she forges new ground by focusing on the intricate middleman minority status of the Appalachian Jew and the relationship between such a designation for the Jewish population and the delicate Appalachian economy. Weiner denotes how, after acclimating to the region, the Jews were so integrated that they moved from salespeople to proprietors, often going where the business would be best and competing with company stores by, following these coalfield institutions, offering customers lines of credit. Weiner demonstrates the Jewish merchants' flexibility in dealing with rough and occasionally uncertain economic times, as the mountainous region was rife with environmental (fires and floods) and economic problems based on the boom and bust nature of coal mining. Thus, "Jewish owned businesses linked the coalfields to a different set of distribution networks, increased the range of shopping choices, served as an alternative source of consumer credit (especially meaningful during strikes), and hampered the ability of coal companies to engage

in monopolistic practices such as price gouging" (89). Weiner continues, therefore, that "despite the peculiarities of the coal economy, the economic and demographic trajectory of coalfield Jews conformed to trends in small-town American Jewry" (90).

The question and issue of how Jews assimilated and acculturated into Appalachian culture is an interesting one. Weiner notes in the beginning of her third chapter that those characteristics that once "otherized" the Jew in the old country "did not have the same effect in the coalfields" (91). Weiner capitalizes her argument about how Jews came to be active participants in Appalachian life. She notes that the Jews did not abandon or forget their religious, cultural, or even ethnic distinctiveness, but rather adapted (as most Jews did upon their integration into American society) and assimilated into the secular pursuits of their communities. Indeed, as Weiner notes, their religious distinctiveness was not even called into question, as the prevailing sense in the region has been (and still is) that attending a church, any church (even a Jewish "church") was acceptable. What mattered most was the belief in a divine power, but the distinctiveness relating to whether one is Jewish or Presbyterian was less consequential to coalfield life. In addition, Weiner points to Jewish flexibility once again by maintaining that in order for the coalfield Jews to "fit in," they often had to modify kosher laws, work on Saturdays, and interact with Christian culture. Instead of resisting, coalfield Jews embraced this diversity of experience and integrated their experiences into the totality of their being "coalfield Jews." The final two chapters document how successful the Jews of Appalachia were at maintaining Jewish identity. Occasionally, this identity had to "bend and sway" with the times and experiences of the group, and the Jews of Appalachia were not immune to the trends facing Jews across America. Previously Orthodox Jews made the switch to Reform Judaism because it was more attractive and financially necessary for economic survival. Kosher laws were adapted and then ultimately abandoned. Small (but notable) congregations were established (three of which had staff rabbis, and the others benefited from itinerant student rabbis from Hebrew Union College), and Jewish life flourished in the coal-

fields as the Jewish residents aptly navigated their identities as both Appalachian and Jewish.

Overall, only one criticism bears mentioning; that is, many of the historical facts are often stated and restated in such a way that the reader can get bogged down in the repetition. Such a criticism, however, is minute in comparison to the huge contribution that this book makes to the field of American Jewish history. It is highly and enthusiastically recommended.

Dana M. Greene

North Carolina Central University

Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas. Edited by Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England in association with the Texas Jewish Historical Society, 2007. 308 pages.

This is a BIG book, not in the sense of being long or weighty with closely argued scholarship, but because of its oversized 8½ x 11 inch format, sporting a cover with a pair of handcrafted Justin boots emblazoned with stars of David and lions of Judah. All of this conveys the immediacy of the Texas myth Jewish-style. The expanded page size allows for some very good historical illustrative material large enough to examine, including photographs, documents, letters, and wonderful maps. One map designed by Jewish surveyor Jacob De Cordova, three years after Texas achieved statehood in 1846, has been reproduced in both black-and-white and within a center signature of color photographs. Graphics designer Gary Hartman created several topic-specific maps for this volume, which illustrate the essence of particular essays—a thoughtful addition in a well-designed book aimed at a broad readership.

The subtitle, *The Jews of Texas*, leads one to expect a comprehensive overview of the Texas Jewish experience. The editors have organized the twenty-one essays into three sections: The

Formative Years: Forging a Dual Identity; The Entrepreneurial Era: Leaving their Mark; and Current Events: Changing the Texas Landscape, and within these nearly parallel divisions, the essays follow a more-or-less chronological arrangement. In the introduction, Hollace A. Weiner observes that “studying the evolution of Texas Jewish communities can lead to analysis of patterns common not only to Jews but also among other ethnic groups drawn to the frontier or to boomtowns, small towns, and early industries that followed the frontier epic” (5). In this anthology, however, one finds little “analysis of patterns.” *Lone Stars of David* is more like a family photo album of essays that comprise snapshots of Jewish life in a larger-than-life state that is as much a state of mind as a geographical and political entity. Like Texas longhorns on the open range, the individual essays also ramble over many years and a great deal of territory; hence, the “snapshot” nature of the volume. Weiner acknowledges this apparent randomness in the introduction, quoting her coeditor’s talk at the Texas Jewish History Symposium, when he mentioned that *Lone Stars of David* “attempts to examine the main themes of the development of Texas Jewry by choosing individual examples to illustrate richer and broader realities . . . [because] a complete and comprehensive history will never be possible” (15).

The upside of this approach gives the reader a sense of the variety and vastness of the Texas landscape and the Jews who have peopled it, from those who came during the 1840s to those who arrived much more recently. Several intriguing essays give the reader a sense of the chutzpa of a portion of the state’s Jewish pioneers whose vision and actions transformed aspects of the frontier, like Alsatian-born cattleman Mayer Halff who controlled miles of ranch country that crossed state lines; Russian-born M. B. Zale, whose original credit jewelry store in Wichita Falls spawned the world’s largest jewelry chain; and the Bavarian-born Sanger brothers, whose retail outlets expanded as the railroad expanded. These individuals had an eye on the main chance and the drive and determination to realize their ambitions. Texas presented them with an irresistible canvas on which to unleash their entrepreneurial creativity, and these stories provide essayists Patrick

Dearen, Lauraine Miller, and Gary P. Whitfield, respectively, great material from which to forge compelling narratives. Although these three essays are not in the same division, they and several others in the same vein reveal a strong sense of the resiliency and adaptability of businessmen who succeeded in a rough-and-ready environment.

Stuart Rockoff and Ken Roseman offer us different kinds of insights. Rockoff's "Deep in the Heart of Palestine: Zionism in Early Texas," analyzes the complexities of forging support for a Jewish state. He argues persuasively that the greatest impact of Zionist organizations was in creating "a community in which Jews could feel comfort and pride in their Jewishness even as they became Texans" (93). Likewise, Ken Roseman's "Six Tenths of a Percent of Texas" is a succinct analysis of the demographic shifts as Texas's many once-vital small-town Jewish communities declined and its metropolitan centers burgeoned. While the Jewish populations of both Houston and San Antonio expanded greatly in the past two decades, those of Austin and Dallas have more than doubled. This shift reflects both larger regional and national trends, with such massive transformations ultimately changing the entire character of growing up Jewish in the state.

The downside to the collection is that it lacks a coherent thematic vision, leaving one's appetite for getting at the nature of the Texas Jewish experience only partially sated. Whether "a complete and comprehensive history" is or is not ultimately achievable remains an open question, but this volume underscores the need for more in-depth historical analysis to give us a more coherent understanding of the challenges of forging a Jewish identity in the hinterlands.

Bobbie Malone

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