

# SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

**Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society**

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Sandra Berman, *Primary Sources Section Editor*

Stephen J. Whitfield, *Book Review Editor*

Phyllis Leffler, *Exhibit Review Editor*

2010

Volume 13



# Southern Jewish History

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Sandra Berman, *Primary Sources Section Editor*

Stephen J. Whitfield, *Book Review Editor*

Phyllis Leffler, *Exhibit Review Editor*

## Editorial Board

Ronald Bayor     Alan Kraut

Marcie Cohen Ferris     Adam Mendelsohn

Belinda Gergel     David Patterson

Karla Goldman     Jonathan Sarna

Dana M. Greene     Lee Shai Weissbach

*Southern Jewish History* is a publication of the Southern Jewish Historical Society available by subscription and a benefit of membership in the society. The opinions and statements expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the journal or of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

Southern Jewish Historical Society OFFICERS: Leonard Rogoff, *President*; Stuart Rockoff, *President Elect*; Phyllis Leffler, *Secretary*; Les Bergen, *Treasurer*; Scott M. Langston, *Immediate Past President*. BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Sandra Berman, Marni Davis, Maryanne Friedman, Margaret Anne Goldsmith, May Lynn Mansbach, Adam Mendelsohn, Jean Roseman, Harriet Stern, Ellen Umansky, Lee Shai Weissbach, EX-OFFICIO: Rayman L. Solomon.

For authors' guidelines, queries, and all editorial matters, write to the Editor, *Southern Jewish History*, 2517 Hartford Dr., Ellenwood, GA 30294; e-mail: Markkbauman@aol.com. For journal subscriptions and advertising, write Rachel Heimovics Braun, managing editor, 954 Stonewood Lane, Maitland, FL 32751; or e-mail: journal@jewishsouth.org; or visit [www.jewishsouth.org](http://www.jewishsouth.org).

Articles appearing in *Southern Jewish History* are abstracted and/or indexed in *Historical Abstracts*, *America: History and Life*, *Index to Jewish Periodicals*, *Journal of American History*, and *Journal of Southern History*.

*Southern Jewish History* acknowledges with deep appreciation grants from

The Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, New York

The Gale Foundation, Beaumont, Texas

Copyright © 2010 by the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

ISSN 1521-4206

## PERMISSION STATEMENT

Consent by the Southern Jewish Historical Society is given for private use of articles and images that have appeared in *Southern Jewish History*. Copying or distributing any journal, article, image, or portion thereof, for any use other than private, is forbidden without the written permission of *Southern Jewish History*. To obtain that permission, contact the editor, Mark K. Bauman, at [MarkKBauman@aol.com](mailto:MarkKBauman@aol.com) or the managing editor, Bryan Edward Stone, at [bstone@delmar.edu](mailto:bstone@delmar.edu).



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

by

Anton Hieke\*

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

*The Beginnings: Early Jewish Wilmington until 1860*

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

---

\* The author may be contacted at [anton.hieke@zusas.uni-halle.de](mailto:anton.hieke@zusas.uni-halle.de)

## 2 SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

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

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

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

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

Christianity either out of conviction or as means of marrying Christian social peers.<sup>5</sup>

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

To retain a pious life according to Jewish law was a challenge for those who desired to do so. The supply of kosher meat, for instance, was not introduced to the city until 1876.<sup>7</sup> Also, the first permanent mohel appears in records five years earlier.<sup>8</sup> For early Jewish Wilmingtonians, the burial situation was especially problematic. The remains of deceased Jews had to be transferred to Jewish cemeteries as far away as Charleston, Richmond, Norfolk, or even New York for interment at great expense.<sup>9</sup> No Jewish burial ground existed in the entire state of North Carolina, whose Jewish population had numbered about four hundred individuals as early as 1826.<sup>10</sup> In 1852, a *chevra kadisha* was founded in Wilmington under the name True Brothers. It was the first organization in the state with the explicit goal of establishing a Jewish cemetery. The growth of the Jewish community through the immigration of Central European Jews in the 1840s and 1850s demanded a solution for handling the deceased. The recently arrived immigrants' role in the society was so prominent that Wilmington's *Daily Herald* referred to the new organization as "True Brothers (German Jews)."<sup>11</sup> In 1855 the new burial ground was dedicated as a part of the city cemetery with the attendance of Christians and consecrated by Isaac Leeser, the prominent hazan of congregation Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia, who was visiting

#### 4 SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

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

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

Wilmington's early Jewish community was largely composed of descendants of old Jewish American families of Sephardic background such as the Mordecais and Lazaruses. By 1860 the nature of the population had changed in favor of the German element. Wilmington's Jews from the Sephardic tradition no longer played a dominant role, unlike their counterparts in larger cities like Savannah or Charleston. From twenty Jews in 1849, the community increased threefold by 1860.<sup>14</sup> Between 1860 and 1880, Wilmington's Jewish population more than tripled. In 1860, 63 Jews lived in Wilmington (0.6 percent of the population), 116 in 1870 (0.86 percent), and 215 in 1880 (1.23 percent).<sup>15</sup> Of the 116 Jewish Wilmingtonians who are identifiable in 1870, the census closest to the formation of both congregations, 47 were American born, 38 of whom were under the age of eighteen and children of immigrants. Jewish Wilmington in 1870 was therefore a community of immigrants.<sup>16</sup> And, the majority of the city's adult Jews, 56 of 77, were from German states.<sup>17</sup> Fourteen Jewish Wilmingtonians came from Prussia but none of these verifiably from Prussia's Polish provinces. (For the origin of Wilmington's German Jewish immigrants, see the table on the facing page.)

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

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

---

<sup>1</sup> Numbers in parentheses refer to Wilmingtonians under 18 years of age.

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

This description matches the experiences of Jews in Wilmington: These people were young (the average adult Jewish Wilmingtonian in 1870 was thirty-two-years-old up from thirty-one in 1860), single (in 1860, there were only eight Jewish married couples), and self-employed or clerking for Jewish merchants. In 1870 the largest number of adult Jews were immigrants from Bavaria (thirty-eight), of whom at least ten were from Bavaria's extraterritorial province Bavarian Palatinate, also known as Rhenish Palatinate (in German: *Bayerische Pfalz* or *Rheinpfalz*). The French Republic had occupied this German territory on the western bank of the River Rhine for about twenty years, beginning in 1795. Officially annexed into the Napoleonic Empire in 1801, it remained French until the Congress of Vienna decreed its cession to the Kingdom of Bavaria in 1815.<sup>19</sup> As subjects of France, the Jews in the Palatinate enjoyed political equality under the Code Napoléon/Code Civil for thirteen years. In 1808, the French so-called *Décret Infame*, however, again limited the rights of Jews in the Palatinate. Money lending was restricted, licenses for trading had to be obtained annually, and new Jewish immigrants were prohibited from settling in eastern France, i.e. the German provinces of the Empire.<sup>20</sup> This *décret* remained in effect in the Bavarian Palatinate until the 1840s but was, despite its anti-Jewish leitmotif, rather liberal compared to the conditions in Bavaria proper. There, Jews were liable to Bavaria's illiberal jurisdiction aimed at the reduction of the state's Jewish population. For instance, Bavarian Jews were subjected to the *Matrikelgesetz* (license law): closed *Matrikel* lists limited the number of Jews for each village and town individually to prevent growth of the Jewish population. Jewish residents received licenses to live in the community until their numbers reached the limits. Licenses for additional Jews, newcomers or children of residential families, were then refused and the surplus Jewish residents had to leave the community.<sup>21</sup>

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

small towns. Brothers Jacob, Daniel, and David Kahnweiler came from Rockenhausen as minors with their father, Benedict, in the 1840s.<sup>22</sup> The Blumenthals, Abraham and his children Jacob, Samuel, and Rosa, came from Teschenmoschel<sup>23</sup> (today part of Rockenhausen). Bernard, Lewis, and Sigmund Solomon were from Ungstein,<sup>24</sup> as was Jacob Loeb and likely his cousin Jacob Lyon, born Loeb.<sup>25</sup> Abraham Weill came from Lambsheim<sup>26</sup> and Frederic Rheinsteins and his nephew Leopold Bluethenthal from Münchweiler an der Alsenz.<sup>27</sup> Nathan Greenewald was born in Breunigweiler, his daughter-in-law Rosa Sternberger in neighboring Börrstadt, as was her sister Henriette who married Samuel Blumenthal. West of Börrstadt lies Steinbach am Donnersberg, the birthplace of Leopold and Henry Brunhild<sup>28</sup> (originally Brünhild). These villages and small towns were in fact situated in the Bavarian province of the Palatinate. Identifiable native villages of later Wilmingtonians in the mainland of Bavaria include Bibergau<sup>29</sup> (Julius Fernberger), Fellheim<sup>30</sup> (Gustav Rosenthal and Bertha Solomon), Öttershausen<sup>31</sup> (the Bear Family), Thüngen<sup>32</sup> (Babette Bear, née Forcheimer), and Forchheim<sup>33</sup> (Lewis Schwarzman and Joseph Lederer).

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

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

Although Jews had constituted only a minority in the mid-nineteenth century German states,<sup>38</sup> the Bavarian villages and towns of origin of emigrants to Wilmington had considerable Jewish populations<sup>39</sup> that provided a potentially rich network after immigration, as well as a supply of German Jewish spouses. The portion of Jews in the communities ranged from 3.5 percent in Forchheim (103 Jews), 7.9 percent in Rockenhausen (140), 30 percent in Münchweiler (178), to 65 percent in Fellheim (92).<sup>40</sup> Dürkheim, to which Ungstein belongs today, and Münchweiler were also the seats of their districts' rabbinates.<sup>41</sup> Öttershausen, the home village of the Bear family, on the other hand, had only a small Jewish community of about fifteen to twenty persons around 1820, and by 1880 it ceased to exist.<sup>42</sup>

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

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

This wealthy family was in fact the Kahnweilers. Menasse Kahnweiler, described as "a rich and very religious man,"<sup>44</sup> set up a small synagogue for the community on the upper floor of one of his buildings in 1811.<sup>45</sup> His son, Heinrich/Hirsch, uncle of Wilmington's Kahnweilers, imported cotton and groceries, such as coffee. As a member of Rockenhausen's community council, Heinrich Kahnweiler participated in road construction and owned real estate including forest land as well as sheep.<sup>46</sup> Economic or financial hardships therefore do not seem to be reasons for the Kahnweilers to have left Europe.

THE GERMAN EMPIRE IN 1871

*Map 1*

THE ORIGIN OF JEWISH WILMINGTONIANS IN BAVARIA

*Map 2*

The socioeconomic background of the grandfather-generation of the German immigrants to Wilmington was rather homogeneous regardless of the size of the home community. With the exception of Marx Salomon Fernberg in Bibergau (probably a relative of Julius Fernberger) who in 1817 was listed in French records as a *Schmuser*, a term applied to a *shadchen*, the families of the future immigrants of Wilmington were traders in one way or another. The Böhr family of Öttershausen (Americanized to Bear in Wilmington) sold horses,<sup>47</sup> whereas the Rheinsteins of Münchweiler<sup>48</sup> and Levy Weill of Lamsheim dealt in cattle. Alexander Weill of the same community was a *Kolonialwarenhändler*, meaning grocer.<sup>49</sup> Abraham Salomon Fernberg of Bibergau<sup>50</sup> as well as Assor Brünhild of Steinbach am Donnersberg were also merchants. Samuel Brünhild of the same community dealt in potassium.<sup>51</sup> The noticeable wealth of the Kahnweilers, however, was not normative for the immigrants from Germany to Wilmington. In 1810, the French Imperial occupants of the Palatinate counted the Jewish population according to tax brackets in order to raise the *Kultusumlage*, an early form of today's German church tax. Seventy percent of the Palatinate's Jewry belonged to the two lowest brackets (as did the Rheinsteins of Münchweiler, the Sternbergers of Börrstadt, and the Brünhilds of Steinbach am Donnersberg), and 28 percent could be described best as middle class (like the Löbs of Ungstein and the Weills of Lamsheim). Only 0.7 percent was considered wealthy, as were indeed the Kahnweilers.<sup>52</sup> With the exception of this family, the typical immigrant from the Palatinate to Wilmington therefore came from a modest background but also did not belong to the poorest layer of society.

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

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

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

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

## 12 SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

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

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

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

Wilmington's Jewry of 1860 was mainly composed of German immigrants who had settled in the city during the 1840s and 1850s and had become acculturated to the antebellum South. But how southern were they in their identity? The Kahnweiler and Brothers store, for instance, owned five slaves in 1860<sup>61</sup> and became involved in hunts for runaways.<sup>62</sup> Historian Jonathan Sarna wrote, "as a rule those southern Jews who could afford slaves owned them—that was the southern way."<sup>63</sup> The Federal Census for 1860 shows several Jewish Wilmingtonians with personal

## 14 SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

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

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

*(Courtesy of Anton Hieke.)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Confederate states, experienced times of political upheaval. Nathaniel Jacobi and Solomon Fishblate were outspoken supporters of the conservative, white supremacist Democratic Party. Fishblate became the Democratic mayor of the city immediately after the official end of Reconstruction in 1878 and governed Wilmington for four years, longer than any other mayor between 1866 and 1884.<sup>78</sup> Samuel Bear, Abraham Weill, Gustav Rosenthal, David Aaron, and other Jewish Wilmingtonians joined the Young Men's Democratic Club, founded in 1863, with the purpose of supporting the Democrats.<sup>79</sup> Opportunities for political activities were expanded with the passage of Article 32 of North Carolina's constitution in 1868 by the Republican Reconstruction government. Previously Jews and non-Protestant Christians were excluded from state office.<sup>80</sup> It is, however, not known if some of the city's Jews supported the Republican Party.

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

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

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

Overall, Jewish Wilmingtonians were integrated members of Wilmington's white society and supporters of their southern home during the war. On the other hand, their identity as southerners is somewhat problematic. Apparently, Jewish Wilmingtonians were rather unfixed in their regional identity and constantly moved between North and South. Only sixteen of the sixty-three Jews in Wilmington of 1860 were still present in the city in 1880 and could be identified in the census.<sup>83</sup> Many Jewish Wilmingtonians had close ties to Philadelphia, a city easily accessible through a direct steamship line. The Kahnweilers resided there for several years in the 1840s after immigrating to the United States and before coming to Wilmington,<sup>84</sup> as had the families of David Aaron, Isaac Reichman, Jacob Loeb, and others.<sup>85</sup> Samuel Blumenthal had peddled in Pennsylvania,<sup>86</sup> and Morris M. Katz managed a Philadelphia hotel before coming to Wilmington in 1853.<sup>87</sup> Of the Jewish Wilmingtonians in 1860, twenty-seven found a new home elsewhere by 1870, and most of them, twenty-one, in Philadelphia.<sup>88</sup> By 1880, several Jewish families from Wilmington had moved to Philadelphia and then returned, as did the families of Simon Anathan, David Aaron, Jacob Lyon, and Solomon Levy.<sup>89</sup> The Nathan Greenwalds came from Philadelphia to Wilmington by 1880.<sup>90</sup> Abraham Weill and his family resided in Wilmington in 1860, in Philadelphia in 1870, and in Wilmington again in 1880, whereas son Charles reportedly resided in California for some time between 1870 and 1880.<sup>91</sup> Philadelphia also became important in the process of forming the second Wilmington congregation. Rabbi Marcus Jastrow of Philadelphia's congregation Rodeph Shalom inspired and guided the formation of Temple of Israel.<sup>92</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

*Jewish: The Two Congregations of Wilmington*

As early as 1852 in his *Occident and Jewish Messenger*, Isaac Leeser had bemoaned the fact that there was no synagogue in North Carolina although there were enough Jews to be found in the state, a criticism he repeated in 1860.<sup>104</sup> In 1867, he emphasized:

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

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

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

Leeser's repeated public criticism that sparked the establishment of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation on Rosh Hashanah in 1867. The importance of this event was stressed by an invitation to the governor of North Carolina to attend the ceremony. Although he declined, he sent his greetings.<sup>108</sup> In its coverage of the event, the *Occident* stated twenty-three members and several sponsors raised almost two thousand dollars in postwar Wilmington for a house of worship<sup>109</sup> that eventually occupied a former church.<sup>110</sup> The congregation was dissolved, however, only a year later and the hazan, E. M. Myers, left Wilmington for New York. The *Wilmington Star* covering the event stated the lack of funding for the congregation as the reason for its failure. The fact that the furniture at the hazan's residence was auctioned off seems to support this.<sup>111</sup> The reason given, however, does not seem completely plausible since four years later the problems in funding were obviously solved when the permanent Reform Temple of Israel was established and twenty thousand dollars was raised for the building of a synagogue in 1876.<sup>112</sup> Wilmington Hebrew Congregation appears to have been dissolved because of tensions between the congregation and hazan over the issue of orthodox practice and personal reasons.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Wilmington announcement, 1876.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

They provided the organ, Torah, and maintenance of the building.<sup>139</sup>

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

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

Wise propagated the idea of adjusting Judaism to the realities of life in America. For this purpose, "he . . . traveled the length and breadth of the country, preaching, dedicating new synagogues, and spreading the gospel of Jewish religious reform wherever he went."<sup>141</sup> Wise had visited Wilmington in 1850<sup>142</sup> but it is unknown if he revisited the city in the 1870s. His ideas, however, found fertile soil, and Wilmington's Jews began preparation for the establishment of a new congregation. Rabbi Marcus Jastrow, a prominent rabbi of Philadelphia, was invited to Wilmington to help in the process of establishing the new congregation, which was officially organized in 1872. Three years later, however, Wise scorned Wilmington's Jewry for still not having found a house of worship and a permanent rabbi. He was especially affronted by the fact that Nathaniel Jacobi's son, Edward, was buried by a Baptist clergyman because there was no rabbi available. (Nathaniel Jacobi himself typically officiated as a lay reader.) Wise wrote:

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

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

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

The ceremonies in connection with the erection of Temple of Israel, the first Jewish house of worship built solely for that purpose in North Carolina, were marked by American and southern symbols. Representatives of the St. John and Wilmington Masonic lodges laid the cornerstone of the new Moorish-style building on July 15, 1875.<sup>147</sup> Residents of the city participated by marching in a procession.<sup>148</sup> And they deserved to be included: Christian Wilmingtonians had donated money toward the erection of the temple because, as the *Morning Star* phrased it, "[The city's Jews] are but a handful as compared with other denominations and must of necessity rely upon a certain outside aid."<sup>149</sup>

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

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

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

At least one member left the congregation for reasons other than departing Wilmington. Abraham Wronski, formerly an officer of Wilmington Hebrew Congregation, resigned his seat in 1876.<sup>154</sup> Most tensions, however, were overcome and the congregation moved towards Reform. In 1878, Temple of Israel joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the recently formed central organization of the American Reform movement.<sup>155</sup> Two years later, the congregation had thirty-eight members and the same number of children enrolled in Sabbath school.<sup>156</sup> Temple of Israel proved to be one of the enduring

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

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

#### *Conclusion*

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

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

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

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

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

---

## NOTES

I want to take the opportunity to thank the amazingly helpful staff at New Hanover County Public Library in Wilmington, NC, and especially Beverly Tetterton who is a great librarian, historian, and friend. Above all, I thank Wolf and Irka Hieke of Bobbau who keep me from getting lost in census lists. *Ich danke Euch beiden.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>11</sup> *Wilmington (NC) Daily Herald*, May 3, 1855.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>19</sup> Ellen Latzin, “Bayern und die Pfalz: Eine historische Beziehung voller Höhen und Tiefen,” *Einsichten und Perspektiven: Bayerische Zeitschrift für Politik und Geschichte*, No. 02/2006) [http://www.km.bayern.de/blz/eup/02\\_06\\_themenheft/index.asp](http://www.km.bayern.de/blz/eup/02_06_themenheft/index.asp) (accessed February 13, 2010).

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

<sup>26</sup> Abraham Weill's tombstone inscription, 1831-1902, Oakdale Cemetery.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>32</sup> Mosiah Bear Family Sheet, New Hanover County Public Library.

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

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

<sup>35</sup> Abraham Blumenthal, "Life in Wilmington."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>43</sup> "Rockenhausen," Aliche, *Lexikon*, 3533. Translation by the author.

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

<sup>45</sup> "Rockenhausen," *Alemannia Judaica*, [http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/rockenhausen\\_synagoge.htm](http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/rockenhausen_synagoge.htm) (accessed March 3, 2010).

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

<sup>47</sup> "Öttershausen," *Alemannia Judaica*.

<sup>48</sup> "Münchweiler an der Alsenz," *Alemannia Judaica*, [http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/muenchweiler\\_synagoge.htm](http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/muenchweiler_synagoge.htm) (accessed March 3, 2010).

<sup>49</sup> "Lambsheim mit Maxdorf," *Alemannia Judaica*, [http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/lambsheim\\_synagoge.html](http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/lambsheim_synagoge.html) (accessed March 3, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> "Rockenhausen," *Alemannia Judaica*.

<sup>51</sup> Kreutz, "Die pfälzischen Juden," 77.

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

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

<sup>54</sup> All information from Ninth Census, 1870, Wilmington.

<sup>55</sup> Wilmington, NC, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, v. 18.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>61</sup> Eighth Census, 1860, Wilmington, Slave Schedules.

<sup>62</sup> "Rewards," *Wilmington Daily Journal*, November 22, 1862.

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

<sup>64</sup> Eighth Census, 1860, Wilmington.

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

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

<sup>67</sup> Marcus, *To Count a People*, 49.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>75</sup> Solomon H. Fishblate Civil War Pension File, *Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934*, [http://search.ancestry.com/iexec/?htx=View&r=an&dbid=4654&iid=T288\\_153-3956&fn=&ln=Solomon+H.+Fishblate&st=r&src=&pid=1730014](http://search.ancestry.com/iexec/?htx=View&r=an&dbid=4654&iid=T288_153-3956&fn=&ln=Solomon+H.+Fishblate&st=r&src=&pid=1730014) (accessed April 27, 2010.)

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

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

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

<sup>79</sup> Sims, "Wilmington Jewry," 35.

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

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

<sup>82</sup> Reilly, *Wilmington: Past, Present & Future*, 109.

<sup>83</sup> Eighth Census, 1860, Wilmington; Tenth Census, 1880, Wilmington.

<sup>84</sup> David Kahnweiler Naturalization Certificate, New Hanover County, NC, 1852.

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

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

<sup>87</sup> Morris M. Katz obituary, *Wilmington Star*, March 7, 1894.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>95</sup> Eighth Census, 1860 and Tenth Census, 1880, Wilmington; Ninth Census, 1870, New York.

<sup>96</sup> Wilmington, NC, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, *v.* 18.

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

<sup>98</sup> Tenth Census, 1880, Wilmington; Tenth Census, 1880, New York.

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

<sup>100</sup> Tenth Census, 1880, Carson City, NV; Tenth Census, 1880, Dakota Territory, 1880.

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

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

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

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

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 (1867): 36.

<sup>106</sup> Alfred T. Jones to Isaac Leeser, May 3, 1867, Issac Leeser Papers, AJA.

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

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

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

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

<sup>111</sup> *Wilmington Star*, September 30, 1868.

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

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>114</sup> Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 49.

<sup>115</sup> *Occident and Jewish Messenger*, 25 (1867): 414.

<sup>116</sup> Weitz, *Bibilog*, 13.

---

<sup>117</sup> *Occident and Jewish Messenger*, 26 (1868): 541.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 (1868): 43–44.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>121</sup> *Occident and Jewish Messenger*, 25 (1867): 414.

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

<sup>123</sup> "History of Temple of Israel," *Wilmington Star*; Ninth Census, 1870, Wilmington.

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

<sup>125</sup> Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 25.

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

<sup>127</sup> Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 16–17.

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

<sup>129</sup> Sarna, *American Judaism*, 128.

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

<sup>131</sup> *Wilmington Star*, September 17, 1871.

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

<sup>133</sup> Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 16–17.

<sup>134</sup> Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 57–64.

<sup>135</sup> Weitz, *Bibilog*, 15.

<sup>136</sup> *Wilmington Star*, July 23, 1874; July 16, 1876.

<sup>137</sup> *History of the Temple of Israel*, ed. Tetterton et al, 16.

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

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

<sup>140</sup> *American Israelite*, November 8, 1872, 8.

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

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

<sup>143</sup> *American Israelite*, April 9, 1875, 2.

<sup>144</sup> "Israel's Temple," *Wilmington Star*, May 5, 1876.

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

<sup>146</sup> Rogoff, *Down Home*, 96.

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

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

<sup>149</sup> *Wilmington Morning Star*, November 26, 1872.

<sup>150</sup> *Wilmington Star*, May 28, 1875.

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

<sup>152</sup> "Temple of Israel," *Morning Star*, July 16, 1875.

<sup>153</sup> *Jewish South*, October 14, 1877, 5.

<sup>154</sup> Treasurer Records, Temple of Israel 1876–1888.

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

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

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