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Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Eric L. Goldstein, *Book Review Editor*

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## Anti-Jewish Violence in the New South

by

Patrick Q. Mason

Jews in the New South found themselves in an ambivalent position. On one hand, they hailed the South as a land of freedom and opportunity, far better than eastern Europe's pogroms or even the urban North's slum conditions. For the most part they were a welcome segment of society, some families tracing their southern roots back to colonial days and most having loyally supported the Confederacy. Most European Jews had little or no experience with agriculture but had substantial background as middlemen in the exchange of goods. The latter prepared them to fill an important niche selling goods and extending credit to white and black southern farmers. As a result, they rose with the New South economy even as they nurtured it. Embracing the opportunities afforded them in their new homeland and conscientious not to stick out or give offense, Jews made cultural and religious adaptation a virtual article of faith, and thus they not only became good Americans but also acculturated to specific regional mores and customs. As Jews made efforts to be good southerners, for the most part their Protestant neighbors, particularly in urban settings and in the middle and upper classes, received them as such.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, Jews did not entirely escape antisemitic discrimination and even violence in the New South. There clearly existed a pervasive, low-level antisemitism in southern culture that periodically became exacerbated by xenophobia, nativism, and economic downturns. Thus, when southerners needed a scapegoat, they were able to draw on the usually latent symbols

and attitudes of traditional antisemitism, including the images of the merciless Christ-killer and the avaricious Shylock. These images were most famously employed by Tom Watson during his days of demagoguery, but the very fact that his vitriolic rhetoric resonated so well with a certain segment of the southern populace suggests that the antisemitic themes he employed were neither new nor foreign to his listeners. Of course, southerners scapegoated Jews for their troubles much less frequently than they did African Americans, so much so that the comparison is hardly apt. Jews also experienced far less overt prejudice and violence than they did in Europe and overall were subject to less vigilantism than Latter-day Saints in the late nineteenth-century South. Regardless of their comparative good fortunes, however, the threat of losing their tolerated and even integrated status constantly hung over their heads and occasionally became real. The South was a region renowned for its penchant for violence related to its culture of honor, and the New South was described by historian C. Vann Woodward as "one of the most violent communities of comparable size in all Christendom."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when southern Jews acculturated to southern customs so as to blend in with the majority, it was done partly out of a desire to be accepted but also out of real fear of the consequences of rejection, which sometimes translated into bloodshed. The anti-Jewish violence that did occur typically took the form of robbery, murder, or forcible expulsion.

What should not be done is to view the southern Jewish experience through a dualistic lens, supposing either that the South was a virtual garden spot of tolerance or a den of bigotry fueled by religious fanaticism. An absolute argument for southern toleration would slight the numerous cases of violence that actually did include a significant component of antisemitism, but assertions of a virulent antisemitism pervading the South would similarly obscure the generally friendly relations that marked most Jewish-gentile interactions in the region. Although he would not argue that antisemitism was necessarily the dominant motif of southern history, Leonard Dinnerstein represents the more pessimistic view of Jewish-gentile relations, blaming widespread southern antisemitism on the narrowness of "Protestant fundamentalist faith."<sup>3</sup>

Howard Rabinowitz conversely argues for the tolerant South. Although he acknowledges episodic moments of prejudice and violence, he suggests that the South may have been "the least anti-Semitic region in the nation," and certainly "no worse than the norm."<sup>4</sup>

As will be demonstrated, there were in fact a greater number of cases of anti-Jewish violence than Rabinowitz considered, which raises questions about whether his estimation was perhaps overly sanguine. Although the violence documented was more occasional and sporadic than in either the African American or Mormon cases, taken as a composite it does darken the fairly optimistic portrayal that Rabinowitz provides. Arguably although a relatively high degree of acceptance and tolerance typically characterized the daily interactions of most southern Jews with their Christian neighbors, discrimination and violence were realities that they could not ignore, nor should historians. Therefore, in order to fully appreciate the complexity of the southern Jewish experience, we must seek to understand not only its broadly congenial contours but also its darker underside of violent rejection.

Most violence that Jews received was related to their roles as peddlers and merchants in the postbellum southern economy. In most cases, peddlers were robbed and sometimes killed, whereas storeowners were either robbed or intimidated and expelled from town. The violence frequently took on an antisemitic character, but more often than not, Jews' assailants primarily targeted them not because of their religious identity per se, but rather because they had cash in their pockets, wares in their carts, or credit extended to hopelessly indebted farmers. This conflict displayed a distinct class component, as "respectable citizens" of the New South frequently condemned anti-Jewish violence performed by disgruntled farmers or simple ruffians. Economic grievances thus typically provided the trigger for violent acts that were then often aggravated or rationalized by appeals to antisemitic images and prejudices. Other than brief and localized stretches, however, there was nothing that approached a systematic and extended antisemitic campaign in the South even during the era of the Leo Frank lynching in 1915 and

the concomitant rise of the second Ku Klux Klan, which marked the low point of southern Jewish-gentile relations.

This essay will proceed with a case study of one particularly brutal incident of anti-Jewish violence, the vicious murder of Jewish peddler Abram Surasky in rural South Carolina. The themes introduced in the Surasky case will be further developed as more than two dozen other instances of violence against Jews in the New South are considered. These episodes do not comprise all the anti-Jewish violence that occurred in this period or even constitute an entirely representative sample. The research and analysis that follow are substantially weighted toward particularly grievous acts (especially murders) that were more likely to receive newspaper coverage and are much thinner on lesser acts of violence that often were unreported. There are unquestionably many cases (perhaps an equal or greater number) that have not been discovered. Thus, while this analysis is based on the largest collection of cases hitherto assembled, other scholars will surely build on these insights as they find and consider other examples.

*The Murder of Abram Surasky*

Late in the morning of July 28, 1903, Abram Surasky stopped at the home of Lee and Dora Green, situated in the rural woods outside Aiken, South Carolina.<sup>5</sup> The Greens' home was part of Surasky's regular circuit as he guided his horse-drawn wagon around the area peddling goods. Indeed, virtually everyone in the neighborhood knew Surasky, as most of them were his clients, and he enjoyed an "excellent reputation" in the county.<sup>6</sup> The thirty-year old Jewish peddler, who had recently emigrated from the Polish shtetl of Knyshin, had packed his cart the day before to make his usual rounds. Surasky's purpose when he visited the Greens, as with many of his customers, was twofold: to sell goods and to collect debts on merchandise previously purchased on credit. He was one of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Jewish peddlers who rattled through the southern countryside and who played a crucial but often underappreciated role in the economy of the New South, bringing manufactured goods and, in a sense, modernity, into the maze-like back roads of rural Dixie.<sup>7</sup>

*Abram Surasky, shortly after his arrival in America.  
(Courtesy of Surasky's grandson, Jerry Cohen, of Glen Cove, New York.)*

When Surasky's cart stopped in front of the Green homestead, he found only Dora at home. This was perhaps a relief for the peddler, because her husband Lee was known to be a rough and dangerous character, and the matter of collecting a debt might be easier with him absent. So Surasky, whose peddling represented the sole support of his two daughters after the death of his wife, ambled up the front steps to conduct business with Dora Green. She invited him in, but they had not been talking long when Lee arrived. According to what he told George Horsey a week later, Green immediately recognized the peddler's cart, and upon not seeing Surasky, assumed that its owner was inside with his wife. Green burst through the front door, where he later testified he caught Surasky holding his wife's hand. Enraged, he "did not multiply any word with him at all," but immediately shot the peddler. (It is unclear whether Green had his gun with him when he came in the house, or whether he grabbed one that was kept inside.) Surasky, wounded but not downed, ran out the back door and rounded the house with the obvious intention of getting his cart and fleeing. But the enraged Green was not to be cheated of his prey. He burst through the front door, put another shell in his gun, and intercepted Surasky as he came around the corner of the house, shooting him a second time. Surasky stumbled through the front door and begged Dora to intervene with her husband, but he was greeted only with a third shot from Lee's gun. Mustering all his strength, the peddler staggered back outside and fell to his hands and knees. Green followed him and then spied an axe nearby. Surasky apparently saw the same thing and begged, "Mr. Green don't kill me: I have got two little motherless children." Past the point of mercy, Green snarled back, "Goddamn you and your motherless children. I am going to kill you." As he said this, he raised the axe and swung it down on the peddler's skull with all his force. He finished the horrid deed with several more swings, and, by the time he was finished, Surasky's face and body were "hacked horribly," and one of his arms was almost completely severed.<sup>8</sup>

As gruesome as it is, this version of the story was the one that Lee Green wanted people to hear; indeed, it was the story he

unashamedly told George Horsey just a week after the murder and on which Horsey later based his affidavit. In fact, Green never denied committing the murder. Even when he was on the run from law enforcement officials who had come to arrest him several days after the incident, he bragged to Luther Cordon, who found him hiding at the edge of the woods, that he had killed Surasky.<sup>9</sup> Green wanted to portray the murder as a crime of passion after he happened on the peddler attempting to seduce his wife. Like any good nineteenth-century husband, he then flew into a rage and killed the seducer, his better nature clouded by his loyal and loving instinct to protect his innocent and helpless wife. In this scenario, not only would Green have been justified in killing Surasky, but he would have been held at greater fault had he not protected his wife's (and by extension his own) honor. So rather than attempting any real cover-up—his feeble attempt to hide the body and the cart in the woods was soon betrayed by the circling buzzards—Green was happy to share the story. To provide support, Green's lawyer proffered the testimony of two other women who swore that "the peddler' tried to rape them." Although there is no corroborating proof of these claims, they may have helped win the day for Green's defense, since the jury returned a verdict of not guilty.<sup>10</sup>

Green's story was more convenient than it was true. While the basic skeleton of the narrative—that he had come home to find Surasky with his wife and then killed him—remained intact, the motives behind Green's actions shifted significantly in light of additional testimony provided at the trial, although it apparently had little effect on the jury. According to the lengthy statement of Mary Drayton, supported by sworn depositions of several others, Green was less a noble defender of family honor and southern womanhood than he was a violent, dangerous, and even antisemitic criminal. Drayton, an African American neighbor who occasionally worked for the Greens, testified that Lee and Dora Green came to her home about four o'clock on the afternoon of the murder. Reassuring her that the gun Lee held in his hands was not intended for her, as he had "done too much damn shooting" already, he demanded that she come to his home immediately and

scour the floors. When Drayton expressed hesitation at the strange request, she said that Green admitted that he had killed the "damn peddler" and that he wanted her to stay with his wife and for them to clean the blood off the floors while he found someone to help him dispose of the body. He then related the sequence of that morning's events. According to Drayton, Green told her that as he arrived home, Surasky came out the front door and helped with Green's horse. Just as the peddler turned to go back into the house, presumably to continue his business transaction, Green shot him in the back. At first Surasky ran into the house, but then turned toward Green and cried out, "Oh, Mr. Green what have I done to you? Don't shoot me; I will give you all I have got." Green callously replied, "Stand back, you son of a bitch, don't come on me," and shot him a second time. When Surasky dropped to his elbows and knees, Green "put the muzzle of the gun to his head and shot him again and then he took the axe and knocked him in the head twice."<sup>11</sup>

The most significant addition of Drayton's testimony is not the details of the murder itself, but rather her account of what happened before and after the shooting, which seriously undercut Green's later story that it was a crime of passion against his wife's seducer. As to motive, Drayton revealed that Green had long held a grudge against Jewish peddlers in general, and Surasky in particular. Some three weeks before the murder, Drayton testified, Green had told her husband "that he intended to kill him [Surasky]." In addition, she noted that part of the reason she considered Green a "dangerous man" was because he had bragged in her presence "about shooting at Levy," another Jewish peddler in the area, just "to make him drop his bundle."<sup>12</sup> That Surasky's murder was premeditated to a certain degree and that it grew at least partly out of a prejudice against Jews was backed up by other depositions. David T. Parker made a sworn statement that George Toole, who was originally accused of the murder along with Green but was never tried, had told him that Green said, "the pedlars took all of his wife's change and that he was tired of them and that he was going to kill ever damned Jew pedlar that came around and get shed of them." Parker further

*"A Verdict of Not Guilty."*

*Detail from the acquittal of Lee Green.*

*Aiken County, Court of General Sessions,*

*Indictment, Bundle 164 (1904), Lee Green (L 02048, Box 102).*

*(Courtesy of the South Carolina Department  
of Archives and History, Columbia.)*

testified that after Toole found the dead body in the woods, Green came to his house and confessed triumphantly, "I have done what I said I was going to, I have killed that damned pedlar."<sup>13</sup> Further building the case against Green, H. B. Heath testified that while visiting his home a month or two before Surasky's murder, Green had declared that he had recently shot at Levy (the same peddler Drayton mentioned) "to scare him," and that "the first thing some of them Jew peddlers knew he was going to kill some of them, that he wouldn't have them a deviling around him."<sup>14</sup> These witnesses' statements raise serious doubts about Green's story and make a compelling case that the crime was not motivated by chivalrous protection of womanly virtue.

On their own the testimonies of Parker and Heath do not necessarily incriminate Green. It is conceivable, after all, that even

following the series of threats and the Levy shooting, he could have legitimately discovered Surasky making advances on his wife, which could have justified the killing in the eyes of a nineteenth-century jury. However, Drayton's deposition shatters this possibility as well and therefore belies Green's narrative. Drayton testified that while she was at the Greens' home the night of the murder, Lee Green bemoaned his situation to Arthur House, another neighbor who had come to the house but refused to help dispose of Surasky's body. "Arthur," Green asked, "what will I do now; how will I get out?" House replied, whether seriously or flippantly is not clear, "I don't know unless you tell it that you came up on this man committing rape on your wife." The light seemed to go on in Green's head, and he immediately concocted a plan. He forced his wife, House, and Drayton to swear that they would stick to this story of attempted rape.<sup>15</sup> Although Drayton reneged on her pledge, the other conspirators, particularly the Greens, promoted the story as the primary defense. In fact, Lee Green was scheduled for trial in October 1903, but Dora had given birth at the beginning of the month and was bedridden. Not only was Dora the sole eyewitness to the murder, but the defense rested on her testimony that Surasky was guilty of "criminal assault with the intention to commit a felony upon her" and that her husband was simply defending her from the peddler's sexual advances. This led the judge to grant the defense's request for a continuance until the court's next session.<sup>16</sup> Although transcripts of Dora Green's testimony have not survived, it can be inferred by the trial's outcome that she stuck to the prearranged story and provided an emotional performance capable of persuading the jury to deliver a not guilty verdict. The significant evidence and testimonies portraying Lee Green as a violent antisemite wilted in the face of a wife's trumped-up declaration of her husband's loyalty, fidelity, and honor.

Abram Surasky's murder was in part made possible because he was a solitary peddler walking the country roads of the South. Such Jewish peddlers were highly vulnerable figures. They usually began as recent immigrants who spoke little or no English and who had few established personal connections in the vicinity. In

addition, the goods in their carts and the money in their pockets made them attractive targets. In the cash-poor economy of the rural South, local peddlers and merchants were usually among the few people who had currency at hand. Beyond that, their account books offered written testimony to the chronic indebtedness that plagued individual southern farmers especially during bad years. So when Lee Green not only murdered Surasky but then stole his money and ripped the page recording his debt out of the peddler's account book,<sup>17</sup> he was lashing out at Surasky as a Jew, as his direct creditor, and as the most immediate (and vulnerable) symbol of the economic system that frustrated many southern farmers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

What differentiated Abram Surasky from many other Jewish peddlers in the South was that he was not an isolated and marginalized figure in the community. Morgan Halley described Surasky to be "as nice a man as I ever saw" who "always behaved himself as a gentleman" on his periodic visits. "Everybody, white and colored in the neighborhood," Halley concluded, "spoke in the highest terms of him."<sup>18</sup> Beyond his reputation and business relationships, however, Surasky was tied into the Aiken community through respected family and religious connections. The Surasky family had been integrated into Aiken society for over a decade since Abram's older brother B. M. (Benedict Morris) had traveled to the South as a peddler shortly after 1890 and subsequently opened a store. He prospered enough to pay for the immigration of his wife, children, and three of his four brothers including Abram. Over time the Suraskys became something of an Aiken institution, with B. M. serving on the city council for a decade and his wife, Sarah, actively involved in civic affairs.<sup>19</sup> In addition to his family ties, Abram Surasky was connected to Aiken's fledgling Jewish community. When his body was discovered two days after the murder, men were immediately sent to town "to let the Jews know it," a token of the recognition of and respect for the small Jewish community in the area.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, several weeks after the incident, one of the county newspapers and "several prominent citizens and leading ministers" pressed the sheriff to work diligently to apprehend Green, who had gone into

hiding.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, Surasky was a known figure who was part of a respected and included segment of Aiken society, and his death was not swept under the rug or deemed to be of minor consequence simply because he was an immigrant Jewish peddler.

The experience of Abram Surasky and his extended family thus illustrates the many tensions facing Jews in the South. While the South represented a land of opportunity where Jews could flourish and become integrated into communities, their immutable Jewishness meant they could never become true insiders. Antisemitism usually remained dormant, but, particularly for poor and frustrated farmers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jewish creditors became personal representatives of the economic system that held them paralyzed, and they grasped at prejudices that helped them make sense of their world, lashing out in violence against anyone they could blame. Unless one believes Green's story of attempted rape, Surasky's only offense on the day of the murder was to fulfill a stereotype and be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Precisely because they knew that such acts of violence could occur at any time, and because they did not want their new homeland to go the way of eastern Europe, southern Jews did all they could to minimize the likelihood of antisemitic violence by adapting themselves to southern culture and making sincere efforts to become southerners. Their acculturation was thus a byproduct of their simultaneous fear of violence and desire for acceptance.

#### *Four Models of Southern Anti-Jewish Violence*

Four cases, all of which occurred in the span of a few months in the spring and summer of 1887, aptly illustrate the range of antisemitic violence that occurred in the South in the fifty years following the end of the Civil War.<sup>22</sup>

1. In the northeastern Louisiana parish of West Carroll, longstanding resentment against Simon Witkowski, "the leading merchant and richest man in the parish," finally turned into violence in early spring 1887, resulting in the death of one unidentified man and the driving of Witkowski from the area. As reported in the *American Hebrew*, "It was stated that Witkowski

*Grave of Abram Surasky in Magnolia Cemetery, Augusta, Georgia.  
The stone was dedicated by family members on November 14, 1993.  
For approximately ninety years, Surasky's grave was unmarked and  
forgotten, until relatives of Surasky began researching his life.  
(Courtesy of Surasky's grandson, Jerry Cohen, of Glen Cove, New York.)*

had ground down those who were indebted to him, and had pursued a very hard policy in dealing with them."<sup>23</sup>

2. Shortly after the Witkowski incident, 170 miles downriver in Avoyelles Parish, a store owned by two Jewish merchants, Kahn and Bauer, was attacked by a mob of "wild young men." The store had been "doing a fine business," which engendered some local jealousy. Directing their violence against property and not persons, the assailants riddled the store and surrounding fence with bullets. The following day, Kahn and Bauer were given notices of what the mob had done to their store, along with a warning that they must leave the area or be killed. Additional proclamations were posted by the mob in a number of public

places “declaring that the people of Avoyelles—as they styled themselves—wanted no more Jews among them, and therefore advised all Jews to leave the county by April, under penalty of death.” To the vigilantes’ surprise, the local populace, for whom they presumed to speak, was aroused not in their favor but rather in support of the Jews. The parish’s two newspapers called for the mob’s apprehension and punishment, a mass meeting was held to the same effect, and the governor was persuaded to offer a large reward for their conviction.<sup>24</sup>

3. On the night of July 20, 1887, Jacob Simon’s store in Breaux Bridge, in south-central Louisiana, was broken into by “a number of negroes.” The merchant was choked to death, after which his attackers robbed the store and “made away with the booty.” Simon, a fifty-seven-year-old bachelor, had moved to Breaux Bridge from Cincinnati, where his family lived, sixteen years earlier and was “the only Israelite in that town.” When his brother and nephew came to retrieve the body, they had to travel to Lafayette, which had the nearest Jewish burial ground, to inter him.<sup>25</sup>

4. The same day as Simon’s death, Solomon Dreeben, a peddler working out of Dallas, was murdered near Wylie, in northeast Texas. The crime appears to have been a simple robbery, as money and clothing were discovered missing from the dead man’s valise. Dreeben left behind a wife and two teenage children, whom he had supported by peddling.<sup>26</sup>

Most of the violence leveled against Jews in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century South followed the patterns represented by these four cases. To begin, most cases had an economic component. Many were linked with robbery, as in the Solomon Dreeben and Jacob Simon cases, and not unlike the Abram Surasky murder detailed earlier.<sup>27</sup> As mentioned previously, Jewish merchants and peddlers were vulnerable and attractive targets for thieves and other desperate men. For every assaulted or murdered peddler, there were surely at least an equal number who narrowly escaped harm, like B. M. Surasky (Abram’s older brother), who, according to the recollection of his daughter, “overheard the family with whom he found refuge for the night plotting to make away with him,” but made his flight

before they could carry out their plan.<sup>28</sup> Jews in small towns could be targeted as well. Although Simon had been a resident of his town for sixteen years and owned his own store, thus achieving a certain degree of stability and acceptance, the fact that he had no established kinship or religious networks nearby increased his susceptibility to violence. Most southern Jews were not completely separated from family or coreligionists as Simon was, but there were only a few cities throughout the South that had a large enough mass of Jews to provide reasonable insulation from the possibility of violent attack, although, as the Leo Frank case would prove, even a sizeable Jewish population did not guarantee security. For the most part, however, postbellum anti-Jewish violence occurred in the rural and small-town South, rather than in urban areas. This parallels broader patterns in southern violence, but also suggests the relatively greater vulnerability of peddlers and small-town merchants.<sup>29</sup>

Southern Jews were not targets of violence only when they dealt from a position of relative weakness. As the Witkowski and Kahn and Bauer examples demonstrate, there were many instances in which the economic strength of Jewish merchants led to resentment among their competitors or other local residents (often their debtors). In fact, in these cases when Jews held an economic position of power, antisemitism became most explicit and virulent. These incidents also displayed a greater tendency to inspire mob violence. Jewish proprietors were culpable in their enemies' eyes not only as individual transgressors, but also as visible agents of a largely invisible and impersonal system of economic injustice and oppression. Thus, it was not just Simon Witkowski's individual business practices that drew the mob's ire, but his personification of the image of the greedy and manipulative Jewish Shylock, who lined his pockets by stealing from honest farmers and workers who were left in a spiraling cycle of indebtedness and poverty. Violence fueled by prejudicial and conspiratorial images thus failed to differentiate between individual merchants, against whom indebted customers may have had a legitimate complaint, and the remainder of the Jewish population, which was guilty of nothing more than filling an antisemitic stereotype.

The least complicated and usually least explicitly antisemitic violent episodes against southern Jews were the robbery cases in which itinerant peddlers also became murder victims. In April 1870, the mangled remains of Samuel Friedman's body were found under a tree trunk on the banks of the Duck River two miles outside Williamsport, Tennessee. Friedman, a well-known peddler in the region, was a native of "Russia Poland," but had resided in America for several years and was a Confederate veteran. Although his body was in a fairly advanced state of decomposition when searchers found it, they were able to ascertain that Friedman had been shot in the back of the head, through one leg near his knee, and near the bottom of the spine and that his throat had been cut. Because Friedman's goods were missing from the murder scene, it was concluded that the primary motivation behind the murder was robbery.<sup>30</sup> Twenty years later, in December 1890, Morris Brown disappeared near Fairmount, in central Louisiana. After several organized searches failed to turn up anything, a ten-year-old boy came forward with information. According to his testimony, Brown had stayed at the house of Jack Chambers, and, just as he left the house in the morning, Chambers came from behind and struck the peddler in the back of his head with an axe, put the body in a sack, and carried him off. Brown's body was later found in a seven-foot-deep hole under a large tree; thrown on top of his corpse were his coat, hat, boots, and valise, with "a portion of [the] goods that had cost him his life." The murdered peddler had been in the country for only three months, having come from Russia at the solicitation of his older brother. His earnings were to have allowed his wife and child to eventually join him in America.<sup>31</sup> Five years later and sixty miles south, another "brutal, dastardly and atrocious murder was committed," this time against Jewish peddlers Israel Tucker and Charles Bernstein. The two men were traveling along the Calcasieu River in their mule-drawn wagon when they were suddenly besieged by a volley of rifle shots. Tucker was immediately killed and Bernstein severely wounded. Hardly strangers to their victims, the murderers, James and Aaron Johnson, were among the peddlers' regular patrons. Indeed, the day of the attack Aaron was wearing a red

shirt that he had bought from the peddlers the previous Saturday, and when the shooting had begun, Bernstein pleaded, "Aaron, don't shoot at me." Although the newspapers explained that "robbery was the sole and only motive for the commission of this heinous crime" and that the "whole affair was concocted . . . for the purpose of getting the peddlers' money and goods," it was also a personal grudge that led to the shooting. Aaron Johnston had told others that he "wanted to shoot the --- peddler . . . for accusing him of trying to steal a suit of clothes." Following the usual pattern, Tucker and Bernstein both had young families dependent on them for support.<sup>32</sup>

Robbery-murders such as these clearly fall more in the category of violent crime than hate crime, since the victims' Jewish identity seemed to have been incidental rather than causal. Even in the last example in which revenge joined theft as the motivation, there is no indication from contemporary accounts that Tucker and Bernstein were targeted because they were Jews. In sum, all of these instances clearly demonstrate the vulnerability of Jewish peddlers to criminal behavior, but do little to suggest a widespread violent antisemitism pervading the rural South.

These violent robberies were the exception to the general rule of cordial treatment that Jewish peddlers received. In all of these cases law enforcement officials acted quickly to locate and apprehend the perpetrators, newspapers roundly condemned the actions of what were portrayed as an isolated handful of violent individuals, and a number of citizens, particularly many community elites, publicly denounced the murders. In the Friedman case, "both Jew and Gentile joined in offering of their condolence" to his widow, and the local citizenry "determined that nothing short of full measured justice should be meted out upon the heads of the criminals."<sup>33</sup> Certainly these Jewish peddlers were not pariahs or outcasts. Even so, such violent incidents must have made other Jews in the vicinity at least somewhat uneasy about the security of their place in southern communities.

Far more venomous and intimidating than isolated and sporadic robberies and murders were the occasional spates of

organized agrarian violence against southern Jewish storeowners. Most of this violence occurred in the late 1880s and early 1890s when conditions for small farmers in the South became increasingly hopeless and drove them to desperation.<sup>34</sup> Several historians have connected this general discontent among southern farmers in the period with a growing antisemitism that eventually exploded into violence. Leonard Dinnerstein argues that beginning in the late 1870s, some of the victims of the South's agricultural depression "began to identify Jews as sources of their woes. . . . Farmers especially disliked Jews, the 'detested middlemen' who did not work with their hands or till the soil, and whom they associated with wealthy bankers who had allegedly forced the demonetization of silver."<sup>35</sup> This sentiment intensified in proportion to the deterioration of the southern agricultural condition over the next two decades. Although farmers' discontent was not exclusively vented against Jewish merchants, uncomplimentary references to Jews appeared more frequently in southern newspapers,<sup>36</sup> and more and more, "Jews, Jewish Shylocks, Jewish money and Jewish mortgage holders were blamed for all the troubles besetting the nation," including those particular to the South.<sup>37</sup> It is important to make distinctions, as historians John Higham and David Gerber do, between the "rural and small town anti-Semitic propagandists, most from the South, Midwest, and Great Plains," and the "agrarian political radicals of the 1890s such as the Populists, who were not particularly drawn to anti-Semitism."<sup>38</sup> It was these "rural and small town anti-Semitic propagandists" who initiated the most extensive campaign of violence against Jews that the South had ever seen.

Early Saturday afternoon, October 25, 1889, a "large party of armed men" rode into the northeastern Louisiana city of Delhi, not far from where Simon Witkowski had been violently driven from town two years previous. The mob fired their pistols into the showcases and front windows of the Jewish-owned mercantile establishments in the town, discharging about fifty shots into T. Hirsch's storefront window, smashing S. Blum & Co., and sending bricks through the windows of Karpe, Weil & Co. Threatening the Jewish storeowners and "putting them in terror for their lives,"

the rioters "ordered them to leave the place" within the next twelve to fifteen hours, then rode away as fast as they had come. The townspeople, who were "friendly" to the Jewish merchants, expressed a "general regret" over the incident, and their disapproval of the mob's activities probably protected the merchants from further harm, at least in terms of making empty the threats of expulsion. Although the attackers were not publicly identified in the newspapers, their identities must have been known since it was immediately ascertained that the motivation behind the violence was that the merchants held mortgages on the land of many small farmers in the area, and that "certain debtors in the neighborhood were banded together, to run their creditors away."<sup>39</sup>

The public outcry was swift and determined in its denunciation of the violence, if not in wholehearted sympathy for the victims. One of the earliest local reports wryly noted, "This is certainly a new way to clear off old debts." Although taking a jab at "certain merchants" for charging high prices and then demanding collection of debts arising from late mortgage payments, the newspaper's opinion was decidedly pro-business, if not necessarily pro-Jewish. The editor wrote, "If a man agrees to pay a hundred, or a thousand per cent . . . he should be made to stand up to his contract."<sup>40</sup> A week after the "riotous acts" occurred, a mass meeting, "one of the largest and most respectable ever held in Delhi," was assembled. The unanimously accepted resolutions denounced the violent attacks as being performed "maliciously, wantonly and without just cause of provocation." They stated that such behavior, "if left unrebuked," would "disparage and disgrace" the community "in the opinion of all honest and honorable people." The citizens then asserted their unflinching support of the rule of law, advising everyone to take matters of perceived injustice to the courts, rather than taking the law into their own hands "so as to regulate society to their own views" and disrupting the "peace and christian [*sic*] sentiment of our community." The local newspaper printed the resolutions in full and applauded the actions taken by the assembly to show that the townspeople were as committed to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as the inalienable right of the citizen" as much as those in any other

place in the Union.<sup>41</sup> Public statements condemning the violence were also made by the Delhi Farmers' Union (that some observers originally suggested had sanctioned the violence as part of its activism in support of farmers and in opposition to merchants) and by the residents of Charlieville, thirty-five miles away.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the general antipathy toward extralegal violence exhibited by the majority of "respectable" citizens of northeastern Louisiana, mob violence struck again near the Mississippi River town of Lake Providence, fifty miles northeast of Delhi. In mid-November, a store owned by Jews in Tompkins Bend was riddled with some fifty rifle shots in the middle of night. A sign was also left, reading: "No Jews after the 1st of January. A Delhi warning of fire and lead will make you leave." Another store, Bernard & Bloch, was also targeted with approximately fifty-five rifle shots, and twenty shots were fired into the home of one of the store's proprietors, Gus Bernard, one bullet narrowly passing over the bed where his family lay in fear.<sup>43</sup> This attack, especially coming on the heels of the "Delhi outrage," is interesting on several accounts. First, it was imitative of the Delhi episode, raising the question of whether some of the same people may have been involved. Second, it was more explicitly antisemitic, overtly identifying "Jews" in general, and not just individual storeowners, as the target. Finally, the violence became personal when it targeted one of the merchants and his family rather than just a store. In the wake of the attacks, the people of East Carroll Parish denounced the "wanton" and "flagrant" assault on the Jewish merchants in their midst.<sup>44</sup> However, the purpose of the terrorist violence was at least partly fulfilled when some of the Jewish merchants who had been targets of the mob decided to give up their businesses and leave the area.<sup>45</sup>

Things seem to have settled down somewhat after the Lake Providence shootings, but only briefly. As the 1890s dawned and the agricultural condition of the South reached its lowest point leading up to the depression of 1893, rising costs, falling prices, the crop lien system, high railroad rates, an inelastic currency system, and a perpetual cycle of debt led farmers in the Deep South to lash out in desperation. The region of western Mississippi and

northeastern Louisiana had a long tradition of violence illustrated in part by the incidents related above. It was agricultural depression, however, that provided the proximate cause for Whitecapping, a dirt farmer movement that espoused an antisemitic and racist ideology and used violence against black tenant farmers and Jewish merchants to achieve its aims. Convinced that they were the victims of a vast Jewish conspiracy, hundreds of poor farmers in southwestern Mississippi formed secret clubs late in 1891 that became known as Whitecap societies.<sup>46</sup> One of their main platforms, published in a number of local newspapers, was that area merchants including several Jews should not allow blacks to tenant farm their land because the cheaper labor made it virtually impossible for white farmers to compete. For instance, the central club of Lawrence County complained, "The accursed Jews and others own two thirds of our land. They control and half bind the Negro laborers who partly subsist by thefts from the white farmers; thereby controlling prices of Southern produce." As a solution to the problem, the club proposed to "control negro laborers by mild means, if possible; by coercion if necessary," and "to control Jews and Gentile land speculators, and, if necessary, force them to abandon our country and confiscate their lands for the benefit of the white farmers."<sup>47</sup>

That the vigilantes targeted a Jewish-black alliance, even if it was overstated, revealed one of the key ways that Jews did not entirely adopt white southern customs and beliefs. Indeed, race relations was a significant arena of social life in which southern Jews diverged from prevailing trends in the Jim Crow South. Most Jews, especially in commercial trades took a pragmatic approach to dealing with African Americans, viewing them primarily as customers and employees and therefore not obsessing about the color of their skin.<sup>48</sup> This clearly placed Jews outside of the mainstream white South, a position that was exacerbated by lingering questions about whether or not Jews were white.<sup>49</sup> Although they were generally accepted as at least being not-black, their relatively progressive racial stance sometimes led to violence. One example of this came in Reconstruction-era Tennessee, where in 1868 S. A. Barfield, a young Russian Jew operating a dry-goods store, was

murdered along with one of his African American employees by the Ku Klux Klan. Barfield had run afoul of the Klan because of his Radical Republican political allegiances, his ardent support of racial equality, and such simple gestures as hiring and socializing with freedmen.<sup>50</sup> Apparently the Jewish merchants in Mississippi and Louisiana had adopted a similar approach toward African Americans on an economic, if not a political level, and that in part made them targets for Whitecap violence. Of course, the Whitecaps' violent solution did not truly address the deep structural roots of late-nineteenth-century economic inequalities that plagued the South, but together Jewish merchants and black tenant farmers represented convenient scapegoats and eliminating them would benefit local white farmers in the short run.

Propelled by an ideology of victimization and retribution, Whitecap violence erupted in the election season of 1892. African American tenants on lands owned by Jewish merchants were driven from their homes to which notices were affixed declaring: "This Jew place is not for sale or rent, but will be used hereafter as pasture." Numerous blacks were beaten, whipped, and even killed, and scores of tenant homes were burned to the ground.<sup>51</sup> One of the major targets of the Whitecaps was H. Miller, a Jewish merchant in Pike County who had built a flourishing business over several decades. Miller had obtained four hundred small farms in the area mostly through mortgage foreclosures. He was doubly despised because he rented his land to black laborers and had acquired wealth based on the misfortunes of white farmers who defaulted on their mortgages. During the last two months of 1892, Whitecaps burned twenty-seven homes on Miller-owned land, and through damage and abandonment, Miller estimated his losses at \$30,000. Fearful for his life, he hired an armed guard to watch his home at night "to prevent it being burned over his head," and in February 1893 sold his business and moved to New Orleans.<sup>52</sup>

Many local officials and businessmen decried the Whitecap violence because of fears of lawlessness and negative effects on the area's economy. Even the governor intervened, issuing a proc-

lamation condemning the movement and offering a \$100 reward for each offender apprehended and convicted. Nevertheless, the violence continued into 1893 and ended only after a concerted effort by law enforcement officials.<sup>53</sup> Although individual Jews were typically not targets of direct violence, several were given notices to leave town, and many Jewish merchants and landholders suffered considerable economic losses because of the attacks against their black tenants and their properties. In one case, farmers even threatened lawyers who represented Jews in court.<sup>54</sup> Jews were by no means the only victims of the Whitecaps, but the threats and violence against them revealed not only the standard agrarian tensions of the period but also rising antisemitic sentiments among many rural southerners.

A common feature in many of these anti-Jewish incidents was the alliance of "respectable" citizens with the Jewish victims rather than with the vigilante mobs who assaulted them. While vigilantes typically claimed to speak for the interests of the entire community, it became clear that there were in fact significant divisions among southern communities in their attitudes toward both extralegal violence and certain outsider groups, in this case Jews. This distinction typically fell along class lines. Southern elites were hardly adverse to the principle of vigilantism, as business, civic, religious, and government leaders not only supported but also participated in and sometimes led mobs against African American and Mormon offenders. Community leaders shared the widespread belief that citizens had the right to use violence to defend honor and preserve the social order. However, they were also afraid that if left unchecked, vigilantism would devolve into mob rule and thus threaten the law and order it initially intended to protect. Accordingly, elites advocated social violence as a surgical instrument to be used in certain situations rather than a blunt weapon to be applied indiscriminately. They therefore encouraged some forms of vigilantism as necessary and good while condemning others as excessive and dangerous.<sup>55</sup>

Jews generally had the support of community elites because even if they were not fully accepted as cultural insiders, their mercantile interests allied them with the southern middle class. As

upwardly mobile Jews sought respectability in southern society, they did so not by seeking common cause with poor farmers but by building relationships with more influential southerners. In their geographic location in towns and cities, economic location in entrepreneurial and commercial interests, and social location as the aspiring middle class, Jews naturally gravitated toward the business elements of the New South which in turn showed an affinity toward them.<sup>56</sup> The violence against Jewish merchants and storeowners reified their class position, both by reinforcing their sometimes antagonistic relationship with poor farmers and by strengthening bonds with middle- and upper-class southerners who repeatedly demonstrated solidarity with the victims of class-based vigilantism. To be sure, these class lines were not sharply drawn, as many southern Jews had friendly relations with neighbors and customers from across the economic and racial spectrum, and southern elites consistently barred Jews from certain parts of high society.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, anti-Jewish violence exposed deep tensions within southern society not only between Jewish merchants and poor farmers but also between the mercantile and agrarian classes more broadly. In the next section, antisemitism will be considered in both its ideological and religious forms, which, combined with economic-based prejudice, served to further legitimize acts of violence against Jews.

*Toward an Understanding of American Antisemitism*

Economic hardship, class antagonism, and populist protest were the immediate causes of the agrarian violence that racked the Deep South in the late 1880s and early 1890s. However, the anti-Jewish element of that violence can only be fully understood when put into the larger context of intensifying antisemitism throughout the United States and Europe during the same era. Especially in America, as Michael Dobkowski notes, for the most part "the kinds of accusations that anti-Semites and others leveled against Jews remained relatively constant. . . . The big changes were not so much intellectual or conceptual, but emotional and a matter of degree."<sup>58</sup> Unlike scholars including Oscar Handlin and Richard Hofstadter, who connected the rise of rural American an-

tisemitism to agrarian protest movements and especially the Populists, Dobkowski demonstrates that "there were many misconceptions and falsehoods, including conspiracy theories, circulating in America well before the 1890s that had nothing to do with the agrarian protest or social claustrophobia."<sup>59</sup> From 1865 to 1915, longstanding prejudices and stereotypes were simply given new expression and found resonance with a new set of social, cultural, and economic circumstances.

Antisemitic attitudes in American culture were rooted in complex religious and economic sources. Leonard Dinnerstein unequivocally argues that "Christian viewpoints underlie all American antisemitism. No matter what other factors or forces may have been in play at any given time the basis for prejudice toward Jews in the United States . . . must be Christian teachings."<sup>60</sup> While compelling in its boldness, Dinnerstein's thesis must be nuanced by a fuller representation of how Christians viewed Jews. Jews became both indirect and direct victims of nineteenth-century American Protestant triumphalism in a number of ways including laws upholding the Christian Sabbath as the national day of rest; Bible readings, recitations of the Lord's Prayer, and the singing of Protestant hymns in public schools; explicit Christian references in official government language and proclamations; missionary drives to convert or, in the words of some evangelicals, "reclaim" Jews to Christianity; and general disdain among Protestant ministers and intellectuals for Judaism as a viable and respectable religious system in its own right (rather than as a precursor to Protestant Christianity).<sup>61</sup> In addition, Jews were often depicted in unflattering terms in religious sermons and popular novels throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup> Jews were both unforgivable Christ-killers and the chosen people of God who had providentially survived centuries of persecution.<sup>63</sup>

Although some Jewish sources pointed to the majority of southerners' Christian faith as "the root of popular prejudice,"<sup>64</sup> when southern Jewish-Christian interactions are viewed as a whole, it is difficult to argue for a substantial religiously based antisemitism during the 1800s. Many southern evangelicals saw Jews as part of the great unsaved mass of humanity that needed

conversion, but relatively few Jews recalled specific attempts to convert them personally.<sup>65</sup> Jews were rare enough in the region that many people, especially in rural areas, saw meeting a Jew as something of a novelty or special event. David Steinheimer related that on his first day as a peddler, fresh off the boat from Bavaria and knowing almost no English, a family took him in for the night. He recalled: "After supper I was the hero of the farm house . . . they wanted to know all about me and my country as well as my religion, when I told them I was a Jew, they were astonished, they thought a Jew had horns."<sup>66</sup> As "people of the Old Testament," Jews were considered religious authorities by many southerners who loved to talk religion. One North Carolina peddler recalled how his customers insisted "that I stay overnight and discuss the Bible with them." A Jewish pawnshop owner in Durham spent hours discussing passages from the Bible with customers. Another peddler remembered a poor farm family who turned their home into a kind of boarding house for Jewish peddlers: "They reminded the Jews of their religious duties, loved to hear Yiddish spoken, and carefully separated pork from the eggs that they fed them."<sup>67</sup> In addition, the rabbis in Reform temples across the South were often invited to give sermons in Christian churches and Bible classes. As Eli Evans notes, "To rock-ribbed Baptists they seemed the very embodiment of the prophets themselves."<sup>68</sup>

Although many of these relationships were patronizing and Jews were treated at least somewhat condescendingly, most southerners saw Jews and Judaism as a curiosity, something like a great-uncle who was endearingly odd but nonetheless part of the family, and not as some kind of demonic anti-Christian threat. This is not to say that religious prejudice did not feed southern antisemitism. However, it should be emphasized that the pervasiveness of evangelical Protestantism did not deterministically lead to conscious antisemitic feelings among southern Christians, and strains of religious philosemitism were juxtaposed with classic images of Jews as Christ-killers.

The second major source of antisemitism in the late nineteenth century was a wide array of negative stereotypes of Jews as

greedy, unproductive Shylocks. Like religious prejudices, however, these images were also complicated. Michael Dobkowski aptly describes this duality of virtues and vices that Jews inspired based on economic stereotypes:

On the positive side, the Jew commonly symbolized an admirable keenness and resourcefulness in business. In this sense, his economic energy seemed very much in the tradition of Yankee America. . . . In another mood, however, keenness might mean cunning; enterprise might shade into greed. Along with encomiums of the Jew as a model of commercial skill went frequent references to avaricious Shylocks.<sup>69</sup>

Dobkowski further observes that the image of the Jew featured in the pages of the nationally circulated magazine *Puck* from 1885 to 1905 was "the inveterate materialist who strives his entire life for pecuniary advantage, receives his greatest satisfaction from a particularly profitable business transaction, and looks out upon the world with cash-register eyes riveted to the possibilities of a quick profit."<sup>70</sup>

Most of these images were churned out of popular presses in northern urban centers where Jews had a much larger numerical presence than in the South, but the stereotypical representations still resonated strongly with many southerners. Even New South boosters who were energetic advocates of commercial enterprise were not entirely comfortable with the merits of a class of creditors who earned money based on economic concentration and who made profits, it seemed, based on the hard work of others.<sup>71</sup> Despairing farmers throughout the Midwest and South, searching for an explanation for the never-ending cycles of debt and failure they suffered, often summoned up images of "the Jew" as merciless creditor, the Wall Street banker, or the international financier; in other words, "the epitome of the exploitative moneyed interests."<sup>72</sup> Individuals who believed they had been shortchanged on business transactions with Jewish lenders or merchants similarly reverted to stereotypes to make sense of the situation. For instance, Philip Pitts complained in his diary that he had received only forty-three of the fifty pounds of meat he had ordered from

“Ernst Bros.” He then remarked, “No Jew that I ever met with, was honest. My Bible tells me ‘A false ballance [*sic*] is an abomination to the Lord’ – These Jews then must be an abomination to the Lord.”<sup>73</sup>

Such antisemitic attitudes were not unique to the South nor did they originate there. However, as they became more pervasive in the popular imagination throughout western Europe and America in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, antisemitic images were perpetuated and advanced by southern demagogues such as Tom Watson and by local vigilante groups such as the Whitecaps.<sup>74</sup> While the mass of southerners were generally neither more nor less antisemitic than other Americans in the period, the depressed agricultural and financial condition of the postbellum South allowed for scapegoat images of the Jew to be exploited by willing parties and then given a southern flavor as expressed in anti-Jewish vigilante violence.

*In Comparative Perspective*

The antisemitic violence that racked rural Louisiana and Mississippi in the late 1880s and early 1890s struck a chord with Jews around the country. Due to his proximity in New Orleans, Reform rabbi Max Heller felt compelled to make public comment about the tragedies. His response to the violence in Delhi, Lake Providence, and western Mississippi is intriguing, even surprising. Rather than issuing blanket condemnations of southern antisemitism, Heller assumed an ambiguous pose. He argued that the charge of “Antisemite” had been bandied about too lightly, and that most Christian and Jewish commentators demonstrated “utter misunderstanding” about what the term really meant. Jewish circles in northern cities exaggerated the antisemitic content of the violence, Heller argued, as he differentiated between the true “Jew-hatred” of Germany and eastern Europe and the “lawless rowdyism” that Jews occasionally fell victim to in the South. A culture of vigilantism was not the same as epidemic antisemitism, and he assured his readers “how little these troubles mean as

*Rabbi Max Heller.*

*In reacting against anti-Jewish violence in the South,  
Heller strongly urged conciliation between Jew and non-Jew.*

*(Courtesy of Temple Sinai, New Orleans.)*

regards the general feeling in Louisiana towards the Jews." Heller's scrapbook for the period includes clippings from various newspapers describing antisemitic atrocities in Russia occurring at the same time as the anti-Jewish violence in northern Louisiana, clearly trying to show by comparison how well Jews in America and particularly in the South really had it. When the southern press denounced the antisemitic violence, Heller extolled the "perfect harmony prevailing between Jew and Gentile" in the region.<sup>75</sup> Perhaps Heller was overly sanguine about the situation of Jews in the South, but he was certainly right when he asserted that their treatment far excelled that of Jews in Russia or African Americans in the South.

While America's "Protestant century" was certainly not a structurally or culturally inviting place for non-Protestants, not all religious outsiders fared the same. Antisemitism undeniably operated throughout the nineteenth century, providing a rationale for antagonism and occasional violence, but it was eclipsed as a cultural force by anti-Catholicism until approximately the First World War.<sup>76</sup> Southern Catholics were subject to the same prejudices and discrimination as were their coreligionists around the country. One southern Methodist minister typically warned that the goal of Catholicism in America was to "throttle Republicanism, bruise freedom, crush Protestantism, control the press, shape legislation, direct our institutions, manipulate our national wealth, and enthrone the pope in our midst."<sup>77</sup> Despite the widespread anti-Catholic sentiment throughout the region, however, Catholics were subject to relatively little violence largely because they congregated in insular enclaves in southern cities. Paradoxically, it was precisely because many southern Jews chose not to ghettoize themselves that they were assaulted more frequently. Indeed, it was their intimate interactions with southerners particularly in rural areas and small towns which opened them up for violence, whether because of their vulnerability as in the case of peddlers or their relative economic strength as in the case of merchants and other creditors. Thus, while Jews generally enjoyed more congenial relationships with their Protestant neighbors on a daily basis and were more integrated into the institutions of

southern society, they were also the victims of more violence in the postbellum period than were Catholics.<sup>78</sup>

Both Jews and Catholics fared extremely well in the South compared to Mormons. While episodes of anti-Jewish violence numbered in the dozens, there were hundreds of cases of anti-Mormon violence throughout the region primarily in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This is particularly striking because of the marked disparity in the relative populations of the two groups. According to the 1890 census, there were 1384 Latter-day Saints (LDS) in the South, plus approximately 120 itinerant missionaries. By contrast, the South reportedly housed 21,896 Jews.<sup>79</sup> Even if the undercounting of violent episodes is more severe for Jews than for Mormons, the contrast is still astonishing, suggesting the remarkable virulence of anti-Mormon sentiment particularly in the 1880s when the national anti-polygamy campaign was at full pitch, and southerners' unique willingness to actuate their antagonistic feelings with vigilantism. Mormon converts were occasionally marked for chastisement, but LDS missionaries became special targets for southern ire. Seen as religious carpetbaggers, Mormon elders were perceived as religious and sexually aggressive outsiders who threatened traditional beliefs, disrupted family relationships, and drained southern communities of precious white labor. The stereotyped Mormon missionary became an object of fear and scorn throughout the South, as he was accused of breaking up families and seducing young women to join him in his polygamous harem in the Mountain West. Hounded by vigilantes and unprotected by government and law enforcement officials, Latter-day Saints in the South were whipped, kidnapped, forcibly expelled from towns and homes, and in a few instances murdered. Secular and religious publications alike called for the removal of Mormons from the region and threatened dire consequences when they remained. In sum, although Jews were often victims of harassment and violence, even more so than their Catholic neighbors, their reception in the South was considerably more hospitable than that of the Mormons, who were assailed on every level of southern, and indeed American, society.<sup>80</sup>

Rabbi Heller's reaction to the anti-Jewish violence in Mississippi and Louisiana illustrates that complexity of the southern Jewish experience in the half century after Appomattox. On one hand, Jews were victims of repeated, if sporadic and localized, aggression and violence, resulting in several murders and the destruction of many thousands of dollars of property. On the other hand, most southern Jews made ready peace with their dual identities as southerners and Jews and lived undisturbed as relatively well-integrated members of their communities. The real story is therefore one of complexity and paradox, not singular and exclusivist explanations. Accepting the complexity of the situation not only prevents us from trivializing the suffering of the many Jews who did indeed suffer violence or discrimination at the hands of southern antisemites, but it also stops short of demonizing southern gentiles or evangelical Christians as a whole. In fact, tolerance of Jews in the South and violence against them were not competing, but rather complementary and parallel processes. The palette of antisemitic images and stereotypes which had existed for hundreds of years in religious sermons and popular art and literature was readily available for those who chose to paint their world with them. And certainly the agricultural depressions and societal instability of the late nineteenth-century South provided ample opportunity for would-be antisemites to act out their prejudices and for others to turn to Jews as convenient scapegoats. This combination of antisemitism and violence would reach its peak in the 1915 lynching of Leo Frank. Although the Frank case was of a markedly different character than most of these earlier episodes due to its urban setting, the sexual paranoia it revealed, and the virulent antisemitism it sparked, when put in its broader historical context, it can be interpreted as the climax or culmination of decades of southern anti-Jewish violence.<sup>81</sup>

Violent antisemitism in the postbellum South could have been much worse, as the Mormon and African American examples prove. One of the key factors differentiating southern Jews from other groups was their unique social and economic location, which led them to build relationships with the southern middle class, moving them away from the fringes of society and closer to

the cultural center. Although sometimes it was Jews' very success at integration and upward mobility that fueled new hostility, particularly from marginalized poor farmers, in most times and places southern Jews were adept at being southern enough that their Jewishness was deemed by their neighbors to be either irrelevant or merely curious. While overt antisemitism and violence would never be dominant themes in the nineteenth-century southern Jewish experience like they were in Europe at the same time, they were persistent enough to constitute essential elements of Jewish-gentile relations in the New South. That southern anti-Jewish violence was scattered and unpredictable suggested that there was no formula invariably resulting in conflict, and no single set of indicators to predict when and where violence would occur. The episodic nature of the violence thus proved that no amount of integration and acculturation could guarantee Jews complete immunity from the capricious whims of southern vigilantism, particularly when vigilantes drew upon the antisemitic images and attitudes that existed but usually lay dormant in southern culture. In the end, Jews' integration in communities across the South did in fact reflect a wide degree of acceptance. However, the omnipresent threat and occasional reality of anti-Jewish violence in the New South demonstrated the precarious and limited nature of that acceptance.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> On the role of Jews in the economy, see Stephen J. Whitfield, "Commercial Passions: The Southern Jew as Businessman," *American Jewish History* 71 (March 1982): 342–357. On the development of Reform Judaism in America and particularly in the South, see Alan Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture, 1840–1930* (Hanover, NH, 1994); Gary Phillip Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788–1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual* (Tuscaloosa, 1994); James W. Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993); Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988); and Leon A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820–1870* (Hanover, NH, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge, 1971), 158–159. In agreement with Woodward, Edward L. Ayers writes that the New South was "a notoriously violent place," with homicide rates easily the highest in the country and among the highest in the world." Edward L. Ayers, *Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York, 1992), 155; see also Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th-Century American South* (New York, 1984). On southern violence and the culture of honor, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s–1890s* (Chapel Hill, 2001); Kenneth Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, 1996); Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Boulder, 1996); Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, esp. chap. 1; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982); Bruce D. Dickson, *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin, TX, 1979); Sheldon Hackney, "Southern Violence," *American Historical Review* 74 (February 1969): 906–925. The best source on American violence, particularly in its vigilante manifestations, remains Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York, 1975); see also Hugh Graham Davis and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives – A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence*, June 1969 (Washington, DC, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York, 1994), 176; see chap. 9. See also Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Antisemitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York, 1987), esp. chap. 4–5.

<sup>4</sup> Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Nativism, Bigotry, and Anti-Semitism in the South," *American Jewish History* 77 (March 1988): 446–447.

<sup>5</sup> Surasky's first name was spelled both Abram and Abraham by contemporaries. Here Abram is used since it is the spelling preferred in most (including family) sources. One family member reported that among his branch, Surasky was called Avreml, a Yiddish diminutive of Abraham. See also the memoir by Surasky's niece, Mina S. Tropp, "Memoirs: Mostly about a South Carolina Childhood," *Jewish Currents* 34 [1980]: 13. Also confusing is the day that Surasky visited the Greens' home and was murdered. Most sources agree that it was July 28, which would have been a Tuesday. However, witnesses variously identify the day as a Wednesday or Friday, somewhat clouding the actual chronology.

<sup>6</sup> "The Assassinations in Aiken," *Beaufort Gazette*, August 13, 1903.

<sup>7</sup> The literature on Jewish peddlers in the South is relatively small and is virtually all the work of Louis Schmier. See Schmier, "Hello! Peddler Man! Hello!" in *Ethnic Minorities in Gulf Coast Society*, ed. Jerrill H. Shofner and Linda V. Ellsworth (Pensacola, 1979), 75-88; "'For Him the 'Schwartzers' Couldn't Do Enough': A Jewish Peddler and his Black Customers Look at Each Other," *American Jewish History* 73 (September 1983): 39-55; "The Man from Gehau," *Atlanta Historical Journal* 23 (fall 1979): 91-106; and "The First Jews of Valdosta," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 62 (spring 1978): 32-49.

Other than Schmier's work, the scholarship on peddlers focuses almost exclusively on antebellum peddlers in the North and the West. See David Jaffee, "Peddlers of Progress and the Transformation of the Rural North, 1760-1860," *Journal of American History* 78 (September 1991): 511-535; Henry L. Feingold, *Zion in America: The Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 1974), 73-78; and Rudolf Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," *Jewish Social Studies* 7 (April 1945): 119-136. In her keynote address at the 2004 conference of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, Hasia Diner spoke about the importance of peddlers and peddling as engines of Jewish immigration and economic development. Diner, "Wandering Jews, Peddlers, Immigrants, and the Exploration of New Worlds," Southern Jewish Historical Society annual meeting, Charleston, S.C., October 2004. [Ed. note: a revised version of Diner's paper appears as the first article in this journal.] All of these authors agree that Jewish peddlers were important players in the rural economy. Jaffee most explicitly argues that by bringing consumer goods to rural homes, peddlers also integrated themselves into a market culture and to a certain degree introduced themselves to modernity. Many of Jaffee's observations about peddlers in the antebellum North also ring true for the postbellum South, raising questions not only about the different chronologies of the introduction of the market to each section, but also about the ambivalences inherent when a culture embraces a market economy. Stephen J. Whitfield briefly makes this point for southern peddlers, writing that "their peddler's packs and sample cases helped cultivate a taste for the products of the modern world. . . . In helping to make the South more modern, more like the rest of the United States, Jewish businessmen altered the moral climate which all Southerners breathed." Whitfield, "Commercial Passions," 356.

Edward Ayers discusses the importance of small-town merchants and stores in integrating the South into the modernizing national economy after the Civil War. However, he omits any mention of Jews. See Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, chap. 4. While Jews were a tiny minority of the population throughout the South, they were disproportionately represented in commercial trades; see Whitfield, "Commercial Passions."

<sup>8</sup> This account relies primarily on two sources: "Gruesome Murder in Aiken," *Charleston News and Courier*, August 2, 1903; and especially the sworn affidavit of George H. Horsey, February 18, 1904, Aiken County Indictments, Bundle 164, June 1904, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia (hereafter cited as ACI). Original reports were that the murder was carried out by Lee Green and George Toole, but Green was the only one charged and tried. There was some disagreement about whether Green shot Surasky

two or three times. Regardless, the doctor who inspected Surasky's body found his upper back "well sprinkled with shot." He declared the cause of death to be either the "large wounds" in his flesh near his shoulder and collarbone or the "blow on head," all from the axe. Testimony of Dr. W. S. Eubanks, August 1903, ACI.

<sup>9</sup> Luther Cordon affidavit, February 17, 1904, ACI.

<sup>10</sup> Note, dated June 15, 1904, on back of testimony of Morgan Halley and his wife, February 18, 1904, ACI; verdict issued on June 25, 1904, ACI. According to the "unwritten law" of nineteenth-century legal culture, still prominent after the turn of the twentieth century, "if a man found his wife in the arms of another man and he killed the other man on the spot, he would never be convicted of murder. His exemption was part of a complex of self-defense rights, at one with his right to shoot a burglar or a malicious trespasser, to repel, violently if necessary, someone who had invaded his property (although, like other property holds acting in self-defense, the man might be convicted of manslaughter). His exemption was part of the privileged identity of a husband. . . . This was the unwritten law." Hendrik Hartog, "Lawyering, Husbands' Rights, and 'the Unwritten Law' in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 84 (June 1997): 67-96 (quote from 67-68).

In promoting his story of Surasky making sexual advances on his wife, Lee Green may have been drawing upon rumors and fears about Jewish sexuality. However, the available evidence supports a historical rather than a psychosexual reading of this event. Green's rape narrative was more as a convenient rationale for his own violent behavior fabricated after the fact, than a manifestation of cultural beliefs about Jews' alleged sexual deviance. Although they were sometimes constructed as hypersexual, more frequently Jews were seen as deviant or feminized, and often homosexual. Green's defense that Surasky was a seducer or rapist (the line becomes blurry in his telling) is therefore more akin to southern fears of black "beasts" or Mormon seducers than antisemitic narratives of Jewish sexual deviance. On ideas about Jewish sexuality, see Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York, 1991); and Jeffrey Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson, MS, 2000), esp. chap. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Drayton affidavit, February 24, 1904, ACI, 1-4.

<sup>12</sup> Drayton affidavit, 3, 8.

<sup>13</sup> David T. Parker statement, undated, ACI.

<sup>14</sup> H. B. Heath affidavit, February 18, 1904, ACI.

<sup>15</sup> Drayton affidavit, 7. Arthur House swore that while at the Greens' home the night of the murder, he had asked Dora Green "what was the trouble between [her husband] and the pedlar." She replied that "the pedlar had been bothering me," but did not give any details. House does not mention suggesting to Green that he fabricate the rape story, nor being sworn to abide by it. Arthur House affidavit, February 17, 1904, ACI.

<sup>16</sup> Request for continuance of trial, October 19, 1903, ACI; Order continuing case, October 21, 1903, ACI.

<sup>17</sup> According to David Parker's affidavit, Green confessed to George Toole that after he killed Surasky, "I taken his account book, tore out my account and then taken the book and

his hat and dug a hole by a stump in the cotton patch and buried them just back of the house." In her affidavit, Mary Drayton testified that Green owed Surasky fifteen dollars, and stole \$3.05 from his dead body, which he later complained did not even "pay me for my trouble."

<sup>18</sup> Morgan Halley testimony, February 18, 1904, ACI.

<sup>19</sup> For biographical information on the Surasky family and their place in the Aiken community, see Surasky family file, College of Charleston Special Collections. Sources in the file include a typed Surasky family history (author unknown, May 1978); Arnold Shankman, ed., "Jewish Life in Aiken, S.C.: Childhood Memories of Esther Surasky Pinck," *SJHS Newsletter* (March 1982): 2-3; and various local newspaper articles. Shortly after Abram's murder, the Surasky family was tangentially involved in Happyville, one of several agricultural utopian colonies founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Arnold Shankman, "Happyville: The Forgotten Colony," *American Jewish Archives* 30 (April 1978): 3-19; Marcia Savin, "Happyville: A Kibbutz Grows in Aiken," *Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina* 9 (2004): 3-5.

<sup>20</sup> Burrel Holley affidavit, February 18, 1904, ACI. Two of Lee Green's uncles, Robert and James Green, were among this particular group that discovered the body. (It was actually "discovered" at several different times by multiple people in the days after the murder.) James wanted to bury the body quietly and thus "settle up the question," but Robert and the others insisted that the incident be made known, both to the local Jews and the larger populace.

<sup>21</sup> "The Sheriff of Aiken," *Beaufort Gazette*, September 17, 1903.

<sup>22</sup> Nothing in particular suggests why there was this unusual spike of anti-Jewish violence in 1887. Other than chronological proximity, these four cases are unconnected. However, based on my research there seems to have been more southern anti-Jewish violence in the years 1887-1893 than at any other time, with most of the episodes being rooted in farmers' grievances related to poor agricultural and economic conditions. See Patrick Q. Mason, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Mob: Violence against Religious Outsiders in the U.S. South, 1865-1910" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2005) esp. chap. 5.

<sup>23</sup> "Anti-Semites in Louisiana," *American Hebrew*, April 1, 1887.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*; "The Louisiana Outrage," *American Israelite*, June 17, 1887.

<sup>25</sup> "Domestic News," *American Hebrew*, August 5, 1887.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, August 12, 1887.

<sup>27</sup> Other victims of robbery-murders included Jacob Kriss (Baton Rouge), Samuel Goldberg (Washington, LA) and Max Lubelsky (Charleston, SC). On Kriss, see Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," 128-129. On Goldberg, see "Horrible Murder," *St. Landry* [Opelousas, LA] *Clarion*, December 1, 1900; and "Murdered and Robbed," *Opelousas Courier*, December 1, 1900. On Lubelsky, see Daniel J. Crooks Jr., *The Trial of Daniel Duncan: As Told in the Days of Porgy and Bess* (Charleston, 1999).

<sup>28</sup> Shankman, "Jewish Life in Aiken," 2.

<sup>29</sup> For the most part, New South cities were relatively tame bastions of law and order compared to rural areas where law enforcement was less present, more informal, and thus more given to vigilantism. Most southern violence occurred in small towns and the countryside, making these areas more threatening to Jews' personal safety. See W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* (Urbana, IL, 1993), 159; Gilles Vandal, *Rethinking Southern Violence: Homicides in Post-Civil War Louisiana, 1866–1884* (Columbus, OH, 2000), 25; Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882–1930* (Urbana, IL, 1995).

<sup>30</sup> "Friedman's Body Found," *Columbia [TN] Herald*, April 8, 1870; "What They Are Saying Against Us," *ibid.*, April 15, 1870; "Terrible Development of the Friedman Mystery," *The [San Francisco] Hebrew*, April 29, 1870; "The Murdered Peddler," *[New York] Jewish Messenger*, April 29, 1870.

<sup>31</sup> "An Awful Murder," *[Alexandria, LA] Weekly Town Talk*, January 24, 1891; "A Diabolical Deed," *ibid.*, January 31, 1891.

<sup>32</sup> "A Brutal, Dastardly and Atrocious Murder for Purpose of Robbery," *[Alexandria] Louisiana Democrat*, June 3, 1896; "Horrible Murder at Oakdale," *Weekly Town Talk*, June 6, 1896; "Aaron and James Johnson Confess," *Louisiana Democrat*, June 10, 1896; "Shooting of the Jew Peddlers," *Weekly Town Talk*, June 13, 1896.

<sup>33</sup> "The Murdered Peddler," *Jewish Messenger*, April 29, 1870.

<sup>34</sup> C. Vann Woodward's account of the period is worth recounting as background: "The annual defeat of the crop market and the tax collector, the weekly defeat of the town market and mounting debt, and the small, gnawing, daily defeats of crumbling barn and fence, encroaching sagebrush and erosion, and one's children growing up in illiteracy—all added up to frustration. The experience bred a spirit of desperation and defiance in these people. 'The basest fraud on earth is agriculture,' wrote a Mississippi farmer, and then he said the most blasphemous thing ever spoken by one of Jefferson's 'chosen people of God'—'No wonder Cain killed his brother. He was a tiller of the ground.'" Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 188.

<sup>35</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 49.

<sup>36</sup> See Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769–1976: Shabbat in Shockoe* (Charlottesville, 1979), 247.

<sup>37</sup> Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*, 91.

<sup>38</sup> David A. Gerber, "Anti-Semitism and Jewish-Gentile Relations in American Historiography and the American Past," in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. David A. Gerber (Urbana, IL, 1986), 30; see also John Higham, *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York, 1975), 123–124. The standard source defending the Populists against charges of widespread antisemitism is Walter Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists: Kansas, Populism, and Nativism* (Chicago, 1963).

<sup>39</sup> "Mobbing Merchants," *American Israelite*, October 31, 1889; "Trouble in Delhi," *Richland [Rayville, LA] Beacon*, November 2, 1889; "The Delhi Trouble," *Richland Beacon*, November 2, 1889. Coverage of the incident was also provided in the [Jackson, MS] *Clarion-Ledger*, October 31, 1889. C. Vann Woodward asserted that the Delhi incident was "not

indicative of widespread antisemitism, for there seems to have been very little." (*Origins of the New South*, 188 n. 42). Given the other episodes of antisemitic violence in the region during the late 1880s and 1890s, it seems that Woodward's estimation was somewhat optimistic.

<sup>40</sup> "The Delhi Trouble," *Richland Beacon*, November 2, 1889.

<sup>41</sup> "Mass Meeting at Delhi," and "The Outrage Denounced," *ibid.*, November 9, 1889.

<sup>42</sup> "Delhi Farmers' Union, No. 306," *ibid.*, November 16, 1889; "The Delhi Outrage," *ibid.*, December 14, 1889.

<sup>43</sup> "The Louisiana Outrages," *American Israelite*, November 21, 1889.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, "Notes," December 5, 1889.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 1890.

<sup>46</sup> William F. Holmes, "Whitecapping: Anti-Semitism in the Populist Era," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 63 (March 1974): 245-247. Although the Whitecaps did not always wear costumes and only sometimes rode disguised, their name may have been a nod to the similarities between them and Reconstruction terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and Knights of the White Camellia, who typically wore white hoods or caps. Richard Maxwell Brown argues that "white capping seems to have been an important link between the first and second Ku Klux Klans. White Cap methods, in regard to punishment and costume, seem to have been influenced by the first Klan" (*Strain of Violence*, 25).

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Holmes, "Whitecapping," 248.

<sup>48</sup> Howard Rabinowitz notes that "comparing Southern Jewish attitudes with those of their Gentile contemporaries and Northern Jews, they end up somewhere in the middle, that is, more liberal than Gentile white southerners but less so than Northern Jews." Rabinowitz, "Nativism, Bigotry, and Anti-Semitism," 449. See also Louis Schmier, "Jews and Gentiles in a South Georgia Town," in *Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Jewish Historical Society*, ed. Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier with Malcolm Stern (Macon, GA, 1984), 12; Schmier, "'For Him the 'Schwartzers' Couldn't Do Enough,'" Whitfield, "Commercial Passions," 353. Recent works on black-Jewish relations in the South include Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*; and Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> On Jews' racial identity and how southerners constructed ideas about Jews' race vis-à-vis African Americans, see Leonard Rogoff, "Is the Jew White? The Racial Place of the Southern Jew," *American Jewish History* 85 (September 1997): 195-230.

<sup>50</sup> See Morris U. Schappes, ed., *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1971), 515-517; also see "Murderous Outrage at Franklin, Williamson County, Tenn.," *New York Times*, August 17, 1868.

<sup>51</sup> Holmes, "Whitecapping," 249.

<sup>52</sup> "A Just Charge," [Natchez] *Daily Democrat*, January 20, 1893. Holmes lists the man's name as H. Hiller ("Whitecapping," 249).

<sup>53</sup> Beginning in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, an internal discussion took place (albeit an often tepid one) over the merits of the mob violence that plagued the South. Frequently led by government officials and business leaders, anti-lynching

campaigns sprang up across the region, although they emerged at different times and advanced at different paces. While most of these discussions centered on racial violence, condemnations of anti-Jewish violence fell under the same rubric. For a comparative account of the anti-lynching movements in Georgia and Virginia, see Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, chap. 6–8. For women’s involvement in anti-lynching, see Patricia Ann Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880–1930* (Chapel Hill, 2001); Mary Jane Brown, *Eradicating This Evil: Women in the American Anti-Lynching Movement, 1892–1940* (New York, 2000); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching*, rev. ed. (New York, 1993); Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892–1900*, ed. with an Introduction by Jacqueline Jones Royster (Boston, 1997).

<sup>54</sup> See Holmes, “Whitecapping,” 251, 259. Notice of this violence against Jews reached the highest levels of the nation’s government. U.S. Senator Donelson Caffery from Louisiana, after hearing about the expulsion of Jews from one town, asked in a letter to a friend, “What is the matter with the itinerant Jews in Franklin, that they were the subjects of extradition, not of a legal but of an actual kind?” Typescript letter from Donelson Caffery, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC, to Harry [no last name], November 23, 1893, from letter file book, v. 6, 105, Caffery (Donelson and Family) Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.

<sup>55</sup> In his extensive research on lynching in the New South, Fitzhugh Brundage finds ample support that many southern mobs during this time were led by “the best citizens” of the community. For instance, he documents mobs led by, respectively, a former judge and prominent local politician, a railroad auditor, a manager of the local ice company, an accountant, the manager of a local hotel, and the president of an insurance company. See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 38. Richard Brown also asserts that vigilante movements were often led by the “social and economic elite of an area,” including politicians, judges and law enforcement officials, wealthy businessmen, and prominent writers. *Strain of Violence*, 120. Other elites led the anti-lynching movement (see n. 53).

<sup>56</sup> For instance, Steven Hertzberg shows how Jews’ role as merchants brought prosperity and fostered civic-mindedness, which helped them integrate into Atlanta society. *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 155–156.

<sup>57</sup> As Wendy Lowe Besmann explains, “the genteel brand of social anti-Semitism kept Jews out of exclusive clubs, led to restrictive covenants against Jews in many neighborhoods, and produced quota systems in universities and professions.” *A Separate Circle: Jewish Life in Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville, 2001), 51. David Gerber argues that this pattern of social exclusion in the South was “no worse than elsewhere” in nineteenth-century America. “Anti-Semitism and Jewish-Gentile Relations,” 27.

<sup>58</sup> Michael N. Dobkowski, *The Tarnished Dream: The Basis of American Anti-Semitism* (Westport, CT, 1979), 236.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 6; see also Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists*, and Higham, *Send These to Me*, chap. 7. For the opposing point of view in which Populists are more forcefully linked with

antisemitism, see Oscar Handlin, "How U.S. Anti-Semitism Really Began: Its Grass-Roots Source in the 90's," *Commentary* 11 (June 1951): 541-548; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: from Bryan to FDR* (New York, 1956), 78-80; Victor C. Ferkiss, "Populist Influences on American Fascism," *Western Political Quarterly* 10 (June 1957): 350-373.

<sup>60</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, ix.

<sup>61</sup> See Benny Kraut, "Jewish Survival in Protestant America," in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana, IL, 1998), 40-41.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Rockaway and Arnon Gutfeld, "Demonic Images of the Jew in the Nineteenth Century United States," *American Jewish History* 89 (December 2001): 355-381, see esp. 356, 375.

<sup>63</sup> Joseph Proskauer, who grew up in late nineteenth-century Mobile, Alabama, was beaten up in high school for being a "Christ killer." Other Jewish boys in the South shared similar experiences. See Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*, 89.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Rockaway and Gutfeld, "Demonic Images of the Jew," 366.

<sup>65</sup> Leonard Rogoff, *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa, 2001), 88. Attempts at conversion, however, were common enough so that Jewish leaders sometimes became impatient and struck back. For instance, Rabbi Louis Weiss wrote an apologetic work expressly designed to defend Judaism in a southern climate in which "some missionaries and some fanatics hurl at us the imputation that we are blind and stubborn for not believing in Christ." Weiss, *Some Burning Questions Pertaining to the Messiahship of Jesus - Why the Jews do not Accept Him*, rev. and enl. (n.p., 1900), 5, in Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville.

<sup>66</sup> David Steinheimer life sketch, date unknown, 2, in David Steinheimer Family Papers 1869-1952, William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta, GA.

<sup>67</sup> Rogoff, *Homelands*, 85-86.

<sup>68</sup> Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* rev. ed (New York, 1997), 49. On the important role that rabbis played as liaisons between their Jewish congregation and the larger community, see Malcolm H. Stern, "The Role of the Rabbi in the South," in *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville, 1979), 21-32. A good anecdotal example of this is in Besmann, *A Separate Circle*, 51-52.

<sup>69</sup> Dobkowski, *Tarnished Dream*, 79.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>71</sup> See *ibid.*, 103-104; Higham, *Send These to Me*, 180-181. On New South commercialism and boosterism, see Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York, 1970); Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, esp. chap. 3; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, chap. 5-6.

<sup>72</sup> Louise A. Mayo, *The Ambivalent Image: Nineteenth-Century America's Perception of the Jew* (Rutherford, NJ, 1988), 128.

<sup>73</sup> Philip H. Pitts Diary, Alabama, typescript, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2 (1882-1884), 44. In another example of a personal reaction to Jewish business practices, Donelson Caffery complained of his indebtedness on his

sugarcane plantation: "I pay the Jews in the neighborhood of 20% when I ought to pay 6%. The business won't stand the interest." Letter from Donelson Caffery, Bethia Plantation, Teche P.O., Louisiana, to his child (Don?), December 14, 1901, (letter file book, v. 4, 159), Caffery Papers, LSU.

<sup>74</sup> On the application of generally held antisemitic stereotypes to specific rural and southern crises in the late nineteenth century, see Rockaway and Gutfeld, "Demonic Images," 379; Kraut, "Jewish Survival," 42; and Dobkowski, *Tarnished Dream*, 176–177, 235–237. The standard biography of Tom Watson remains C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York, 1938); see esp. chap. 23.

<sup>75</sup> Bobbie Malone, *Rabbi Max Heller: Reformer, Zionist, Southerner, 1860–1929* (Tuscaloosa, 1997), 47–48.

<sup>76</sup> See Ronald H. Bayor, "Klans, Coughlinites and Aryan Nations: Patterns of American Anti-Semitism in the Twentieth Century," *American Jewish History* 76 (December 1986): 181–196; also see Nathan C. Belth, *A Promise to Keep: A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1979), 22–23.

<sup>77</sup> Rev. L. L. Pickett, *The Danger Signal; or, A Shot at the Foe* (Nashville, 1891), 275. Catholics and Mormons were often attacked for what were seen as their anti-republican, and thus anti-American, elements; see David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," in *From Homicide to Slavery: Studies in American Culture* (New York, 1986), 137–154; Mark W. Cannon, "The Crusades Against the Masons, Catholics, and Mormons: Separate Waves of a Common Current," *Brigham Young University Studies* 3 (winter 1961): 23–40. For the personal anti-Catholic railings of a Baptist preacher in the heavily Catholic city of New Orleans, see the Robert Lewis Bolton Papers, Southern Historical Collection. For a comparison of antisemitism and anti-Catholicism in the 1890s and more broadly, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992). The most recent treatment is Peter R. D'Agostino, *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism* (Chapel Hill, 2004).

<sup>78</sup> The Catholic case is complicated somewhat by Italian Americans and Mexican Americans, who were victimized by a series of lynchings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The most prominent of these cases was the New Orleans lynching of eleven Sicilians in 1891, but there were also lynchings in Tallulah, Louisiana, and Irwin and Vicksburg, Mississippi. Scholars who have analyzed these lynchings have found them to be of an entirely ethnic/racial nature. I am inclined to agree with this interpretation, although I would note that their Catholicism was part of what made Italians and Mexicans so alien and dangerous in the southern (Anglo-Saxon Protestant) mind. In addition, the Mexican lynchings were more of a southwestern than southern phenomenon. For a sampling of the literature on anti-Italian lynchings, see Peter Vellon, "A Darker Past: The Development of Italian American Racial Consciousness, 1886–1920," (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 2003); Richard Gambino, *Vendetta: The True Story of the Largest Lynching in U.S. History* (Toronto, 1998); Edward F. Haas, "Guns, Goats, and Italians: The Tallulah Lynching of 1899," *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal* 13 (spring 1982): 45–58; Barbara

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Botein, "The Hennessy Case: An Episode in Anti-Italian Nativism," *Louisiana History* 20 (summer 1979): 261–279. On anti-Mexican lynchings, see William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, "Muerto por Unos Desconocidos (Killed by Persons Unknown): Mob Violence against Blacks and Mexicans," in *Beyond Black & White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the U.S. South and Southwest*, ed. Stephanie Cole and Alison M. Parker (College Station, TX, 2004), 35–74; William D. Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture: Violence and Vigilantism in Central Texas, 1836–1916* (Urbana, IL, 2004), esp. chap. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Church membership statistics are drawn from *Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890. Part II* (Washington, DC, 1894); see also Henry K. Carroll, *The Religious Forces of the United States: Enumerated, Classified, and Described on the Basis of the Government Census of 1890* (New York, 1893), 169, 173.

<sup>80</sup> For a full treatment of anti-Mormon violence in the postbellum South, see Mason, "Sinners in the Hands," chap. 3–4; see also William W. Hatch, *There Is No Law: A History of Mormon Civil Relations in the Southern States, 1865–1905* (New York, 1968). The best book on the anti-polygamy campaign in Congress and the courts is Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, 2002).

<sup>81</sup> See Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York, 2003); Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York, 1968); Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*, chap. 6; Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*.