Southern Jewish HISTORY

Volume 25
2022

JOURNAL *of the* SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

2022
Volume 25

Southern Jewish History

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

Southern Jewish Historical Society OFFICERS: Jay Silverberg, *President;* Josh Parshall, *Vice President and President Elect;* Marni Davis, *Secretary;* David Meola, *Treasurer*; Phyllis Leffler, *Immediate Past President*. BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Rachel Barnett, Catherine R. Eskin, Karen Franklin, Joshua Furman, Eric Goldstein, Stephen Krause, Anna Tucker, Ellen Umansky, Ashley Walters, Stephen Whitfield; Bernie Wax, *Board Member Emeritus*.

For submission information and author guidelines, see http://www.jewishsouth.org/submission-information-and-guidelines-authors. For queries on all editorial matters: Mark K. Bauman, Editor, *Southern Jewish History*, 6856 Flagstone Way, Flowery Branch, GA 30542, e-mail: MarkKBauman@aol.com. For journal subscriptions and advertising: Bryan Edward Stone, Managing Editor, PO Box 271432, Corpus Christi, TX 78427, e-mail: bstone@delmar.edu. For membership and general information about the Southern Jewish Historical Society, visit www.jewishsouth.org or write to PO Box 71601, Marietta, GA 30007-1601.

Articles appearing in *Southern Jewish History* are abstracted and/or indexed in *Historical Abstracts; America: History and Life; Index to Jewish Periodicals; Journal of American History; Journal of Southern History; RAMBI-National Library of Israel;* Immigration and Ethnic History Society *Newsletter;* and the *Berman Jewish Policy Archive* (www.bjpa.org).

Full-text content of recent issues is available to subscribing libraries on EBSCO*host* Academic Search Ultimate. Full-text content of most back issues is available free on Academia.edu at http://independent.academia.edu/SouthernJewishHistory.

COVER PICTURE: Max and Trude Heller announcing Max's candidacy for mayor of Greenville, South Carolina, 1971. Heller's life and career are documented in the article by Andrew Harrison Baker in this issue. (Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Furman University.)

ISSN 1521-4206

PERMISSION STATEMENT

SOUTHERN JEWISH
Historical Society

The Southern Jewish Historical Society acknowledges with great appreciation a generous donation to the society's endowment to support *Southern Jewish History* as well as the society's grants, archival preservation, and an annual lecture.

Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter
Jacksonville, Florida

The grant was given in partnership with the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience and the Tulane University Department of Jewish Studies.

MUSEUM OF THE SOUTHERN JEWISH EXPERIENCE

Tulane University

Southern Jewish History acknowledges with deep appreciation the generous financial support of the following:

Journal Operations Fund
Rachel Heimovics Braun
Nina Friedman
Debra Goldberg
Gordon Family
Andrea Markowicz
Marlene Merves
Helen Marie Stern Memorial Fund
Ellen Umansky
Bruce and Hollace Weiner

Bauman Family Journal Endowment Fund
Mark and Sandy Bauman
Charles and Minette Cooper
Bernard Goldstein

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the Krause family for the **Rabbi Allen Krause Endowment**, providing grants supporting southern Jewish historical research.

Table of Contents

From the Editor . . .

This is perhaps the most complete issue of the journal published thus far. Three regular articles by an historian/archivist, a junior faculty member, and a professor of literature are followed by a primary source article by another historian/archivist and a memoir in a new section edited by a rabbi/historian, a genealogist, and a college chancellor/history professor. Then follows a book review section including a review essay by a graduate student, a website review by a retired professor, and several exhibit reviews by specialists from a variety of backgrounds. We travel from Maryland, Louisiana, and South Carolina to Texas, Mississippi, and beyond. All of this speaks to the vibrancy of the field of southern Jewish history and a variety of perspectives in which to view history.

Owen Lourie takes us back in history to the American Revolution in Maryland. Elias Pollock stands out as unique: an enlisted man in the ranks of the Continental Army who ultimately depended on a veteran's pension after he lost almost everything when a son-in-law absconded after going into debt, a debt Pollock then became responsible for paying. Pollock's story raises questions about the willingness of Jews to make substantial commitments to the war effort, the impact of socioeconomic class on military service, and the efficacy of family connections for economic success.

Judah P. Benjamin, one of the first Jewish U.S. senators, the holder of three Confederate cabinet positions, and an almost legendary individual, is the subject of biographies and figures prominently in numerous historical works. Michael Hoberman looks at him from the different lens of fiction and analyzes the various meanings novelists have given his image. It is a story of the divergence between history and memory.

Andrew Baker delves into the life of a refugee from Hitler's oppression who makes his mark in business and community service. As mayor of Greenville, South Carolina, Max Heller provides a model of a Sunbelt

policymaker like other Jewish mayors of his era. Since the antebellum era, Jewish mayors tended to follow a trajectory from commerce to city betterment to electoral politics. Did their backgrounds and inclinations typically also lead them to support business-progressive programs while in (and out) of office?

Joshua Furman presents a pamphlet designed to lure potential Jewish immigrants to Galveston, Texas. Through his analysis, we gain a greater understanding of the motivations of the Galveston Movement's supporters and of those in the Jewish Territorial Organization who developed the pamphlet as well as their ideas of the expectations of the potential immigrants.

When a rabbi submitted a memoir at the suggestion of book review section editor Stephen J. Whitfield, I polled the editorial board concerning the creation of a new section on memoirs. After substantial discussion, the editorial board agreed to the concept with the proviso that historical context be provided for the document. Consequently, Karen S. Franklin and Lance J. Sussman agreed to edit the new section. For their first selection, Rabbi Fred V. Davidow's memoir traces his changing attitude toward race from his childhood in the Mississippi Delta to Atlanta and beyond.

Special thanks as always to proofreaders Rachel Heimovics Braun, Karen Franklin, Bernie Wax, Hollace Ava Weiner, and Dan Weinfeld for their meticulous work.

Mark K. Bauman

Maryland's Jews, Military Service, and the American Revolutionary Era: The Case of Elias Pollock

by

Owen Lourie*

On a late August day in 1818, a sixty-three-year-old veteran, slowed by age and his wartime injuries, stood in a Baltimore City courtroom and told his story. To secure a pension from the federal government as a Revolutionary War veteran, the man gave a sworn statement detailing his three years as a private in the Third Maryland Regiment forty years before.[1]

The man, Elias Pollock, had been about twenty-three years old when he enlisted in early June 1778, a precarious time for the revolution. The Continental Army had scored a major victory the previous fall at Saratoga, but the British had now occupied the capital city of Philadelphia. Standing in court, Pollock recounted the names of the battles in which he fought, the officers under whom he served, and the hardships he endured, his narrative typical of Revolutionary War veterans testifying in support of their pension applications. Many thousands of veterans flooded courthouses across America during 1818, after Congress authorized a system to provide them with financial support, and Pollock's appearance was largely routine. Still, a few elements of the day's proceedings stood out sufficiently to merit the court's notice.[2]

First, Pollock had enlisted under the alias Joseph Smith. To help overcome this discrepancy, Pollock secured a deposition from an old army comrade, John Williams. Williams related that "he knew Elias Pollock, . . . who then passed by the name of Joseph Smith, to have been in Captain Joseph Marbury's Company, 3rd Maryland Regiment." According to

* The author may be contacted at owen.lourie@gmail.com.

Williams, Smith "has ever since been known by the name of 'Elias Pollock,'" although Williams did not explain how he knew this. A soldier enlisting under an assumed name may not have been common, but the court readily accepted the explanation provided by Pollock and Williams.[3]

One further element of Pollock's appearance in court merited a notation by the court clerk. Typically, people took an "oath on the Holy Evangels of Almighty God" before giving court testimony. Pollock, however, swore on "the five books of Moses, he being a Jew." This was so unusual that the clerk had to add it as an interlineation after the fact.[4] On several occasions over the previous two decades, Pollock recorded land deeds with his signature in Hebrew. Only through a special arrangement was this possible, and when Pollock submitted his pension application, he again signed his name in Hebrew.

Pollock's life offers insights into Jewish participation in the military during the American Revolution. Whereas most Jews in the South supported independence from England, at least in Maryland few joined the regular revolutionary army. Pollock is the only known Jewish infantry private from the state. Whereas there may have been other common soldiers like him, there could not have been many Jews, given the state's small Jewish population.

In terms of his postwar experiences, historians of American Jewry routinely refer to Jewish ethnic and family networks as a major reason for economic success.[5] However, for Pollock, his network also contributed to economic disaster since he became responsible for his son-in-law's debts. This forced him to rely on public funds in the form of a veteran's pension. Thus his case also sheds light on the lesser told circumstance of Jewish poverty and downward mobility. This essay, then, expands on previous studies concerning Pollock, on Jews in the military during the Revolution, and on economic history.[6]

People like Elias Pollock lived lives less fully documented than highly successful and public figures like the Ettings and Cohens, well-known Jewish families in Maryland. Nonetheless, these lesser known individuals are far more representative of Baltimore's early Jewish population. With fortunes sensitive to the ups and downs of the economy of the early republic, they moved frequently, traveling along the East Coast seeking fresh starts or better opportunities. Pollock lived in Baltimore and Philadelphia, besides conducting business throughout

Pennsylvania and possibly New York. Such mobility served as a hallmark of the Jewish experience in the decades around the American Revolution. Exploring the lives of Baltimore's early Jews requires tracking individuals through multiple places over an uncertain timeline and, in at least a few cases, with changing names. Elkin Solomon, for example, worked as a merchant in Baltimore in the 1780s after having traded around Boston as Abraham Solomon before legal and financial problems induced him to change his name and move south.[7]

At the time of Pollock's pension request, only a few dozen Jewish families called Baltimore home, and the city's days as a large Jewish population center lay in the future. However, many of those families had lived in the city for some time and were well integrated into local society. Pollock, for example, had lived in the city for close to thirty-five years. Although Baltimore's population had grown astronomically in the decades after the Revolution, for long-time residents (of a certain social class, at least), the city likely retained a certain small-town feel, giving them a passing familiarity with each other.[8]

Elias Pollock pension award, 1818. (National Archives and Records Administration, via fold3.com.)

The small Jewish world of early Baltimore had little unifying structure, but everyone's role was nevertheless significant. High Holiday services were conducted sporadically beginning in the 1780s. Pollock possibly helped form the city's *minyan* since he repeatedly demonstrated his Jewish identity by signing legal documents in Hebrew.[9]

Pollock's pension application showing his signature in Hebrew. (National Archives and Records Administration, via fold3.)

Pollock's use of an alias in 1778, and the court's ready acceptance of that fact four decades later, reflects something about the place Jews occupied in Baltimore at the turn of the nineteenth century. Pollock possibly enlisted under the generic name Joseph Smith because he believed that his religious or ethnic identity needed to be disguised to escape discrimination, but that is not the most likely explanation. Instead, Elias Pollock may have needed to disappear for a while, just as Abraham Solomon had. If Pollock was a convict servant, as some historians have theorized, or an indentured apprentice, he would have been unable to enlist without his master's consent. A fake name allowed Pollock to evade that restriction and flee from servitude. Whatever the reason, Pollock's standing in the city by the time of his application ensured that the court accepted his use of an assumed name without question.[10]

Elias Pollock: Soldier and Citizen

Upon enlistment in Baltimore in 1778, Pollock was issued a pair of uniform shirts and received an enlistment bonus of forty dollars with the promise of a fifty-acre parcel of land if he completed his term. The British withdrew from Philadelphia a few weeks after Pollock enlisted and before he and his company marched there later that summer, and he recalled spending the rest of the year in that city.[11]

Pollock spent 1778 and 1779 around Philadelphia, New Jersey, and New York, patrolling and constructing fortifications along the Hudson River. Evidently a skilled soldier, he belonged to the elite Corps of Light Infantry and "was in . . . the taking of Stoney Point" in July 1779, a daring, nighttime bayonet raid that captured a British fort on the Hudson. In 1780, his regiment joined the American army that General Horatio Gates led from Valley Forge to the Carolinas, where the British had opened a new front in the hopes of shifting the war's focus away from New York.[12]

Many men fell ill during the arduous thousand-mile march undertaken in the spring and summer with inadequate preparations for food and supplies. By the time the army arrived in North Carolina two months into the journey, the troops "were very much distressed for want of provisions."[13] One soldier from Delaware, whose unit travelled with Pollock's, wrote of going

> fourteen days and [receiving] but one pound of flour. Sometimes we [received] half a pound of beef per man, and that so miserably poor that scarce any mortal could make use of it—living chiefly on green apples and peaches, which rendered our situation truly miserable, being in a weak and sickly condition, and surrounded on all sides by our enemies the Tories.[14]

In August 1780, Americans badly lost the Battle of Camden, South Carolina, not long after arriving in the state. Pollock called it the battle "where Gates was defeated," echoing many of his Maryland comrades in blaming the unprepared American commander who failed to hold his army together or direct an orderly retreat. As other men fled in panic, the Maryland troops attempted to hold the line, consequently taking heavy casualties. Pollock's regiment suffered more than any other Maryland unit, losing 113 of its 307 troops. In total, the Maryland Line lost some six hundred men killed, wounded, or missing, about one-third of its strength.

Alonzo Chappel, engraving depicting the death of General Johann de Kalb at the Battle of Camden, South Carolina, 1858. De Kalb commanded the Maryland troops at the battle. (New York Public Library Digital Collections.)

Pollock was among them, wounded in the side by a bayonet and taken prisoner. The British held him first in Charleston, South Carolina, then St. Augustine, Florida, and finally in Halifax, Nova Scotia. By August 1781, he had been released in a prisoner exchange and made his way back to Annapolis, where he received his official discharge. His three years had ended earlier that summer, likely while he remained in British captivity.[15]

After his discharge in 1781, Pollock's wounds continued to trouble him as he struggled to get his footing economically. It remains unknown when he arrived in Maryland or how well established he was before he joined the army. Disability benefits he received from the state under a program established to provide support for injured soldiers partly aided him. Any soldier who was so "disabled in the service of the United States of America, as to render him incapable of getting a livelihood" would receive a pension equal to half the pay of his rank. Men discharged as invalids but who were "not totally disabled from getting a livelihood,"

were paid amounts commensurate with their disabilities. The county registrars of wills, who tended to approve payments reluctantly, administered the system. Pollock received a paltry two pounds, ten shillings per month under the name Joseph Smith from March 1784 until April 1785. He may have received payments before or after that time, but record-keeping was inconsistent. Curiously, when acknowledging his payments, he only made his mark, rather than signing as Smith.[16]

Whether Pollock stayed in Maryland throughout the 1780s is not certain. Many Maryland Jews migrated back and forth to Philadelphia and other cities, just as Americans of all stripes traveled to improve their situations during this era. Still, Pollock likely remained in Maryland for most, if not the entire decade. Although he may have conducted business in New York during the 1780s, he resided in Baltimore by 1786, where he received a peddler's license in 1792.[17]

Within a few years, Pollock demonstrated economic mobility. He operated primarily as a merchant and manufacturer, "on an industrial scale" as he later boasted, of blackball (used for polishing shoes), as well as other wax-based products like heelball (similar to blackball) and washball (a type of soap).[18]

Working in a lucrative trade, Pollock thrived near the upper end of the middle class. In 1796, he bought a house on Front Street, just east of the Jones Falls in the Old Town section of the city. The Pollocks owned expensive furniture and silver plate. In 1803, he also bought a tavern near the southern end of Baltimore on the road to Washington, D.C., where he and his family lived for several years. He sold it within five years at a substantial profit. With the exception of that period, the family's main residence remained on Front Street, alongside Pollock's workshop in a lot that contained "a one story Frame [house] . . . and a back building of brick, 2 stories high."[19]

In his home, Pollock employed at least one servant, an African American woman identified only as Kate. In January 1804, Kate fled Pollock's service. He published advertisements in local newspapers declaring her to be a runaway, a common practice at the time. Less common was Kate's response. She took out ads, as "a duty I owe to myself . . . to contradict [Pollock]" and defend her rights and freedom: "Some years since, Mr. Pollock purchased me for eight years, which time expired with the preceding year [i.e. the end of 1803]. During the period of my servitude, I served him

Charles Varle, Warner & Hanna's Plan of the City and Environs of Baltimore, 1801 (detail). Detail shows the Old Town area where Elias Pollock lived. (Courtesy of the George Peabody Library, The Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University.)

E. Sachse & Co., Bird's-eye view of the city of Baltimore, 1869 (detail). Pollock lived on the right side of Front Street, close to the curve. The street had not changed much since his time there. (Library of Congress.)

honestly and diligently." If Pollock produced evidence that Kate's term of indenture extended beyond eight years, she promised, "I will return to his service, but not otherwise." Two residents of Old Town, near Pollock's Front Street house, testified in support of her claim. Although nothing else is known about Kate's identity, her advertisement indicates that she was a term servant, not an individual enslaved by Pollock.[20]

Jewish Soldiers in the Revolutionary War

Pollock's story of military service opens the door to broader questions concerning the participation of Jews and other ethnic groups during the American Revolution. To the occasional consternation of American commanders, the Continental Army proved to be an extraordinarily diverse institution, as historians Charles Royster, Edward C. Papenfuse and Gregery Stiverson, and Charles Patrick Neimeyer, among others, have documented.[21] General Charles Lee, for example, appraised a batch of recruits in 1776 by writing, "the Men are good, some Irish Rascals excepted." The summer that Pollock enlisted, the Continental Army included a small but significant contingent of African American soldiers. The First Maryland Brigade, which included Pollock's regiment, had sixty African Americans serving in integrated units, about 3.5 percent of its total strength. The Irish and Scots Irish comprised between one-third and one-half of the men from mid-Atlantic regiments.[22]

To a large degree, America's Jews lived alongside the gentile population, and being Jewish generally did not impact one's support or opposition of the Revolution. High-profile Jews appeared among proponents of American independence as well as among loyalists. Philadelphia, for example, was home to Haym Salomon, a key financier of the Continental Army, and to David Franks, who aligned with the British colonial government. Whichever side they supported, Jews in America were not protected from antisemitism, issuing mostly from pro-Revolutionary factions. Some historians have argued that at times Jews remained loyal to the Crown because they feared religious persecution by intolerant revolutionaries, as may have occurred in Newport, Rhode Island, for example. Similarly, in Philadelphia, the revolutionary government displayed antisemitic tendencies and resented its reliance on Haym Salomon's purse to prop up the military and its commanders. Salomon was berated on the streets with antisemitic insults. David Franks, the city's most prominent

Jew, was singled out and eventually banished from the city for his disloyalty to the new country. For the revolutionaries in the city eager to make an example of a loyalist, a Jew provided an ideal victim. Nevertheless, such fears of antisemitism did not uniformly push Jews into the loyalist camp.[23]

Estimates generally put the Jewish population of the United States at around 1,500 to 2,000 during the American Revolution. Scarce records mean that many of these people cannot be identified, and as historian Jacob Rader Marcus concludes, the true extent of the Jewish presence in the army during the Revolution can never be known. Their service is undeniable, however, even if only outlines of it can be seen.[24]

Several historians have produced compilations of Jewish soldiers and other supporters of the war effort, beginning with Simon Wolf's *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier, and Citizen* (1895) and including Jacob Rader Marcus's better-researched survey, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*.[25] Samuel Rezneck provides a more comprehensive and documented treatment identifying about one hundred Jews in military service on the American side. This number includes fifteen commissioned officers and perhaps a dozen regulars, professional soldiers in the Continental Army. Militia soldiers, whose service was usually more episodic and limited in scope and duties, comprised the rest. The militia members included the so-called "Jew Company" of Charleston, South Carolina. In truth, *Jew Company* is a misnomer: the company comprised between twenty-six and thirty-four Jewish soldiers, less than half its strength when it mustered in 1779–80 during the British siege of the city. Nonetheless, the unit probably boasted the largest concentration of Jewish soldiers in the war and included Jacob I. Cohen. Cohen and his family later became influential in Baltimore.[26]

Many of the soldiers whom Marcus, Reznick, and Wolf identified came from Pennsylvania, Georgia, and South Carolina, places with well-established Jewish communities. This speaks to the size of the Jewish populations in these areas and to the degree to which these communities' histories and structures make it easier to identify individuals' religions through synagogue and other communal records. Maryland's situation is reversed since the Jewish community was small and lacked institutions and institutional records that could help identify the religion of soldiers. Service records from Maryland include several dozen soldiers whose

names suggest Jewish heritage—Levy and Moses Aaron, David and Jacob Levy, Jacob Moses, and others with the surnames Solomons, Lyons, and the like. Yet none can be identified as Jewish with certainty. Ira Rosenwaike's research on Baltimore's Jews and Malcolm H. Stern's genealogies of American Jewish families fail to list them. Neither a synagogue nor any burial or other community records in which these individuals could be listed existed in Baltimore or Maryland until the late 1820s. Such a reliance on names is a perilous exercise. Although detractors of Israel Israel, a Philadelphia politician during the era of the Revolution, assumed he was Jewish and assailed him with antisemitic slanders, he was Anglican. Yet the possibility that some of these Maryland soldiers might have been Jewish highlights the ways that many Jews in Baltimore—and the rest of Maryland—could remain unidentified, especially if they were poor or working class.[27]

A few Jewish soldiers have been studied as individuals. Benjamin Nones provides a key example. A Sephardic Jew who emigrated from France during the American Revolution, Nones served in Pulaski's Legion, a glamorous unit led by Casimir Pulaski, a legendary freedom-fighter in his native Poland. Nones became a high-profile Republican Party leader in Philadelphia after the war and may well have been acquainted with Pollock: both were later affiliated with Mikveh Israel, the city's synagogue. Scholars have viewed Nones's life as a case study about Jews' involvement in politics and community relations in the early national era and have documented the antisemitic attacks he was subjected to and explored his antislavery activism. His military service, however, has largely been ignored or characterized merely as prologue to his political career.[28]

Generally, the best-known Jewish supporters of the American Revolution were men like Haym Salomon and other Philadelphia merchants who lent money to Congress and sold supplies to the army. Most of the soldiers identified as Jewish served in local militia units. Militia soldiers typically served for short periods at a time, usually close to home, and their ranks drew from a large portion of the male population. Enlisting as a regular, full-time, professional soldier provided a decidedly different type of service. It often entailed being absent from home for several years at a time, and fewer people chose to make this greater commitment. The disparity between the number of Jewish militia troops and regular soldiers

suggests that Jews were willing to support the war effort at home, but few were eager, able, or perhaps welcome to serve in the Continental Army. Consequently, Elias Pollock's life and those like him becomes even more important to study as exceptions.[29]

Two other Jewish soldiers from Maryland have been identified along with Pollock. In 1781 Nathan (or Nathaniel) Levy rode as a member of the Baltimore Light Dragoons, a cavalry troop composed of wealthy Baltimoreans raised by twenty-five-year-old Captain Nicholas Ruxton Moore between 1780 and 1781. The members of this unit spent much of their time in uniform parading in Baltimore, although they served in Virginia during summer 1781, travelling with the Marquis de Lafayette for a few months during the early phases of the Yorktown campaign, perhaps seeing some combat during that time.[30]

The service of Reuben Etting, the third Jewish soldier from Maryland, is less well-documented. The oldest version of Etting's story, published in 1894, seems to be drawn from distant family memories and recounts that as a nineteen-year-old clerk, he

> hastened northward to join the patriots. He was taken prisoner at Charlestown, and when the British learned that he was not only a rebel but a Jew, they gave him for food only pork, which he refused to eat. . . . Weakened by confinement and privation, he died of consumption soon after his release.[31]

Many historians have retold this account, sometimes reporting that Etting survived the war and was the same Reuben Etting who rose to prominence in early national Maryland (a different person with the same name). If Etting did serve in the Revolutionary War, documentation is absent. While a few accounts from prisoners held by the British mention rations that included meager amounts of pork, in general the Americans received so little food that it is hard to imagine the veracity of this element of the story. One author reports that Etting was a member of John Sterrett's Baltimore militia company and served while the unit deployed to the Eastern Shore of Maryland during winter 1776–77 to suppress the restive loyalist population of the region. This correctly represents where Sterrett's company served, although no muster rolls survive to confirm Etting's role.[32]

Levy's military experience and any possible service by Etting appears paltry compared to Pollock, who was an infantryman, one of the

soldiers who comprise the backbone of any army. As members of ad hoc units and not a formal part of the army, Levy and Etting served on their terms without being locked into the three-year enlistment Pollock undertook. Militia units, like the one Etting may have served in, often only came into being when called into service, while their members otherwise lived as civilians—which may account for why no contemporary record of Etting's service can be located.

Although Levy's and Etting's service may do little to bolster the military prowess of Maryland's Jews, it testifies to their social integration. With their ornate uniforms and swashbuckling reputations, cavalry units in the Revolutionary War were the province of the wealthy and well-connected. The unit Levy belonged to included many prominent Baltimore residents. Lafayette described its soldiers as "men of fortune who make great [financial] sacrifices to serve this country" and directed that they be spared "the common camp duties." Levy's family had resided in Baltimore for decades, and his ability to join the dragoons shows that he was on a relatively equal footing with other young sons of the gentry. The same is true of Philadelphia's Benjamin Nones, who also served in a high social status unit.[33]

Thus only Pollock can be identified as a Jewish Baltimorean with service in a regular army unit. Although the city had a small Jewish population, this finding raises questions about Jewish commitment to the military effort.

Pollock's Postwar Life

Pollock probably married his first wife (whose name is unknown) during the 1780s. This woman died in August 1802, while their children Hester (or Esther) and Charlotte Amanda were still young, and he remarried within a few years. His second wife, Polly Pollock, died in February 1806 at forty-one years old and was buried in the city's Jewish cemetery.[34]

The Jews' Burying Ground was in use by 1786, making it the oldest established fixture of Jewish life in Baltimore. Not until the 1820s and 1830s, after Pollock's departure, did the Jewish population begin to stabilize and grow. Consequently, during Pollock's time, Baltimore had few institutions or services necessary for religious life. Presumably, Jews in Baltimore handled these needs out of town, improvised at home, or simply went without, as members of minority communities typically do.

Founding a cemetery as a first communal institution was somewhat typical. One might not live as a Jew but would want to be buried as one. The elite Ettings and Cohens maintained family plots, as did many upper-class non-Jewish families. Some members of the wealthy Levy family were buried in St. Paul's Episcopal Church cemetery, alongside prominent members of Baltimore society.[35]

Well-heeled Solomon Etting trained as a *shochet* in Pennsylvania before settling in Baltimore, but he did not pursue that profession in Baltimore, and neither a *shochet* nor a *mohel* may have operated in the city on a long-term basis until about 1815. With no Jewish congregation formally established until 1829, individuals organized worship services on their own. Whether they could routinely muster a *minyan* during Pollock's time in the city is doubtful, but High Holiday services were sporadically organized privately by the late 1780s.[36]

Jewish Baltimoreans who wished to marry within the faith had limited local options, and many sought spouses from other towns, as did Pollock and his children. Others intermarried with non-Jews, although in at least some of those cases they remained Jewish. With no permanent Jewish clergy available, marriages were performed elsewhere or by religious leaders from out of town. When Pollock's daughter Hester married in Baltimore in 1809, both the officiant, a Rabbi Wolf, and her husband, merchant Isaac Jacob Levy, came from Philadelphia. Civil marriage did not exist in Maryland, and at least a few of Baltimore's Jews were married by Christian ministers, possibly when they were unable to arrange for a Jewish official in time or because they married non-Jews.[37]

No identifiable Jewish neighborhood existed while Pollock lived in the city. A few prominent families lived around the city's center, and, beginning in the 1820s after Pollock departed, some newly arrived Jewish families settled in the Fells Point area of the city. In Pollock's day, his neighborhood in the Old Town section included a small cluster of Jewish households. In addition to Pollock, his daughter Charlotte and her husband, Isaac Cook, who married in 1810, lived on Front Street, as did peripatetic merchant Wolf N. Pollock who resided there temporarily. Just a block or two away lived Mordecai M. Mordecai, and later his son, Isaac.[38]

Pollock could do little to signal his faith in the absence of a congregation or other Jewish organization to join. However, Pollock took great

Mortgage, Elias Pollock to Isaac Henry, 1803.
(Courtesy of the Maryland State Archives.)

pains to ensure that his religion was no secret: every time he finalized a property deed or mortgage, he signed his name in Hebrew. He signed as "Elias," spelled phonetically in Hebrew characters, rather than Eliyahu, the Hebrew equivalent of the name. He did not do this because he was illiterate in English, as one historian suggests. His 1820 pension form was likely written by him in English.[39]

The Hebrew appears not on the original deed, filled out on loose paper by the parties to the sale, but in the official copy, transcribed by the clerk into the bound volume of land records. Pollock may have signed the record book, or one of the clerks working at the courthouse may have copied Pollock's Hebrew characters. Regardless of who did the writing, its occurrence remained highly unusual. Clerks did not try to replicate English signatures, although many contemporaries had elegant and elaborate ones. The signatures on Pollock's deeds generally appear in different inks and in a different hand than the rest of the recorded deeds in which they appear, and few of them resemble the handwriting on Pollock's pension application. In one instance, "Elias" is spelled two different ways in the same deed, suggesting that a clerk did the writing at least in that case.[40]

In 1778 another Maryland Jew, Henry Lazarus, also signed his will, a legal document, in Hebrew. The original document bears Lazarus's signature in Hebrew (as Hirsh, rather than the Anglicized equivalent), next to which is written "English: Henry Lazarus." The recorded version, transcribed into the wills record book, simply reads "Henry Lazarus," the clerk in the Register of Wills' office evidently being uninterested in inserting foreign characters into the records.[41]

Will of Henry Lazarus, 1778 (detail), showing signature in Hebrew.
(Courtesy of the Maryland State Archives.)

The actions of Lazarus and Pollock demonstrate that they did not attempt to hide their religion in the years after the Revolution at a time when being Jewish was something of an oddity. Rather their Hebrew signatures on public records symbolized their sense of identity and willingness to stand out as distinctive. The number of people who saw the Hebrew signatures was never large, so the effort suggests the involvement of principle on Pollock's behalf. By contrast, when he and his neighbors petitioned the city government for repairs to Front Street—a more public act—he signed his name in English.[42]

Elias Pollock did not leave behind a lengthy record of political advocacy. If ideology drove him to enlist in the Continental Army, it apparently did not spur him to be involved in any of the day's causes or parties. Although the patchy poll records fail to include his name, in 1803 he joined many citizens of Baltimore in signing a petition to the Maryland General Assembly calling for reforms to democratize the city's government. Still, in the first years of the 1800s, when Pollock signed most of these deeds, proclaiming himself to be Jewish was not simply a matter of

personal pride or affirmation: it was an act with political overtones. Locked out of public office by the state's constitution, members of Maryland's Jewish community had begun to petition the legislature for redress.[43]

Although there were few Jews in Maryland to be excluded from public office, some began to advocate for their rights beginning in 1797 with a petition presented to the Maryland General Assembly by Solomon Etting and Bernard Gratz—wealthy and prominent members of Baltimore society—"and others." The House of Delegates, the lower chamber and the one more receptive to democratic reform, duly considered the request and agreed "that the prayer of the petition is reasonable." Nonetheless, the House felt that it was impossible to take up the issue "at this advanced stage of the [legislative] session," although the session was not yet halfway completed.[44]

In 1802, six months before Pollock signed his first deed in Hebrew, the House of Delegates again took up a petition against the test oath from "sundry inhabitants of the city of Baltimore, praying that a law may pass enabling the sect of people called Jews to hold and enjoy any office." Coincidentally, it was read in the House the same day as the petition Pollock signed about Baltimore City's government. The House eventually produced a bill that year to allow Jews to hold office but voted it down thirty to seventeen. Both of Baltimore's delegates voted in favor. The petition submitted in 1803 met with the same lack of success.[45]

Not until 1826, after several acrimonious years of debate, was the "declaration of a belief in the Christian religion" abolished. In its place, the constitution required officeholders to swear they believed in "a future state of rewards and punishments." The figure often associated with the legislation, referred to as the "Jew Bill," is Thomas Kennedy, a delegate from Western Maryland, who sponsored the bill repeatedly during the 1820s despite not knowing any Jews personally. However, it was the protracted lobbying and growing economic and political clout of Baltimore's Jews that ultimately led to the law's passage. By the time Pollock departed the city, part of that power flowed from him, even if he is not listed among the advocates in the historical record.[46]

Jacob I. Cohen and Solomon Etting, perhaps the most prominent Jewish citizens in Baltimore, were both elected to the city council immediately after the religious component of the oath was dropped. There are no

signs that Pollock harbored political ambitions, and the change in the law would not have materially altered his life. Still, the extension of full citizenship to Jews likely would have resonated with Pollock, the man who took such pains to sign his name in Hebrew.

Elias Pollock's Family and Downfall

During the years when Pollock signed his deeds in Hebrew and Baltimore's Jews advocated for their political rights, Pollock's two older daughters grew up, and his first two wives passed away. Six months after his second wife, Polly, died, Pollock married for a third time, wedding Rebecca Hart of Philadelphia in August 1806. Rebecca was in her late thirties, a dozen years younger than her husband. They had two daughters together: Rachel, born around 1809, and Matilda, born two years later. The Harts were a well-off family, suggesting that Pollock had a strong and stable position in Baltimore, one, however, that failed to last.[47]

Charlotte's husband, Isaac Cook, brought about Elias Pollock's downfall. Within a few years of their wedding in 1810, Isaac and Charlotte moved into a rented house on Front Street close to Pollock. Isaac prepared and sold quills used as pens. He and Charlotte evidently lived well, since they were assessed as possessing fifty-five ounces of silver plate in 1813, a substantial amount.[48]

Isaac incurred significant debts with several grocers and dry goods dealers, including $3,709 to one firm alone, and in 1816 he abandoned his family and disappeared. The first court cases to collect his debts were filed in fall 1816 after Cook's departure. Pollock became legally responsible for his son-in-law's debts, presumably because he cosigned Cook's promissory notes. As the court record noted, the papers were "Laid in the hands of Elias Pollock."[49]

Only sparse records survive from Baltimore's courts of this era, primarily docket books that provide a skeletal outline of the cases' progress. Consequently, they do not elaborate on Cook's activities, and it is possible that not all of the lawsuits were related to the debts he owed. Indeed, Elias Pollock was engaged in his own ongoing legal battle at the time, having been sued by Levi Myers to resolve an unspecified dispute. That case was never resolved. Myers left town in the middle, and Pollock obtained a judgment against him for his legal fees. Nonetheless Myers gave testimony in one of the cases against Pollock and Cook.[50]

In June 1821, after several years of litigation to resolve the suits, the family's house, Pollock's workshop, and their "Household and Kitchen Furniture" were seized and sold at auction to settle Cook's debts. Pollock declared insolvency almost immediately, and within two years the family moved to Philadelphia, where they could find a community to help support them. Among the Jews of Baltimore, returning to Philadelphia was a common event in bad times since the more established Jewish community offered refuge.[51]

At this point Pollock's tale again becomes a soldier's story, or rather a veteran's story. Pollock may have been unusual as a Jewish veteran of the Revolutionary War, or because of the exact reasons for his financial ruin, but he was hardly the only contemporary to fail financially. Many veterans and nonveterans experienced difficulty navigating the rocky economy of the early republic. Fortunately for Pollock and his family, he was eligible for a pension from the federal government thanks to a relatively new law.

Baltimore American & Commercial Daily Advertiser, *June 8, 1821.*
(GenealogyBank.com.)

Formally titled *An Act to provide for certain persons engaged in the land and naval service of the United States, in the Revolutionary War*, Congress passed the pension bill on March 15, 1818. Stories of penniless veterans of the Revolution, who were seemingly spurned by the country they had helped to free, motivated Congress's action. Under the law, all veterans with at least nine months of service (and their widows) could receive quarterly payments based on their rank for the rest of their lives. The pension system witnessed a surge of aging veteran applicants who had not thrived in the young country. In fact, the response exceeded expectations, and two years later Congress tightened eligibility and made recipients reapply. Pollock first applied in summer 1818, as the court cases against him loomed ahead. Even though he had fought under a different name, his application was accepted without difficulty, and in fall 1819 he began receiving ninety-six dollars per year, half a private's annual pay.[52]

In June 1821, Pollock reapplied to satisfy the new requirement that applicants demonstrate financial necessity, something Pollock had no difficulty verifying. He appeared in court to swear out his application less than two weeks after his house was sold at auction and described his circumstances:

> My property consists of Two common Tables, One old Desk, Some chairs, some trifling articles of Crockery ware and kitchen furniture, the whole worth . . . say $20.00.
>
> My family consists of a wife named Rebecca, aged about fifty three years, now nearly helpless, two daughters under twelve years of age, And there are also with me and have heretofore been dependant on me for support, a daughter [Charlotte] and her two infant children who were deserted by the husband and father. . . .
>
> I formerly manufactured Black Balls on an industrial Scale, by which and other small trade had supported myself & family with a comfortable home; but in consequence of becoming Bondsman for another have had my House, Furniture, and property of every kind seized and sold . . . leaving me in such a State of penury as to be absolutely unable to support myself or family without the benefit of my Revolutionary pension. . . .
>
> I labor under severe affliction from a Rupture [hernia] Occasioned by hardships experienced while in the army of the U.S. and from a Bayonet wound received at the battle [of Camden].[53]

The bitterness Pollock felt over his fate is evident, and his complaint of having become "Bondsman for another" is stinging, commensurate with the fall that he had taken. Whereas the family now owned personal property valued at twenty dollars total, they once had owned chairs worth more than that. Pollock's chance at the American dream had evaporated. Although eight dollars a month would not restore it, the pension provided a source of income when few others were available to him.[54]

Yet Pollock had additional prospects. Through his children and his wife Rebecca, he had strong connections to several prominent Jewish families in Philadelphia. Rebecca's family, the Harts, were merchants who had helped found Easton, Pennsylvania, before moving to Philadelphia. Pollock had worked with his in-laws in the past, getting power of attorney from Rebecca's brother Samuel in 1810 to sell some of his land. In addition, Pollock's two younger daughters later married men from Philadelphia. Hester and her husband, Isaac Jacob Levy, lived there, and in 1833 Rachel married Joseph Levy, who came from a family of prominent merchants (the two Levy men were distant cousins).[55] Pollock possibly turned to some of these relatives during the 1820s after he and Rebecca settled in Philadelphia permanently.

After about a decade in the city, Elias Pollock died on May 10, 1832, at age seventy-seven. Rebecca died of dropsy (edema) on December 21, 1836, when she was about sixty-eight. Both were buried in the Spruce Street cemetery of Mikveh Israel, where members of Philadelphia's Jewish community had been interred for decades.[56]

Conclusion

This essay broaches important questions for additional study. What number and percentage of Jews in other states enlisted in the Continental Army? If these numbers and percentages were as sparse as in Baltimore, does this suggest a lack of allegiance to the revolutionary cause or reflect the community's political sentiment or insecurity about their social position? Did the ways that Jews experienced the American Revolution politically, socially, or economically lead them away from joining the army? Or does the paucity of Jewish community records simply make it too great a challenge to draw any conclusions about the Jewish presence in the army? How typical or unusual was bankruptcy or business failure during the early republic and thereafter resulting from problems with

family networks? Historians should also consider a balance between the experiences of individuals and families who remained relatively rooted in one location and those who meandered from location to location. What were the varied reasons for both behaviors?

Elias Pollock's life can easily be viewed through the lens of difference. As a Jew, he was part of a tiny minority in Baltimore and in the United States. In the Continental Army, he was part of an even smaller group of Jews. Yet his religion was clearly an important part of his public identity, as he demonstrated by signing his name in Hebrew to legal documents for decades. Whether or not a leader among the Jews in Baltimore, Pollock was a member of the community.

Pollock was at once an outlier, as any Jew was in Maryland by virtue of their religion, as well as an ordinary, integrated member of society. Despite the otherness that necessarily surrounded Jewish residents of Baltimore during the early nineteenth century, Pollock's service in the Continental Army gave him much in common with thousands of other Marylanders and other Americans. Pollock's fate reflected that of many other Revolutionary War veterans. His health was at times impacted by the injuries he sustained in combat. Many Americans in the first decades of the new republic, veterans or not, left their homes in search of a new start or a better economic footing, as Pollock did. Some headed west in the hopes of buying farms, and others migrated toward cities. Such fortune seekers flocked to Baltimore in the decades after the Revolution, helping its population grow exponentially. Pollock ventured to Baltimore to improve his fortunes, and he made a good life for himself and his family there, although he ultimately found refuge elsewhere.

Thus Pollock's life represents not only the story of the exceptional—the Jewish private in the Continental Army—but also a story typical of thousands of veterans, including many whose fates remain unrecorded. The legacy and memory of his military service lasted long after the war, and ultimately his time in the army provided him a measure of financial salvation. As a Jewish resident of Baltimore in the first decades after the American Revolution, Pollock was part of a nascent community of Jews that was just beginning to coalesce. Over time, Baltimore's Jews built an array of vibrant institutions and accumulated enough clout to secure full civil rights under the state's constitution. Although Pollock had already left the state, he was a part of the community as it built to those

accomplishments. Pollock was a man proud enough of his heritage to sign his name to legal documents in Hebrew, though his role within the city's Jewish community is unrecorded, just as the names and deeds of many other Jews in early America are unknown. Indeed, if he had not penned his signature in Hebrew, the fact that Pollock was Jewish may have been lost to history. Pollock wanted his Jewish identity to be remembered, and through his actions he succeeded. Pollock's memory was kept alive in another way as well: two of his daughters named sons Elias P., after their grandfather.[57]

NOTES

The research for this article was conducted in conjunction with *Finding the Maryland 400*, a research collaboration between the Maryland State Archives and the Maryland Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR). The author is very grateful to the SAR for their support of Revolutionary War research and to the staff of the State Archives. He also wishes to thank Eric L. Goldstein, Christine Arnold-Lourie, Judy McCormally, and his wife Erin Lourie for reading earlier drafts of this article and providing valuable criticism. Many thanks for research assistance also to Joanna Church at the Jewish Museum of Maryland; David Armenti and Micah Connor at the Maryland Center for History and Culture; and Edward C. Papenfuse, retired Archivist of Maryland.

[1] Pension of Joseph Smith [Elias Pollock], National Archives, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land-Warrant Application Files, NARA M804, S 40279.

[2] Mark Andrew Tacyn, "'To the End:' The First Maryland Regiment and the American Revolution" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland–College Park, 1999), 271–72.

[3] Pollock pension. On the difficulties applicants (particularly African Americans) faced in obtaining pensions, see Judith L. Van Buskirk, *Standing in Their Own Light: African American Patriots in the American Revolution* (Norman, OK, 2017), 193–97. Consider the case of John Deaver, an officer in Pollock's regiment. Deaver's service was partially documented by a letter from his commander who inadvertently wrote the wrong year, which caused Deaver's survivors years of difficulties in collecting the pension to which he was entitled. See Pension of John Deaver, National Archives, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land-Warrant Application Files, NARA M804, R 2822.

[4] Pollock pension.

[5] See, for example, "Special Issue on Jews and the American Economy," *American Jewish History* 103 (October 2019).

[6] Pollock's life was addressed briefly in Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*, vol. 1 (Detroit, 1989), 85; Jacob Rader Marcus, ed., "The Jew and the American Revolution: A Bicentennial Documentary," *American Jewish Archives* 27 (1975): 108, 144–46; Samuel Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots: The Jews in the American Revolution* (Westport, CT, 1975), 52–53; 201–203; Ira Rosenwaike, "The Jews of Baltimore to 1810," *American Jewish Historical*

Quarterly 64 (1975): 292–95 (on population), 299–300 (on Pollock); Eric L. Goldstein and Deborah R. Weiner, *On Middle Ground: A History of the Jews of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 2018), 22–25; Isaac M. Fein, *The Making of an American Jewish Community: The History of Baltimore Jewry from 1773 to 1920* (Philadelphia, 1971), 41.

[7] Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 298–99, 303–304; Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 17–18.

[8] Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 291–95; Pollock pension.

[9] Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 32.

[10] Eric L. Goldstein, *Traders and Transports: The Jews of Colonial Maryland* (Baltimore, 1993), 55; Marcus, "Jew and the American Revolution," 144–46. On motivations for enlistment, see, for example, John A. Ruddiman, *Becoming Men of Some Consequence: Youth and Military Service in the Revolutionary War* (Charlottesville, 2014), 17–45, and Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775–1783* (Chapel Hill, 1979), 373–78.

[11] Pollock pension; Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, vol. 18, p. 165, Maryland State Archives, Archives of Maryland Online, accessed March 15, 2019, https://msa.maryland.gov (hereafter cited as MSA); Arthur J. Alexander, "How Maryland Tried to Raise her Continental Quotas," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 42 (1947): 188; Maryland General Assembly, Session Laws, October 1777, vol. 203, ch. 8, sect. 4, p. 182, MSA; Account of Cloathing Delivered to the 3rd Regiment, April–July 1778, Maryland State Papers, Revolutionary Papers, box 3, no. 5/9, MdHR 19970-3-5/9, S997-3-61, MSA.

[12] Pollock pension.

[13] Joseph Brown Turner, ed., "The Journal and Order Book of Captain Robert Kirkwood," part I, *Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware* 56 (1910): 9–11; William Seymour, "Journal of the Southern Expedition, 1780-1783, by William Seymour, Sergeant-Major of the Delaware Regiment," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 7 (1883): 286–87. The Delaware Regiment fought alongside the Maryland troops throughout the southern campaign.

[14] Seymour, "Journal," 286–87.

[15] Pollock pension; Tacyn, "'To the End,'" 216–25; Discharge, Joseph Smith, August 18, 1781, Anne Arundel County Register of Wills, Military Discharges, C44-1-47, vol. 18, p. 165, MSA.

[16] Maryland General Assembly, Session Laws, March 1779, vol. 203, ch. 14, p. 199, MSA; Tacyn, "'To the End,'" 262–63; Anne Arundel County Register of Wills, Invalid Pay Receipts, Joseph Smith, C87-1-47, MSA; Anne Arundel County Register of Wills, Orphans Court Proceedings, 1777–1784, C125-1, pp. 8, 17, 23, 26, 32, MSA; Orphans Court Proceedings, 1782–1784, C125-2, pp. 14, 18, 21, 22, 25, MSA.

[17] Baltimore County Court, Minutes, 1792–1797, C386-7, p. 37, MSA; Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 300; Pollock pension; Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 26. Court records show an Elias Pollock and Solomon Jacobs, likely of Philadelphia, being sued by a prominent New York merchant in 1785–86, but not enough details from the case survive to elaborate. Samuel Oppenheim Collection, box 11, P-255, American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History.

[18] Deed, James Long to Elias Pollock, 1796, Baltimore County Court, Land Records, CE66-98, WG XX, p. 328, MSA; Pollock pension; Federal Direct Tax, 1798, Baltimore City, Tax List, Archives of Maryland Online, vol. 729, p. 5970, MSA; William Thompson and James L. Walker, *Baltimore Town and Fells Point Directory* (Baltimore, 1796), 62; *Democratic Republican & Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore), June 29, 1802.

[19] Deed, Isaac Henry to Elias Pollock, 1803, Baltimore County Court, Land Records, CE66-126, WG 76, p. 187, MSA; Elias Pollock to Gotlieb Buster, 1808, Baltimore County Court, Land Records, CE66-149, WG 99, p. 307, MSA; *Baltimore American & Commercial Daily Advertiser*, October 13, 1806; Baltimore County Commissioners of the Tax, Assessment Record, C277-7, Baltimore City, Ward 6, 1813, p. 97, MSA; Account of Sales, Household Furniture, Dewitt and Strikes, April–June 1803, Baltimore City Archives, BRG41-1-2-1-11, MSA (hereafter BCA); "Sheriff's Sale," *Baltimore American & Commercial Daily Advertiser*, June 8, 1821.

[20] "Five Dollars Reward," *Telegraphe and Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore), January 16, 1804; "To the Public," *Telegraphe and Daily Advertiser*, January 17, 1804. No record of indentures to Pollock can be located because Baltimore County indenture records are indexed by servant, not master, for most of this period. See Baltimore County Court, Indentures, MSA C337, MSA. The 1820 Census of Manufacturers does not list Pollock. National Archives microfilm M279, reel 16. This omission may indicate that the business had closed by that time or just left out Pollock for another reason.

[21] Royster, *Revolutionary People at War*; Edward C. Papenfuse and Gregory A. Stiverson, "General Smallwood's Recruits: The Peacetime Career of the Revolutionary War Private," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 30 (January, 1973): 117–32; Charles Patrick Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (New York, 1996), 30–34, 37–43.

[22] Charles Lee to George Washington, May 10, 1776, National Archives, Founders Online, accessed December 21, 2021, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-04-02-0207; Alexander Scammel, "Return of the Negroes in the Army," August 24, 1778, George Washington Papers, Series 4, General Correspondence, Library of Congress, accessed May 5, 2022, https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw451463; Charles H. Lesser, ed., *The Sinews of Independence: Monthly Strength Reports of the Continental Army* (Chicago, 1976), 80–81.

[23] Donald F. Johnson, *Occupied America: British Military Rule and the Experience of Revolution* (Philadelphia, 2020), 26. For other examples of loyalist Jews, see Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York, 2011), 255–56, and Johnson, *Occupied America*, 150. On antisemitism in the Revolutionary and early National eras, see for example, Heather S. Nathans, "A Much Maligned People: Jews On and Off the Stage in the Early American Republic," *Early American Studies* 2 (2004): 310–42; William Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America, 1654–1800* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2005); William Pencak, "Jews and Anti-Semitism in Early Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126 (2002): 365–408, especially 376–77, 388 on the intersection of antisemitism and support for American independence.

[24] Marcus, "Jew and the American Revolution,"103, 108; Marcus, *United States Jewry*.

[25] Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier, and Citizen* (Philadelphia, 1895), 44–52; Marcus, "Jew and the American Revolution,"104–108.

[26] Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 24, 54–65, 199–205, 238. On Jews in Hessian units, see Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Impact of the American Revolution on American Jews," *Modern*

Judaism 1 (1981), 150; Marcus, "Jew and the American Revolution," 108–109; James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993); Jacob I. Cohen, "An enumeration of the names of Israelites who served in one company at Charleston SC, 1779," JMM 1988.145.2, Jewish Museum of Maryland.

[27] Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 294–95; Ira Rosenwaike, "The Jews of Baltimore: 1810-1820," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 67 (1977): 103, 123; Malcolm H. Stern, *First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies, 1654–1988* (Baltimore, 1991). For listings of Maryland soldiers, see Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, vol. 18, MSA; and S. Eugene Clements and F. Edward Wright, *The Maryland Militia in the Revolutionary War* (Silver Spring, MD, 1987). None of the individuals identified by Rosenwaike as residents of Baltimore are listed in Maryland service records except for Pollock and Nathan Levy. A Jewish cemetery existed in Baltimore, but only three burials can be identified (including one of Elias Pollock's wives), all listed in *Memoirs of the Dead and Tomb's Rememberancer* (Baltimore, 1806), 100–101, 141.

[28] Bennett Muraskin, "Benjamin Nones: Profile of a Jewish Jeffersonian," *American Jewish History* 83 (1995): 381.

[29] Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 297–98; Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 25. For longer compendiums of Jewish Revolutionary War soldiers from the United States, see Marcus, "Jew and the American Revolution," 103–258, and Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 46–66.

[30] Wolf, *American Jew as Patriot*, 50; Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 295–98; Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 154; J. Thomas Scharf, *Chronicles of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1874), 414; Journal and Correspondence of the State Council, 1781 Archives of Maryland Online, vol. 47, p. 313, MSA. On the formation and activities of the dragoons, see Archives of Maryland Online, vol. 47, 183, 307, 312–14, MSA; *Maryland Journal* (Baltimore), June 12, 1781; June 19, 1781; June 26, 1781; July 17, 1781; July 24, 1781; August 7, 1781; and September 11, 1781.

[31] Solomon Solis-Cohen, "Note Concerning David Hays and Esther Etting his Wife," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 2 (1894): 66.

[32] Wolf, *American Jew as Patriot,* 48; Goldstein, *Traders and Transports,* 54; Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 301–302; John W. Jordan, *Colonial and Revolutionary Families of Pennsylvania*, vol. 3 (New York, 1911), 1243; Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 25. Jordan (cited by Goldstein and Weiner) gives a correct account of where Sterrett's company served in 1776–77. See Clements and Wright, *Maryland Militia*, 23–24; William Smallwood to John Sterrett, March 14, 1777, Maryland Society of the Sons of the American Revolution Smallwood Collection, SC6205-1-1, MSA; Edwin G. Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners During the Revolutionary War* (New York, 2008), 19–21, 24–25, 58. Many thanks to Micah Connor and David Armenti at the Maryland Center for History and Culture for their assistance searching for records of Sterrett's Company in their archives.

[33] Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 295–98. Marquis de Lafayette to Daniel Morgan, July 16, 1781, in Stanley J. Idzerda, ed., *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution: Selected Letters and Papers, 1776–1790*, vol. 4 (Ithaca, NY, 1981), 251.

[34] "Died," *Democratic Republican & Commercial Daily Advertiser*, August 9, 1802; *Memoirs of the Dead*, 141; Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 300; Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore:

1810–1820," 119; "Married," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), February 16, 1809; *Baltimore Federal Republican*, December 31, 1810. Rosenwaike also reports a son, Samuel Pollock, who was listed as a head of household in the 1820 census, but there are no sources for this assertion. Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore: 1810–1820," 102, 123.

[35] Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 32–33; *Memoirs of the Dead*, 100–101, 141.

[36] Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 18–21, 40–42; Isidor Blum, *The Jews of Baltimore: An Historical Summary of Their Progress and Status as Citizens of Baltimore from Early Days to the Year Nineteen Hundred and Ten* (Baltimore, 1910), 7–9; Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 32–33, 51; Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 313.

[37] Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 32–33; "Married," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, February 16, 1809.

[38] Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 298–99; Baltimore County Court, City Civil Docket, 1817, September Term, Originals, C301-2, no. 226, MSA; *Baltimore Federal Republican*, December 31, 1810. Jewish settlement patterns in the 1800s and 1810s come from the names listed in Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore to 1810," 294–95 and addresses published in John Mullin, *The Baltimore Directory for 1799* (Baltimore, 1799); Cornelius Williams, *The Baltimore Directory for 1803* (Baltimore, 1803); William Fry, *The Baltimore Directory for 1810* (Baltimore, 1810). No evidence has been discovered indicating that Elias Pollock was related to Wolf or any of the other Pollocks in town, including Samuel Pollock or Benjamin F. Pollock.

[39] Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore: 1810–1820," 101; Marcus, *United States Jewry*, 85; Marcus, "Jew and the American Revolution," 144. Pollock signed five land records in Hebrew: Deed, Isaac Henry to Elias Pollock, 1803, WG 76, p. 187; Mortgage, Elias Pollock to Isaac Henry, 1803, WG 76, p. 189; Mortgage, Elias Pollock to Philip German, 1807, WG 93, p. 54, Baltimore County Court, Land Records, CE66-143, MSA; Deed, Elias Pollock to Gotlieb Huster, 1808, WG 99, p. 307; Release, Elias Pollock to Gotlieb Huster, 1809, WG 104, p. 304, Baltimore County Court, Land Records, CE66-154, MSA.

[40] "Elias" is misspelled in WG 104, p. 304, Baltimore County Court, Land Records, CE66-154, MSA. Many thanks to retired Archivist of Maryland Edward C. Papenfuse for his insights into the signatures and how the clerk's office handled its business.

[41] Original will of Henry Lazarus, 1779, Frederick County Register of Wills, Wills, Original, C900-8, box 8, folder 4, MSA; Will of Henry Lazarus, 1779, Frederick County Register of Wills, Wills, C898-2, vol. GM 1, p. 112–13, MSA; Goldstein, *Traders and Transports*, 42n12. Frederick County in Western Maryland had a large ethnic German population (including some Jews), and wills recorded entirely in German exist from this time period.

[42] Baltimore City Commissioners, Administrative Files, Application to alter grade of part of Front Street, 1803, BRG3-1-5-20-2, HRS no. 111, BCA.

[43] Baltimore City Mayor's Office, Mayor's Correspondence, Petition from sundry inhabitants of Baltimore for amendments to the city charter, 1803, BRG9-2-2-6-2, HRS no. 196, BCA; Charles G. Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763–1812* (Chicago, 1984), 201–202. Only the title of the petition Pollock signed is known, but the text is likely the same as the petitions described by Steffen.

[44] *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Delegates of Maryland*, 1797, 69, 71–72.

[45] *Votes and Proceedings*, 1802, 32, 46, 63, 87; *Votes and Proceedings*, 1803, 27.

[46] Carl N. Everstine, *The General Assembly of Maryland, 1776–1850* (Charlotttesville, 1982), 351–59.

[47] "Married," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, August 21, 1806; Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 103, 166, 171; Pollock pension; Alan D. Corré and Malcolm H. Stern, "The Record Book of the Reverend Jacob Raphael Cohen," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 59 (1969), 72n146.

[48] William Fry, *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the Year 1812* (Baltimore, 1812); James Lakin, *The Baltimore Directory and Register for 1814–15* (Baltimore, 1814); Edward Matchett, *The Baltimore Directory and Register for the Year 1816* (Baltimore, 1816). Isaac and Amanda lived at 59 Front Street, and Elias lived at 72 Front Street, but houses on Front Street (and likely much of Baltimore City) were only vaguely sequential, so it is unclear exactly where Elias's daughter and son-in-law lived. Baltimore County Commissioners of the Tax, Assessment Record, Baltimore City, Ward 6, 1813, C277-7, p. 99, MSA.

[49] Quote from Baltimore County Court, Civil Docket, 1816, September Term, Originals, C324-49, no. 957-958, MSA.

[50] All cases were filed in Baltimore County Court. For Levi Myers v. Elias Pollock, see City Civil Docket, 1817, September Term, Originals, C301-2, no. 875, MSA; 1818, Imparlances, C301-4, p. 308, MSA; 1819, Imparlances, MSA C301-4, p. 99, MSA; 1820, March Term, Judicials, C301-5, no. 162, MSA; and Baltimore City Superior Court, City Judicials, 1820, March Term, T574-2, no. 162, MSA.

Three cases stood against Pollock and Cook. The first was Philip Reigart, use of Charles Diffenduffer v. Elias Pollock, garnishee of Isaac Cook, originally filed in 1817. See City Civil Docket, 1817, March Term, Originals 317-318 and September Term, Originals, C301-2, no. 378–79, MSA; 1818, Imparlances, C301-3, no. 194, MSA; 1819, Imparlances, C301-4, no. 150, MSA; 1820, Imparalnces, C301-5, no. 150, MSA; 1821, County Civil Docket, City Judicials, C311-4, no. 16; Judicial Record, WG 7, p. 117–18. This is the case for which Pollock's house was seized and sold at auction to resolve the dispute.

The second case was Gershom Lambert, William Jones, and Aaron Lambert v. Elias Pollock, garnishee of Isaac Cook, originally filed in 1816; see Civil Docket, 1816, September Term, Originals, no. 957-958 [C324-49], MSA; City Civil Docket, 1818, Imparlances, p. 87 [C301-3], MSA; 1819, Imparlances, p. 38 [C301-4], MSA. No resolution for this case is recorded.

The third case was John G. Worthington v. Elias Pollock, garnishee of Isaac Cook, originally filed in 1817. See City Civil Docket, 1817, March Term, Originals, No. 330–33 and September Term, Originals, C301-2, no. 300–301, MSA; 1818, Imparlances, C301-3, p. 271, MSA; 1819, Imparlances, C301-4, p.88, MSA; 1820, Imparlances, C301-5, p. 38, MSA. No resolution for this case is recorded.

[51] "Sheriff's Sale," *Baltimore American and Commercial Daily Advertiser,* June 8, 1821; Baltimore City Commissioners of Insolvent Debtors, Insolvency Docket, 1821, C339-2, no. 217, MSA; Rosenwaike, "Jews of Baltimore: 1810–1820," 119; Pollock pension; Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 26–29.

[52] John Resch, *Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic* (Amherst, 1999), 118, 146–48; Pollock pension.

[53] Pollock pension, emphasis in original.

[54] Pollock pension; Account of Sales, Household Furniture, 1803.

[55] Edwin Wolf II and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia, 1975), 87, 417n69; Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 103, 166; Jacob Levy, Levy Family Genealogy, Levy Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as HSP); Power of Attorney, Samuel D. Hart to Elias Pollock, June 2, 1810, Levy Papers, HSP.

[56] Pollock pension; Corré and Stern, "Cohen Record Book," 57, 59, 72n146.

[57] Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 166, 171; Levy Family Genealogy, Levy Papers, HSP.

"Did You Ever Hear of Judah Benjamin?" Fictional Representations of the Jewish Confederate

by

Michael Hoberman*

Why have so many people written about Judah Benjamin's smile? Eli Evans, Benjamin's preeminent biographer, paints a vivid picture of it in *The Jewish Confederate*. "His ample cheeks," Evans writes, "almost cherubic in their plumpness, seemed to tug the corners of his mouth upward into a permanent half-smile, giving him the aura of a man at peace with himself and content in his life's work."[1] Every writer who has ever attempted to tell Benjamin's story not only mentions the smile but, like Evans, assigns great meaning to it. Naturally novelists go to town. Even the ones whose fictional retellings purport to stick close to the historical evidence feature the smile prominently in their characterizations. In Dara Horn's words it remains a "perpetual mysterious smile" that newspaper articles made famous.[2] In his recent biography of Benjamin for the Yale Jewish Lives series, James Traub quotes Varina Davis on the subject of Benjamin's "courtesy in argument," which, as the Confederate first lady put it, didn't preclude him from "smilingly" vanquishing his opponents in debates.[3] Harry Turtledove, a best-selling writer of speculative "alternative history," goes one further. His book *Guns of the South* tells the story of what would have happened if time-traveling Afrikaners had visited the Confederacy in its hour of need and gifted its leaders with enough AK-47s to win the Civil War. That book indicates that Benjamin's smile "claimed that he knew more about matters of state than any other three people living."[4]

* The author may be contacted at mhoberman@fitchburgstate.edu.

Like the man, the smile is both a tell-all and a consistent lacuna, a gesture that can and does signify whatever we want or need it to signify and then some. That is a great deal of symbolic pressure for so many writers to be placing upon a single person's facial expression—after all, does not *every* human being have a distinct smile? Evidently, Benjamin's case is a special one. He is the embodiment—or, more specifically, the envisagement—of so many Jewish American dialectics: confidence and anxiety, principle and weakness, certitude and doubt. As Eli Evans reminds us, Benjamin served as "the prototype of the contradictions in the Jew, the Southerner and stranger in the Confederate story." He was "the Jew at the eye of the storm that was the Civil War."[5] Who would fail to find a way to smile under all that pressure and expectation? Benjamin's "mysterious" facial expression is an invitation of sorts, a vacancy that doubles as a powerful signifier of whatever contemporaries and authors want it to mean. Is he pleased with himself? Eager to please others? Is he proud of who he is and who people think he is? Is he ashamed? Does he approve of the political cause for which he stands, or does he harbor misgivings about it? Is he sure that he will succeed, or is he afraid he will fail? Fiction writers who have portrayed Judah Benjamin have conferred an outsized, symbolically burdened significance upon him.

Exploring fictional characterizations of Judah Benjamin, especially as twentieth- and early twenty-first-century novelists formulated them, allows us to track changing attitudes towards the legacy of Jewish slaveholders in the antebellum South. Representations of this one man have varied greatly through the decades, but they have retained one stable quality. Whether they approve or disapprove of, or are simply intrigued by his example, the fiction writers who have featured him in their novels assign meaning to his acts *because* he was a Jew who happened as well to be a southerner of signal importance.

Naturally, fictional views of Benjamin have shifted in accordance with shifting mores toward race in America. In the years leading up to the Civil War centennial, a pervasive reconciliatory spirit (among whites, at any rate) allowed and even encouraged southerners to cling to the Lost Cause mentality. Fiction writers could claim Benjamin as a well-intentioned person who believed in the justness of the Confederacy's fight and was therefore ennobled through his service to that belief. Post–1960s versions of Benjamin have been more troubled by his wholehearted

Adolph Rinck, Judah P. Benjamin, *1853.*
(Courtesy of The Louisiana Supreme Court Portrait Collection.)

participation not only in the waging of a war to retain slavery as an institution but by his own slaveholding. What has not changed, however, is the *reason* that fiction writers care about him in the first place. Despite the fact that he never embraced his Jewishness in any certifiable way, novelists care about him because he was understood by all around him to be a Jew. In accordance with my interest in how people remember and represent the phenomenon of Jewish slaveholding, this essay classifies depictions of Benjamin through the years in order to think more deeply about how American Jews have engaged the subject of race.

For a man who, as the historians tell us, went so far out of his way to eliminate as many written traces as possible of his career, Benjamin has garnered oceans of ink at the hands of imaginative writers. Yet remember what the man wanted to happen or at least said he wanted to happen. In Pierce Butler's 1906 biography of Benjamin, we read of an interview that Francis Lawley, an aspiring British journalist and biographer, conducted with the former Confederate statesman in 1883, in which Benjamin asserted: "Even if I had health, and desired ever so much to help you in your work, I have no materials available for the purpose. I have never kept a diary, or retained a copy of a letter written by me. No letters addressed to me by others will be found among my papers when I die."[6] As Lawley explained—and this really tells us a great deal of what we need to know—Benjamin was worried lest "the passions and prejudices of writers" would yield a version of himself that would be out of keeping with the true story, or at least the story he would have wanted to have been told. I cannot help at this juncture but be reminded of a more recent subject of Jewish American biographical controversy, namely Philip Roth (more on him later). Where Roth sought, as we now know, to influence and guide the story of his triumphs without allowing insight into their sordid accompaniments, we see that Benjamin—a much different man—rather than seeking to shepherd the written record of his legacy, took steps toward eliminating it altogether by destroying his private papers.

The results, like the men, share little in common except for one thing: they remind us that living people remember dead people the way they want and need to remember them. Neither an absence of evidence nor a superabundance of it offers any impediment to the fashioning of stories that are not only compelling, but that fulfill our determination to derive meaning from the past in the present and unravel the mysteries that attend

the acquisition of power by unlikely candidates. Cultural fixations exert a shaping influence over fictional characterizations that can, at times, equal the effects of what the characters in question said or did in their lifetimes. Fictional portrayals of noteworthy public figures afford insight into the contradictory meanings and expectations that a citizenry attaches to its most colorful, or at least most controversial, characters.

As we consider Benjamin's posthumous fictional legacy, we note the parallels between it and that of Benjamin Disraeli, the converted Jew who served as Great Britain's prime minister through the 1870s. As biographer Adam Kirsch points out, Disraeli's period as the most powerful figure in Britain coincided with the publication in 1876 of two important novels—George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and Anthony Trollope's *The Prime Minister*—both of which featured prominent treatment of Jews and Judaism. These novels offered diametrically opposing answers to the question that had motivated their authors: "Can a Jew be an Englishman?" Neither of these novels were *about* Disraeli, but both "testified," as Kirsch writes, "to the imaginative climate" that existed around him owing to the fact of his Jewish origins.[7] Fictional depictions of Jewish characters provided an outlet for a wider societal investigation of the parameters and limits of English identity in the Victorian era.

Within the North American context, fictional representations of Benjamin, like fictional representations of other "early American Jews" (I am using quotation marks because people's ideas of what *early* means as it relates to Jewish history in North America seem to differ), bear the strain of overuse. With so few Jews and even fewer Jews who left written records of their innermost thoughts and experiences, we rely heavily on the handful of stories that can be assembled out of the archive. Sunday school children who want to know what it meant to be a Jew in the era of the American Revolution are handed books about the noble Haym Solomon. Rebecca Gratz's story provides our graceful guide to the lives of Jewish women in the early republic. When the stories we can tell on the basis of archival sources are too fragmentary or not compelling enough for popular retelling, we invent: Gene Wilder, for example, as Avram Belinski in *The Frisco Kid*. How else would we know how Jews experienced the Gold Rush? That is how the game is played. Readers who are interested in how Jews experienced the Civil War—surely one of the most written-about and fictionalized episodes in American history—encounter

multiple depictions of Judah Benjamin, even though thousands of other Jews served in the Union and Confederate armies and 150,000 Jews who were not named Judah Benjamin called America home in 1860. Over a dozen novels published since the 1940s have featured Benjamin as a character of interest, if not as a protagonist. The earliest novel I have identified, Oscar Leonard's *Americans All: Grandfather Tells Benny How Jews Helped in the Discovery and Building of America,* was published in 1941. Dara Horn's *All Other Nights*, in which the Confederate statesman does not figure as a protagonist but plays an absolutely pivotal role, was published in 2009.

The moral quandaries that the racial question imposes on us compound the complexities of Benjamin's fictional legacy. As a slave owner and ardent Confederate, the man who came to be known as "The Brains of the Confederacy" throws a giant wrench into the already difficult process of thinking through Jewish racial identity in the United States. During the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, as David Weinfeld notes, southern Jews in particular tended to celebrate Benjamin's legacy. Their "celebration of the Lost Cause symbolized" their "loyalty to the white South" and their willingness to embrace a form of commemoration that was tantamount to "a civil religion."[8]

In contrast, during the contemporary era, many Jewish Americans on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line have formed the habit of assuming that their Jewishness precludes their participation in and furtherance of white supremacy. The vaunted alliance that Jews and Blacks formed in the civil rights era was built around just such an assumption. In words that come close to summarizing the experience of an entire generation of middle-class American Jews, historian Marc Dollinger, the author of *Black Power/Jewish Politics*, recalls his days as a child attending Sunday school in suburban southern California in the 1970s. "We learned," Dollinger writes, "how so many Jews risked their lives to protest segregation and, how, in the shadow of the Holocaust, each of us needed to do our part to ensure that no one faced persecution again."[9] Perhaps because so many of us think of ourselves as the victims of historical oppression, we adopt what Amy Cohen, in a recent *Tablet* article, refers to as "a typical Yankee perspective" whose heritage consists of "abolitionism, the Underground Railroad, [and] the Harlem Renaissance" to the exclusion of "slavery, lynching, Jim Crow, and voter suppression." In Cohen's case, the realization that she had a Confederate great-great grandfather acted as a point of

curiosity and not much else—it was what she "could use to trip people up in games of Two Truths and a Lie."[10]

Benjamin gives the lie to the two truths. He is the Jew who should be a liberator who happens instead to be an oppressor. Or, as a more tempered variation on that theme, perhaps, he is the Jew who is trying to be a mite less oppressive than everyone else around him. He is the Jew who should be looking out for the welfare of his fellow Jews but, instead, is scheming to achieve personal success. Or, if we prefer to cast him in a more positive variation on that second theme, perhaps he is the Jew whose pursuit of personal success is meant to put his fellow Jews in a better light. He is the Jew who ought to be an independent thinker but, instead, acts the part of a blindly loyal acolyte who will go to any extreme to prove his patriotism, albeit to a nation that was formed by a treasonous act. Of course, he might actually be the Jew whose loyalty to that cause is so great and selfless that he will do whatever he can to save it from destroying itself. Whoever he is, he is never the person who, as Dara Horn writes, he "had been born to be."[11] Benjamin defied expectations at every turn. In a part of the world where Jews typically attained prominence through mercantile activity, he became a planter and a statesman. He left no evidence that he cared what his fellow Jews felt about his actions and accomplishments.

The smile keeps us guessing, and the stories that fiction writers have been inspired to tell about the man behind the gesture provide insightful lessons about who Jews-who-are-not-who-they-are-born-to-be are supposed to be. Oddly enough, these fictional renderings show that even Jews who are not born to be whoever it is that Jews are not supposed to be end up being those identical things. That is another way of saying that these Jews, or at least this particular Jew, no matter what he did or what we think he did, could not avoid being thought of as a Jew.

In surveying the range of fictional treatments of Judah P. Benjamin, I have identified three dominant motifs, each of which takes shape in keeping with the thematic pairings I have just delineated, and each of which derives its salience from one stable, or seemingly stable factor: the subject's Jewishness and all of its implied meanings within the framing context of American history.

The Jewish moralist or antimoralist offers the most dominant order of motifs. This motif allows fiction writers to explore the greatest dilemma,

or mystery, of all: how could a man who was so obviously the target of cultural and religious prejudice declare and enact his loyalty to a cause whose primary purpose was the enforced subjugation of millions of fellow human beings? Or, as Traub puts it, how could Benjamin have squandered the "charm, brilliance, [and] tact" with which he had been gifted in "the defense of slavery"?[12] The second motif I have coined is that of the Jewish maverick, or high achiever. Fiction writers who explore this motif want to know whether this reputedly brilliant jurist, legislator, and statesman was in it for himself—was his motivation purely mercenary in nature?—or whether he was, in fact, bent on gaining personal success and recognition because he wanted to prove to his detractors that Jews could be high achievers. The loyal Jew motif comprises a third approach. In a post–Napoleonic world, where Jews sought recognition as full-fledged citizens of nation-states, what would they have to do and to what lengths might they have to travel in order to prove their civic devotion? Fictional authors have interpreted Benjamin's loyalty, first to the state he represented in the Senate and eventually to the Confederacy, in a variety of ways. Was his loyalty a sign of personal virtue or, at the opposite extreme, indicative of a personal deficiency? Either way, the question of loyalty returns us to the North Star that guides all Benjamin depictions: to most of the people around him, possibly to himself, but most certainly to those of us who experience him as a historical personage, he was born to be a Jew in America whose truest loyalties remain a subject of speculation.

The (A)moralist: Slave-Holding Abolitionist or Would-Be "First Jewish President of a Major Country"?

No fictional portrayal of Judah Benjamin is as extreme in its eagerness to declare the Confederate statesman entirely exempt from moral condemnation as that of Oscar Leonard in his 1941 book, *Americans All: Grandfather Tells Benny How Jews Helped in the Discovery and Building of America*. Leonard's depiction, which was brought to my attention through Adam Mendelsohn's research on Jewish American renderings of the Civil War, offers a story whose fabrication brings to mind the story of Moses killing the slave-beater in Exodus. It is difficult to resist the temptation to quote it in full, as Mendelsohn did in a footnote accompanying his article. The story not only represents Benjamin as an unusually "humane" slaveholder but as someone whose insistence upon decent treatment of chattel

Oscar Leonard,
Americans All, 1941.
(*AbeBooks.com.)*

originates in his strong sense of Jewish identity. While riding a wagon through his plantation, the fictionalized Benjamin witnesses his hired overseer administering lashes to one of his slaves. Benjamin speaks the sort of judgment we might expect to issue from the mouth of a biblical prophet:

> Suddenly he stopped talking and jumped [from] the carriage. He ran toward the sound of a cruel, angry voice and the swift lashing of a whip. The fury in Benjamin's voice was controlled as he spoke in low, steady tones. "Who gave you the right to beat a helpless slave?" Before him stood his overseer, a whip now limply at his side, and a frightened and trembling Negro. The man stammered hesitantly. "But he sassed me." "You know my wishes in these matters. Complaints are to be brought before me. I will not tolerate whippings on my plantation. Is that clear?" The overseer muttered: "I worked on plantations before, for gentlemen . . . " Benjamin's face was severe as he cut in. "I know. You never worked for a Jew before."[13]

To quote Mendelsohn, pure inventions like Leonard's render "historical accuracy" itself a "lost cause."[14] I will resist the temptation to list all of the ways in which this depiction of Benjamin strays from the demonstrable, substantiated truth of who he was and what we know about him. Instead, and in order to follow a more thematically salient method of dismissing the passage's total and fascinating fabrications, I point to the three central components of its efforts to establish Benjamin's bona fides as a moral being. First, Leonard invests Benjamin with *physical*, as well as intellectual authority by describing Benjamin's agility in hopping out of his carriage (was it moving as he did so?), the steadiness of his voice, and the "severity" of his face. (This last point also offers an interesting counterpoint to the famous smile.) Second, the novelist establishes the confidence the plantation owner invests in his power as he asserts dominance over the overseer—he is the opposite of a cowering Jew. Finally, and most significantly, the quotation establishes a basis for all of these aspects of Benjamin's actions in the notion that it is his strong sense of Jewish identity that impels him to forbid cruelty toward enslaved people. Again, the lack of hard evidence for any of these aspects of Leonard's depiction is beside the point. What matters is that the author is bent on establishing an idea of what Jewish racial justice meant, or ought to have meant, in antebellum America.

Howard Denson follows in Leonard's footsteps in believing in the "progressive" nature of Benjamin's views on race. His recent self-published and quite fanciful murder mystery series goes so far as to join Benjamin to a Black partner and amanuensis. Denson offers an egalitarian-minded and *Huckleberry Finn*–like characterization of the U.S. senator and Confederate statesman-to-be. In *The Case of the Anniversary Libation*, Benjamin's efforts as an innovative amateur detective inspire him to free the enslaved, Louisiana-born Horatio T. Burdette and arrange for his education in the North.[15] Judah Benjamin, the racial moralist, also makes a significant appearance in *Gettysburg*, the 2003 what-if novel by the arch-conservative former legislator, historian, and sometime novelist Newt Gingrich (along with coauthor William Forstchen). In Gingrich and Fortschen's depiction, Benjamin plays the part of a go-between who arranges for Robert E. Lee to have dinner with an abolitionist Baltimore rabbi—presumably based on David Einhorn—who convinces the Confederate general that a South that wishes to be victorious must seize the moral

high ground from Lincoln and issue its own Emancipation Proclamation. Here again, we see that a fictionalized Benjamin, *because* he is a Jew, does his part to achieve a just result, racially speaking.[16]

A somewhat less strident version of Benjamin as a racial justice moralist features prominently in *Beloved,* a 1956 novel about the Jewish statesman by Viña Delmar (née Alvina Louise Croter). Delmar depicts him as a sympatico character, a man most motivated in life by love for his disloyal wife and devotion to the Confederacy. Delmar highlights Benjamin's 1842 defense, before the Louisiana Supreme Court, of an insurance company that transported enslaved people along the southeastern coast. In order to win the case and spare his clients the cost of paying for a party of slaves who had rebelled and jumped ship in the British colony of Nassau where slavery had already been outlawed, Benjamin highlighted the humanity of the Black people who could not help but liberate themselves when they got the chance to do so. To win the day he argued that the carriers whose interests he represented could not be held responsible for the actions of their freedom-seeking human cargo.

Viña Delmar,
Beloved, *1965.*
(Courtesy of Michael Hoberman.)

While Delmar fails to approach Leonard's level of fabrication in her representation of this episode in Benjamin's legal career, her selection of it from among the many cases that her protagonist argued in the course of his pre–Civil War legal career suggests her interest in establishing a claim for Benjamin's status as a moral being who wished to redress the barbarities of slavery. His most recent biographer also focuses attention on Benjamin's alleged "ambivalence" on the racial question. Traub's study actually begins with this same 1842 episode and, elsewhere, wonders whether Benjamin's encounters with resourceful and intelligent free Blacks in New Orleans may have troubled his outwardly facing devotion to upholding racial hierarchies.[17]

Elsewhere in *Beloved*, Viña Delmar's Benjamin airs his views on the subject of emancipation when a hostile and Jew-baiting member of the Davis cabinet grills him. LeRoy Walker, who served as the first Confederate secretary of war, asks him to declare his sentiments on slavery, and Benjamin speaks in favor of the institution's preservation not so much on the grounds of Black inferiority but of expediency and southern pride. He simply dislikes the idea of caving in to arrogant Yankee demands. As he puts it to Walker, "If the South had said, 'Let us free them all,' I would have replied, 'Splendid, let us do it.'"[18] Delmar would have her readers believe that Benjamin was, at worst, indifferent to the prospect of freeing slaves and, at best, in favor of it on the grounds that, as he puts it, it is "unfair to withhold learning from them and then judge them as lesser people because they have no learning." Benjamin's 1865 proposal to free Blacks willing to fight for the Confederacy must certainly have been a factor in Delmar's inclusion of the conflict between her hero and Walker as a central episode in her novel. That she elevates this conflict to such a high level of prominence is indicative of her eagerness to draw a moral distinction between the Jewish Confederate and his gentile counterparts.

Depictions like those of Leonard, Denson, and Delmar linked Benjamin's purported decency on the racial question to his Jewishness. But fiction writers' fixation with the question of his moral character and the influence that his identity and status as a Jew might have had over his stance on the slavery issue does not end there. After all, if Benjamin failed to live up to twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers' expectations that, as a Jew, he had a moral obligation to stand up for other oppressed peoples, he would be no less interesting as a fictional character. While I

have not yet found a fictional rendering that portrays him as a ruthless oppressor of Blacks, a version of Benjamin who is notably untroubled by his role in the continued enforcement of slavery and racial hierarchy can be found in Robert Skimin's "alternative history" novel *Gray Victory* (1988). In this plot-driven thriller, Benjamin comes across as the same inscrutable figure that he tends to be in the historical biographies, but one matter is made plain: his Jewish identity not only does not predispose him to feel or act upon any sympathy for Black people, but rather may influence him to act in opposition to such an expectation. Skimin's "what-if" takes shape around a Confederate victory in the war (which he concludes during fall 1863) and an imagined postwar trial of J. E. B. Stuart, Lee's chief of cavalry, who was actually killed in combat. Stuart is put on trial for the failure of the southern army, notwithstanding its ultimate triumph in the war, to prevail at Gettysburg. A major subplot within this action- and famous personality-filled novel is the attempt on the part of a group of desperate abolitionists, including both Blacks and whites, and John Brown's son Salmon, to foment a rebellion against the rebellion and overthrow the Confederate government.

Skimin's novel portrays Benjamin as a predatory, amoral figure whose apparent indifference to Black suffering is compounded not only by his transparent ambition, but also by his disturbing eagerness to exploit women. As the novel's abolitionist plot thickens, Verita, a light-skinned Black woman posing as the agent of a Confederacy-friendly French government, is assigned the task of seducing Benjamin in order to assess his knowledge of the coming Black rebellion. She is particularly bent on finding out whether he is aware that several prominent Jews have been contributing to the clandestine attack on the Confederacy. The novel's hypersexualized Benjamin seems only to care about taking Verita to bed in the short term and achieving the ultimate political triumph in the long term. In his state of arousal, he tells Verita, before explaining how he plans to pursue his goal: "I want to be the first Jewish president of a major country." "Do you think you have a chance?" she asks him in the course of one of their several precoital tête-à-têtes. After all, as she puts it, "doesn't the South resent Jews almost as much as Negroes?"[19]

Skimin's libidinous Benjamin is as far a cry from Leonard's mercy-dispensing, lawgiving Benjamin as can be imagined. In this prelude to one of the several sex scenes in which we learn just how evil and slimy of

Robert Skimin, Gray Victory, *1988. (Amazon.com.)*

a Jew he is, Benjamin cannot hold back on telling his lover (and eventual assassin) how he plans to gain that power. "His eyes bore into hers, radiating his natural confidence," Skimin writes, before directly employing his character as the mouthpiece for a history lesson. "I've been attorney general, secretary of War, and secretary of State in this government," Benjamin says, "and at times during the war, I was called the Brains of the Confederacy. Certainly, these are logical qualifications." Naturally, Verita wants to know more about the timing of Benjamin's planned rise to the presidency. "I must be patient," he tells her, before explaining that he expects Jefferson Davis to be reelected and then succeeded by Robert E. Lee. "Then it will be my turn."[20] It is difficult not to imagine the rising sound

of demonic and dastardly laughter accompanying this announcement on Benjamin's part.

What Skimin does not account for in this depiction is any sense of why this character who never declares or demonstrates his Jewishness would harbor any ambition to be the "first Jewish" anything. The closest Benjamin ever comes to making *any* pronouncement on Judaism is when he tells Verita that, notwithstanding his evident failure to take a moral stance on the slavery issue, he recognizes that "it's in the Jewish nature" to side with the oppressed. Apparently, and in keeping with a common antisemitic trope, it can also be in "the Jewish nature" to ignore such tendencies in pursuit of personal aggrandizement. Ultimately within the framework of the morality motif, Benjamin's Jewishness can only bear one of two possible aspects. It can, in the imagination of Leonard, Denson, or Delmar, be an extension of his Moses-like rectitude and sympathetic underdog character. In opposition, Skimin's Benjamin is no less of a vehicle for exploring the question of Jewish morality. In his wholehearted abandonment of any attachment to the moral compass that is supposed to be something he was "born" to cherish and honor, this "evil" Benjamin is still, fundamentally, a Jew, albeit of the "hypocritical" or "morally wayward" variety.

The Benjamin-as-moralist motif encompasses a range of possibilities, each of which hinges on some connection between Benjamin's Jewish origins and his attitude toward race. From Oscar Leonard's filiopietistic (and delusional) version of a physically courageous and justice-seeking Jewish humanitarian to Robert Skimin's patently antisemitic assumption that Benjamin's deranged indifference to the victimization of women and Blacks was a direct function of his Jewishness, one factor remains unchanged: his feelings about the oppression of Black people are dictated by his symbolically fraught positioning as a southern Jew. In historical terms, not much evolution occurs. Leonard's *Uncle Benny* bears the earmarks of a left-leaning, solidarity-based critique of Jim Crow injustice, even as it was also a product of the Holocaust era, a time when American Jews, by and large, felt extraordinary pressure to conform to mainstream Americanism. Leaving aside its racier aspects, Skimin's version of Benjamin, despite its 1988 vintage, could just as easily have emerged in the 1920s or 1930s, when ascendant antisemites had the upper hand and images of exploitative Jews in fiction were commonplace.

The Maverick: Agent of White Supremacy and a Weak Jew Besides

Whether or not Judah Benjamin deserves recognition as the most highly placed Jewish government official in American history is a matter of perspective and parameters. Does the Confederacy count as part of America? Does it matter if your face appears on paper currency if the country that issued that currency no longer exists? Does Henry Kissinger's three-and-a-half-year service as secretary of state under Nixon and Ford surpass Benjamin's four years of cabinet service under Jefferson Davis? Should we take Madeleine Albright, who may have only discovered her Jewish heritage late in life, into account? How long will Antony Blinken hang in there? Be these comparisons as they may, Benjamin's access to

Confederate currency featuring the likeness of Judah P. Benjamin, 1862. (Wikimedia Commons.)

power and ability to wield it taunts us with visions of individual Jewish achievement within the wider context of a gentile-dominated, secular state. It reminds us that whatever the state of Jewish collectivity might have been in the antebellum years, a Jew could and did attain high status on the merits of his intellect and ambition.

Philip Roth presents this use of Benjamin in his acclaimed 2004 novel *The Plot Against America.* In episode two of HBO's recent production of the novel, Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf (John Turturro) drawls out a brief overview of Benjamin's career. He was, as Bengelsdorf puts it, the "Jewish lawyer who served [Jefferson] Davis as attorney general, as secretary of

war, and as secretary of state."[21] Bengelsdorf, a Lindbergh apologist and the son of a German-born South Carolina Jewish peddler and veteran of the Confederate army, tries his best to convince the Levin family that Jewish boys like their eldest son Sandy will be accepted as real Americans if they first become real Confederates. While careful to point out that "the cause for which the South went to war was neither legal nor moral," Bengelsdorf does not tell Benjamin's story only because it represents a high-water mark of Jewish political achievement in America. Why Bengelsdorf chooses to share Benjamin's story with the Levins and not, say, Haym Solomon's has everything to do with *what Benjamin did* in order to prove his American bona fides and gain access to the corridors of governmental power. That his visage remains the only Jewish one ever to have made it onto paper currency (during his lifetime, no less) is by no means insignificant. Benjamin went to great lengths to arrive at that result.

Bengelsdorf gets one thing wrong about Benjamin, and Roth is the witting or unwitting source of the error—the HBO production takes the

Philip Roth,
The Plot Against America,
2004. (Amazon.com.)

John Turturro as Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf in HBO's production of The Plot Against America, *2020. (IMDB.)*

rabbi's words directly from the pages of the novel. He refers to Benjamin as "one of South Carolina's two senators" when, in fact, despite his having spent his childhood in Charleston, he represented Louisiana in the Senate.[22] Factual errors in novels—and especially in works of alternate historical fiction like *The Plot Against America*—need not give us enormous pause. As such novels go, *The Plot* is rather staid and even "realistic" in its scope. After all, instead of relying on time-traveling AK-47–wielding Afrikaners or seductive French-speaking female assassins to make its counterfactual point, it deploys the more plausible and familiar power of xenophobic populism in American politics as its central speculative device. Bengelsdorf's mistaken reference to Benjamin representing South Carolina rather than Louisiana gains importance because it is indicative of a larger pattern in fictional depictions of the Jewish Confederate statesman: the facts are of less consequence than the meanings that people attach to them. Why *should not* the quintessential Jewish Confederate have represented the state that was at once the most Confederate (the first to secede) and the most Jewish (Charleston hosted the nation's largest Jewish

population when Benjamin grew up there in the early 1820s)? Changeable facts are less important than stable and meaning-laden subtexts. The subtext that attaches to Roth's erring reference to Benjamin having represented South Carolina is that ambitious Jews who accrue political power in America can only do so at a cost. In the contemporary Jewish American imagination, a South Carolinian, Confederate Jew represents a character type extraordinaire—the Jew who is so hungry for personal power that he sells his Jewishness for a mess of potage and worships at the temple of white supremacy.

It is no coincidence that Benjamin's brief mention by Bengelsdorf occurs on the heels of one of the Roth novel's only overt invocations of the race issue. Sandy Levin has just returned to Newark from a summer spent living with a Christian family (the Mawhinneys) on a Kentucky tobacco farm as a participant in the Lindbergh administration's "Just Folks" de-Jewification program. Bengelsdorf's visit to the Levin household follows a dialogue sequence in which Philip plies his older brother with questions about what it was like to live with a family of southern gentiles. After Sandy describes to him how the Black farmhands who work for the Mawhinneys eat chitterlings, Philip wants to know whether Sandy ate them. The question evokes an alarmed and defensive response from this newly minted southern apologist: "Do I look like a Negro?"[23] The older brother understands and accepts the only terms upon which a Jew might hope to survive a fascist takeover in a society whose defining principle is a fixed racial hierarchy. Bengelsdorf, who evidently internalized this lesson early in life, is also eager to learn how Sandy's indoctrination has proceeded. The rabbi is thrilled to hear how thoroughly regionalized the boy has become in the course of a single summer—little Philip notices that both Bengelsdorf and Sandy Levin pronounce Kentucky's first three letters as "K-i-n." He then regales the family with the tale of Benjamin, the man who, according to the mythology, would certainly have perfected the art of being a southern Jew if only the Lost Cause had not been lost. Bengelsdorf has ventured a similar gamble in attaching his personal fortunes to Lindbergh's "America First" presidency, which views Hitler as a man of peace.

Strangely, Roth's representation of Benjamin as a sellout echoes the approach taken by "the queen of family-saga writers," Belva Plain (née Belva Offenberg), in her 1984 novel *Crescent City*, which Eli Evans

described in his *New York Times* review as a Jewish version of *Gone with the Wind*. Benjamin is fairly tangential to the action of Plain's novel. He exemplifies wrong-headedness, twisted ambition, and betrayal whenever the story's primary Jewish characters require a foil for their slightly less compromised behavior. One character, the reality-based Edwin Israel Kursheedt, who actually served in the Confederate army, judges Benjamin harshly on the basis of the statesman's failure to live up to expectations around his Jewish identity. "It's an old story," says the devoutly raised Kursheedt, scion of the minister of New York's pioneer congregation. "When Jews rise to great prominence there comes a temptation to take the easy social path and forget one's heritage."[24] He then singles out New Orleans's two most famous nineteenth-century Jewish Judahs—Touro and Benjamin—for censure. Elsewhere in Plain's novel, when a less sympathetic (and non-Jewish) character refers disparagingly to Benjamin, then the secretary of war, as the cause of the Confederate defeat at Roanoke

Belva Plain, Crescent City, *1984. (Goodreads.)*

Island in 1862, his would-be Jewish defender, Miriam Raphael, one of the novel's protagonists, echoes Kursheedt's earlier condemnation in her private thoughts: Benjamin was "a Jew, but not much of one."[25] Where Roth singles out the Confederate statesman for his reprehensible views on race, Plain—whose primary concern in *Crescent City* seems to have been to produce a southern romance with Jewish overtones—writes him off as a poor excuse for a Jew whose eagerness to rise through the ranks of American and southern society precluded any loyalty to the religion and culture of his birth.

Perhaps in the spirit of American Jews' midcentury rise into middle-class respectability, the two Benjamin-depicting novels that hew most closely to the "Jew as maverick" motif fix their attention on a similar question: can a Jew like Benjamin who achieves high status in American politics do so without relinquishing his legitimacy as a member of the Jewish community? Especially in the aftermath of World War II and the civil rights era, authors like Philip Roth and Belva Plain would have been all the more likely to wonder. Roth, in particular, whose ties to the Jewish community were, at every stage in his career, complicated by his own status as a maverick, pursued this question primarily through his depiction of Lionel Bengelsdorf, the rabbi who brings Benjamin's career to the attention of the fictional Roth family of Holocaust-era Newark. The Bengelsdorf/Benjamin depictions in *The Plot Against America*, a self-styled by-product of the George W. Bush era, are particularly salient since Roth never made a secret of his opposition to Republican regimes: his 1971 novel, *Our Gang*, is a sendup of the Nixon administration, which, of course, prominently featured Henry Kissinger. While Roth resisted the assumption that he bore any responsibility to the Jewish community, he devoted his career to exploring the lives and compromises of Jewish men in America.

Loyal Citizen: The Devoted Lover or the Spurned Victim?

Benjamin's story also offers an opportunity for novelists to explore the meaning of Jewish loyalty in America. Was the zealousness with which Benjamin served his Louisiana constituents a testament to the high regard he felt for their interests and well-being? In his fulfillment of three cabinet posts in the Jefferson Davis administration—each of which resulted in large measures of anti-Jewish ire being directed not only at him

but at the man who entrusted him with so much power—was he trying his best to demonstrate the depth of his loyalty to the rebel cause? Does he earn admiration for such "selfless" service in the name of a political and military effort, or, on the contrary, ought we view him as an abased creature whose eagerness to please people who, at bottom, felt a boundless contempt for him?

The figure of the lover, whether his advances are reciprocated or spurned by the object of desire, epitomizes the loyalist. Featuring Benjamin in the role of the spurned lover, Viña Delmar and Dara Horn assign an almost selfless quality to the Confederate statesman's loyalty. In Delmar's case, the role of lover actually supersedes that of political figure. The novelist's choice of title is indicative. While *Beloved* invests considerable energy in narrating the most significant events in Benjamin's legal and political career, its center of gravity throughout remains the lifelong "love story" that, at least as Delmar describes it, tantalized and tormented him through the several decades of his long-distance marriage to Louisiana-born Natalie St. Martin. Not one for depicting or even hinting in the direction of salaciousness, Delmar avoids painting Benjamin's spouse as the "nymphomaniac" that others have called her. Instead, she gives us a picture of the object of Benjamin's attraction and loyalty to a flighty, easily distracted, and breathtakingly superficial female who is unwilling to remain in one place as her husband goes about proving his worthiness as a public figure. For his part, Delmar's Benjamin resists all temptations to pursue relationships with other women, including the ever-available "quadroons" with whom his friend John Slidell continually tempts him, in Natalie's absence. Delmar evinces even less interest in portraying her subject as the homosexual that some historians claim Benjamin to have been.[26]

When Delmar depicts her hero visiting the pro-Confederate minister Maximilian Michelbacher of Richmond's Beth Ahabah congregation during spring 1863, she represents a conversation between the two men that reifies Benjamin's loyalty to his fellow Jews and to his non-Jewish spouse as the key feature of his personality. While the secretary of state owns that in having married outside of his faith others will *view* him as having betrayed Judaism, he refuses to relinquish his deepest attachments to it. "I have never ceased to think of [my religion] with love and reverence," he tells the religious leader who wonders how such a thing can be true for a

man who, in marrying a Catholic, had essentially excommunicated himself. "How long has your marriage endured," the minister asks. Benjamin's response allows that the thirty years of wedlock with Natalie have not produced "undiluted bliss," but it doubles down on the question of his steadfastness and devotion.[27] He has, he tells Michelbacher, always loved Natalie, always remained faithful to her, and never regretted marrying her. His love for those who would reject him—his people, his matrimonial partner, and his country—know no bounds. Clearly, Benjamin is not the "beloved" figure who inspired Delmar's book title, but the victim of the multiple objects of his unrequited affection. All the same, we should admire him for his willingness to love at all costs.

Dara Horn's Benjamin is hardly as gallant and heroic as Delmar's, but, as her attention to his "love affair" with America attests, she, too, views him as a study in extreme loyalty. Instead of dwelling on his sad marriage to Natalie, Horn fixes attention on Benjamin's childhood and youth as a point of origin for his eagerness to demonstrate loyalty. His devotion was "tortured and tormented":

> Like all the rest of the country's immigrant suitors, Judah Benjamin would do anything to win his country's love. He tried to attract her, to make up for his lack of conventional beauty with his brilliance, his wits, and his charms. He tried to impress her, becoming an attorney who had mastered the very laws that made her who she was.[28]

Regardless of whether or how we perceive him as a Jew, Horn's Benjamin is a profoundly human figure whose "ambition" is of a perfectly understandable and even admirable nature and whose indifference to injustice (and concomitant acquiescence to white supremacy) is entirely beside the point.

It all goes back to a single moment that Horn's imagination conjures as she depicts the secretary of state having a wistful conversation near the end of the war with Jacob Rappaport, the New York-born Jewish spy who has secured a place in the Confederate White House in order to keep tabs on an alleged Lincoln assassination plot. As Benjamin prepares to evacuate the Confederate White House in Richmond and make his escape to England, he tells Rappaport about a time when he and his beloved sister Penina were swimming off the abandoned docks in Charleston Harbor and she saved him from certain drowning by dragging him out of the water in the middle of a powerful thunderstorm. Judah's greatest fear was

Dara Horn,
All Other Nights, *2009.*
(Amazon.)

discovery by his parents, so in an attempt to shield her little brother from punishment, Penina announced to their father that Judah had rescued her from the roiling waters.[29] This, in turn, inspired Judah's father Philip to believe that his son possessed the maturity necessary to leave home and attend Yale at the tender age of fourteen. The possible implications from this story are myriad—that all Judah ever wanted was to be loved by his father, that his entire life was based on a fraudulent story, that he viewed himself right up until the end of his Confederate career, at any rate, as an inadequate and inauthentic being. From a young age, he had boxed himself into a corner and taught himself that the only way in which he might earn other people's love would be to maintain his composure, keep smiling, and forge ahead no matter the cost to his personal dignity or reputation. If there is a romantic element to be found in such a story and such a fate, it is of a singularly sad variety. We are meant to admire Delmar's Benjamin and pity Horn's Benjamin.

Love, whether of the doomed or the blessed variety, is a timeless interest in literary fiction, and, in this regard, neither Delmar's nor Horn's version of Benjamin appears to be any more the product of its particular era than it is of a novelistic consciousness that seeks to investigate the emotional states of the characters in whom it invests its deepest meanings. That being said, insofar as Delmar's Benjamin appears in other ways to exhibit a Lost Cause mentality that may result from its 1956 vintage, we ought not be surprised that the singularly unrequited nature of his love ennobles him. For her part, Dara Horn, who does not assign sentimental value to the Confederacy in her postmillennial Civil War novel, fails to deliver an admirable Benjamin but, instead, offers us an intriguing, if pitiable, version of him. In both instances, nonetheless, we encounter versions of the Jewish Confederate who engages our interest because of his acts of heedless devotion.

The Lost Cause as a Fictional Device

A lost cause demands doomed heroes like Judah Benjamin, and, if those heroes repeatedly prove to be based upon imaginative constructs, we ought not be surprised. Since the Confederacy was a fictional device unto itself, a political and military experiment in storytelling to fit a particular need, its production of a heroic pantheon had, by necessity, to rely upon the conjuring of fanciful figures. Since its demise, as so many of us have become especially aware in the last few years, its partisans shaped the very landscape of the South with their statues and memorial parks. The fictional legacy of the Confederacy has been an industry unto itself, from the earliest coinage of the phrase "Lost Cause" by Edward A. Pollard in 1866, to its popular culture apotheosis in *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone with the Wind,* down to the present-day Sons of Confederate Veterans and the adherents of the "Heritage, not hate" campaign.

Its Jewish component, whose presence vexes common formulas and motifs, makes Judah Benjamin's fictionalization as a Lost Cause icon noteworthy. Jewish Americans, like those who would commemorate the South's rebellion in the Civil War, want to tell inspiring stories and elevate worthy heroes. The "ghosts in gray" who populate the romances of the South demonstrate all sorts of heroic properties, from battle-hardened stoicism to dashing courage to romantic devotion to a doomed spirit of chivalry. Notwithstanding the tradition that, for decades, conferred a

mantle of dignified "decency" upon Robert E. Lee, among other Confederate heroes, no one expects them to be symbols of humanitarian justice.[30] No one assigns them the role of upholding a minority faith in a land in which Christianity reigns. No one imagines them to be proud representatives of a foreign-born tribe. Judah Benjamin's fate as a fictional character related him to both sets of standards. To make his story meaningful to both of its two constituencies simultaneously is a tall order that cannot help but put an unwieldy imaginative strain on its tellers, especially in the present day. A Judah Benjamin who meets our contemporary criteria for Jewish heroism would be an unconvincing Confederate. A Benjamin who deserved consideration as a Confederate hero would be a *shanda*.

NOTES

The genesis of this article was a talk I gave at the 2021 (online) conference of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. Portions of the essay were previously published as "The Counterlife of Judah P. Benjamin," *Tablet*, August 20, 2020, accessed February 2, 2022, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/judah-benjamin.

[1] Eli N. Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate* (New York, 1988), 97.

[2] Horn's rendering of Benjamin's smile actually borrows from the poet Stephen Vincent Benet's 1928 epic poem, *John Brown's Body*, in which the Confederate statesman appears as the "dapper Jew" wearing a "perpetual smile." Dara Horn, *All Other Nights* (New York, 2009), 301.

[3] Quoted in James Traub, *Judah Benjamin* (New Haven, 2021), 33.

[4] Harry Turtledove, *The Guns of the South: A Novel of the Civil War* (New York, 1992), 243.

[5] Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin*, 38.

[6] Pierce Butler, *Judah P. Benjamin* (Philadelphia, 1906), 8.

[7] Adam Kirsch, *Benjamin Disraeli* (New York, 2008), xv, ix.

[8] David Weinfeld, "Two Commemorations: Richmond Jews and the Lost Cause During the Civil Rights Era," *Southern Jewish History* 23 (2020): 80.

[9] Marc Dollinger, *Black Power/Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s* (Waltham, MA, 2018), x-xi.

[10] Amy Cohen, "Uncovering my Confederate Roots," *Tablet Magazine,* July 27, 2021, accessed December 1, 2021, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/community/articles/uncovering-confederate-roots.

[11] Horn, *All Other Nights*, 23.

[12] Traub, *Judah Benjamin*, 6.

[13] Oscar Leonard, *Americans All: Grandfather Tells Benny How Jews Helped in the Discovery and Building of America* (New York, 1945), 114-130.

[14] Adam Mendelsohn, "'A Struggle Which Ended So Beneficently': A Century of Jewish Historical Writing About the American Civil War," *American Jewish History* 92 (December 2004), 454.

[15] Howard Denson, *The Case of the Anniversary Libation, a Judah P. Benjamin–Horatio T. Burdette Mystery* (n.p., 2015), accessed December 1, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Case_of_the_Anniversary_Libation/vDP2jgEACAAJ?hl=en.

[16] Newt Gingrich and William Forstchen, *Gettysburg: A Novel of the Civil War* (New York, 2003).

[17] Traub, *Judah Benjamin*, 1–2.

[18] Viña Delmar, *Beloved* (New York, 1956), 206.

[19] Robert Skimin, *Gray Victory* (New York, 1988), 154.

[20] Ibid.

[21] David Simon and Ed Burns, "Part 4," *The Plot Against America* (HBO miniseries, 2020).

[22] Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (New York, 2004), 104. Later editions of the novel corrected the error, although the makers of the HBO series took the information from the original, flawed version.

[23] Ibid., 99.

[24] Belva Plain, *Crescent City* (New York, 1984), 111–12.

[25] Ibid., 352.

[26] See Daniel Brook, "The Forgotten Confederate Jew," *Tablet Magazine*, July 17, 2012, accessed February 13, 2022, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/the-forgotten-confederate-jew.

[27] Delmar, *Beloved*, 300.

[28] Horn, *All Other Nights*, 250.

[29] Ibid, 303.

[30] See, for instance, Adam Serwer, "The Myth of the Kindly General Lee," *Atlantic*, June 5, 2017.

Max Moses Heller: Jewish Mayor in the Sunbelt South

by

Andrew Harrison Baker*

In October 1973, Greenville, a textile manufacturing center in upstate South Carolina, held a "homecoming" for the city's most prominent native. The Reverend Jesse Jackson's homecoming weekend drew extensive coverage in local publications and the *Chicago Daily News*. Receptions, a parade, and the opportunity to preach a sermon before thousands at the Greenville Memorial Auditorium welcomed him home. The television show *Soul Train* broadcast live from Greenville in honor of Jackson. Atlanta Braves outfielder Hank Aaron and Michigan congressman John Conyers travelled to the city to participate in the weekend. The event gave city leaders an opportunity to promote Greenville as a tolerant city open to new business opportunities. Conversely, Jackson pressed for greater economic opportunity and political representation for Greenville's Black residents.[1]

Business and civic leaders turned out in force to welcome Jackson, but Greenville's mayor played only a small role during the event. Max Moses Heller's absence did not stem from antipathy to the civil rights movement nor to Jackson. At a reception he proclaimed, "Jesse Jackson is good for America" and labelled Greenville "a town that's too busy to hate." The mayor carefully explained that his observance of the Day of Atonement on Saturday, October 6, precluded him from attending other events honoring Jackson.[2]

Heller's seemingly unusual place as a Jewish mayor in a southern city did not escape Jackson's notice. He praised Heller for his "openness

* The author may be contacted at ahbaker@clemson.edu.

to use his political position to help the poor" and used the mayor's election as a symbol of Greenville's progress as well as a call for further change. "If it is possible for Max Heller, a Jew, to be mayor of Greenville, then it is possible for Greenville to have a black mayor," Jackson reasoned. The statement echoed the perception that the election of Jews as mayors of southern towns and cities marked progress in a region whose history had been marked by racial hierarchy and prejudice. Yet numerous Jews have served as mayors of southern towns including major regional centers such as Atlanta.[3]

Heller followed in the footsteps of reform-minded southern Jewish mayors such as Durham, North Carolina's Emmanuel "Mutt" Evans, and his political career overlapped with Atlanta's Sam Massell, Dallas's Adlene Harrison, and other Jewish mayors of southern cities. Although scholars and journalists have addressed the remarkable life and career of Max Moses Heller, this article's focus on his role as a Jewish mayor in a midsized city in the Sunbelt South offers a unique perspective. Heller's political career coincided with what historian Clive Webb describes as the "increased assertiveness of southern Jews" after the end of Jim Crow segregation, as well as the beginnings of the Sunbelt South. A moderate Democrat in a conservative city, Heller's political career also contributes to our understanding of urban politics in the Sunbelt South, which has often been overshadowed by scholars' focus on conservatism and suburban politics.[4]

Placing Heller's years as mayor in the context of the Sunbelt South, I argue that Heller's success in a former textile manufacturing center and bastion of evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity, demonstrates that a Jewish politician could serve as a symbol of progress in seemingly unlikely settings like Greenville. As mayor, Heller enjoyed the support of influential local business leaders eager to project a positive image of Greenville, advance downtown revitalization, and secure outside investment. Heller also earned support from the African American community, which valued his responsiveness to their concerns. Unlike Atlanta's Sam Massell, Heller proved acceptable to both groups.

As Greenville moved away from its textile-centered economy, Heller also symbolized a more international outlook and continued to serve as a corrective for outsiders quick to judge the city by the moniker "the Buckle of the Bible Belt" long after he departed electoral politics. This is not to say

that all groups accepted Heller and his leadership of Greenville. Heller faced overt antisemitism in some instances and earned the enmity of some supporters of Bob Jones University (BJU), a prominent local fundamentalist institution of higher education, over his decision to hold an ecumenical prayer breakfast. This article discusses the circumstances that brought Heller to Greenville and his decision to seek public office after retiring from a successful business career.

Escape to South Carolina

Born in Vienna in 1919, Max Heller grew up as a child of the European depression of the 1920s in what he described as "an extremely religious atmosphere." His parents conducted no business on the Sabbath, refusing to handle money. They dreamed of their son becoming a doctor, but his interest lay in business. After his graduation from gymnasium at age fourteen, Heller obtained a job as an apprentice sweeping floors, making fires, and cleaning. He excelled at the business school that he attended after work. Heller's entrance into the workforce coincided with the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany and attuned him to Austria's changing politics. He noticed the political turmoil leading up to the Anschluss, the 1938 Nazi annexation of Austria, and the rising antisemitism that followed.[5]

As a child and young adult, Heller experienced regular antisemitic incidents such as notes in the gymnasium reading "Jew go back to Palestine" and fights in the street that sometimes left him and/or his opponents

Max Heller at ten years old in Vienna, 1929. (Courtesy of Susan Heller Moses.)

bloodied. Heller viewed these incidents through the prism of his mother's experience in Poland and his education in Jewish history, recalling that "this was the history of the Jews and I accepted that." The Anschluss, however, unleashed a new level of antisemitism and violence. In Heller's memory, police took "swastika armbands" from their pockets within minutes of the announcement of the Nazi takeover of Austria. When his family tried to withdraw money from the bank, they learned that their "bank account was confiscated." Gentile friends stopped associating with him, and one former sport club friend forced him to clean the street while calling him a "pig Jew."[6]

On the Monday following the Anschluss, a Nazi partner took control of the business where Heller worked and fired most of the Jewish employees except for Heller and several others needed to train the new owner and workers. Heller recalled that he "realized that particular day there was no way to stay in Austria."[7] The unusual circumstance that allowed Heller to escape Austria was set in motion the previous summer when he met two young women over the course of several days in August 1937: his future wife, Trude Schönthal, and a southern girl from Greenville, Mary Mills.

Heller met Trude Schönthal during a vacation at a summer resort outside of Vienna. He first noticed Schönthal, who was four years his junior, during the resort's *dirndl* competition (a type of German dress) and asked her to dance at dinner. "I'm going to marry you," he declared. "At fourteen, I thought he was crazy," she remembered. Heller briefly left the resort to return with his father to Vienna, where he accompanied a friend to an outdoor café. They noticed a group of American girls from Greenville who were on a European tour, and Heller asked one of them to dance. He and Mary Mills danced for two hours and walked together in the park on the following day conversing with the help of a German-English dictionary.[8]

Heller kept Mills's address in his wallet, and when Germany seized Austria in March 1938, he once more referred to a German-English dictionary to compose a letter to her in which he attempted to explain the new situation in Austria and his desire to emigrate to the United States. His family doubted that anything would come of his attempt. A few weeks later, he received a call from his father while visiting Trude Schönthal's home. "A registered letter from the United States" had arrived. In the

letter, Mary Mills wrote that she had visited Shepard Saltzman, a Jewish businessman from Greenville, and Saltzman agreed to provide Heller with employment and the necessary paperwork to emigrate. Saltzman followed through with the promised employment offer.[9]

In his retellings of the story, Heller emphasized that Saltzman felt compelled to help a fellow Jew when asked by a Christian. Heller recalled that Saltzman said "how wonderful is it that this young lady, who was not Jewish, had so much compassion and wanted to help me. How could he do less?" Saltzman offered to try to assist Heller's older sister, Paula, and their parents emigrate as well. The Hellers hesitated to ask for additional help and felt it "wouldn't be fair to this man" to find employment for the entire family. They prioritized the children. Consequently, Saltzman provided an employment affidavit for Max and Paula.[10]

On July 26, 1938, the Heller children reached New York and stayed with "a long-lost aunt" who lived in Newark, New Jersey. Their distant relative believed she could secure employment for Max in Newark through "a rich cousin" and tried to dissuade him from moving to Greenville. Her negative view of the South apparently did not faze Max. He recalled in a later interview that he felt a loyalty to the "people who brought me here" and found his relatives' "impression of the South was so different from what I found it to be."[11]

When Heller arrived in Greenville in August, he stepped into a very different setting from Vienna or Newark. Segregation made an early impression on him. At his new workplace, Piedmont Shirt Company, Black and White workers labored in different spaces and performed separate jobs. The heaviest work fell on African American employees. The practice of Jim Crow initially confused him. He tried to drink from the water fountain labelled "colored." Sunday blue laws were also a new feature of life for Heller. He discovered that movie theaters and other forms of entertainment were shuttered on Sundays, and restaurants were not allowed to serve alcohol.[12]

At the close of 1941, Trude Schönthal and her mother visited Greenville. Their journey to the United States had been even more arduous and included surviving Kristallnacht and time as refugees in Belgium. On her first visit, Max picked them up from the train station and tried to conceal Greenville's small size by taking a circuitous route. She remembered the return trip to the train station "took like two minutes." After the couple

Max Heller and Trude Schönthal, Greenville, 1941. (Courtesy of Susan Heller Moses.)

married in August 1942, Trude took a job working at the window of Piedmont Shirt Company and initially found it difficult to understand southern accents. Greenville also lacked theatre and the live music that characterized life in Vienna. She recalled immediately buying tickets when the first theatre opened.[13] These reflections suggest that the Hellers brought their cosmopolitanism from Vienna to a relatively provincial environment, a contrast of which they were most conscious.

As immigrants to Greenville and Jews, the Hellers represented a decided minority. In 1940 South Carolina had the smallest number of foreign-born residents of any American state, with fewer than five thousand. During the same era, the Greenville Chamber of Commerce boasted that "no more than one tenth of one percent [of residents] were of foreign birth." The majority of immigrants to South Carolina hailed from Greece, Germany, Russia, or Palestine-Syria. Greeks, the most prominent immigrant group, had arrived in Greenville in the last years of the nineteenth century and, by the early 1930s, established a Greek Orthodox Church.[14]

A small Jewish community also existed in Greenville County. In 1926, 195 Jews lived in the county. Jewish life centered on the Greenville, the county seat. As a textile city that benefited from the textile boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Greenville proved an attractive destination for Jewish merchants. Historian Diane Vecchio notes that "migrant Jews were welcomed by New South advocates of economic

development." In 1930, they operated nearly two dozen shops that sold dry goods, apparel, and other items.[15]

Jewish institutions also developed as a result of the growth of Greenville's Jewish population. In the 1910s, Greenville Jews organized both an Orthodox and a Reform synagogue. The former, that became known as Beth Israel, served as Heller's spiritual home following his arrival in the city. The synagogues provided a source of religious and cultural identity for Greenville's close-knit Jewish community. Jeff Zaglin, the grandson of Greenville's first rabbi, recalled growing up in "Hebrew School with the same 10 kids from kindergarten to 12th grade."[16]

Heller's employer, Piedmont Shirt Company, represented a substantial Jewish-operated business. In 1928, its founder, Shepard Saltzman, migrated to Greenville from New York City and started the company with the help of prominent local investors interested in bringing the apparel industry to the city. By 1946, Saltzman's firm employed one thousand workers and became the fourth largest menswear manufacturer in the United States and the largest south of Baltimore. Through his workplace, Heller developed friendships with Jewish employees such as Harry Abrams and Morris Leffert who were recruited from New York by Saltzman to serve in managerial roles.[17]

In the majority evangelical Protestant city, Jews faced some antisemitism. Prior to Heller's congressional campaign in 1978, he and his family most frequently experienced antisemitism through exclusion from prominent social clubs, even after he achieved a degree of wealth and social standing. In 1968, Heller declined the invitation to a dinner honoring South Carolina governor, Robert McNair, at Greenville's Poinsett Club. The club's membership policies precluded Jews from joining. Heller wrote McNair, "People of my faith are not welcome as members and because of this I have declined the invitations to any affairs taking place there."[18]

Almost a decade later, Heller penned a similar note to James B. Edwards, South Carolina's first Republican governor since Reconstruction, to explain why he declined an invitation to a reception honoring Edwards. "I have not gone to the Poinsett Club because of their admission practices which relate to ethnic and religious minorities. It is regrettable that such is the case and I hope that, in time, it will change." Heller may have felt uncomfortable at other social clubs as well. He is "rarely seen on the country-club circuit and refuses to attend at least two private clubs where he

realizes an anti-Semitic attitude exists," a columnist for *The State* newspaper wrote in 1971. The Hellers also recalled an instance when, as a young married couple, they were refused the rental of a home.[19]

In the workplace, Heller adapted quickly despite his lack of English language skills. He initially swept floors in the shipping department while learning how to correspond with clients by reading through old letters, then he received a promotion to internal sales manager. Max and Trude Heller further honed their English skills by reading and discussing the same books.[20]

By his mid-twenties, Heller had risen to the vice presidency of the Piedmont Shirt Company before he left to form his own company with a partner. After the partnership dissolved, he founded Maxon Shirts in 1948, which made children's clothing that sold across the United States and in foreign markets. An innovative businessman involved with even the minute details of his company, Heller instructed salespeople to give their retail clients "colorful balloons" to place around each store's Carnegie, Jr.,

Heller, front row center, with employees of Maxon Shirts, 1956.
(Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Furman University.)

line. "If the Mother should have her children with her and had not even intended to buy a shirt for her little boy; he will drag her over to that department because he will want to see the balloons," Heller explained in a letter to his sales staff. By the company's tenth year, it had "produced and marketed over 22 million Carnegie Shirts."[21]

In 1962, Heller sold Maxon to Oxford Industries but continued to run the company until his retirement in 1968 to pursue a second career in public service. He explained that he "had no desire to be the richest man in the cemetery" and felt a duty to "give back" to Greenville. His involvement in charitable organizations provided the bridge from business to politics. In this respect, Heller followed a similar path as other southern Jewish mayors. Durham's Evans chaired the city's community chest and headed a steering committee raising funds for a localAfrican American hospital before his election as mayor. Annette Greenfield Strauss, the first Jewish woman to be elected mayor of Dallas, built a reputation as a fundraiser for civic causes that started when she volunteered for the United Jewish Appeal.[22]

Heller served in a number of leadership positions in local organizations during his business career, including chairman of the board for the Roman Catholic St. Francis Hospital, and consequently housing issues in Greenville played a major role in motivating him to run for elective office. As Heller explained in a later interview, "In 1969, I became very much concerned about the housing situation in Greenville and got involved in a number of other organizations that concerned themselves with community work of that nature: like sub-standard housing, and so forth." The roots of Heller's concern dated back at least to the 1950s, when he sent letters to American political leaders urging policies promoting home ownership. "Let us create happy people in the world by giving them something they will own, and use, and perpetuate. I am speaking of a home of their own," Heller wrote to President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956.[23]

By one measure, in 1969 Greenville County contained twenty-two thousand houses classified as substandard. Heller served as housing committee chair for the Greenville Chamber of Commerce and headed a housing foundation formed by the chamber in 1969. Heller also credited his reform work with youthful offenders with inspiring his desire to run for elective office.[24]

Downtown Greenville, South Carolina, 1959.
(Courtesy of Greenville County Historical Society,
www.greenvillehistory.org.)

Greenville and the Sunbelt South

Max Heller's political career took place during a unique era in southern history. A confluence of events in the late 1960s and early 1970s led to an altered image of the South. The Sunbelt, a linkage of the South and West, became a popular way to refer to the southern half of the United States during the 1970s. This new image of the South emphasized improved race relations and regional prosperity amid the national struggles of the era. As one contemporary observer explained, the South became in the national mind "a region cleaner, less crowded, more open and honest, more genuinely religious and friendly, and suddenly more racially tolerant than any other American region."[25]

During the late 1960s and 1970s, Greenville benefited from the Sunbelt image. The narrative surrounding the community's response to

Construction on McAlister Square, Greenville, South Carolina, 1967.
(Courtesy of Greenville County Historical Society,
www.greenvillehistory.org.)

School busing ordered by the Supreme Court in 1970 and Heller's election as mayor in 1971 helped create a positive image of Greenville that maintained the area's attractiveness for industry.[26] Heller serves as an example of the "New South Democrats" or "Populist Moderates" of the early 1970s. Historian Numan V. Bartley explains that these politicians eschewed "racial demagoguery" and "sought to appeal to ordinary white and black voters by combining a common-folk campaign style with the advocacy of moderately progressive policies." In South Carolina, Democrats forged a coalition of moderate Whites and African American voters that held together at the state level until the mid-1980s.[27]

Before Heller entered politics, the city of Greenville experienced a sustained period of population decline and business losses. Between 1960 and 1970, the county added nearly thirty-one thousand residents, but the city's population declined from 66,188 to 61,208. Suburban and

formerly rural spaces in Greenville County absorbed former city residents and newcomers to the area. The percentage of county residents living in suburban areas increased from 26 to 33 percent, and the percentage of Black residents in the county fell from 13.8 to 10.5 percent. By the early 1970s, the inner-city portion of Greenville contained a Black majority.[28]

Job losses accompanied the decline in White population, and inner-city residents experienced slower income growth than the area as a whole. Between 1960 and 1970, the incomes of families in the Greenville area rose 84.6 percent, but families living near the city center only saw income growth of 69.1 percent. White suburbanites enjoyed the greatest income gains. The city also contained a substantial number of the county's twenty-two thousand units of substandard housing, and African Americans were more likely to occupy these dwellings. Black residents also occupied the majority of the city's rental housing. In 1975, only 21.7 percent of African American residents owned homes.[29]

The departure of downtown retailers for strip shopping centers and malls provided one of the most palpable manifestations of suburbanization. As historian Kenneth Jackson notes, the national origins of this change dated back to the interwar period when national retailer Sears began locating new stores in "low-density areas which would offer the advantages of lower rentals and yet, because of the automobile, be within reach of potential customers." Shopping centers and malls built on this idea in the postwar decades led to the departure of retail establishments from central business districts. By 1984, Americans conducted most of their retail trade in large shopping centers.[30]

Greenville followed the pattern. The area's first shopping center opened in 1948, and enclosed malls followed during the 1960s. As in other cities, the "once-mighty department stores that anchored many a Main Street" relocated to malls. In the mid-1960s, two downtown Greenville department stores, Ivey's and Meyers-Arnold, left for McAlister Square Mall. Some Jewish-owned businesses such as Cancellation Shoe Mart, which sold overruns of shoes, remained downtown in part because its owner judged his product as better suited to a working-class clientele than shoppers with more disposable income. The Greenville Army Store, founded by the son of Greenville's first kosher butcher, also remained downtown. Other Jewish-owned businesses, however, such as Horizon

Records, which opened in 1975, directly bypassed downtown Greenville for a more suburban setting.[31]

The exodus of businesses, whether large or small, was conspicuous. Greenville civic leader Minor Shaw noticed the change on her visits home from college. She recalled that by the late 1960s, downtown "started shriveling up with closed storefronts." A rising crime rate accompanied population and retail losses. In 1970, Greenville's murder rate ranked third nationally. Crime remained a problem throughout the decade. In 1974, crime increased in the city at a faster rate than in the region and nation. Merl Code, who moved to Greenville in late 1970 and later served as a municipal court judge, recalled, "downtown Greenville was quite an adventure . . . and the safety factor probably was an issue during those early 70s."[32]

According to local business leader Charles E. Daniel, a construction executive and political conservative who worked across party and ideological lines on local issues, Greenville's leadership had allowed the city's urban core to atrophy. In a 1957 address, Daniel accused Greenville of becoming "unclean and neither attractive nor competitive with comparable progressive cities," largely due to a leadership vacuum. In 1964, Daniel began construction of a downtown skyscraper to serve as his company's headquarters, tied to his vision for a revitalized and growing downtown. The Daniel Building rose as the tallest in South Carolina. "Charlie Daniel realized that when people came to town, Greenville needed to have a skyscraper," Minor Shaw recalled of her great uncle's purpose.[33]

Daniel passed away before the completion of his building, and his nephew, Buck Mickel, became one of Greenville's central figures and continued to press for downtown revitalization. In a 1966 speech to the Downtown Greenville Association, Mickel implored business leaders to contribute their time and effort to finding solutions for the flight of retail to shopping centers. He called for planning and concerted action to address traffic and parking problems and create a more appealing retail sector that could compete with shopping centers and malls. "Economic, traffic and parking, and design skills should be brought together to tackle problems and opportunities comprehensively," he argued.[34]

Economic development and civic pride drove the program. Mickel believed that Greenville could attract corporate headquarters to augment

the manufacturing sector. His plan relied on maintaining and improving the area's quality of life. "Adequate housing, fine highways, modern retail stores, splendid schools, recreation, culture and churches of all denominations" were necessary features for successful corporate recruitment.[35] Mickel and like-minded leaders sought local political talent that could help them achieve these goals for the city.

Many businessmen like Daniel and Mickel were political conservatives who consistently supported Republican presidential candidates. They identified with Republican economic policies and strongly opposed labor unions, but they also valued active leadership regardless of political party at the local level.[36] As former state legislator and South Carolina governor Richard W. "Dick" Riley recalled, Heller attracted support from business leaders who "were Democratic voters locally but voted Republican nationally and considered themselves Republicans."[37] Mickel became one of Heller's key supporters and allies.

Heller entered elective office in 1969 when he won a two-year term on Greenville's city council. Appointed chairman of the finance committee, Heller took charge of the city's budget and earned praise for his management skills. He crafted a budget for 1971 that raised employee salaries and formed a new department without increasing taxes. Heller also called for the elimination of excessive spending on the council chambers and mayor's office in a new city hall for Greenville while simultaneously advocating for a study of pensions for all city employees. According to Diane Vecchio, Heller's concern with these issues as well as "improving housing and race relations won him the support of both White and Black voters" and paved the way for his successful candidacy for mayor in 1971. Business leaders interested in downtown revitalization as a vehicle for economic development and civic purposes also lent their support to Heller's mayoral campaign.[38]

In 1971, Republican R. Cooper White, Jr., chose not to run for a second term as mayor, setting the stage for Heller's election. White argued that the demands of his full-time job in a stock brokerage firm led to his departure from office. A dispute within the South Carolina Republican Party may have also contributed to his exit.[39]

White represented the moderate or "cosmopolitan" faction of the party. Historian Bruce H. Kalk contends that "cosmopolitans" believed the Republican Party could construct "a coalition combining the business

Max Heller on the Greenville City Council, c. 1970.
(Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Furman University.)

and political classes with support in the African American community." In his 1969 mayoral campaign, White won in Greenville's Black majority precincts. As mayor, he helped build public support for comprehensive desegregation in February 1970 and worked to improve the relationship between city government and Black Greenvillians through improving city services and constructing "mini-parks" and community centers.[40]

White split with his party over the "southern strategy" of 1970 and refused to back Republican gubernatorial candidate Albert Watson, whose campaign appealed to White backlash against the civil rights movement. In 1971, White crossed party lines to support Heller's candidacy. Republicans failed to offer a challenger to Heller, who only faced former council member Gus Smith in the Democratic primary that Heller won by a three-to-one margin.[41]

During the primary campaign, Heller advocated for downtown revitalization, the elimination of substandard housing, the erection of new lighting to deter crime, and the construction of additional recreational facilities. He promised to bring the government closer to the people by creating a "citizens service and information desk" at city hall and by holding town hall meetings. In many respects, Heller built on Cooper White's programs. White had initiated a redevelopment program and employed planning professionals. Under his leadership, the city accepted federal grants, which earlier leaders refused to do.[42]

Heller's election as mayor, however, represented a different kind of change than White's election as Greenville's first Republican mayor. The city of Greenville already trended toward the Republican Party in national elections and began to move towards the Republican Party in state elections during the 1960s. Heller was not only Greenville's first Jewish mayor, but the last Democrat to be elected to the position.[43] Heller accelerated White's programs, and his election as mayor also represented progress for citizens seeking an active government built on the Sunbelt narrative of a more progressive and open South.

Nick Andrew Theodore, a state representative from Greenville County and the son of Greek immigrants, told Heller in a letter that Greenville was "long overdue, compared to Charleston and Columbia, in electing officials of ethnic background to lead in moving our city government forward." Reporter Dale Perry of the *Greenville News* shed his objectivity to tell Heller that his election restored his faith in Greenville.

Following graduation from Furman University, Perry decided to remain in Greenville even though he "was not quite so sure I had much of a future here." He retained hope, however, that South Carolinians would "cast off the kind of politicians who stand in the way of community progress." Moderate Democrat John C. West's victory over Republican gubernatorial candidate Albert Watson and Heller's election as mayor renewed his optimism. "Greenville has certainly come a long way in electing a man of your caliber to the office of mayor. I only hope the city can keep up with you."[44]

National publications and journalists from major newspapers who wrote on Greenville or Heller attached Heller to narratives of regional and local progress built on the Sunbelt image. During Heller's unsuccessful congressional run in 1978, syndicated columnist Neal R. Peirce prefaced Heller's story by asking, "How did a young Jewish immigrant wind up in deepest Dixie, in a town that likes to call itself 'the buckle of the Bible Belt?'" A 1974 profile of Greenville in *Money Magazine* emphasized the importance of conservative churches to Greenville's social life but reassured readers, "There is no overt prejudice toward Catholics or others who belong to a religious minority. In fact, Greenville's mayor Max Heller is an Austrian-born Jew." The decision of Furman University, then a Baptist institution, to award Heller an honorary doctorate led the *B'nai B'rith Messenger–Religious News Service Report* to tout, "Baptist Students Hail Jewish Mayor." In 1973, Delaware's U.S. senator, Joseph R. Biden, Jr., quipped while visiting Greenville for a South Carolina Democratic Party fundraising dinner that he expected to find "good old boys in South Carolina" rather than a Jewish mayor.[45]

A member of Greenville's Jewish community whose family enjoyed a friendship with the Hellers viewed it as a breakthrough moment for Greenville Jews, arguing that "whatever discrimination may have existed seemed to melt away" following Heller's election. Although the statement may contain some degree of exaggeration, it speaks to the importance of Heller's election to Greenville's Jewish community.[46]

Mayor Heller

In office, Heller proved remarkably active. He made the part-time position of mayor his full-time job and put in ten-hour days. Heller worked energetically to enact his vision of creating a "city of tranquility"

where residents would express "a pride in citizenship."[47] In more concrete terms, Heller envisioned redevelopment of the city's central business district to improve the area's quality of life and increase the tax base, as well as a more active role for city government in housing policy and greater responsiveness to citizens. Although the slow pace of government sometimes checked Heller's ambitions, he remained a very popular mayor throughout his two terms in office. His responsiveness to the needs of Black constituents earned support from the African American community.

Merl Code, who served as the first African American chairman of the Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce, recalled that when he first moved to Greenville in the early 1970s it remained "very, very segregated." A graduate of North Carolina A&T University in Greensboro, Code spent his college years immersed in a city with a significant Black middle class. In contrast, Code recalled that Greenville "did not have a cadre of African Americans who were socially and economically at a higher level because of their education."[48]

Until the mid-1960s, Black residents were largely excluded from employment in higher-paying production positions in the textile mills that employed twenty-one thousand county residents in 1960.[49] Racial violence also remained within recent memory, including the 1947 lynching of Willie Earle by Greenville cabdrivers, which drew national attention to the city; tensions periodically flared in the 1950s and early 1960s. During the peak years of the civil rights movement, Greenville business and civic leaders worked to maintain the city's image by reducing violence and gradually desegregating Greenville institutions. Nevertheless, one historian of South Carolina contends that boosterish slogans such as "integration with dignity" and desegregation with "grace and style" often masked the underlying reality that the community only integrated due to pressure from African American activists and as a result of court orders.[50]

Heller's relationship with the Black community dated to his business days, and his response to segregation mirrored that of many other southern Jews. As historian Daniel Puckett has noted, "southern Jews supported, tacitly accepted, or quietly 'bent' the boundaries of Jim Crow racism." Heller appears to fall into the latter category. Although never a proponent of segregation, Heller initially acceded to local law and custom. His apparel firm employed hundreds of Black and White women who were legally required to work in separate spaces. Maxon Shirt Company

Heller with former U.S. Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps and members of the Greenville Urban League, 1983. (Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Furman University.)

held separate Christmas parties and company gatherings for Black and White employees and had separate drinking fountains and bathrooms. Vecchio notes that Jewish businessmen in upcountry South Carolina often followed racial custom to defend their status as White, but "many empathized with the plight of blacks in the segregated South" and "quietly challenged white racial etiquette in their business dealings with African Americans." In Heller's case, he ended the practice of having separate drinking fountains and bathrooms.[51]

As mayor, Heller took an active role in attempting to bridge the divide between the Black community and city government. This may reflect the thawing of tensions after segregation that helped to usher in the Sunbelt phenomenon and helped Jewish politicians such as Heller to assert

themselves more vigorously on racial issues without fear of violent reprisal.[52] His actions fell into three categories: increased access to local government and responsiveness to the concerns of Black Greenvillians; desegregating city government; and symbolic gestures.

One example of increased attention from local government is Heller's "hungry ear" telephone line for constituents, which allowed them to express grievances directly to city government. This proved particularly valuable to Black constituents given that prior administrations had sometimes greeted Black citizens by slamming the door. Holding town hall meetings in both Black and White neighborhoods also improved access to government for Black Greenvillians. At one such meeting held at the Birnie Street YWCA in 1973, Black residents expressed "complaints about substandard housing, sanitation problems and poor street conditions to Heller."[53]

Heller's administration proved responsive to these concerns as the city's sanitation department was reorganized and the frequency of trash collection increased. In 1974, the city also allocated funds to the Birnie Street YWCA for the renovation of a daycare facility. Additional money flowed into historically Black neighborhoods in the form of federal grants and revenue sharing. Community centers, playground equipment, and lighting for outdoor recreation facilities were added to communities such as Nicholtown, a Black neighborhood. Portable swimming pools were purchased for use in predominantly Black neighborhoods lacking community swimming pools.[54]

The mayor also created a new bus system when the previous operator withdrew from the Greenville market. Heller rounded up church buses and helped organize driver training. Black residents dependent on public transportation placed particular importance on the bus system. Although it was on a much smaller scale, Heller's effort to ensure that public transportation remained available to city residents resembled in some respects Mayor Sam Massell's successful campaign to create the MARTA bus system in Atlanta.[55]

During Heller's first term, he desegregated city government. As his daughter Susan Heller Moses recalls, her father "desegregated all city departments and commissions." This included the appointment of African Americans to white-collar jobs in city government. He hired city hall's first African American secretary and the first Black employee at the

administrative level.[56] Although Heller's actions represented progress for Greenville, the city lagged behind other southern cities like Atlanta and Durham that had Jewish mayors.

Durham's Evans desegregated his city's police and fire departments during the 1950s, hired African Americans to supervisory positions, and helped his city obtain federal money for housing. After the fracture of Atlanta's Black-White political coalition that dated to the 1940s, Sam Massell largely won election as mayor in 1969 through Black support and initially offered substantial attention to the concerns of the Black community. Massell appointed African Americans to administrative positions, and the overall number of Black city employees increased to 42 percent. In contrast to Greenville, Black Atlantans also held elected positions in city government, among them Vice Mayor Maynard Jackson.[57]

Symbolic gestures such as a proclamation honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday and support for the formation of African American cultural organizations were other ways that Heller engaged with the Black community. Interfaith services organized by the Greenville Ministerial Alliance often brought together Black and White Greenvillians and featured Heller as a speaker. Heller's contemporaries such as Charleston mayor Joseph P. Riley pursued a similar course by honoring Denmark Vesey, the leader of a slave revolt in the 1820s, with a portrait and refusing to attend segregated events at social clubs just as Heller had done.[58]

African American political power in Greenville, however, continued to lag. In 1976, only 31 percent of eligible African Americans in Greenville County were registered to vote. Although the Reverend Jesse Jackson used Heller's election as a symbol of new possibilities in Greenville, his organization's filing of a voter registration complaint with the Justice Department in July 1976 testified to the continuing dearth of Black officeholders in the city. Although the Justice Department denied the call for federal registrars, Heller and other Democrats proved supportive of additional registration efforts. Nonetheless, Greenville remained behind other South Carolina cities such as Charleston in terms of Black elected officials at the local level. African Americans were not represented in city government until 1977 when minister Rayfield Metcalf won a council seat.[59]

Heller's emphasis on downtown development as a means of shoring up the area's tax base led to some criticism from Greenville's African American citizens. "Without a strong tax base, government can't fulfill all its good intentions," Heller explained. Critics noted that a greater share of development money flowed to large downtown projects rather than to impoverished neighborhoods. In the late 1980s, the *Greenville Piedmont* still reported that on the city's west side "the indications of a black middle class are almost nonexistent."[60]

Despite these criticisms, Heller maintained the support of many Black Greenvillians in contrast to Atlanta's Massell whose unsuccessful 1973 reelection campaign was marred by accusations of race-baiting when a controversial advertisement attempted to bring White voters into his flagging campaign. In his 1975 reelection campaign, Heller won handily in African American communities such as Nicholtown, which he carried 398 to 5 over his Republican opponent. Research commissioned by Heller's congressional campaign in 1978 found that 75 percent of all Black voters in the district supported him; 56 percent of Black voters in the district *strongly* supported him. This support proved lasting. Heller cochaired a task force on improving race relations in Greenville after his retirement from elective politics. "Max, more than anybody else in the community, is automatically acceptable to white people and black people," a local developer argued in a late 1990s profile of Heller.[61]

Heller's focus on downtown redevelopment and eventual success cemented his legacy as mayor. Neither of his Atlanta contemporaries, Sam Massell or Maynard Jackson, the city's first Black mayor, enjoyed the full support of the business community. Heller's close relationship with the business community bore greater resemblance to the seemingly unlikely alliance between Atlanta's business leaders and former civil rights movement activist Andrew Young. As Atlanta mayor, Young reduced property taxes and helped approve a record number of construction projects.[62] Yet given Heller's business background, his alliance with Greenville's business elite was hardly surprising.

However, the slow pace of redevelopment efforts almost led Heller to leave office rather than seek reelection in 1975. Heller recalled in a later interview, "There were broken sidewalks with grass growing out," and his plans to widen sidewalks and plant trees drew "objections from some of the merchants" who feared changes would increase crime. Progress

remained glacial in pace. A small group of business leaders persuaded Heller to run for reelection. In exchange, they raised money for downtown redevelopment. The local newspapers, the *Greenville News* and the *Greenville Piedmont*, both closely linked to the community's power structure, also supported Heller's candidacy. The *News* provided generally favorable coverage of Heller, and its sister paper the *Piedmont* endorsed his run.[63]

In April 1975, Heller defeated by a substantial margin a Democratic primary opponent running on an anticrime platform. In the general election he faced Jesse L. Helms, a conservative Republican businessman associated with BJU. (He should not be confused with North Carolina's longtime senator Jesse A. Helms.) The *Greenville Piedmont* cautioned readers that the "importance of who sits in Greenville's seats of power cannot be overemphasized" and praised Heller's achievements while noting that Helms's ideology favored "maintenance of the status quo." In the general election, Heller took 65 percent of the vote. In his second term, the tempo of redevelopment activities increased, sowing the seeds of downtown Greenville's later success.[64]

Heller rooted his vision for downtown Greenville in his experiences in Vienna. "He envisioned a Greenville that was more like a village, . . . a European village with people coming downtown," Greenville leader Minor Shaw remembered. On the advice of Halprin and Associates, a San Francisco–based urban design firm, the city government narrowed Main Street to two lanes, widened sidewalks, and planted trees. "[N]ew green spaces, flower planters, and areas for outdoor dining" accompanied these changes. Downtown merchants feared the changes would damage their ability to attract customers dependent on cars. Instead, innovations such as the city's development of a "People's Market" for the sale of artisan-made goods in a vacant building that formerly housed a department store brought more locals downtown, as did free parking and the construction of new parking garages.[65]

As mayor, Heller made use of private-public partnerships. He and his allies believed a hotel and convention center to be necessary for revitalization. Although several companies passed on building a hotel in Greenville, a connection between Greenville attorney Tommy Wyche and a member of Hyatt Hotel's management team led to a meeting between Heller and Hyatt CEO Jay Pritzker. Hyatt initially demurred on the

Greenville market because of its small size. Heller and Pritzker, however, shared connections: both were Jews, and Heller's parents and Pritzker's mother shared the same birthplace in Poland. Private and public funding underwrote the cost of the hotel and convention center: a 5.5 million dollar federal urban development action grant and contributions of four million dollars from local businesspeople. The Hyatt paved the way for the development of a burgeoning hotel industry in Greenville with over one thousand rooms in close proximity to the city center. A similar project, Charleston Place, pursued by Charlest mayor Joe Riley, used a hotel and convention center to propel downtown redevelopment.[66]

Improvements to downtown Greenville were also designed to help recruit new businesses and residents to the area by enhancing local quality of life. Heller, an amateur artist, proved a patron of the arts and attempted to enhance Greenville's entertainment options. The formation of the Metropolitan Arts Council and the opening of Greenville County Museum of Art in downtown during Heller's first term offer two examples. Trude Heller also served as a patron of the arts through her service on the boards of the Greenville Symphony Guild and the Metropolitan Arts Council. The Hellers' role in fostering a stronger arts scene in Greenville speaks to the idea of Jewish cosmopolitanism. It also mirrored efforts made on a larger scale by the city of Charleston under fellow Democratic mayor Joseph P. Riley, which included the development of the Spoleto Festival. As one study of Charleston in the Sunbelt era concludes, Riley "brought people into the city with arts and commerce."[67]

Heller actively recruited new companies to the area. During his time in office, French tire manufacturer Michelin built its first American manufacturing facility in Greenville, and Metropolitan Life Insurance Company located a computer center in the city. Heller traveled to France and New York to sell the companies on the area and undertook other travels in search of new business. Locals perceived Heller's European background as an asset in the recruitment of European companies. News reports explained that he surprised a group of visiting European newspaper executives by speaking German and that he "felt no anger" in a business recruiting trip to Germany during the latter years of his mayorship.[68] This coincided with the continued growth of western European capital investments in South Carolina that helped the state overcome the decline of the textile industry.

Some critics of Greenville's business leadership, however, argued that Heller's acceptance of low taxes and other concessions to attract industry undermined his credentials as "a man who serves the people's interest." These criticisms did little to dent Heller's popularity within the city, but his close ties to the city's business class may have harmed his 1978 congressional campaign as his Republican opponent employed a strategy that portrayed Heller as part of the urban elite.[69]

Trude Heller also played a pivotal role in her husband's successful political career. She became his most trusted advisor and served as a host for gatherings of supporters and business prospects for the area in their Greenville home. Their eldest daughter, Francie, recalled that her father "never went without [Trude] anywhere," and news reports noted Trude's presence at sparsely attended council meetings. "He used to tell me all the time what he was going to do and we used to discuss it and sometimes I said 'you can't do that' and he said 'you're right,'" Trude recalled.[70]

Gatherings at their home helped bring people together for Greenville and often included other prominent local Democratic politicians such as Dick Riley, a close friend of the Hellers and two-term governor of South Carolina, and Nick Theodore. Francie recalled her parents' home as being "always open" and her mother regularly preparing dinners for twenty to thirty people at a time.[71] One such occasion led a business leader to change his mind about not locating his company in Greenville. "She was a wonderful partner of Max. Really the leadership was the two of them," Riley recalled in 2021.[72]

The Mayor's Prayer Breakfast

Heller's second term also coincided with the start of a new stage in local and national politics. In the mid-1970s, Christian conservatives mobilized politically and became active in Republican Party politics. In Greenville, members of the BJU community were in the vanguard. A turning point in the political involvement of local evangelical and fundamentalist Christians came in 1976. In March, people affiliated with BJU took over the county Republican organization. As historian A. V. Huff, Jr., describes the coup, local evangelicals used "floor leaders, walkie-talkies, and rigid discipline" to gain control. Bob Jones III denied that his institution organized the takeover of the local GOP. Despite the institution's disavowals, Senator Strom Thurmond's longtime associate Harry

Dent told the senator in March 1976, "the Bob Jones people took over the Greenville County GOP precincts this past week" under the leadership of a faculty member and advised Thurmond to keep in touch with Dr. Bob Jones, III.[73]

During his campaign for reelection in 1975 and spring 1976, Heller faced two controversies centered on religion. The first related to the invocation to open city council meetings. In January 1975, a rumor alleged that Heller asked ministers offering the invocation to refrain from using the name of Christ. The rumor appears to have originated from a letter that Heller forwarded to city council members. As he explained to a local minister, "last May we received a letter from a resident expressing the thought that public prayer should be a common prayer in which members of all faiths could participate. I gave members of City Council a copy of the note, as I do on all correspondence addressed to this office concerning Council; and left it up to each individual as to how he or she wished to give the invocation. At no time were any orders issued to anyone." A Methodist minister directed the January 1975 invocation to "Almighty God" and made no references to Jesus Christ.[74]

Some members of the community believed that Heller issued instructions to the ministers delivering an invocation. Local ministers and concerned citizens wrote seeking clarification or leveling accusations. The matter became controversial enough for the president of the Greater Greenville Ministerial Alliance to address the rumor. "At no time has Mayor Heller tried to influence, counsel, or instruct any member as to how to pray at these meetings," Smith told the *Greenville Piedmont.* Nonetheless, in 1976, the Associated Press reprinted the false accusation and renewed the controversy.[75]

Other controversies centered on the religious and social mores of Greenville. In a campaign the *Greenville Piedmont* characterized as "against the City Government in general," a Democratic candidate for city council sent copies of receipts for the purchase of liquor by the city to the *Piedmont.* The controversy centered around the purchase of $216.82 of alcoholic beverages for the presentation of a report on downtown development by Lawrence Halprin Associates and a reception for officials of the Miss South Carolina pageant.[76]

Heller called the release of the receipts "dirty politics" and received "a heavy ovation from the Rotary Club." The issue did not appear to affect

Heller's support among his base but drew fire from members of the BJU community. WMUU, the BJU radio station, broadcast an editorial that attacked the city's purchase of liquor and Heller's characterization of the controversy as "the stinking part" of politics. Dayton Walker, the station's programming director and a future Republican city council member, noted Greenville's blue laws and WMUU's stance against the consumption of alcohol. "Liquor is wrong; its consumption is wrong; its sale is wrong; and the use of taxpayers to finance a private reception for guests of the city is just adding insult to injury," Walker argued.[77]

The contretemps between Heller and WMUU continued after the campaign. Letter writers faulted Heller for what they described as a failure to "extend congratulations to the W.M.U.U. upon their extended range of coverage." One even described Heller as "deliberately discourteous to Bob Jones University."[78] The tumultuous relationship between BJU and Max Heller became more contentious.

At the urging of the Greenville Ministerial Alliance, Heller organized a Mayor's Prayer Breakfast for Greenville to coincide with the World Day of Prayer and America's bicentennial. Hundreds of locals attended the

Mayor's Prayer Breakfast, March 5, 1976.
(Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Furman University.)

event in downtown Greenville on March 5, 1976. At the breakfast, a Black Baptist minister, a White Methodist minister, a priest, and a rabbi offered prayers. L. D. Johnson, Furman University's chaplain and the former pastor of First Baptist Greenville, offered opening remarks. A choir of Greenville County Schools students sang " America the Beautiful" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Dr. Bob Jones, III, declined an invitation to attend the breakfast. The Joneses opposed cooperation between people who shared different religious faiths. Their long-held stance against such ecumenicalism led to a break with the Reverend Billy Graham in the late 1950s and their opposition to an extremely popular 1966 crusade that Graham held in Greenville.[79]

In his response to Heller's invitation, Jones announced his institution's opposition to the prayer breakfast. "The lord calls on true believers to expose wolves in sheep's clothing who rend and tear the flock of God, we consider any preacher who participates in an unscriptural endeavor such as this to be a wolf in sheep's clothing." He added, "Bob Jones University wants no part in it, and we are actively opposing it." Dr. Gilbert Stenholm of BJU applied for and received a permit from the city to protest the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast.[80]

Outside of the gathering, "thirty-five blazer-clad" and "clean-cut ministerial students" carried signs protesting the breakfast. One of the students told a reporter that Dr. Bob Jones, III, had requested the protest. A protestor's sign repeated the rumor from 1975 asking, "How can Christians join in a prayer meeting with a man who objected to the city council praying in the name of Christ?" Although a *Greenville News* report following the protest noted that "no one officially connected with the BJU protest last Friday knows where erroneous information originated that appeared on one of the picket placards," Bob Jones, III, still gave the rumor official sanction months later. In a written statement, Jones placed fault for the protest with Heller: "The only religious issue that's been raised in this whole affair was raised by Max Heller himself when he made it quite clear at the Council meeting that he didn't want anybody praying in the name of Jesus."[81]

Many Greenvillians expressed support for Heller and opposed the protest. A local florist instructed Heller, "When you see the picketing tomorrow, please remember that there are many times more Christians

in Greenville who greatly admire and deeply love the Hellers." One Greenville resident wrote to Heller, "I'm daily more afraid that though your gracious comments to the press revealed no offense, you must surely have been sensitively afflicted." In seeking forgiveness for Greenville's Christian community, she explained her perspective on Judaism: "The Jewish people are the apple of God's eye, and His blessing will forever be with you."[82]

A local Protestant explained to Heller his view of the motives. "From what I can understand from the newspapers, and other reports, the objection seems to be that you as a Jew are sponsoring this breakfast to which will be invited ministers of all faiths, and some of another color besides whites." Victor Babb added that these distinctions mattered little to God. "Our God, when he welcomes us to that home in the sky, will not ask us whether we have been a Presbyterian, or a Methodist, or a Jew, or a Catholic."[83]

Some letters in the *Greenville News* and the *Greenville Piedmont* supported Bob Jones's position. Raymond A. Hefle called the prayer breakfast one of Satan's deceptions. "Somehow, the devil had tricked thousands of people in our city into thinking that anything labeled 'prayer' is honoring to God. Nothing could be further from the truth." Hefle affirmed the primacy of the Bible and salvation. In another letter to the editor, Gilbert Swift of Bob Jones University described the modern ecumenical movement as "a lie of Satan which gives a false sense of security to people." In Swift's estimation, "Hell will be full of religious people, but only those who have trusted Christ for their salvation will be in heaven." One local couple simply expressed their hope that Bob Jones, III, would "always stand true and not compromise his beliefs."[84]

Heller chose to focus on the positives of the prayer breakfast, later describing it as the "most touching event we ever had." The gathering continued in subsequent years, as did BJU's opposition to the ecumenical event.[85] In some ways, the two sides in the controversy reflected the binary reception Jews received in the South. They were looked down upon and criticized for their failure to accept Christ as their savior, but also respected as the people of the Bible. Although some of Heller's supporters rejected religious distinctions, the comments of others suggested that even they perceived Jews as different.

Conclusion

The prayer breakfast protest foreshadowed another religious controversy that helped bring a close to Heller's elected career. In 1978, Heller ran as the Democratic candidate for the seat of retiring Fourth Congressional District representative James R. Mann. Heller's Republican opponent, Carroll Campbell, Jr., won a tightly contested race and brought the seat under Republican control for the first time since Reconstruction. During the campaign, third-party candidate Don Sprouse argued that Heller's status as a Jew rendered him less qualified to represent the largely evangelical and fundamentalist Christian district. Many Heller supporters alleged that people associated with Campbell's campaign provided the impetus for Sprouse's criticism of Heller.[86]

(Greenville News, *March 12, 1978.*
Newspapers.com.)

Heller's loss in the congressional campaign meant that his legacy remained centered on his extraordinary story of escaping Nazi-occupied Austria and his business and civic achievements rather than on partisanship. After leaving elected office, Heller served as chairman of the State Development Board and recruited outside industry to South Carolina. He

also maintained involvement in downtown redevelopment efforts, improving public education and efforts to bridge the divide between Black and White Greenvillians.[87]

The success of downtown revitalization efforts particularly elevated Heller's legacy. As early as the 1980s and frequently in the 1990s and 2000s, local and outside publications awarded Heller credit for starting Greenville's downtown revitalization. Although begun under his predecessor, Heller's efforts pushed the movement substantially forward. In a 1994 article, a *Southern Living* magazine writer described Greenville's Main Street as "one of the liveliest prettiest streets in the South" and noted Heller's role in downtown revitalization. In 2001, the *Greenville News* observed that Heller is "widely credited with Greenville's downtown revitalization." Greenville and particularly its downtown have attracted positive attention from national publications including the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and *Esquire*, as well as from media figures such as Oprah Winfrey and Ben Stein.[88]

Heller also provided a bridge between Greenville's old identity as a textile center and its new identity as an "international community" with manufacturers such as BMW, Hitachi, and Michelin operating in the area. By the mid-1990s, South Carolina and particularly the upstate were more strongly linked to foreign capital than any comparable area in the United States. As one outside observer noted about the area, foreign manufacturers "have built world class manufacturing skills and turned locals into cosmopolitans."[89] Heller provided a ready example of cosmopolitanism for local media.

In 1996, the Atlanta Olympic Committee selected Greenville as one of the sites for the Olympic torch to pass through on its way to the summer games in Atlanta. Heller was chosen as the final torchbearer in the city. In its coverage, the *Greenville News* credited him with helping Greenville to become an "international business community." He also offered a ready contrast between the city and Greenville County. A controversial resolution by the Greenville County Council that opponents labeled "anti-Gay" led to the Atlanta Olympic Committee's decision to bypass the county and only run the Olympic torch within Greenville's city limits. An area resident wrote to Heller to explain that she told Heller's story to two new residents who feared Greenville to be a "mean-spirited community" as an example of Greenville's openness. As the letter writer explained, one of

the new residents "seemed amazed and relieved" that a fellow Jew had served as the mayor of a midsized, Bible Belt city.[90]

Two years before Max Heller passed away in 2011, Greenville honored Max and Trude Heller's contributions to the city through a statue and panel display in Legacy Plaza across from the Greenville Hyatt.[91] The tribute to the Hellers signified their importance to the story of Greenville's downtown revitalization and spoke to the image that city leaders wished to project. Max Heller's election as mayor contributed to the Sunbelt narrative of southern progress, and through his civic service Heller played an important role in revitalizing the city of Greenville. His identity as a Jew in a Bible Belt city excited some opposition, but Max Heller remained a very popular figure in Greenville whose legacy is tied not only to his unique story and status in Greenville but to his achievements as an elected official and civic leader.

Jews have comprised a small minority throughout American history almost everywhere in the country. Yet their business achievements and civic contributions have placed them in positions to win elections and serve in public office. In politics they tend to be business progressives and infrastructure developers, reflective of their backgrounds, interests, and values. In these ways, the story of Max Heller serves as a case study of broader patterns and themes. Max Heller's service as Greenville mayor also illustrates the changing nature of southern politics in the Sunbelt era as mayors such as Heller, Sam Massell, and Joseph P. Riley entered office and demonstrated new concern for African American constituents in the post–civil rights movement South and aggressively pursued strategies to revitalize the urban core.

NOTES

The author expresses his appreciation to the anonymous peer reviewers.

[1] Miriam Goodspeed, "Jesse Jackson's Homecoming Attracts National Attention," *Greenville Piedmont,* October 4, 1973; Walter Morrison, "Jesse Jackson 'goes home' and Carolina town loves it," *Chicago Daily News,* October 6–7, 1973, box 10, folder 9, Max M. Heller Papers, James B. Duke Library, Special Collections and Archives, Furman University (hereafter cited as Heller Papers).

[2] Archie Vernon Huff, Jr., *Greenville: The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont* (Columbia, SC, 1995), 407; Morrison, "Jesse Jackson 'goes home.'"

[3] Dale Perry, "Jesse Jackson Blasts Thurmond; Parade Begins Weekend Activities," *Greenville News,* October 6, 1973; "Political Breakfast Held in Honor of Reverend Jesse Jackson," *Focus News,* October 12, 1973, box 10, folder 9, Heller Papers; Diane Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller: Patron Saint of Greenville's Renaissance," in *Doing Business in America: A Jewish History*, ed. Hasia R. Diner (West Lafayette, IN, 2018), 191.

[4] Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2001), 217–18; Steve Estes, *Charleston in Black and White: Race and Power in the South after the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015), 36. For scholarship on Heller, see Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller"; Robert David Johnson, "Political Culture and the Legacies of Antisemitism: The Heller-Campbell Congressional Race in South Carolina 1978," *American Jewish History* 105 (January/April 2021): 49–75; and Jessica Foster, "Campbell vs. Heller: A New Analysis of the 1978 Election for South Carolina's Fourth District," *Furman Humanities Review* 31 (2020): 5-32, accessed May 18, 2021, https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/fhr/vol31/iss1/13.

[5] Abe Hardesty, "Greenville honors visionary behind downtown's rebirth," *Greenville News,* May 29, 2009, Max Heller file, Biographical Files, South Carolina Room, Greenville County Library (hereafter cited as Heller clipping file); Max Heller, interview conducted by Jim McAlister, 1972, box 7, folder 8, 1–5, Heller papers.

[6] Heller interview, 1972, 2, 6, 8–10; Max Heller, interview conducted by Randy M. Goldman, September 24, 1998, 9–10, Jeff and Toby Herr Oral History Archive, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed January 6, 2021, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn506450.

[7] Heller interview, 1972, 6–10. As Heller explained in a 1998 interview with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "the reason they didn't fire us is the people they put in charge had to learn something." Heller interview, September 24, 1998, 7.

[8] Trude Heller and Francie Heller, interview conducted by author, February 23, 2019; Max and Trude Heller, interview conducted by Dale Rosengarten and Sandra Rosenblum, February 28, 1997, Lowcountry Digital Library, College of Charleston Libraries, accessed January 31, 2022, https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/lcdl:11839, 3; Heller interview, 1972, 7, 10.

[9] Heller interview, 1972, 10; Max Moses Heller, interview conducted by Peggy Denny, October 2001, box 18, Heller papers.

[10] Heller interview, 1972, 13–14. Heller's parents were able to immigrate to the United States later. Dan J. Puckett documents how Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe arrived in Alabama. See *In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama's Jews, the Second World War, and the Holocaust* (Tuscaloosa, 2014).

[11] Heller interview, 1972, 14, 18, 19. As Heller explained to McAlister, "I had about $1.60 in my pocket. That was all the money that was left over. I was allowed to take $8.00, incidentally, with me leaving Europe. That was the only money we were allowed to take out." Heller did not specifically explain what his relatives believed about the region.

[12] Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 185; Max and Trude Heller, interview conducted by Courtney Tollison, August 10, 2004, Furman University, accessed February 18, 2019, https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=oral-histories; James Shannon, "Max Heller Remembers," *Creative Loafing,* October 6, 2001, Heller clipping file.

[13] Trude and Francie Heller interview, 2019; Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 186–87. Trude Heller's father arrived in the United States separately from her mother. He spent time in a concentration camp before escaping into the south of France and securing passage to the United States.

[14] Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia, SC, 1998 [1992]), 513; Yancey Gilkerson, Paper Prepared for Club of 39 Meeting, October 15, 1987, Greenville 1920s-1940s file, Vertical Files, South Carolina Room, Greenville County Library; Huff, *Greenville*, 266–67. The chamber of commerce's boast is likely tied to the common idea among southern business and political leaders that immigrants, especially from eastern and southern Europe, were more likely to join labor unions than native-born workers. Nick Theodore, a descendant of early Greek immigrants to Greenville, noted in his memoirs, "For years, Charleston had South Carolina's largest Greek community, a distinction now held by Greenville." Nick Theodore, *Trials and Triumphs: South Carolina's Evolution 1962-2014* (Taylors, SC, 2014), 14.

[15] Huff, *Greenville*, 266–67; Johnson, "Political Culture and the Legacies of Antisemitism," 52–53; Diane Vecchio, "Making Their Way in the New South: Jewish Peddlers and Merchants in The South Carolina Up Country," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 113 (April 2012): 102, 112–15.

[16] Huff, *Greenville,* 266–67; Anna B. Mitchell, "Times, They're still changing," *Greenville Journal,* April 10, 2009, Jewish Clipping File, South Carolina Room, Greenville County Library. Beth Israel began as an Orthodox synagogue but "transitioned from Orthodox to Conservative practices in the late 1940s." "Greenville, South Carolina," ISJL Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed January 3, 2022, https://www.isjl.org/south-carolina-greenville-encyclopedia.html.

[17] Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller" 184–86; David A. Tillinghast, "8,600 Dozen Garments Made Weekly by Piedmont Shirt," *Greenville Piedmont,* May 6, 1946, Heller clipping file.

[18] Max M. Heller to Robert McNair, March 19, 1968, box 3, folder 2, Heller Papers.

[19] Max M. Heller to James B. Edwards, January 26, 1977, box 3, folder 4, Heller Papers; Dave Partridge, "Max Heller: From Refugee to Mayor," *The State*, April 25, 1971, box 3, folder 1, Heller Papers; Max and Trude Heller interview, 2019.

[20] Heller interview, 1972, 20–21, 24–25; Trude and Francie Heller interview, 2019.

[21] Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 187–88; Trude and Francie Heller interview, 2019; Heller letter to salesmen carrying the Maxon Shirt Company product, box 8, folder 1, Heller Papers; Carnegie Shirts For Boys ad, box 8, folder 12, Heller Papers.

[22] Heller letter to employees, March 26, 1968, box 8, folder 12, Heller Papers; Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 189–90; Leonard Rogoff, "Divided Together: Jews and African Americans in Durham, North Carolina," in *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s*, ed. Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin (Tuscaloosa, 1997), 130; Jane Bock Guzman, "Annette Greenfield Strauss," The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women, accessed March 6, 2022, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/strauss-annette-greenfield.

[23] Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 189–90; Heller interview, 1972, 33; Max M. Heller to Dwight D. Eisenhower, December 13, 1956, box 2, folder 8, Heller Papers. See also Max M. Heller to Hubert H. Humphrey, April 30, 1968, box 2, folder 8, Heller Papers. In this letter, Heller explains that he also sent similar letters to John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

[24] "Greenville Citizens Urged to Join Fight Against Substandard Housing," *Greenville News,* December 16, 1969; "Housing Foundation Nearing Ready Stage," *Greenville News*, April 25, 1969; "Nonprofit Foundation Formed to Provide Adequate Housing for Slum Dwellers," *Greenville News,* May 30, 1969; Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 189–90.

[25] Numan V. Bartley, *The New South 1945–1980* (Baton Rouge, 1995), 431–32. Bartley quotes Fred Hobson, *Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain* (Baton Rouge, 1983).

[26] In 1970, the city received positive publicity from a variety of outlets including the national media when its fifty-eight thousand student Greenville County school district integrated without major incident. Stephen O'Neill, "Memory, History, and the Desegregation of Greenville, South Carolina," in *Toward the Meeting of the Waters: Currents in the Civil Rights Movement of South Carolina During the Twentieth Century*, ed. Winfred B. Moore, Jr., and Orville Vernon Burton (Columbia, SC, 2008), 286–99. O'Neill argues that Greenville business and civic leaders desegregated reluctantly but attempted to maintain a progressive image for the city to maintain the area's growth.

[27] Bartley, *New South,* 431–32, 398–99; Alexander P. Lamis, *The Two-Party South* (New York, 1984), 63–64. For a longer discussion of the relationship between New South Democrats such as Jimmy Carter and the Sunbelt image, see Bartley, *New South*, 398–404.

[28] Huff, *Greenville*, 420; "Greenville Evolving into Pattern of Segregated Areas, Study Shows," *Greenville News*, June 20, 1973.

[29] "Greenville Evolving"; "Greenville Citizens Urged to Join Fight"; "Statistical Information Released," *Greenville News,* October 25, 1975, box 12, Heller Papers.

[30] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985), 257, 258–59.

[31] Huff, *Greenville,* 395; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 260; Paul Davidson, "Changing of The Guard: Downtown's Past Slowly Being Replaced," *Greenville News,* December 4, 1996, Cancellation Shoe Mart Clipping File, South Carolina Room, Greenville County Library; Vincent Harris, "Sounds Familiar," *Upstate Business Journal,* 2015, Horizon Records Clipping File, South Carolina Room, Greenville County Library.

[32] Minor M. Shaw, interview conducted by author, March 11, 2020; Cliff Sloan and Bob Hall, "It's Good To Be Home in Greenville, But It's Better If You Hate Unions," *Southern Exposure* 7 (Spring 1979): 92 ; "Greenville Crime Rate Is Rising," *Greenville News,* April 4, 1975, box 13, Heller Papers; Merl Code, interview conducted by author, March 9, 2020.

[33] Huff, *Greenville,* 395; Shaw interview, March 11, 2020.

[34] Huff, *Greenville,* 395; Buck Mickel, Speech to the Downtown Greenville Association, box 30, folder 3, MSS 298, Buck Mickel Papers, Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, SC.

[35] Buck Mickel, Speech to the Downtown Greenville Association.

[36] For a good summary of Daniel's philosophy on organized labor and his politics, see James Arthur Dunlap, III, "Changing Symbols of Success: Economic Development in Twentieth Century Greenville, South Carolina" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1995), 168–80.

[37] Richard W. "Dick" Riley, interview conducted by author, January 25, 2019.

[38] "Budget Represents Good Planning," *Greenville News,* November 25, 1970; "City Agrees on Cost Figures For City Hall," *Greenville News,* April 7, 1971; Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 190.

[39] Jimmy Cornelison, "Ex-mayor prime player in school integration," *Greenville News,* June 7, 2000; Eric Connor, "Ex-mayor dies at 90; pushed for civil rights," *Greenville News,* April 25, 2017; Stuart Campbell, "No Retrogression Fears for Retiring Mayor," *Greenville News,* July 13, 1971, R. Cooper White, Jr., file, South Carolina Room, Greenville County Public Library (hereafter cited as Cooper White file). For the controversy over Albert Watson's campaign and R. Cooper White, Jr's role in the controversy, see Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, 2006), 259–60.

[40] Bruce H. Kalk, *The Origins of the Southern Strategy: Two Party Competition in South Carolina: 1950–1972* (Idaho Falls, ID, 2001), 122–24; Lassiter, *Silent Majority,* 255; "A Short, But Historic Term," *Greenville News,* February 19, 1971, Cooper White file; Cornelison, "Ex-mayor prime player."

[41] Lassiter, *Silent Majority,* 254, 260–61; Stuart Campbell, "White Has Parting Pangs: No Retrogression Fears For Retiring Mayor," *Greenville Piedmont,* July 13, 1971, Cooper White file; J. Hunter Stokes, "Heller Wins Mayor's Race by Large Margin," *Greenville News,* April 14, 1971.

[42] Heller campaign advertisement, *Greenville News,* April 10, 1971; Knox H. White, interview conducted by author, April 8, 2020; Cornelison, "Ex-mayor prime player."

[43] Huff, *Greenville,* 407–409; "Baptist Students Hail Jewish Mayor," *B'nai B'rith Messenger-Religious News Service*, 1975, box 3, folder 4, Heller Papers. As of 2022, no other Jews have won election to the position of mayor of Greenville.

[44] Nick A. Theodore to Max Heller, April 21, 1971; Dale Perry to Max Heller, April 14, 1971, box 3, folder 1, Heller Papers.

[45] Neal R. Peirce, "A Different Sort of Mayor in the Buckle of the Bible Belt," *Boston Globe,* April 14, 1978, box 4, folder 4, Heller Papers; "Greenville, South Carolina," *Money Magazine,* August 1974, box 3, folder 6, Heller Papers; "Baptist Students Hail Jewish Mayor," *B'nai B'rith Messenger–Religious News Service*, 1975, box 3, folder 4, Heller Papers; Dale Perry, "Presidency A Kingly Title No One Questions—Biden," *Greenville News,* May 6, 1975. Heller and Biden exchanged letters in 1975 and 1978 that can be found in box 4, folder 3 of the Heller Papers and in the Max Heller clipping file in the South Carolina Room of the Greenville County Library.

[46] Phillip Rovner, "Growing Up Jewish in Greenville," *The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina* 15 (2010): 10.

[47] Stuart Campbell, "Ayes and Nays," *Greenville Piedmont,* December 4, 1973, box 12, Heller Papers; "Mayor Heller's 'City of Tranquility,'" *Greenville News*, July 14, 1971.

[48] Merl Code interview, March 9, 2020; Cara Bonnett, "Merl Code," *Greenville News,* January 1, 2000.

[49] In 1915, South Carolina law prohibited African Americans from working in the same spaces as Whites within textile mills although, as the authors of *Like a Family* note, "By and large, occupational segregation was accomplished informally" prior to the passage of South Carolina's Segregation Act of 1915. See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, et. al., eds., *Like a Family: The*

Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World (Chapel Hill, 2000 [1987]), 66; O'Neill, "Memory, History, and the Desegregation of Greenville," 286–89.

[50] Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 197–98; O'Neill, "Memory, History, and the Desegregation of Greenville," 286, 287–89, 295–96.

[51] Puckett, *In the Shadow of Hitler,* 7; Vecchio, "Making Their Way in the New South," 117; Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 188.

[52] Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 217–18.

[53] Neal R. Peirce, "From poor refugee to mayor," *Boston Globe,* April 14, 1978, box 4, folder 4, Heller Papers; Dale Perry, "Housing, Sanitation Criticized at Meeting," *Greenville News,* October 12, 1973, box 12, Heller Papers.

[54] Stuart Campbell, "City Government Did More Listening, Brick and Mortar, Heightened Service Mark Year's Progress," *Greenville Piedmont,* December 27, 1973, box 13, Heller Papers; "City Council Accomplishments," box 3, folder 2, Heller Papers; "Federal Grants for Parks & Recreation Projects," box 3, folder 2, Heller Papers; Neal R. Peirce, "Greenville's Extraordinary Refugee-Businessman-Mayor," box 4, folder 4, Heller Papers. The Washington Post Publishing Group sent Heller a longer version of Peirce's column with additional details before it ran.

[55] Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 197; Trude and Francie Heller interview, 2019; Charles McNair, *Play It Again, Sam: The Notable Life of Sam Massell, Atlanta's First Minority Mayor* (Macon, GA, 2017), 129–36. MARTA initially only operated as a bus system; Atlanta's aboveground rail system only began operation after Massell left office.

[56] Susan Heller Moses, "Remembering My Dad, Max Heller," *Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina* 16 (2011): 14; Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 198; "Chronological Summary Evidence of Busy Year in Council Chambers," *Greenville News,* January 8, 1973, box 12, Heller Papers.

[57] Rogoff, "Divided Together," 133; Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill, 1996), 27, 43; McNair, *Play It Again, Sam,* 122–26; Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, 2005), 240.

[58] Dale Perry, "Black Cultural Council Formed in Greenville," *Greenville News,* n.d., box 12, Heller Papers; "Mayor Issues Proclamation for Dr. Martin Luther King," *Greenville News,* January 9, 1975, box 13, Heller Papers; "A Thanksgiving Tradition," *Greenville News,* November 21, 1975; Estes, *Charleston in Black and White,* 55–57.

[59] Dale Perry, "Voter Registration Complaint Filed," *Greenville News,* July 30, 1975; Carey Hayes, "Jackson asks 'resurrection,'" *Greenville Piedmont*, August 6, 1976; "Call for Federal Registrars Denied," *Greenville Piedmont,* August 6, 1976, box 16, Heller Papers; Estes, *Charleston in Black and White*, 52; Sally Smith, "Race for council seat shows black voter split," *Greenville News,* March 10, 1979.

[60] "Mayor says downtown is community's mirror," *Greenville News,* May 3, 1977, box 16, Heller Papers; Neal R. Peirce, "A Different Sort of Mayor"; James Eppes, "Marketer says where we live reveals much about how we live," *Greenville Piedmont,* January 24, 1989, Greenville Demographics 1980s file, Vertical files, South Carolina Room, Greenville County Library.

[61] Kruse, *White Flight,* 240; John Bolt, "Democrats come on strong," *Greenville Piedmont*, May 25, 1975, box 12, Heller Papers; "A Survey of the Political Climate in the Fourth

Congressional District of South Carolina," August 1978, Hart Research Associates Inc., 9, box 1, folder 1, Heller Papers; Jimmy Cornelison, "Partners in Romance, Service," *Greenville News*, May 26, 1999, Heller clipping file.

[62] Kevin Kruse, *White Flight,* 240–42; McNair, *Play It Again, Sam*, 111.

[63] Shannon, "Max Heller Remembers;" "Minitorial Notes on City Elections," *Greenville Piedmont,* April 11, 1975, box 13, Heller Papers.

[64] "Minitorial Notes on City Elections"; John Bolt, "Heller's gain is Jordan's loss," *Greenville Piedmont,* April 23, 1975, box 13, Heller Papers; Dale Perry, "Heller Easily Wins Reelection," *Greenville News,* May 21, 1975; Cornelison, "Partners in Romance, Service."

[65] Minor Shaw interview, March 11, 2020; John Boyanoski with Knox White, *Reimagining Greenville: Building the Best Downtown in America,* rev. ed. (Charleston, SC, 2017), 12–13; Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 192; "Downtown Move," *Greenville News-Piedmont,* July 26, 1975, box 4, folder 3, Heller Papers; "Fact Sheet on the First Term in Office of The Honorable Max M. Heller, Mayor of The City of Greenville," box 2, folder 2, Heller Papers.

[66] Boyanoski with White, *Reimagining Greenville*, 14; Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 193; "Greenville Commons groundbreaking set," *Greenville News*, December 24, 1978; "Facts and Figures," VisitGreenvilleSC, accessed April 6, 2022, https://www.visitgreenvillesc.com/about-greenville/all-about-greenville/facts-figures; Estes, *Charleston in Black and White,* 59–60.

[67] Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 193; Joan McKinney, "Heller's One-Man Show of Happiness Opens At Furman Saturday," *Greenville Piedmont,* September 9, 1970, Heller Clipping File; Marilyn Nelson, "Max Heller Revisited," *Greenville Magazine*, April 1982, 51, Heller Clipping File; Dale Perry, "New Art Museum is Open," *Greenville News*, March 10, 1974, box 12, Heller Papers; Nathaniel Cary, "Trude Heller, Holocaust Survivor who helped shape modern Greenville dies at 98," *The Post and Courier*, May 13, 2021, accessed May 13, 2021, https://www.postandcourier.com/greenville/news/trude-heller-holocaust-survivor-who-helped-shape-modern-greenville-dies-at-98/article_917e3b44-b384-11eb-ae54-1b75bf7e23a9.html; Estes, *Charleston in Black and White,* 58.

[68] Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 195; Adam Chanes, "When Greenville, South Carolina, Had a Jewish Mayor," *Forward*, September 15, 2014, accessed April 6, 2022, https://forward.com/culture/205485/when-greenville-south-carolina-had-a-jewish mayor/#:~:text=But%20for%20Max%20Heller%2C%20a,South%20Carolina's%20sixth%20largest%20city; Aubrey Bowie, "The Mayor Sprach Deutsch," *Greenville News,* March 12, 1973, box 12, Heller Papers; "Heller feels no anger in West Germany trip," *Greenville News-Piedmont*, April 24, 1977, Heller Clipping File.

[69] Sloan and Hall, "It's Good To Be Home in Greenville," 93; Johnson, "Political Culture and the Legacies of Antisemitism," 63–64.

[70] Trude and Francie Heller interview, 2019; "Attendance Is Sparse At Meeting," *Greenville News,* December 10, 1969.

[71] Ibid.; Dick Riley interview, January 25, 2019. Dick and Ann "Tunkey" Riley maintained a close friendship with the Hellers that continued after Heller's service as mayor.

[72] Trude Heller, e-mail to Judy Prince, January 12, 2012, box 1, folder 19, Heller Papers; Cary, "Trude Heller, Holocaust Survivor."

[73] "Jones: BJU Not Trying to Control County GOP," *Greenville News,* March 6, 1976; Bill Inman, "Students Protest Meeting," *Greenville Piedmont,* March 5, 1976, box 4, folder 2, Heller papers; Huff, *Greenville,* 409; Joseph Crespino, *Strom Thurmond's America* (New York, 2012), 267. "Jones: BJU Not Trying to Control County GOP" appeared in the *Greenville News* on the same page that carried stories on the prayer breakfast protest. The article carried Bob Jones III's denials that the institution orchestrated the election of twenty GOP committee people affiliated with the university. Jones also took a shot at the county's GOP leadership: "if old-time Republicans had power wrested away from them Thursday night, it is not Bob Jones University's fault."

[74] Max Heller to Carl R. Blair, February 27, 1975, box 4, folder 2, Heller Papers; G. Bryan Carroll, Invocation for the Greenville City Council, box 3, folder 2, Heller Papers.

[75] Lynn P. Smith to F. C. McConnell, III, March 9, 1976; "Baptist Students March to Protest Stand on Prayer," *News and Observer,* March 6, 1976, box 4, folder 2, Heller Papers.

[76] John A. Bolt, "Candidate Tells of City Liquor Bills," *Greenville Piedmont,* April 9, 1975, box 3, folder 2, Heller Papers.

[77] "Liquor Purchase Report Dirty Politics, Mayor Says," *Greenville News*, April 9, 1975, box 3, folder 2, Heller Papers; "Minitorial Notes on City Elections"; Dayton Walker, "WMUU Editorial," April 15, 1976, box 3, folder 2, Heller papers.

[78] H. R. Maurer to Max Heller, November 18, 1975; Mr. and Mrs. Steve McCrary to Max Heller, November 19, 1975, box 4, folder 2, Heller Papers.

[79] Cheryl Manning, "Prayer Breakfast Draws Crowd," *Greenville Piedmont*, March 3, 1976, box 4, folder 2, Heller Papers; Huff, *Greenville,* 412.

[80] Dr. Bob Jones, III, to Carolyn Stirm, February 5, 1976; John J. Dullea to Dr. Gilbert Stenholm, February 9, 1976, box 4, folder 2, Heller Papers.

[81] Inman, "Students Protest Meeting"; "Students Picket Prayer Breakfast," *Greenville News,* March 6, 1976; "Error's Origin Unknown to BJU," *Greenville News*, March 11, 1976; Statement by Dr. Bob Jones, May 20, 1975, box 4, folder 2, Heller Papers.

[82] Unknown sender to Max Heller, March 4, 1976; Paula Morris to Max Heller, March 8, 1976, box 4, folder 2, Heller Papers.

[83] Victor M. Babb to Max Heller, February 25, 1976, box 4, folder 2, Heller papers.

[84] Raymond A. Hefle, letter to the editor, *Greenville Piedmont*, March 15, 1976; Gilbert Swift, letter to the editor, unknown publication and date; C. G. Lollis, letter to the editor, *Greenville Piedmont,* March 15, 1976, box 4, folder 2, Heller papers.

[85] Shannon, "Max Heller Remembers"; Beth Padgett, "Helms has 'no apologies' despite BJU ouster move," *Greenville News,* March 26, 1980. Mayor Jesse L. Helms, a member of the Bob Jones University board of directors, continued the prayer breakfast during his term as mayor. He told the *Greenville News* that his participation in the ecumenical gathering cost him his seat on the university board.

[86] Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 199–201; Shannon, "Max Heller Remembers." Robert David Johnson argues that lingering fallout from the 1978 campaign may have damaged any hopes that Campbell held of a national political career. Campbell became South Carolina's first two-term Republican governor but was passed over as Bob Dole's running mate in 1996. Campbell passed away from complications related to Alzheimer's disease in 2005. See

Johnson, "Political Culture and the Legacies of Antisemitism," 49–75. Johnson graciously provided the author with a copy of the article before it was published.

[87] Aubrey Bowie, "Max Heller leaves his post on a tidy note," *Greenville News,* May 28, 1983, Heller clipping file; Cornelison, "Partners in Romance, Service"; Dale Perry, "Former mayor now focusing on improving education," *Greenville News,* January 1, 2002, Heller clipping file.

[88] Phillip Morris, "Remaking Main Street," *Southern Living*, August 1994, 67, 65–66, Counties—SC—Greenville—Articles from Other Publications file, South Carolina Room, Greenville County Library; Dale Perry, "Max Heller," *Greenville News,* January 1, 2001, Heller clipping file; Boyanoski with White, *Reimagining Greenville*, 16–17. See also Vecchio, "Max Moses Heller," 192–94.

[89] Andrew Harrison Baker, "From New South to Sunbelt: Greenville, South Carolina" (Ph.D. dissertation, Auburn University, 2020), 186; Lyn Riddle, "City still has a role to play in celebration," *Atlanta Constitution,* June 25, 1996; Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *World Class: Thriving Locally in the Global Economy* (New York, 1995), 248.

[90] Ron Barnett, "Rollicking crowd greets flame in downtown," *Greenville News,* June 26, 1996; Scott Wyman, "Greenville County's image tested by Olympic rebuke," *Greenville News,* June 26, 1996; Baker, "From New South to Sunbelt," 196–97. The original letter is in box 10, folder 20 of the Heller Papers.

[91] Hardesty, "Greenville honors visionary."

PRIMARY SOURCES

"A Good Place to Emigrate to Now": Recruiting Eastern European Jews for the Galveston Movement in 1907

by

Joshua J. Furman*

Important Information About Emigration to Galveston (State of Texas), 1907[1]

In late 2019, the Houston Jewish History Archive at Rice University acquired a rare Yiddish pamphlet from 1907, *Important Information About Emigration to Galveston (State of Texas)*.[2] The pamphlet, a publication of the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO), was produced in Zhitomir (now Zhytomyr), a city in northwestern Ukraine, and distributed to eastern European Jews to encourage them to participate in a program that would procure free ship tickets for them to Galveston so that they might be resettled in a new community in the southwestern or midwestern United States. The brochure, now translated by Maurice and Judy Wolfthal, illuminates what the first waves of eastern European Jews to journey to Texas under the auspices of the ITO were informed about the trip they were about to undertake.[3] The pamphlet also offers a rare snapshot of Texas Jewish life in the first decade of the twentieth century, as its authors ventured to describe the Lone Star State and the various opportunities it offered to an audience that could hardly imagine the destination awaiting them at the end of an arduous three-week journey.

The pamphlet was produced in support of the Galveston Movement, an organized effort to rescue Jews from poverty and oppression in eastern Europe and provide them with job opportunities in cities and towns across

* The author may be contacted at jf36@rice.edu.

the central United States. The movement brought almost ten thousand Jewish immigrants to America between 1907 and 1914. While that number represents only a tiny fraction of the 2.5 million Jews who immigrated to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars have nevertheless argued that the Galveston Movement (sometimes referred to as the Galveston Plan) played a significant role in the growth and development of new centers of Jewish life in Texas and the Midwest. The organizers of the plan undertook it to divert the Jewish immigrant flow away from New York and to disperse the newcomers throughout the American heartland. The story of the Galveston Movement, and the experiences of the thousands of Yiddish-speaking Jews who entered America through Texas rather than Ellis Island, provide a fascinating and useful counterpoint to the dominant narrative of American Jewish history that centers New York City and the Lower East Side as not merely the primary, but the universal hallmarks of the immigrant experience.[4] Studying American Jewish immigrant history outside of the New York metropolitan area and similar cities helps us to understand the larger picture through a comparative perspective.

The Galveston Movement

The origins of the Galveston Movement date to 1901, when a group of Jewish communal workers in New York established the Industrial Removal Office (IRO), an organization dedicated to alleviating the poverty, squalor, and overcrowding in the Lower East Side, the primary destination for the hundreds of thousands of eastern European Jews streaming into the city. Working with a series of local committees in cities throughout the Midwest and South, usually under the auspices of local B'nai B'rith lodges, the IRO worked to get struggling immigrants out of the slums by matching their skills and trades with employment opportunities far outside of New York. In this manner, Sam Zalefsky, who as a painter and wallpaper hanger struggled to make ends meet for his family in New York, received train tickets to transport his family to Fort Worth, Texas, where his wife Libby had relatives. Sam's son, Morris Bernard Zalefsky, shortened the family name to Zale and later became the president of Zale Jewelry Company, which grew into of one of the world's largest retail jewelry empires.[5]

This model for transplanting eastern European Jewish immigrants across the country to places where their job prospects could improve provided a template for the Galveston Movement to follow. According to David Bressler, manager at IRO headquarters in New York, the organization transported more than 29,500 immigrants between 1901 and 1907, its first six years of operation, and 85 percent of them remained in the towns to which they had been sent, a strong indicator of success. By 1922, when the IRO shut down, some seventy-nine thousand immigrants had been relocated away from New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia.[6]

Crowds on Hester Street, New York City, 1903.
(Wikimedia Commons.)

Although these figures might indicate proof that the IRO had succeeded in its goals, staff members and supporters grew frustrated by substantial and persistent difficulties in persuading Jewish immigrants to uproot from the Lower East Side and other major ethnic enclaves on the East Coast once they had set foot in them. As much as these ghettos offered poor housing, dirty air, and stiff competition for backbreaking labor

in sweatshops, they also offered the comforts of Yiddish theaters and newspapers, abundant kosher food, traditional synagogues, and a myriad of Jewish cultural and political organizations. Nevertheless, as the congestion and deterioration in the Lower East Side continued relatively unchecked, a number of American Jewry's most influential leaders grew alarmed concerning three issues.

First, they worried that the New York City Jewish community's capacity to provide charitable assistance to all those who needed it would soon be overwhelmed. Second, they feared that hard-line immigration restrictionist intellectuals and politicians would surely use the decrepit conditions of Jewish immigrant neighborhoods as justification for limiting, if not ending altogether, the pathway for eastern European Jews to seek refuge in the United States. Third, they were conscious of the strong possibility that the increasingly visible presence of poor Jewish immigrants in urban ethnic enclaves such as the Lower East Side would foment a wave of antisemitism that could easily trickle over against all Jews, even those elites like themselves who had become affluent and acculturated. Meanwhile, escalating antisemitic mob violence in Europe, including the notorious Kishinev pogrom of April 1903 in which nearly fifty Jews were killed and more than a thousand Jewish homes and stores looted and destroyed, heightened the sense of urgency among American Jewish communal leaders to take drastic action.[7]

Jacob Schiff, banker and philanthropist of German-Jewish descent, funder of the IRO, and arguably the most influential American Jew of his time, grew convinced that the only way to prevent further congestion and ghettoization in New York was to make sure that as few eastern European Jewish immigrants as possible set foot on Ellis Island to begin with. Instead, he proposed, they should be diverted to another American port as far to the west as possible, and, from there, immigrants with specific trades and skills would be transported to other hinterland communities that could provide them with employment. This plan would accelerate the assimilation process for the immigrants, who would be compelled to learn English and abandon most traditional Jewish rituals in order to make a living and fit in. Schiff hoped that this dispersal process would defuse many of what his class viewed as radical ideologies, from Zionism to socialism, that were attractive to oppressed and impoverished eastern European Jews. The plan would also contribute to the economic

development of dozens of cities across the country, strengthening the argument that Jews made useful citizens and that their immigration should not be blocked by Congress. Finally, Schiff's vision would ensure that the financial burden of assisting the immigrants would not be borne by New York Jewry alone.[8]

While Schiff provided crucial financial backing—five hundred thousand dollars to support the operations of the project on the American side—the day-to-day operations of the Galveston Movement were coordinated by two agencies, the ITO in London and Kiev and the Jewish Immigrants' Information Bureau (JIIB), with offices in Galveston and New York. The ITO was the creation of the English writer and activist Israel Zangwill, most famous for his 1908 play *The Melting Pot*, which cast America as the assimilating crucible that would save and harmoniously blend together immigrants of various European backgrounds. Like Schiff, Zangwill unalterably opposed Zionism as a solution for the problems of European Jewry. He formed the ITO with the goal of advocating the establishment of a Jewish state in a land other than Palestine. Schiff convinced Zangwill to engage the ITO as a partner organization to manage affairs in Europe. From Kiev, the ITO worked to recruit eastern European Jews for the project, creating and distributing the pamphlet under discussion in this article as part of an effort to advertise the advantages of immigration to the United States through Texas. They coordinated with the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden* (Aid Society for German Jews) in Berlin to ease the movement of Russian Jews through central Europe to the port city of Bremen, their point of embarkation for the United States.[9]

Port of Bremen, Germany, c. 1900. (Wikimedia Commons.)

Rabbi Henry Cohen with the 1927 confirmation class of Temple B'nai Israel, Galveston. (Courtesy of the Houston Jewish History Archive, Rice University.)

Having secured the services of the ITO to handle matters in Europe, Schiff then brought the IRO and David Bressler on board to oversee operations in the United States. Bressler's assistant, Morris Waldman, accepted the assignment of finding an alternate American port that could serve as a hub for transporting thousands of immigrants into the country's interior. Although New Orleans and Charleston came under consideration, ultimately Galveston was chosen as the base of operations for this new initiative. Galveston offered several advantages: a direct connection to Europe through regular steamship travel from Bremen, Germany; links to numerous cities across middle America by rail; and a landing spot deemed too small and unattractive, such that immigrants would prefer to move on to other destinations rather than remain in Galveston. The island was also home to the energetic and universally admired Rabbi Henry Cohen of Congregation B'nai Israel, the best-known Jewish leader in Texas at that time. Born and raised in London, Cohen was well-acquainted with Israel Zangwill from their time together at the Jews' Free School. The rabbi

quickly became an enthusiastic ambassador for the movement and its most visible advocate. He routinely met the immigrants upon arrival, assisted with the procurement of kosher food and temporary lodging for them, interceded with immigration authorities when necessary on their behalf, and helped them board the proper trains to their final destinations.[10]

Once Schiff and his partners settled on Galveston as the focal point for the project, the JIIB was organized there in January 1907, under the direction of Morris Waldman, to coordinate the care of immigrants upon arrival and their transportation to their ultimate destinations, as well as to oversee the process by which immigrants were matched with job opportunities in different communities. The JIIB instructed the ITO in Europe with guidelines as to the most desirable trades that potential candidates for successful immigration could offer. The list included tinsmiths, shoemakers, carpenters, tailors, and cabinetmakers. The JIIB explicitly counseled the ITO against sending Jewish ritual functionaries, such as kosher slaughterers, or anyone firmly committed to traditional Jewish practice and unwilling to work on the Sabbath.[11]

The first boat with Galveston Movement immigrants, the SS *Cassel*, docked on July 1, 1907, bringing fifty-six new Jews to American shores.[12] Cohen and Mayor H. A. Landes were on hand to welcome them. In an oft-repeated anecdote about this first encounter, after the rabbi translated the mayor's official greeting to the immigrants into Yiddish so that they would understand, one of them reportedly stepped forward and offered words of gratitude and amazement, which Cohen translated in kind: "We are overwhelmed that the ruler of the city should greet us. We have never been spoken to by the officials of our country except in terms of harshness, and although we have heard of the great land of freedom, it is very hard to realize that we are permitted to grasp the hand of the great man."[13] Newspapers promoted and praised the Galveston Movement in its early years. An editorial in the *Houston Post* in August 1908 applauded the initiative to bring Russian Jews to Texas: "With no desire to butt in ahead of other States which are anxious for an industrious and law-abiding population, we should like to call attention to the fact that Texas has room within her borders for all the Israelites of the world, and then some."[14]

In his editorializing about the Galveston Movement, Rabbi Cohen echoed a similar theme, presenting the Jewish immigrants entering Texas

Henry Cohen's column about the Galveston Movement, Jewish Herald, *February 5, 1909. (Newspapers.com.)*

as hard-working individuals who would be easily assimilated into America's socioeconomic structure and culture. Simultaneously, Cohen was careful to position eastern European Jews in rhetorical proximity to other white races in America, seeking to temper suspicions about their racial status and fitness for citizenship. Writing in the *Houston Post* in December 1908, Cohen claimed that America could, "without the least violence to itself," easily accommodate all of world Jewry "and then have room for three times that number, exclusive of the regular quota of other foreign settlers." To strengthen his presentation of eastern European Jewish immigrants as nonthreatening, Cohen argued that such an influx of "able-bodied" men was precisely the solution to the persistent labor shortage in the South and West: "[T]o this end the Jewish artisan and laborer, fortified by industry and abstemiousness, and well-disciplined by salutary religious laws and customs, could contribute in measure."[15]

Cohen then envisioned eastern European Jews taking their place in America's racial landscape: "With the Teuton and the Slav, as well as with

the scions of the Latin races, he [the Jew in America] would make excellent citizenship, with no possible chance of his returning to his mother country—step-mother country, rather—when he had accumulated a little money." Unlike other white ethnic groups, most notably Italians, who frequently came to America with the intention of staying temporarily while they worked to earn money to send back home and then returning to their countries of origin in Europe, Cohen asserted that the Jews coming to the United States were coming to stay and had no other home. In grouping eastern European Jews with other white ethnics in their character traits, Cohen strongly suggested that no matter what first impression these Yiddish speakers might make, they had more in common with white American Protestants than with the nation's Black and Hispanic minorities. Regaling his audience with tales of newly arrived Jewish immigrants requesting that he procure newspapers, English dictionaries, and a chess set for them, he assured the readers of the *Houston Post* that "[t]his country need have no fear of this class of alien."[16]

Despite its propitious beginnings, the movement faced insurmountable challenges from the start. Periods of economic depression in the United States limited job opportunities for immigrants and placed undue pressure on host communities to meet their commitments of accepting specified numbers of immigrants. Legal challenges hindered the movement's progress, as organizers were accused of violating American immigration laws that forbade entry to anyone whose passage was sponsored. Possibly because of this suspicion or antisemitic motives, customs officials at Galveston were notoriously more strident in deporting Jewish immigrants for supposed cause than were their colleagues in New York. According to JIIB records, the percentage of those arrivals excluded or deported at Galveston approached 6 percent by 1914, whereas at northern ports the percentage never rose higher than 1.1 percent. The arduous and uncomfortable journey from Bremen to Galveston, which lasted around three weeks, posed an additional challenge. Immigrants complained of cramped living conditions, terrible food, and even abusive treatment by the crew aboard their ship. As word of deportation threats and perilous travel reached from America back to Europe, the ITO struggled to find recruits. By spring 1914, due to these daunting and seemingly insurmountable challenges, leaders of the movement voted to end the program

by September of that year. They were, of course, unaware that the outbreak of World War I in August would have led to the same result.[17]

The Galveston Movement in Historiography and Popular Culture

No longer an obscure phenomenon, the Galveston Movement has sustained the attention of historians and storytellers since the 1970s, when the first scholarly articles appeared. Bernard Marinbach's groundbreaking book, *Galveston: Ellis Island of the West* (1983), remains the definitive account. That same year, Dallas-based filmmakers Allen Mondell and Cynthia Salzman Mondell produced *West of Hester Street*, a dramatic retelling of the Galveston Movement story that cast actors in the roles of key figures such as Jacob Schiff, Israel Zangwill, and Henry Cohen. The docudrama depicted the perspective of a Galveston Movement immigrant relating his experiences to his grandchildren at their Passover Seder table. The film and the teaching guide created to spark discussions about the movement and American Jewish immigration history greatly contributed to increasing awareness among scholars and the general public.[18] In 1985, playwright and actor Mark Harelik created *The Immigrant*, a play based on the experiences of his grandparents, Haskell and Matleh Harelik, who came to Hamilton in central Texas via Galveston in 1909. The play has been staged hundreds of times across the United States and Canada since its inception, and was adapted into a musical in 2000.[19] Finally, an exhibit on immigration through Galveston, curated by Suzanne Seriff and entitled *Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America Through Galveston Island, 1846–1924*, included a substantial component related to the Galveston Movement. The exhibit debuted at the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin in 2009 and went on to installations at the Ellis Island Museum in New York City, as well as institutions in Galveston and Fort Worth.[20]

The most detailed memoir about the journey to Galveston from eastern Europe comes from the pen of Alexander Gurwitz, who left the Ukraine in 1910 with his wife and four youngest children when he was fifty-one years old. Gurwitz was not a conventional Galveston Movement immigrant in that he did not emigrate under the aegis of the ITO and paid his own passage with the intent of joining relatives in San Antonio, but he took the same journey as the other immigrants. In his seventies, Gurwitz composed a memoir in Yiddish, *Memories of Two Generations*, in which he described his childhood and traditional upbringing in eastern Europe, his

West of Hester Street, dir. Allen Mondell and Cynthia Salzman Mondell, 1983. (Media Projects, Inc.)

The cast of the Alley Theatre's 1987 production of The Immigrant: A Hamilton County Album. *(Courtesy of Alley Theatre, Houston.)*

life as a kosher butcher and religious teacher there, his voyage to America through Galveston, and his impressions of San Antonio in the early decades of the twentieth century. Translated into English by Rabbi Amram Prero of Congregation Agudas Achim in San Antonio, the memoir was later published with historical footnotes and commentary by historian Bryan Edward Stone in 2016. Gurwitz's description of the passage to Galveston is an invaluable source for examining how immigrants were screened for health concerns prior to boarding and for understanding how class divisions manifested themselves on the ship, among other topics.[21]

Most recently, in the pages of this journal, Stone analyzed statistical data collected by the JIIB about the age, gender, occupation, and destinations of the Galveston Movement immigrants. The bureau kept meticulous records about the immigrants under their charge and tallied the numbers of immigrants sent to each of 235 cities and towns in the United States. Stone's work indicates that the Midwest received the largest share of immigrants as a region, with Kansas City, St. Paul, and Omaha taking in the most arrivals. At the same time, according to the JIIB's statistics, four of the top ten destinations were cities in Texas—Houston, Dallas, Galveston, and Fort Worth—in spite of the fact that some movement organizers expressed serious reservations about the immigrants remaining in the Lone Star State rather than spreading out across the country. The data discloses the number of small communities that received placements: Victor, Colorado, took in seven eastern European Jewish immigrants under this arrangement, for example, while DeRidder, Louisiana, accepted two and Bowman, North Dakota, took in one—one of fifty-eight communities that became home to a solitary new arrival.[22]

The profile of the typical immigrant, according to Stone, was a male in his mid-thirties, a demographic group that would fit the organizers' goal of resettling the "most employable" eastern European Jews. Of those immigrants who declared a trade or profession, the most common was men's tailor, followed by clerk, shoemaker, and carpenter. Stone found more than five hundred self-declared "housewives" among the 1,225 female immigrants older than fifteen, and 1,271 children younger than fifteen who entered through Galveston. Accordingly, he concluded that "the Galveston Movement was not exclusively, as it is usually depicted, a

job placement service. It was, rather, a form of Jewish family service, facilitating the immigration and placement of entire families" in hundreds of destinations across America.[23]

The translation and publication of the ITO's 1907 pamphlet, *Important Information About Emigration to Galveston (State of Texas)* makes a significant contribution to the body of scholarly knowledge and creative portrayals of the Galveston Movement, as the most preeminent example of prescriptive literature yet available related to this effort. What enticements and arguments did the ITO use to sell the program to eastern European Jews? What instructions did immigrants receive to help them prepare for the journey? What impressions of Texas and the United States did the ITO create in order to convince potential immigrants to leave eastern Europe for an unknown destination across the ocean? How does the pamphlet compare to other examples of "push" literature in American Jewish immigration history?

Analyzing the Pamphlet: Understanding the Recruitment Effort

The ITO directed a network of more than eighty committees across the Pale of Settlement, which was charged with the task of recruiting candidates for immigration through Galveston. To support this effort, the committees distributed literature in Yiddish produced with information supplied by the JIIB that described the emigration process, gave advice on how to prepare for the trip, and detailed the opportunities and advantages they claimed Texas and the American West would offer to new immigrants.[24]

One such pamphlet, *United States via Galveston*, aimed specifically to advise immigrants how to dress and remain healthy aboard ship during the three-week voyage. The need for immigration candidates to arrive on American shores in good health was paramount since American inspectors would immediately disqualify anyone with a detectable infirmity. Trachoma, an infectious eye disease and a particularly worrisome ailment, served as a red flag for inspectors. Four eastern European Jews were deported from Galveston in September 1907 as a consequence of a trachoma diagnosis. Accordingly, the ITO pamphlet instructed immigrant recruits "against the practice of bathing their eyes with salt water" while at sea, so that they might avoid suspicion of disease and the fate of deportation.[25]

Important Information Concerning Emigration to Galveston represents a significant entry in the genre of recruitment literature in the history of Jewish immigration to the United States. Its central theme, depicting Texas and the American heartland as places of opportunity and prosperity for those willing to work hard, are echoed in other essays, pamphlets, and letters that circulated among European Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Penina Moïse, born in Charleston in 1797 to a family with roots in Alsace and the West Indies, was among the most preeminent American Jewish women of the nineteenth century. She became a well-known poet and columnist and composed nearly two hundred hymns for the worship services at Charleston's Beth Elohim, many of which were adopted by the Reform movement. In 1820, following a series of devastating antisemitic riots in central Europe, Moïse composed a poem entitled "To Persecuted Foreigners" in which she called on her fellow Jews overseas to "Fly from the soil whose desolating creed/Outraging faith, makes human victims bleed." In America, according to Moïse, Jews no longer suffered under cruel despots or feared such outbreaks of mob violence. She urged her readers to "Brave the Atlantic—Hope's broad anchor weigh/A Western sun will gild your future day."[26]

Echoing similar themes, Max Lilienthal, a Munich-born rabbi who emigrated to America, wrote a series of letters during the 1840s for the German-Jewish periodical *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* that extolled the benefits and privileges that Jews enjoyed in this "God-blessed country of freedom," compared to Europe with its limitations on Jewish civil rights and outbreaks of violence, which was nothing but "a bad dream." Lilienthal urged those "willing and able to work, ready to overcome the first hardships that meet everyone coming to a strange country" to journey to America, where they could pursue economic advancement unhindered by restrictions on their choice of residence or occupation, as was the case throughout much of Europe.[27]

Whereas these examples of "push" literature—a genre of writing encouraging immigration that spanned editorials, poetry, and family letters urging Jewish emigration out of Europe—emphasized America as a land of ideological freedom and physical safety, the ITO's 1907 pamphlet underscored the economic potential of Texas and other destinations in middle America. Its recruitment strategy rested squarely on presenting eastern European Jews with a vision of the better standard of living that

awaited them overseas, in conjunction with the job placement service that it offered through the JIIB. "Our Committee over there [the JIIB] looks for employment for everyone, and is capable of finding work for everyone who is able to work," the ITO announced.[28]

However, the ITO simultaneously attempted to manage expectations about career opportunities and the pace of advancement. While craftsmen could expect to find employment, those seeking to make a living in commerce would have to bide their time until they became acclimated. "As a rule, an immigrant can't become a businessman as soon as he arrives, only later, when he has mastered the language (English) and has gotten used to the place. In the beginning you just have to work at anything," the pamphlet advised. In a footnote, readers were further warned to temper their hopes for a quick rise up the socioeconomic ladder. Although many from the first groups of arrivals had found "stable employment" and sent for their families, nevertheless, "every emigrant, even a craftsman, must be ready for the possibility that he may have to labor for some time in some other craft, and as a result have to work harder and for lower wages." While an adjustment to American labor standards and working conditions might result in a temporary demotion and lower income, and the ITO could not guarantee job placement in a specific trade, it assured candidates that the JIIB would work tirelessly on their behalf and that "every emigrant who has the strength and the desire to work can certainly be sure that, with effort, he will more assuredly and more quickly earn a living in that place than in New York."[29]

Candidates were also instructed that Jewish teachers and ritual functionaries would not find employment as such in America due to their lack of English skills.[30] Despite this "need not apply" approach to Jewish educators and professionals, which fit the organizers' desire to promote assimilation among eastern European Jews, Bryan Stone found eleven kosher butchers listed in the occupations of Galveston immigrants and speculates that rabbis and *melamdim* may have made up some percentage of the sixty-four teachers among the ranks of new arrivals.[31]

Even as it meticulously detailed the opportunities awaiting Jews in America, the ITO invested considerable energy in the pamphlet in dissuading its audience from considering the more conventional path of immigration through Ellis Island and putting down roots in New York. Echoing the concerns voiced by Schiff about the dangers of continuing to

overpopulate the Lower East Side with more eastern European Jewish immigrants, the ITO encouraged its recruits to think of middle America, not the Big Apple, as the place where their ambitions would bear the most fruit. This "large, rich region," an area encompassing Texas, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, and other states, "is now at the same level where New York was 25 years ago, before it was flooded with immigrants," the pamphlet read. While the laws and customs of the United States, guaranteeing freedom and equality to all, were equally applied in every state of the Union, the brochure counseled that immigrants would find higher wages and cheaper food in these other destinations as opposed to New York, along with warmer weather (at least in Texas).[32] Whereas statistics from the United States Bureau of Labor supported the cost-of-living claims about the advantages of settling outside the Northeast, data for 1906 suggests that wages varied regionally according to occupation.[33]

In the event that an immigrant failed a health inspection upon arrival, they would be deported back to Europe at the expense of the steamship company that transported them. So as not to aggravate the companies that the movement depended on—and to avoid giving

Immigrants at Ellis Island, New York, are inspected for trachoma, c. 1910. (National Park Service.)

credence to the impression popular at the time among staunch anti-immigration activists that eastern European Jews were bringing dangerous diseases to American shores—the pamphlet stressed that only those in perfect physical condition should present themselves as candidates for emigration via Galveston.[34] "You have to be totally healthy," the ITO advised. "American officials will not permit entry to the sick, the weak, those with trachoma infections in the eyes, . . . mange, . . . a bald spot in the middle of the head, lung problems, serious nervous diseases and so not capable of working," and therefore all candidates were instructed to seek medical guidance to address any questionable conditions prior to preparing for emigration. In an indication of the primacy of concerns surrounding trachoma, regardless of symptoms, the ITO directed all candidates to consult an eye doctor. Immigrants were strongly forewarned that they traveled at their own risk and that their expenses would not be refunded. "If there's the slightest doubt, it's better not to travel," the pamphlet read. "We take absolutely no responsibility if someone is prevented from entering on the grounds of health."[35]

For those considering emigration who could pass a health inspection, the pamphlet detailed the step-by-step process that would take them from their homes in eastern Europe to Galveston and from there on to a new life in another American city or town. Although immigrants bore the responsibility for their travel expenses to Bremen, the ITO paid for kosher food and lodging for them while they waited, as well as the cost of their ship tickets to Galveston. The pamphlet includes a table of estimated costs of train travel from the border control station to Bremen and then again for the ship tickets, presumably to illustrate the financial benefit the ITO offered Galveston Movement candidates and to prepare those emigrants who chose to pay their own costs. The projected expenses for bringing children of various ages are included along with the cost of tickets for adults, which adds further evidence to Bryan Stone's assertion that the Galveston Movement was not simply an effort to provide eastern European Jews with American jobs, but also a means of transporting entire families.[36]

The pamphlet includes fascinating information about packing recommendations for the journey. Because of the expense of bringing luggage aboard the German trains that carried immigrants from the border to Bremen, the pamphlet's author advised readers to bring "just the

necessities: clean, white underwear, washed and pressed; bedding; your best clothes; shoes or boots," along with an overcoat and a blanket to keep warm above deck. Travelers were further warned only to bring small bundles since large trunks could not be brought aboard the trains.[37] From these guidelines, we can imagine the difficult choices that individuals might have had to make about which family heirlooms or luxury items to take and which to leave, and we can retrace the administrative steps that a Galveston Movement immigrant would have taken to get the proper papers for the journey.

Jewish immigrants boarding
a Galveston-bound ship in Bremen, Germany, 1907.
(Sechster Geschäftsbericht (1907) des Hilfsvereins der Deutschen Juden,
or Sixth Annual Report (1907) of the Aid Societies for German Jews.*)*

Furthermore, the pamphlet helps us understand how the ITO tried to sell eastern European Jewish immigrants on the Galveston Movement as a chance to find opportunity and prosperity that New York could no longer offer them, and how the ITO tried to warn away candidates who could not pass health inspections. These strategies were critical to the project's success, if it were to have any hope of meeting Jacob Schiff's ambitious goal of settling upwards of twenty-five thousand Jews in the far-flung communities of the American hinterland.[38] That the project ultimately faltered for reasons already discussed does not detract from the

pamphlet's ability to convince hundreds of immigrants to journey across the sea for Galveston in the final months of 1907.

Texas and its Jewish Communities in 1907 in Reality and as Presented in the Pamphlet

Beyond what the pamphlet tells us about the Galveston Movement recruitment effort, it contains an interesting description of Texas near the turn of the twentieth century as well. Today 176,000 Jews reside in Texas, concentrated primarily in the large metropolises of Dallas and Houston, with other communities of note in cities such as Austin and San Antonio. In contrast, in 1899, just a few years before the publication of the ITO's pamphlet, the entire Jewish population of the Lone Star State numbered only fifteen thousand.[39]

From letters, stories, and rumors circulating around eastern Europe, Jews dreaming of a better life in the United States might have had a vision of what the Lower East Side was like. But what about Texas? What opportunities could it offer compared to those awaiting in New York, which, despite the dreadful tenement buildings and garment sweatshops, still carried the appeal of flourishing Yiddish newspapers and theaters, familiar synagogues, comforting foods, and various Jewish cultural and political organizations of every ideology and inclination? To convince immigrants to choose the Galveston route, the ITO had to sell the potential immigrants on its version of a different kind of Promised Land.

Still, the fact that the pamphlet devoted several pages to a description of Texas is extremely surprising, given that in the original plans and negotiations that established the Galveston Movement, organizers with the JIIB explicitly directed the ITO to discourage immigrants from remaining in Galveston or other Texas destinations. For its part, the Galveston Jewish community was loath to become permanent hosts for thousands of new immigrants who were likely to need charitable assistance as they worked to reestablish themselves. From the beginning, all parties involved understood that Galveston was to serve merely as the port of entry and nothing more. Ultimately, fewer than three hundred immigrants put down roots on the island. The program was designed to get immigrants off the docks and onto trains headed for their final resettlement destinations as quickly as possible and ideally the same day that they arrived. In

the event that they needed to stay in Galveston for a night or two, the JIIB provided them with shelter and kosher food.[40]

In keeping with the wishes of the Galveston Jewish community and not wanting to alienate any of its local partners, JIIB officials initially advised the ITO to downplay Texas as an appealing destination. On the final page of a copy of this pamphlet that can be found in the ITO organizational records in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, Morris Waldman, the first manager of the JIIB's Galveston office, wrote, "These cities and the whole state of Texas offer only limited opportunities, and only for a small minority of our people. The opportunities in Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota are greater. We suggest that you do not emphasize Texas but the states we have just mentioned. Please say that Galveston is being used by us *only as a port of entry* [Waldman's emphasis], that none of the immigrants will remain here."[41]

Despite Waldman's intentions, a small number of early immigrants elected to remain in Texas. Four of the arrivals who came aboard the SS *Cassel* on the maiden voyage of the Galveston Movement in July 1907 went to Fort Worth because one of them, Joseph Zubrowsky from Zhytomyr, who self-identified as a blacksmith, had a relative there, and three of his fellow townsmen pushed to join him. "I had not intended to place any [immigrants] in the South, during the summer," Waldman confessed in a report to David Bressler, either because he feared the extreme heat would come as an unwelcome shock to the eastern Europeans, or because job opportunities would be harder to come by in the summer months. That these four men had their way suggests that the organization was willing to accommodate immigrants' wishes, within the broader guidelines and goals of the movement.[42]

If some immigrants remained in Texas because they chose to do so, others found a home there because Jewish community leaders in the state lobbied for them for stay. In a report that Bressler sent to Waldman in New York City in late August—they seem to have swapped offices for a brief time—he noted that, of the eighty-nine immigrants who arrived a week earlier on the SS *Chemnitz*, eight went to Dallas, "rather an unusually large number for that city." Mr. Waldstein, the agent representing the Dallas Jewish community in conjunction with the JIIB, came to Galveston and "volunteered to take that many, in fact, he selected them himself; otherwise, I should not have sent more than half that number to that city."[43] In

Letter from David Bressler to Morris Waldman containing a list of immigrants who arrived on the SS Chemnitz *on August 28, 1907, showing their names, ages, occupations, places of origin, and destination cities. (JIIB Records, American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History, New York.)*

this case, Waldstein, possibly sensing an opportunity to bolster Dallas's Jewish community, seized the chance to bring immigrants there. Perhaps due to this demonstration of interest from at least one local community, Bressler wrote to the ITO from New York in November 1907 to indicate that the JIIB had now added several cities in Texas to its roster of destinations, since "while we wish special stress laid on the fact that Galveston itself offers no opportunity for the immigrant, the State of Texas is otherwise not barren of opportunities for the newcomer."[44]

However, not all Texas Jewish leaders rejoiced with the charge of welcoming Galveston Movement immigrants. In December 1907, Rabbi Wolf Willner of Houston's Congregation Adath Yeshurun wrote an exasperated letter to Waldman, announcing that the community could not accommodate additional immigrants. According to Willner, those who had moved to the city thus far were struggling to keep jobs and make ends meet, and now his committee, tasked with aiding them, was two hundred dollars in debt. According to the rabbi's tale of woe, one such immigrant, a man named Salzberg, left a decent situation in Bremen, where the local rabbi convinced him to emigrate through Galveston with the ITO. He ended up in Houston, where he first "went around idle for 6 weeks, till at last he got a job out of pity with enough to keep body and soul together and not a cent to spare for his family in Europe." After this ordeal, Willner claimed, Salzberg "is not inclined to write a letter of thanks to the [ITO], and does not bless the rabbi in Bremen."[45]

Portrait of Rabbi Wolf Willner from The Golden Book of Congregation Adath Yeshurun, *1942. (Courtesy of the Houston Jewish History Archive, Rice University.)*

In blistering language, Willner blamed the ITO and its committees in Europe, whose staffers he wished to have "rapped over the knuckles" for what he viewed as the unethical practice of competing in "a foul race" to send over as many immigrants to the American heartland as possible without any verified assurance that these Jewish communities could actually deliver what the ITO promised in terms of job security and wages. Furthermore, the rabbi railed at the ITO's advertising campaign, referring to the pamphlet translated here: "The men show me the 'Yiddish' pamphlets circulated in Russia. Did you ever see one? From the way Houston is spelled therein . . . we can tell they were written in New York, where they have 'How-ston' St., and therefore by men who had to rely on their inventive genius—what harm does it do them to burden our communities, and to make men unhappy?"[46] From the unrealistic expectations of the ITO and the JIIB, to the bungling of the pronunciation of his home city, Willner blasted the organizers of the Galveston Movement as being completely out of touch with conditions on the ground.

Regardless of Willner's complaints, as soon as Texas Jewish communities were cleared to receive Galveston Movement immigrants without hesitation on the part of the JIIB, the state quickly became the most popular choice for settlement. After a long and arduous journey, it stands to reason that immigrants would have little interest in venturing much further if given the chance to settle in Texas. According to 1913 statistics analyzed by Bryan Stone, Texas received over two thousand immigrants via the JIIB, about 26 percent of the total number of participants registered with the organization. Several hundred more eastern European Jews, including Alexander Gurwitz and his family, entered Texas as "courtesy" or "reunion" cases, traveling to Galveston independent of the ITO or to reunite with relatives already living there. From an initial refusal and reluctance to aid in the development of Texas Jewish communities, the JIIB went on to play a significant role in settling Jews across the state in the larger cities as well as in smaller towns such as Corsicana, Port Arthur, and Palestine.[47]

Although the sources of information that the ITO drew on to describe Texas to eastern European Jews are unknown, the content reads as a fairly accurate rendering of local conditions. Seeking to impress its audience, the pamphlet introduced Texas to readers as the largest state in America, which it was before Alaska gained statehood in 1959—larger

than France, for point of reference. Its land was ideal for raising cotton and cattle, and, aside from the humid Gulf Coast region, newcomers could look forward to a salubrious climate highlighted by temperate winters. The state served as home to a diverse array of ethnicities, including "Englishmen, Spaniards, Germans, Frenchmen, Negroes, Indians, and others," yet the lack of a large population relative to the state's tremendous size suggested that Texas "still has lots of empty space for new immigrants."[48] Here again the ITO set up a stark contrast for its audience between Texas, with its wide-open spaces and warm weather, and the crowding and cold that awaited them in New York.

To further its mission of recruiting eastern European Jews for job opportunities, the pamphlet described the nature of the local economy and Jewish communities in Galveston, Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, Waco, and El Paso. While Galveston boasted the largest port in the region and a significant manufacturing sector, with specialization in such industries as "iron pipes, door and window frames, knitted bags, clothes, fruit preserves, mineral waters, [and] artificial ice," readers were warned that "the cost of living is not cheap here" and were presented with projected expenses (in dollars) for rent and various foodstuffs on the island.[49] Portraying Galveston as a prohibitively expensive place to settle was likely a method by which the ITO and its partner constituencies hoped to dissuade recruits from planning to stay there after they arrived.

The pamphlet introduced eastern European Jews to Houston, just fifty miles northwest of Galveston, even if it confused the proper pronunciation of the city with the more familiar street in Manhattan. It described Houston as "a very important industrial city" and an important transportation hub. According to the pamphlet, job opportunities in the railroad industry, as well as in clay and porcelain manufacturing, were plentiful there for "healthy, capable workers." A community of 2,500 Jews supported "its own synagogue, several prayer and study houses, and various charitable institutions and associations."[50]

In fact, Houston at the time had three synagogues: Congregation Adath Yeshurun, which was traditional, as was the newly formed Congregation Adath Israel, and Congregation Beth Israel, the oldest house of worship in Texas, which by that time had adopted Reform Judaism in its ritual and theological outlook. Presumably the ITO (or whoever furnished the information to it) assumed that Beth Israel, which used an organ and

the Hebrew Union Prayer Book in worship, would have no appeal or significance for an eastern European Jewish audience unaccustomed to such innovations, and thus did not even bother to mention its existence.[51]

Other Texas cities offered varying kinds of opportunities that the pamphlet described in accurate detail, from San Antonio, described as a prosperous agricultural center, to Dallas, the "best-known city in America" for manufacturing saddles and harnesses, to Fort Worth, the "center of the cattle and meat trade," to Waco, with jobs for construction workers, shoemakers, tailors, bakers and watch makers. Sometimes the pamphlet indicated the presence of a Jewish community in a given Texas town by its population, as was the case with Dallas. Elsewhere it listed the names of traditional synagogues in Waco and El Paso to satisfy the curiosity of potential settlers.[52] In short, while Texas offered the rudimentary necessities of Jewish communal life for those who needed it, the ITO presumed that the primary attraction of the Lone Star State for immigrants was the wide variety of jobs supposedly available. Providing them with these jobs and securing for them a safe environment that would promote their acculturation into American life were the central missions of the Galveston Movement.

Conclusion

Prescriptive literature such as the pamphlet analyzed and translated here cannot take the place of memoirs, letters, and other primary sources in helping us to understand what Galveston Movement immigrants experienced in their journey across the sea, or what happened to them after they left the island and dispersed across the American heartland. Nonetheless, we learn intriguing details about the journey itself—the costs involved, the steps required in preparation for the trip, and so on.

The true power of prescriptive literature, in this case, lies in its ability to pull the curtain back on the organizers of the movement and visualize the rhetorical strategies they developed to sell eastern European Jews on the idea of uprooting their lives and taking a chance on Galveston and especially the opportunities that lay beyond. In casting New York in a negative light, the authors of the pamphlet hoped to divert as many immigrants from Ellis Island as possible. Conversely, by presenting Texas as "a good place to emigrate to now," a vast frontier with boundless room for new arrivals, plentiful jobs in a variety of industries, and just enough

Jewish communal infrastructure to satisfy those who would be interested, the ITO cast the Lone Star State as an alternate Promised Land for those Jews seeking a fresh start in 1907.

This discussion also introduces the critical component of whiteness and racial identity to the scholarship of the Galveston Movement and furthers our understanding of how Jewish Texans worked to position and represent themselves as Anglos, part and parcel of the state's white majority, even as they endeavored to maintain their distinct religious and cultural traditions in various ways.[53] Rabbi Cohen's arguments to the *Houston Post* in 1908, directed at a general audience and crafted in an era of considerable xenophobia and hostility toward Jews and other southern and eastern Europeans in American culture and politics, sheds light on yet another important rhetorical strategy in use prior to World War I. Just as eastern European Jews needed to be convinced that Texas could offer them a viable new home, so too did Texans need to be convinced that their state should welcome them.

-o0o-

Important Information About Emigration to Galveston (State of Texas), 1907

Jewish Territorial Organization
Central Emigration Bureau for all of Russia in Kiev

Important Information Concerning Emigration
to Galveston (State of Texas)

Published by Eliahu Feinberg in Zhitomir

1907

[Yiddish translation by Maurice Wolfthal,
Russian translation by Judy Wolfthal, 2019]

1. Galveston is a port that is connected by trains to a large, rich region with many cities with factories and large businesses. The whole region is now at the same level where New York was 25 years ago,

before it was flooded with immigrants. For that reason Galveston and the whole area (the southwestern states of the United States of America: Texas, Iowa, Kansas, Colorado, Missouri, Dakota, and still more states) are a good place to emigrate to now. Craftsmen in every trade can earn a very good living, and workers, also.* There's a place for commerce, too. As a rule, an immigrant can't become a businessman as soon as he arrives, only later, when he has mastered the language (English) and has gotten used to the place. **In the beginning you just have to work at anything**. You cannot get employment as a ritual slaughterer, a rabbi, a cantor, or a teacher, because you have to know English. The climate is good, warm. Food is not expensive (cheaper than in New York, in any case). Wages are higher than in New York. The laws and statutes are the same as in the rest of America. The people are civilized and friendly to Jews.

2. Our Committee over there looks for employment for everyone, and is capable of finding work for everyone who is able to work. The Committee there will pay the train ticket from Galveston to where you settle down.

3. You have to be totally healthy. American officials will not permit entry to the sick, the weak, those with trachoma infections in the eyes (or eye inflammations or chronic styes), mange (even the slightest trace of healed trachoma or mange), a bald spot in the middle of the head, lung problems, serious nervous diseases and so not capable of working, whoever has a sickly appearance—and the same regulations apply over there. Whoever doesn't feel well must consult a medical specialist here first (Everyone has to consult a medical specialist of the eyes even if they don't feel sick). If there's the slightest

* We have already gotten good news from our first emigrants who have stable employment, and some of them are already asking their families to come to them. Nevertheless every emigrant, even a craftsman, must be ready for the possibility that he may have to labor for some time in some other craft, and as a result have to work harder and for lower wages, especially because not everyone who calls himself a craftsman really knows his craft, and the way of working over there is somewhat different than here. For that reason we take absolutely no responsibility for obtaining a specific job with specific wages. But our Committees over there strive with all their might on behalf of their brothers. Therefore every emigrant who has the strength and the desire to work can certainly be sure that, with effort, he will more assuredly and more quickly earn a living in that place than in New York.

Important Information About Emigration
to Galveston (State of Texas), *1907, cover page.*
(Courtesy of the Houston Jewish History Archive, Rice University.)

doubt, it's better not to travel. We take absolutely no responsibility if someone is prevented from entering on the grounds of health.

4. Our emigrants are sent in groups from Bremen. Everyone can leave their homes on their own. Traveling by train to the border, and then crossing the border, are the responsibility of the emigrant: his travel expenses are his concern. (In cases where the emigrant encounters difficulties or obstacles, he can turn to us by writing accurately, telling us where his official, police-registered residence is; where he is living now; and which documents he has. And we'll help him.) We will take him under our protection and at our expense from the border (that is, from the border control station) by train to Bremen and from Bremen by ship to Galveston. The sea voyage takes about three weeks. In Bremen, during the three or four days of waiting for the ship to leave, the emigrant will have lodgings in an emigrant shelter and kosher food at our expense.

5. Whoever feels totally healthy, according to American regulations (see paragraph 3) should send us the train fare from the border to Bremen (see paragraph 8), to the address of Dr. Mandelstam in Kiev. Then we will send him an official voucher right away for travel from the border control station to Bremen. We have committees in many places where they can bring the money and obtain the voucher on the spot (see paragraph 10).

6. We are sending along a questionnaire and we ask you to fill it out with clear answers and send it back right away. This is important so that we may let them know in Galveston about you in advance, so that they may prepare for you even before you get there. And we will let you know in advance when, how, and across which border it will be best for you to travel. We will telegraph if time is short.

7. At the Prussian border control station you will show the voucher to the representative from the Hilfsverein Committee, where you should go if the need arises.[54]

8. Cost of travel from the Prussian border control station by train to Bremen and from Bremen by ship to Galveston:

Adults over 12: train one ticket 7 rubles, ship 63 rubles. Total 70 rubles

Infants less than 1 year old: train 0 rubles, ship 9 rubles 50 kopeks. Total 9 rubles 50 kopeks

Children 1–4 years old: train 0 rubles, ship 31 rubles 50 kopeks. Total 31 rubles 50 kopeks

Children 4–10 years old: train half ticket 3 rubles 50 kopeks, ship 31 rubles 50 kopeks. Total 35 kopeks

Children 10–12 years old: train half ticket 7 rubles, ship 31 rubles 50 kopeks. Total 38 rubles 50 kopeks

Note: The fares are from these border control stations: Ottlotschin, Ostrowo-Illowo, Posen, Myslowitz. They are more expensive from other places. See the table in paragraph 13.

9. Baggage

On Russian trains, a ticket permits one *pud* free of charge.[55] On the ship every adult passenger is permitted 6 *pud* free of charge. Baggage on German trains is expensive, so it's better to bring along less, in other words, just the necessities: clean, white underwear, washed and pressed; bedding; your best clothes; shoes or boots. It can't hurt to have a warm overcoat and a blanket for the deck on the ship. It's easier to pack several smaller bundles, so that you can bring them into the train wagon. Large trunks are not permitted in Prussian train wagons.

10. You can bring money to these Committees to get vouchers:

Kiev, Professor M. E. Mandelshtam, Aleksandrovska No. 27

Warsaw, Jewish Territorial Emigration Bureau, Pruznaya No. 9

Warsaw, Information Bureau, Granicznaya 10-13

Odessa, Editors of the newspaper "The Jewish Voice," Remeslennaya No. 7

Zhitomir, Mr. I. I. Kulisher

Vilna, Mr. Leon Ilich Broydo, Sadovaya No. 15, apt. 5

Bialystok, Board of the company, residence in Grodno Province

Pinsk, Mr. P. Mandelbaum

Kovno, Mr. Sh. Uryson, Banking Office

Lodz, I. M Shlyamovich, Przejazd No. 50

Yelets, Orlovsk, Mr. Dr. M. L. Goldenberg

Libava, Dr. Yulii Levitan

11. Abroad you can turn to:

Berlin, Hilfsverein, Lützowstrasse No. 8

Bremen, Dr. Klatski, Hilfsverein Committee, Düstrnstrasse No. 132

Important Information About Emigration to Galveston (State of Texas)*, 1907, p. 5, showing the list of fares from Bremen to Galveston. (Courtesy of the Houston Jewish History Archive, Rice University.)*

Galveston (America): Jewish Immigrants Information Bureau, Galveston, Texas, America

12. These ships leave from Bremen every three weeks on Thursday

Name of the ship: Russian calendar date / Jewish calendar date

SS Hanauer: August 30 / Tishrei 4
SS Köln: September 20 / Tishrei 25
SS Frankfurt: October 11 / Cheshvan 16
SS Hanauer: November 1 / Kislev 29
SS Köln: November 22 / Kislev 8
SS Frankfurt: December 13 / Tevet 21

Note: We will announce the schedule of later ships at the appropriate time.

You should leave home about eight days before the ship leaves.

Some Facts About the State of Texas

The state of Texas is the largest of all the United States. It occupies 262,290 English square miles, and is larger, for example, than all of France. Its soil is especially fertile for grazing cattle and cotton plants. Except for its southern section, its climate is good for your health, especially in the winter months. The population of the state consists of Englishmen, Spaniards, Germans, Frenchmen, Negroes, Indians, and others. There are Jews in significant numbers only in the larger cities, especially Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and Galveston. The population of the state is approximately 3,000,000 people. Compared to its huge area of territory, its population is very small. The state still has lots of empty space for new immigrants.

The following large cities are in Texas: Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Galveston, Fort Worth, Austin, Waco, El Paso, as well as many smaller cities.

Galveston is the largest port in Texas and the surrounding states. The city has large businesses and factories. The main industries in Galveston are iron pipes, door and window frames, knitted bags, clothes, fruit preserves, mineral waters, artificial ice. The city counts more than 40,000 inhabitants, a number of Jewish communities among them.

In general the cost of living is not cheap here. A one-room apartment is four dollars a month, two rooms six dollars, three rooms eight dollars or more. These are the prices of the most necessary foods: bread five cents

a pound, kosher meat fifteen cents a pound, milk five cents a quart, eggs 30 cents a dozen.

Houston is fifty miles from [the] Galveston port, where the ships from Europe dock. Houston is a very important industrial city. More than 5,000 workers work in its railroad workshops. In addition to the railroad workshops, there are large factories for carriages and wagons, bricks and ceramic tiles, clay and porcelain pots, bowls, plates, and other clay and porcelain wares, large mills and other workshops where healthy, capable workers can find employment. The population of the city is 60,000, among them 2,500 Jews. The Jewish community has its own synagogue, several prayer and study houses, and various charitable institutions and associations.

San Antonio is one of the most important business cities in Texas. It has many big companies of agricultural products, furniture, clothing, and other wares. San Antonio's industries are not well developed. The city has several mills, beer breweries, dairies, cement factories, wood products, and others. The main industries are saddles, harnesses, and confectioneries. The population of the city is big: 50,000 people, 1,200 Jews among them. The Jewish community has two synagogues and various charitable organizations.

Many Belgian gardeners have settled around San Antonio. Since the climate is very warm, and vegetables grow all year round, they send out wagon loads of green cucumbers in the winter months, green onions, carrots, turnips, watermelons, etc., to New York, Boston, and other big cities, and they make quite a good living.

Dallas is a big city with well-developed businesses and factories. Dallas is an important industrial city, known especially for its large workshops where special saddles and harnesses are crafted. It is the best-known city in America for that. Anyone who knows that craft well is certain to find employment in Dallas. In addition, there are large mills, sawmills, factories of wood products, metal, beer breweries, oil factories, and other industries. Carpenters, mechanics, and construction workers have the best employment outlook. Dallas has a population of 75,000 and a well-organized Jewish community with 1,600 members.

Fort Worth is the center of the cattle and meat trade in Texas. Grain and flour are also big business there. The main industries are mills, slaughter houses, iron foundries, and factories for all kinds of machines and

Important Information About Emigration to Galveston (State of Texas), *1907, p. 8, "Some Facts About the State of Texas." (Courtesy of the Houston Jewish History Archive, Rice University.)*

tools. There is work for various construction workers, shoemakers, bakers, tailors. Other important industrial and commercial centers are Austin, Waco, and El Paso. The city of **Austin**, the capital of Texas, is 81 miles from San Antonio. It has a few factories for iron wares, mills, leather works, oil factories. Austin's main commercial products are cattle, fur, wool, oil, grain. It has businesses in dry goods, pharmaceuticals, plowing machines, and various agricultural tools. **Waco** is an important center of the cotton trade. The factories and workshops of Waco produce iron wares, saddles and harnesses, clothes, mineral water, and other products. There are jobs for construction workers, shoemakers, tailors, bakers. Waco has a watch factory.[56] **El Paso**, on the border between the United States and the Republic of Mexico, is important in the cattle business. There are large iron foundries and cigarette factories in the city. All of these cities have Jewish congregations: In Waco the congregation Agudat Yaakov, in El Paso the congregation "Har Sinai," etc.

There are about 20,000 Jews in all of Texas, most of whom are employed in commerce.

Jewish Territorial Organization
Central Emigration Bureau for all of Russia in Kiev

NOTES

[1] Brochure provided to potential immigrants by the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO). Translated in 2019 from the Yiddish by Maurice Wolfthal and from the Russian by Judy Wolfthal. Houston Jewish History Archive at Rice University, Houston, TX. Used with permission.

[2] I am grateful to Rabbi Barry Gelman of United Orthodox Synagogues in Houston, who first alerted me to the availability of the pamphlet on the rare Judaica book market.

[3] Maurice Wolfthal has translated Max Weinreich's *Vos volt yidish geven on hebreyish?* (*What Would Yiddish be Without Hebrew?*); Yitzkhak Erlichson's *Mayne fir yor in sovyetrusland* (*My Four Years in Soviet Russia*) (Boston, 2013); excerpts from Nokhem Shtif's *Yidn un yidish* (*The Jews and Yiddish*) for *In geveb*; Bernard Weinstein's *Di yidishe yunyons in amerike: bleter geshikhte un erinerungn* (*The Jewish Unions in America: Pages of History and Memories*) (Cambridge, England, 2018); Nokhem Shtif's *Pogromen in ukrayne: di tsayt fun der frayviliker armey* (*The Pogroms in Ukraine 1918–19: Prelude to the Holocaust*) (Cambridge, England, 2019); the foreword to Isaac Rivkind's *Der kamf kegn azartshipiln bay yidn* (*The Struggle Against Gambling among Jews*) in the *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* (2019); and Mendl Mann's *Dos faln*

fun berlin (*The Fall of Berlin*). His translation of Shmerke Kaczerginski's *Khurbn vilne* (*The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Vilna*) is under contract with Wayne State University Press. Biography taken from *In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies*, accessed February 23, 2021, https://ingeveb.org/people/maurice-wolfthal). Judy Wolfthal studied Russian as an undergraduate and Yiddish at the YIVO summer program in New York and at Oxford University. She has worked as a cataloguer and reference librarian at the University of Texas and the Jewish Public Library in Montreal.

[4] On arguments for the lasting significance of the Galveston Movement, see Bernard Marinbach, *Galveston: Ellis Island of the West* (Albany, NY, 1983), 181–95; Bryan Edward Stone, "The Galveston Diaspora: A Statistical View of Jewish Immigration Through Texas, 1907-1913," *Southern Jewish History* 21 (2018): 146–47. On classic treatments of American Jewish history that take the Lower East Side experience as paradigmatic, see Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1962); Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made* (New York, 1976); Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880–1920* (Baltimore, 1992).

[5] Jack Glazier, *Dispersing the Ghetto: The Relocation of Jewish Immigrants Across America* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), 15–24; Hollace Ava Weiner, "Removal Approval: The Industrial Removal Office Experience in Fort Worth, Texas," *Southern Jewish History* 4 (2001): 1–44; Lauraine Miller, "The Zale Story: Diamonds for the Rough," in *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, ed. Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman (Waltham, MA, 2007), 148–61.

[6] David Bressler, "The Removal Work, Including Galveston," speech to National Conference of Jewish Charities, St. Louis, May 17, 1910, box 1, folder 6, IRO Collection, American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), Center for Jewish History, New York; Glazier, *Dispersing the Ghetto*, 196. For an appraisal of the IRO's successes and limitations, see Weiner, "Removal Approval," 33–35. Weiner argues, following the conclusions of Jack Glazier and Richard Rockaway, that the IRO grossly exaggerated their retention rates, and that the majority of immigrants sent to towns such as Fort Worth, Indianapolis, and Detroit moved on rather quickly. Weiner's research found that nineteen out of seventy-two IRO families, or 26 percent, remained in Fort Worth as of 1920, a higher figure than the other cities studied.

[7] Weiner, "Removal Approval," 5–6; Stone, "Galveston Diaspora," 124–25. On the Kishinev pogrom, see Steven J. Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History* (New York, 2018).

[8] Bryan Edward Stone, *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (Austin, 2010), 83–84.

[9] Marinbach, *Galveston*, 9–13; Stone, "Galveston Diaspora," 126–27.

[10] Marinbach, *Galveston*, 11–12. Stone, "Galveston Diaspora," 125.

[11] Marinbach, *Galveston*, 13–14.

[12] Morris Waldman to David Bressler, July 3, 1907, Records of the Jewish Immigrants' Information Bureau (I-90), box 2, folder 38, pp. 19–22, AJHS, Center for Jewish History (hereafter cited as JIIB Records), accessed April 10, 2021, https://digipres.cjh.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE131974. I am grateful to Bryan Stone for sharing this source with me.

[13] "Jewish Immigrants," *Galveston Daily News*, July 2, 1907.

[14] "Texas Has Room," *Houston Post*, August 4, 1908.

[15] Henry Cohen, "The Galveston Immigration Movement," *Houston Post*, December 20, 1908, rpt. *Jewish Herald* (Houston), February 5, 1909.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Marinbach, *Galveston*, 29–33, 40–55, 103–104, 142–45; Stone, "Galveston Diaspora," 128–30. Stone speculates that the "extended voyage at sea" before arrival at Galveston, which regularly included a stop in Baltimore or Philadelphia, may have contributed to a significant deterioration in the immigrants' health, factoring into the higher deportation rate there.

[18] Ronald Axelrod, "Rabbi Henry Cohen and the Galveston Immigration Movement, 1907–1914," *East Texas Historical Journal* 15 (1977): 24–37; Gary Dean Best, "Jacob H. Schiff's Galveston Movement: An Experiment in Immigration Deflection, 1907–1914," *American Jewish Archives* 30 (1978): 43–79; Marinbach, *Galveston*; Allen Mondell and Cynthia Salzman Mondell, dirs., *West of Hester Street* (Dallas, 1983); Ronald Axelrod, "Study Guide for West of Hester Street" (Houston, n.d.), accessed March 30, 2021, https://www.mediaprojects.org/discussion_guides/dg_west_of_hester_street.pdf.

[19]Mark Harelik email to author, January 21, 2021. Mark Harelik, *The Immigrant* (New York: Broadway Play Publishing, 2012).

[20] On Seriff's *Forgotten Gateway*, see Humanities Texas: Exhibitions, accessed February 9, 2021, https://www.humanitiestexas.org/exhibitions/list/by-title/forgotten-gateway-coming-america-through-galveston-island; and Bryan Edward Stone, "Exhibit Review: Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America Through Galveston Island, 1846–1924," *Southern Jewish History* 12 (2009): 264–67.

[21] Alexander Z. Gurwitz, *Memories of Two Generations: A Yiddish Life in Russia and Texas*, ed. Bryan Edward Stone, trans. Amram Prero (Tuscaloosa, 2016), chs. 13–14.

[22] Stone, "Galveston Diaspora," 134–37, 141.

[23] Ibid., 142–45.

[24] Marinbach, *Galveston*, 21.

[25] *United States via Galveston*, ITO Papers, A36/95, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, quoted in Marinbach, *Galveston*, 27.

[26] Penina Moïse, "To Persecuted Foreigners" (1820), in *American Jewish History: A Primary Source Reader*, ed. Gary Philip Zola and Marc Dollinger (Waltham, MA, 2014), 69; Pamela S. Nadell, *America's Jewish Women: A History from Colonial Times to Today* (New York, 2019), 29–31; Jay M. Eidelman, "Penina Moïse, 1797–1880," Jewish Women's Archive, accessed March 30, 2021, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/moise-penina.

[27] Quoted in Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820–1914* (New York, 1994), 5, 27.

[28] Jewish Territorial Organization, *Important Information Concerning Emigration to Galveston (State of Texas)* (Zhitomir, Russia, 1907), trans. Maurice Wolfthal and Judy Wolfthal, 3, Houston Jewish History Archive, Rice University, Houston.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Stone, "Galveston Diaspora," 142–43.

[32] Jewish Territorial Organization, *Important Information Concerning Emigration*, 3.

[33] According to statistics compiled by the United States Bureau of Labor in 1907, the average cost of food "per workingman's family" was about 325 dollars in 1906 in the South, compared to 370 dollars in the Northeast. However, charts of comparative wages by occupation and region reveal a far more mixed picture. See "Wages and Hours of Labor In Manufacturing Industries, 1890 to 1906," *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor* 71 (July 1907): 18, 26–60; and "Retail Prices of Food, 1890 to 1906," *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor* 71 (July 1907): 191, accessed February 23, 2021, https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/bulletin-united-states-bureau-labor-3943/july-1907-477634/retail-prices-food-504444?start_page=196.

[34] For a broader discussion of deportations of American Jewish immigrants and the efforts of Jewish lawyers to combat them, see Britt Tevis, "'The Hebrews Are Appearing in Court in Great Numbers': Toward a Reassessment of Early Twentieth-Century American Jewish Immigration History," *American Jewish History* 100 (July 2016): 319–47. On the prevalent belief among anti-immigration advocates in Congress that eastern European Jews were sickly and physically and mentally deficient, see Congressional Committee on Immigration, "Temporary Suspension of Immigration" (1920), in *The Jew in the Modern World*, 3/e, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York, 2011), 568–69.

[35] Jewish Territorial Organization, *Important Information Concerning Emigration*, 3–4.

[36] Stone, "Galveston Diaspora," 145. Because the pamphlet lists ship departures from Bremen beginning August 30, 1907, it must have been published earlier that summer.

[37] Jewish Territorial Organization, *Important Information Concerning Emigration*," 5.

[38] Stone, *Chosen Folks*, 85.

[39] Jewish Population in the United States by State (1899–Present), Jewish Virtual Library, accessed February 9, 2021, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-in-the-united-states-by-state.

[40] Marinbach, *Galveston*, 22–23.

[41] For the Waldman annotation, see illustration 20 in Marinbach, *Galveston* (no page number); see also Marinbach, *Galveston*, 23.

[42] Morris Waldman to David Bressler, July 3, 1907, JIIB Records. Hollace Weiner found a similar situation in Fort Worth, whereby the IRO facilitated the chain migration of family members and friends to a specific desired location to reunite with loved ones or to follow acquaintances. See Weiner, "Removal Approval," 1–2, 17–22.

[43] David Bressler to Morris Waldman, August 28, 1907, JIIB Records, box 2, folder 41, pp. 38–42, accessed April 10, 2021, https://digipres.cjh.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE130693.

[44] David Bressler to Clement I. Salaman, November 20, 1907, quoted in Marinbach, *Galveston*, 23.

[45] Wolf Willner to Morris Waldman, December 20, 1907, JIIB Records, box 3, folder 51, pp. 4–5, accessed April 10, 2021, https://digipres.cjh.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE131275.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Stone, *Chosen Folks*, 91–92; Stone, "Galveston Diaspora," 134–37.

[48] Jewish Territorial Organization, *Important Information Concerning Emigration*, 8.

[49] Ibid., 8–9.

[50] Ibid., 9.

[51] On the early history of these Houston Jewish congregations, see Anne Nathan Cohen, *The Centenary History: Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas, 1854–1954* (Houston, 1954); and *The Golden Book of Congregation Adath Yeshurun: Commemorating Fifty Years of Service to the Jewish Community of Houston, Texas, 1891–1941* (Houston, 1942).

[52] Jewish Territorial Organization, *Important Information Concerning Emigration*, 9–11.

[53] For more on Jewish Texans' relationship to whiteness and Anglo identity and how this dynamic was reflected in the writings of Henry Cohen, see Stone, *Chosen Folks*, 5–6; see also, Allison E. Schottenstein, *Changing Perspectives: Black-Jewish Relations in Houston during the Civil Rights Era* (Denton, TX, 2021).

[54] The *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* (Aid Society for German Jews) was formed in 1901 to improve living conditions for Jews in central and eastern Europe. During the Galveston Movement, the organization helped facilitate the movement of Jewish immigrants across the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany to the port at Bremen. "Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden," *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* Second Edition (Detroit, 2006).

[55] A *pud* (or *pood*) is a Russian unit of measurement equivalent to 16.4 kilograms or about 36 pounds.

[56] The copy of the pamphlet in the collection of the Houston Jewish History Archive is torn in one corner, so a small amount of text is missing. The full page, however, was reproduced in Marinbach, *Galveston*, illustration 20, which Maurice Wolfthal used to produce a translation of the complete text.

From the Memoirs Section Editors . . .

This is the first time *Southern Jewish History* is including a section on memoirs. Scholars from a variety of academic disciplines view memoir as a literary-historical genre. Memoir is a subcategory of autobiography with special thematic foci. Written from a later perspective in life, they differ from diaries, in which the writer is unaware of future outcomes. In general, autobiographies, written with "life in the rearview mirror," often have broader scope than memoirs that generally employ a specific theme or set of themes. Historians generally consider memoirs primary source material whose thematic specificity is helpful and problematic. Still, they provide an invaluable genre of "living" source material when used in a critical fashion. The well-written, historically accurate memoir offers scholars and general readers significant insights into personal dimensions of the past. Nonetheless, as with autobiographies, memoirs can suffer from limitation of memory and a common desire to "spin" one's life in a particular fashion.

Memoirs, per se, have been around since at least Julius Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (58–49 BCE). In Jewish literature, *The Memoirs of Glueckel of Hameln,* written between 1691 and 1719, offers a unique portrait of a Jewish businesswoman in the early modern period. In recent years, Holocaust and digital memoirs have become increasingly popular as well as plentiful in the Jewish community. The memoirs we will print offer particularly rich opportunities for students of the American Jewish experience. A few notable examples of independently published southern Jewish memoirs include "The Life of Alfred Mordecai as Related by Himself"; Clara Lowenburg Moses's *Memoir of a Southern Jewish Woman*;

Seymour Atlas's *The Rabbi Spoke With the Southern Twang;* and *How Can I Help You? Rebecca Teles: Memoir of a Southern Jewish Belle.*[1] The holdings of many southern Jewish archives, such as the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston Addlestone Library and the Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives at the Bremen Museum in Atlanta, include scores of unpublished memoirs.

Starting with "A Rabbi's Memoir: Growing Up Jewish in the Mississippi Delta, 1943–1961," memoir will be a regular feature of *Southern Jewish History.* We hope to provide literary periscopes into the history of the southern Jewish experience by offering select memoirs reflecting the entire range of that experience. We encourage scholars to unearth yet unpublished memoirs (including recent ones written during the COVID pandemic) and plant the seeds for future southern Jewish memoirists to record their life stories. Rabbi Fred Davidow's memoir is an excellent place for *Southern Jewish History* to begin this journey.

Lance J. Sussman and Karen S. Franklin
Memoir Section Editors

MEMOIR

Contextualizing Rabbi Davidow's Memoir: A Historical Introduction to Jewish Life in the Mississippi Delta, 1943–1961

by

Lance J. Sussman and Paul Finkelman*

Fred V. Davidow, Growing Up Jewish in the Mississippi Delta, 1943–1961: A Rabbi's Memoir

Rabbi Fred V. Davidow's multipart "Reconstructed Rebel: My Journey from Good Ole Southern Boy to Center-Left Democrat" provides the literary basis for the following, redacted selection. Davidow's manuscript began with his participation in a memoir-writing class at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, in February 2020. Retired from active pulpit life, Davidow, who has been keeping notes for the purpose of writing a memoir since late childhood, wrote from a twenty-first century perspective selectively concentrating on how he experienced race and ethnicity in his youth and young adult years. Davidow came of age at the beginning of the civil rights movement that would change the American South and the American nation. He witnessed many of these changes at the ground level while simultaneously witnessing the resistance to change within the white and Jewish communities as well as the incomplete success of the civil rights "revolution."

Davidow grew up in Greenville, Mississippi, in the heart of the Mississippi Delta. This is a region notorious for its segregation, oppressive racial violence including lynching, and its vast disparities in wealth between impoverished African Americans and often quite prosperous

* The authors may be contacted at lancejsussman@gmail.com and pfinkelman @gratz.edu.

whites. But it also reflected greater diversity than most of the Deep South. Greenville boasted the largest Jewish community in the state, and the city still contains an impressive early twentieth-century synagogue. The region, including neighboring Bolivar County, also housed descendants of the "Mississippi Chinese" brought to the region after the Civil War as agricultural laborers to replace former slaves. In the mid-1920s some of these Chinese Americans unsuccessfully fought to send their children to the better-funded "white" schools rather than the poorly funded schools for Blacks. In *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927), the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the right of the state of Mississippi to make "pupil assignments as it wished."[2] Thus racism and segregation flourished in the Mississippi Delta where Davidow grew up.

Thirty years before he embarked on this memoir, Davidow published "A Remembrance of Greenville, Mississippi" in the *Jewish Georgian* (1991). In 2004, University of Pennsylvania scholar David Ruderman published "Greenville Diary: A Northern Rabbi Confronts the Deep South, 1966–1970" in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* about the rabbinate of his father, Abraham Ruderman, at the Hebrew Union Congregation, Davidow's boyhood synagogue.[3]

In the sections from the first half of his memoir presented here, Davidow concentrates on how he and his family negotiated their relationship with white majority culture in the South, how his father served as his initial role model of a southern Jewish man, the impact of the legacy and memory of the Civil War on his southern identity, the influence on his identity of several Black people employed by his family, the challenges of eating nonkosher food, synagogue life, Jewish youth group experiences, and the experience of going to all-white segregated public schools. His mother also played a significant role in helping the young Davidow recognize the fault lines between his southern and Jewish identities.

In the remaining unpublished sections of his memoir, Davidow reports in broader brush strokes on his college years at Tulane University in New Orleans, the South's most sophisticated and complex city, and at Delta State University in rigidly segregated Cleveland, Mississippi, next door to his hometown of Greenvillle, and then his seminary years in Cincinnati at the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. He also writes about selected aspects of his later work as a congregational rabbi.

Davidow's earlier draft, titled "Reconstructed Rebel," emphasizes what he recognized as a transformation of his identity as a young adult from a southerner who accepted the region's segregation and racism to a more sophisticated liberal with a national view of race and equality. The editors provide a new title for this publication to reflect the focus on the early years of Davidow's life journey presented here.

Rabbi Fred V. Davidow in 2013.
(Courtesy of Rabbi Fred V. Davidow.)

Greenville

Fred V. Davidow was born on March 16, 1943, during the middle of World War II, in Greenville, Mississippi, his mother's hometown. Known for its regional brand of the blues centered on Nelson Street, Greenville is located in the Mississippi Delta, also known as the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta. In the northwest corner of Mississippi, Greenville is situated across the Mississippi River from Arkansas, 140 miles south of Memphis, Tennessee, and eighty-four miles north of Vicksburg. Mostly a poor rural area known for its rich soil and high-quality cotton, it has been referred to in a phrase reminiscent of William Faulkner as "The Most Southern Place on Earth."[4] In 1950, Greenville's population stood at 29,936. It peaked in 1990 at 45,226 and currently is just below thirty thousand people, approximately 80 percent of whom are African American.[5]

Jews have lived in Mississippi since the mid-1770s. Natchez, approximately 160 miles downriver from Greenville, housed the first major Jewish settlement in the area. Mississippi's Jewish population peaked at about 6,400 in the late 1920s. Today fewer than 1,500 Jews reside in the state. At the time of Davidow's birth, the Delta provided a home to the highest concentration of Jews in the state, about 2,300. After World War II, the Jewish population in the state and the Delta declined steadily. Greenville's Hebrew Union Congregation, where the Davidow family belonged, formed in 1879. Constructed in 1906, the sanctuary seats 350. In 1962, the congregation claimed the largest membership in Mississippi with two hundred families. To a certain extent, Davidow grew up in the "Jerusalem of the Mississippi Delta." Mississippi was the first state in the country to have a woman serve as the religious leader of a synagogue. Following the death of her husband, Rabbi William Ackerman, in 1950, Paula Ackerman led services, preached, and officiated at life cycle ceremonies at Temple Beth Israel of Meridian, Mississippi.[6]

In 1824 William Whitaker Blanton, a wealthy lawyer and owner of the Blantonia plantation, founded the forerunner of modern Greenville. Born in South Carolina, Blanton possibly chose the name because of the city with that name in his home state. The name honored General Nathanael Greene, commander of the patriot army in the South during the last years of the American Revolution. The city prospered until the Civil War as an important Mississippi River port and commercial town in the center of one of the major cotton producing regions of the South. On the eve of the Civil War, slaves accounted for 92 percent (14,467) of the county's population, whereas only 1,212 whites resided there. The farmland in the county surpassed any other place in the state in value.[7]

During the Civil War troops on both sides occupied the town, and Union and Confederate troops, as well as pro-Confederate guerillas, pillaged much of the country. U.S. naval boats bombarded the town when attacked by Confederate artillery inside it, and Union soldiers burned some of the town. This contrasts with the wealthier city of Natchez, which immediately surrendered to the United States Army and thus suffered relatively little damage during the war.

Before the hundredth anniversary of the war, the memory of it remained strong in Greenville as Davidow grew up there. After the war, residents rebuilt the town partially on land donated by Harriet Blanton

Hebrew Union Congregation,
Greenville, Mississippi.
(Wikimedia Commons.)

Theobald, known as the "Mother of Greenville," several miles from the town's original site on what had been part of the family's plantation. Moving some of the town to higher ground reflected the reality of Mississippi River floods that had destroyed earlier towns in the county. When Davidow was born, Washington County (and to some extent Greenville, its county seat) had not fully recovered from the devastating flood of 1927.[8] The city was chartered in 1886. Between 1877 and 1950, twelve documented lynchings took place in the county. From 1870 to 1960 the town grew at a double and sometimes triple rate, going from 890 people in 1870 to more than forty-one thousand in 1960, when Davidow departed for college. Since then, the town has steadily declined to around thirty thousand. Similarly, the county population peaked in 1960 and has declined since.[9]

Greenville enjoyed a period of relative prosperity during the immediate post–World War II period, although a northern migration of its Black population continued from prewar days because of the region's enduring poverty, oppressive Jim Crow culture, and endemic racial violence. White flight, in response to integration and civil rights laws, further diminished the population and altered the demographics of the area.

In addition to Davidow's memoir, further insight into life in the Delta can be gained from C. Stuart Chapman's *Shelby Foote: A Writer's Life.* Foote, born in 1916, grew up in Greenville. Having a Jewish maternal grandmother, a University of North Carolina fraternity blackballed him because of this "tainted" ancestry. Like Davidow, the author of *Where I*

Was Born and Raised, David Cohn, hailed from Greenville. Also useful in understanding the region is Hillary Jordan's novel *Mudbound*, about rural life in the Delta immediately after World War II. Recast as a film by the same name, one Jewish character, an immigrant doctor, appears as an empathetic outsider.[10]

Fred Davidow

Against the harshness of life in rural, Jim Crow Mississippi, Davidow's memoir provides an intimate portrait of his family, beginning with the story of his ancestors' immigration to the United States. His father, David H. Davidow, was born in nearby Belzoni, Mississippi, on August 7, 1903. His mother, Thelma Leah Schwartz, was born on January 12, 1909, in Greenville. His one older brother, Stanley Davidow, died in 2015.

In the still-unpublished section of his memoir, Davidow broadly reviews his experience from college to retirement. Based on his parents' belief that attending Tulane University would provide a hedge against mixed marriage for their son, the future rabbi attended the fourteen-thousand-student New Orleans school from 1961 to 1965, majoring in Spanish and Spanish literature. While attending a Tulane–Ole Miss football game on October 20, 1962, the explicit racism of Ole Miss's "Rebel Underground" organization repulsed Davidow. This incident helped him clarify his earlier experiences in Jim Crow Mississippi.

After considering pursuit of a Ph.D. in history at Tulane, Davidow instead decided to return to his Mississippi roots to obtain a masters in education degree at Delta State University with an emphasis in American history. Delta State, in Cleveland, Mississippi, is only thirty-six miles from Greenville but demographically different. At the time an entirely white college, then and now Cleveland's population dramatically contrasts with Greenville's. Today African Americans comprise just under half of Cleveland's population, while whites, along with a small percentage of Asians and Latinx residents, comprise the remainder. By contrast, Greenville's population is more than 80 percent African American. In Greenville 37 percent of the population lives below the poverty line with a median household income of twenty-seven thousand dollars. Cleveland's poverty rate remains high at about 27 percent, but is substantially lower than Greenville's, and the median household income is dramatically higher at

sixty-one thousand dollars.[11] Davidow likely recognized the stark difference in the two towns.

While at Delta State, he attended a special program at Mississippi Valley State College. Founded in 1950 as the segregated Mississippi Vocational College, today it is Mississippi Valley State University. His encounter with African American students and with the reality of segregated education increased his sympathy for the civil rights movement. Following his graduation from Delta State in 1967, he taught at the Darlington School, a college preparatory high school, in Rome, Georgia. Subsequently, Davidow encountered anti-Israel protests in the wake of the 1967 Six Day War led by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that alerted him to the complexities of Black-Jewish relations during the civil rights era.

The experience of the Six Day War, combined with his family's long-term commitment to synagogue life at Greenville's Hebrew Union Congregation, led Davidow to pursue rabbinic studies from 1969 to 1973 at the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. He filled his first rabbinic pulpit in Plattsburgh, a poor and declining city at the northern tip of the Empire State. Today its poverty rate is 19 percent with a median household income of fifty-two thousand dollars. The city is overwhelmingly white, at 88 percent.[12] The change for the young rabbi must have been impactful. He then had pulpits in Miami, Florida, and Atlanta, Georgia. In 1981 he was invited to give the benediction at a memorial service for the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. This was a high point in Davidow's rabbinic career and a culmination of his life's journey from "good ole southern boy to center-left Democrat." Subsequently he served as rabbi of Temple B'nai B'rith in Kingston, Pennsylvania, just north of Wilkes-Barre, before retiring to the western suburbs of Philadelphia, where he continues to serve as a certified chaplain in retirement facilities.

Davidow rarely discusses antisemitism per se in his memoir, perhaps reflecting Greenville's general acceptance of its Jewish population as white, or "almost white," in a place where race defined the social fault lines and where, when he lived there, whites controlled the social, political, and economic power in the city, county, and state. Davidow's depiction of white society's acceptance of his family illustrates the status of Jews in Mississippi (or at least their perception of their status), before

the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

However, in a well-known and published 1963 letter sent by the president of Greenville's synagogue to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), Bernard Goodman objected to the UAHC's invitation to Reverend King to speak at the biennial convention of the Reform movement. Goodman argued that King's remarks might compromise what he apparently perceived as fragile Jewish-Christian relations in Greenville, which had been built over years based on Jewish civic and economic activity in the Delta's most important city. Other Mississippi cities such as Jackson experienced steadier and more explicit antisemitism than Greenville.[13]

A year later, in 1964, two Jewish men and an African American man were brutally murdered in Philadelphia, Mississippi, just a few hours down the road from Greenville. White Mississippians, including officers of the Neshoba County Sheriff's Office and the Philadelphia, Mississippi, police department murdered Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney because they attempted to help African Americans register to vote. In contrast to this context, Davidow's memoir focuses on general issues of race and how his Jewish and southern identities intersected in shaping his experiences as a child and, later, as a young adult and congregational rabbi.

"Growing Up Jewish in the Mississippi Delta," the redacted portion of Davidow's memoir presented here, provides a forthright, first-person, analytical view of a complex time in American history in the Deep South. It illustrates how one individual navigated the changing course of history in a segregated society on the cusp of massive social, legal, and cultural change. Ultimately, Davidow felt compelled to come to terms with aspects of his youth that he found disquieting with honesty and clarity. In many respects, "Growing Up Jewish in the Mississippi Delta" provides important insights into the southern Jewish experience of an intelligent and sensitive young person coming of age in the historical maelstrom of the 1950s and early 1960s, which led him to confront and reject the prevailing culture of "the Lost Cause."

The Davidow memoir is rich in a number of themes central to the Jewish experience in the American South in the decades following World

War II. In particular, Davidow carefully probes the construction of southern Jewish identity in the postwar era, gender modeling as provided by his father, southern Judaism, and Jewish-Black relations in the South along both racial and class lines. Subsequently, Davidow rejects the racism of the South of his youth but continues to see himself as a southern Jew.

-o0o-

Fred V. Davidow, Growing Up Jewish in the Mississippi Delta, 1943–1961: A Rabbi's Memoir

NOTE ON THE TEXT

The following appears as written by Fred Davidow, redacted by the editors, Lance J. Sussman and Karen S. Franklin, for chronological clarity and with minor stylistic correction. The editors provided the citations, subheadings, and bracketed information within the text.

My Ancestors Arrive in the Mississippi Delta, 1875–1889

The Mississippi Delta was an unlikely place for Jews from eastern Europe to come. The Delta was virtually uninhabitable before the Civil War. Swamps, canebrakes, and dense hardwood forests covered the land. After the war timber companies cleared the area of its hardwood forests and swamps were drained. Then railroad companies laid tracks to connect Delta planters to cotton markets. The Delta, a vast, flat alluvial plain with some of the most fertile soil in the world, became prime cotton-growing country in the late nineteenth century. It was dominated economically by white Anglo-Saxon Protestant planters who profited from the exploitation of hundreds of thousands of black laborers. Nonetheless, Jews pushed out of eastern Europe by poverty, persecution, and pogroms, found economic opportunity in the Delta.

Peddling and storekeeping were the first occupations. Land owning, prohibited to Jews in eastern Europe, and cotton planting were not unusual among Jews in the Delta. Other businesses in which Delta Jews engaged were banking, insurance, grocery wholesaling, and dealing in scrap metals. Before Prohibition, some Jews were in the liquor business. Jews were also represented in the professions of law and medicine. The

largest single occupational group was that of the clothing merchants. Jews found many niches in the Delta's economy.

Five congregations were formed from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s—four Reform and one Orthodox. The membership of the congregations was composed not only of families who lived in the town where the synagogue was built but also of families from smaller towns in the surrounding area. Of the millions of Jews who left eastern Europe for America, [only] a trickle flowed into the Mississippi Delta.

The prospect of prosperity brought the ancestral lines of my family to the Delta between 1875 and 1897. The first to arrive was Morris Cohn, my father's maternal grandfather. Born on June 19, 1849, in Thorn, West Prussia [today Torun, Poland], he married Zelotta Fuleder of Kikol [in Poland]. Their daughter Frieda was born September 7, 1870. By 1875 Morris was in the Delta. He found his way to Burtonia Landing and brought his family down from New York City, where they had sojourned. A fire in 1888 destroyed the settlement of Burtonia, whose population moved farther up the Yazoo River and rebuilt on the present site of Belzoni. When Morris died on December 3, 1910, he was reputed to be one of the richest men in Mississippi, amassing his wealth in land, planting, banking, insurance, and merchandising.

Solomon Davidow was born in Shaki [today Šakiai, Suwalki, Lithuania] on November 4, 1859. He left his native shtetl in 1872 and went to Cork, Ireland, where he lived with relatives for eight years. In 1880 he came to America and went to Pulaski, Tennessee, where a maternal uncle by the name of Israel Hanneberg lived. A year later he moved to Yazoo City, where his younger brother Marcus had settled.[14] He moved to Belzoni around 1890, met Frieda Cohn, and married her on July 30, 1891. My father, Dave Hirsch Davidow, was born in Belzoni on August 7, 1903. Frieda died at the age forty-three in 1914, and ever afterward Solomon was a heartbroken man. He continued to operate his store in Belzoni until his death on December 12, 1927. His business, however, did not prosper, and he died a poor man.

Victor Abe (V. A.) Stein, my mother's maternal grandfather, was born Abba Avigdor Segal in Sheduva [today Seduva, Kaunas, Lithuania] in 1860. He married Sarah Byall there, and their first child, Fannie (née Feige, [born] on March 9, 1881), became my grandmother. Two more children were born in Kovno [Kaunas] in 1883 and 1885. Abba Avigdor, who

Solomon and Frieda Davidow,
July 30, 1891, Belzoni, Mississippi.
(Courtesy of Rabbi Fred V. Davidow.)

changed his surname to Stein in the shtetl, perhaps to avoid conscription into the Russian army, immigrated to America some time after the birth of his third child. After entering America though the port of Baltimore, he transposed and altered his given names to Victor Abe. He took a job harvesting oysters in Chesapeake Bay and after several years had earned enough money to return to his shtetl to retrieve his wife and three children. He brought his family to America.

Because there were relatives already living in Cincinnati, he made his way there, peddling goods along the journey in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Four more children were born in Cincinnati. Victor Abe peddled goods in western Kentucky with Cincinnati as his base. In 1897 he and a partner followed some advice to take goods to the Mississippi Delta. They landed in Vicksburg off a riverboat and started making their way north through the Delta. Their intention was to reach Memphis, after selling all their merchandise, and then to return to Cincinnati. They stopped in Rolling Fork and operated a store for a year. Since V. A.'s partner wanted to return to Cincinnati, the two dissolved their business relationship. V. A. moved on his own to Erwin and rented a store selling caskets, groceries, dry goods, and whiskey for a nickel a shot. The landlord

saw that he was making money and took back the building. Undaunted, V. A. took his earnings and made a down payment on Little Hope Plantation in Chatham. His daughter Fannie, then in her mid-teens, left Cincinnati and went down to Chatham to help her father run his business. Sarah joined them later, after their infant son Lawrence recovered from a bout of pneumonia. Lawrence was as smart as he was hardy. He eventually took over the operation of the plantation from his father and became a wealthy man.

Harry Schwartz, my maternal grandfather, was born in the town of Ananyev [today Ananyviv, Ukraine], north of Odessa, on March 1, 1881. On April 27, 1881, fifty-seven days after my grandfather Harry was born, a pogrom in Ananyev destroyed 175 Jewish homes and fourteen shops. The poor Jews living on the outskirts of the town suffered most. Pogroms broke out in other places in the aftermath of the assassination of Czar

Fannie Stein and Harry Schwartz, married January 14, 1902. (Courtesy of Rabbi Fred V. Davidow.)

Alexander II on March 13, 1881. Jews were blamed for a plot that was actually carried out by Russian gentiles who were members of a left-wing terrorist organization.[15] The Schwartz family left Ananyev in 1889 and came to America. The Schwartz family settled in Indianapolis, Indiana. David Schwartz, Harry's father, went into the produce business. I have scant information about my grandfather's early years.

One story was told to explain why Harry ate bacon and ham, while his wife Fannie kept kosher all of her life. It was said that when Harry peddled goods from a wagon in the Indiana countryside, there were times when he could not make it back to Indianapolis by nightfall. A farmer would offer him food and lodging for the night, and Harry would eat anything the farmer's wife put on the table. Perhaps a refusal to eat pork when served would have seemed ungracious. Anyway, Harry acquired a taste for bacon and ham and ate it during the rest of his life, but only outside of his home with Fannie.

Harry married Fannie Stein on January 14, 1902. The story of how they met is lost. Their first home was in Longwood, Mississippi, where Harry owned a general store. Longwood was a tiny gathering of stores and houses alongside the route that became Highway 1, the River Road. All five of their children were born there. My mother, Thelma Leah, was born on January 12, 1909. In the fall of 1914, Harry went to Greenville to start a business. Fannie and the children followed in January 1915. At one time or another, Harry ran a drygoods store and a meat market, but his businesses did not thrive. In April 1918, they moved to the house at 115 West Walker. This was the house in which Harry and Fannie lived until they died, Harry on March 18, 1963, and Fannie on February 24, 1981. This house was the center of life for my maternal extended family and the house in which I celebrated the Passover Seder, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Thanksgiving, and many other occasions.

From Sheduva in Kovno, Russian Empire, Shaki in Suwalki, Russian Empire, Thorn in Prussia, and Ananyev in Kherson, Russian Empire, came four great-grandparents and four grandparents to the Mississippi Delta. After some migrations they found new homes, settled their families, attained varying degrees of financial success, and never left. Morris and Zelotta Cohn, Solomon and Frieda Davidow, Victor Abe and Sarah Stein, and Harry and Fannie Schwartz are all buried in the soil of the Delta in the Greenville Jewish Cemetery.

Fred Davidow family tree.

My Southern Dad: Dave H. Davidow

My father, Dave H. Davidow, born in Belzoni, Mississippi, in 1903, had an odd amalgamated identity of a being a Jew and a southerner. As I reflect on his values and actions over the entire course of his lifetime, Daddy's Jewish identity was much stronger than his southern. When he was thirteen years old, he started attending Gulf Coast Military Academy in Gulfport, Mississippi. He had barely begun his first year when he requested permission to be absent from classes and extracurricular activities on Yom Kippur. He spent the entire day alone and fasting in his dormitory room. It must have been Dave's firm conviction and self-assertiveness that he chose to stand out as a Jew in such a gentile milieu. There was an ironic conclusion to this incident of traditional observance. Whenever Daddy recalled this experience, he did not omit from the story that at the end of the day a friend brought him a sandwich from the mess hall to break his fast. A hungry Dave ate it with gusto, even though it was a ham sandwich. He had no qualms about eating it. Though his parents kept a kosher household, they did permit their six children to eat *trefa* outside of their home but prohibited them from bringing it inside.

In the 1920s Daddy lived in Ruleville, Mississippi, where his three older sisters had settled. Ruleville was a very small town in the Delta with a population of 1,378 in the 1930 census. He was a tall, lean and very handsome fellow and dated young women in the town, albeit they were Christian. One spring day Daddy was invited to lunch at the home of a

Dave H. Davidow, 1939, and Thelma Leah Schwartz Davidow, 1930s.
(Courtesy of Rabbi Fred V. Davidow.)

girlfriend. He sat down to eat, and when he saw that lunch was a sandwich with leavened bread, he remembered it was Passover. He got up from the table and left. No doubt he killed any budding romance with his hostess.

In 1938 Mama and Daddy moved from Ruleville to Greenville, my mother's hometown. They became members of Hebrew Union Congregation, where Mama had been confirmed and where my parents had been married in 1935. In the years of my boyhood and youth, 1951–1960 (and in the years before and after), Daddy went to Friday night services without fail. He kept *siddurim* and Bibles, books on Judaism and Jewish history in his bedside table and he read them. He made a complete fast on Yom Kippur and stayed in the sanctuary from the beginning of the morning service until *tekiah gedolah* was sounded at the end of the longest day in Judaism. Not one morsel of *chametz* ever touched his lips during Pesach.

Daddy joined the Greenville Lions Club in 1939 and was an active member. In the 1950s the club put on an annual comedy show as a fundraiser. Daddy, who loved being in front of an audience, always got the role of emcee in the show. One year it was suggested by a member that the performance be held on a Friday night. My father stood up from his seat and objected. "On Friday nights my place is the seat on my pew at Hebrew Union Temple. If you want this show to be on Friday night, that's okay with me but I won't be there. Count me out. I'll be attending Sabbath evening services at my synagogue." A Christian member made a motion to have the show on some night other than Friday. The motion was seconded. A vote was called. The show was to take place on a Thursday night. Daddy kept his role as the emcee.

This step showed Daddy's southern side. The role of emcee that he played was Mr. Interlocutor in a blackface minstrel show. The interlocutor was the straight man master of ceremonies [who] spoke in aristocratic English and used a [refined, cultivated] vocabulary. The humor came from the exchanges [and] from the misunderstandings on the part of the endmen when talking to the interlocutor. Daddy, dressed in a tuxedo, wore blackface, and the four endmen, also dressed in tuxedos, were seated, wearing blackface and speaking in black dialect. Four endmen in blackface played the parts of simple-minded, unsophisticated blacks. I attended only one of these shows and can still picture my father standing on the stage with the endmen to his left. I do not recall any details in the dialogue

between my father and the endmen [but] whatever was in the script surely conveyed, "degrading racial stereotypes."

What's In a Name?

My father worked as a salesman for IDS [Investors Diversified Services]. The major financial products of IDS were savings contracts and mutual funds. Daddy had hundreds of clients, and to keep his name, company, and address and phone number fresh in their minds, he would send out promotional 5"w x 2"h desk calendars. By the middle of December, the calendars arrived in boxes and the envelopes had to be addressed, stuffed, and mailed out in the week before January 1. Addressing, stuffing, and stamping the envelopes became a family undertaking. We could do the work only at night when Daddy was at home, because only he could answer any questions about a name or a street address with certainty.

I would take a list and start addressing the envelopes. Going down the list, I would come across one after the other "Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So" or "Dr. and Mrs. So-and-So." Every now and then I would come to names without "Mr. and Mrs." "Daddy," I would call out, "should I write out 'Mr. and Mrs.' for Henry and Rosalie Collins (fictional names)?" "No," Daddy would respond, "it's not necessary. They're colored." Sometime in the mid-1950s Mama persuaded Daddy to add "Mr. and Mrs." to the addresses for Negro clients. Her argument was simply based on economics: why risk offending anyone who was a client. No harm was done by using titles customarily reserved for whites and the benefit was promoting the goodwill of black clients. The change in adding "Mr. and Mrs." to the envelopes for black customers became the routine for as long as Daddy continued sending out the calendars.

It is no surprise that forms of address in face-to-face interactions differed for whites and blacks. Blacks had to address white adults with Mr., Mrs., or Miss, followed by the personal or family name, but whites addressed black adults by their first names only, as if to regard them as having never grown up. Black men who were successful in business could be called by their last names without saying Mr. before the name. This was an acceptable but odd way of showing them respect. Two such black men in Greenville were Brown and Phelps. Brown owned and operated Brown's Pastry Shop on Nelson Street, which was considered the epicenter of African American business and entertainment in the Delta. In the

1940s and 1950s black blues musicians and nightclubs made Nelson Street the equivalent of Beale Street in mid-twentith century Memphis. Brown had black and white customers. His French bread was a popular favorite in my extended family. My brother Stanley and I could devour a loaf by ourselves in a minute, cutting off slabs 2–3" thick at a time.

When we came home from college on vacation, we eagerly anticipated eating our sandwiches with Brown's French bread and Mama's cole slaw as a homecoming treat. Brown's wife made wedding cakes. Their business prospered. The elders in my family called Brown's wife by her given name, but Brown was simply called Brown. He was too successful a businessman to be first-named. I don't remember exactly the year but it was a special thrill for me in the 1960s when I first addressed Brown's wife as Mrs. Brown. My friend Benjy Nelken, who founded the Greenville History Museum, informed me that their first names were German and Louise. It has taken over fifty years for me to find out.

Another successful black businessman, with white as well as black customers, was Phelps. He owned and operated a neighborhood grocery called Humpty Dumpty, which was not far from Coleman High School, the all-Negro secondary school. Phelps was a pit master par excellence. Throughout the South there were many black pit masters who were highly respected for their skill in barbecuing and smoking meats. Hence *the* pit master of Greenville was not called by his first name. Phelps had built by the side of his grocery store an annex, where he tended his barbecue pit.

We did not observe *kashrut* in our home, even though both of my parents had grown up with mothers who kept a kosher household. Through the years Phelps would barbecue spareribs for us. When my father remarried in the summer of 1980, Phelps smoked the turkey we relished at the dinner after the ceremony. I also learned from Benjy that Phelps's first name was Mack. Phelps's wife did not work at his grocery store. Her name was Louise, and she worked as a nurse in the clinic of our family doctor, Jerome B. Hirsch, Jr. I was a kid and yet I called her Louise, not Mrs. Phelps. The clinic had been built by Dr. Hirsch, Sr., fourteen years before in a neighborhood where whites and blacks lived near [one] another. There were two entrances to the clinic on opposite sides on the front of the building, marked "white" and "colored." However, there was one place in the clinic that was not segregated. The Doctors Hirsch had delivered many babies, and on the bulletin board in the office of Dr. Hirsch, Jr.,

were pinned unsegregated photographs of white and black babies who were brought into the world by him and probably also by his father.

Colored Only

In the 1950s I was often in the Washington County Courthouse where Leroy Percy had once fired a thundering salvo against the KKK in 1922.[16] My mother's older sister worked there as a secretary in the County Roads Department. My aunt let me borrow her car and when I went to pick up the keys and returned to pick her up after work, I saw many signs in the halls for water fountains and bathrooms, each marked either "white" or "colored." One argument put forth for the segregated water fountains and bathrooms was that blacks were not as clean as whites and they had body odor. That argument didn't "wash" with me. Food preparation required hygienic conditions, and if Negroes in our homes, in a bakery, at the barbecue pit could be entrusted to prepare foods for whites, then they were clean enough for me. The marble spice made by Lula B. Watson, the French bread baked by German Brown, and the spareribs barbecued by Mack Phelps were never contaminated.

As for the matter of body odor it was just another example of racism. The jobs black laborers performed were back-breaking and sweat-producing, and they were paid cheap wages. I once said to Mama, "If Efrem had left in his pocket only fifteen cents after working a day's labor under the sun in the yard of some white folks, would he buy a box of Nabisco saltines or a bar of Lifebuoy soap?" Lifebuoy made the term "B.O," short for body odor, famous. Body odor was a function of economic status. Blacks in menial positions did have body odor but so did whites who had lower-class jobs. The latter, however, were never deemed to be innately smelly. It is easy to find faults when one is prejudiced.

Jackie Robinson, 1947

On April 15, 1947, Major League Baseball underwent a sea change. On that day Jackie Robinson debuted on Ebbets Field playing for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Robinson was subjected to derision and physical abuse. On April 22, 1947, the Dodgers played the Philadelphia Phillies. The manager and the players of the Phillies called Robinson a "nigger" from their dugout and yelled that he should "go back to the cotton fields." Branch Rickey, a part owner of the Dodgers who had signed up Robinson,

later recalled that the manager of the Phillies "did more than anybody to unite the Dodgers. When he poured out that string of unconscionable abuse, he solidified and united thirty men." One of the most racist teams was the St. Louis Cardinals. In the 1934 World Series the Cardinals played against the Detroit Tigers, whose superstar was Hank Greenberg. Dizzy Dean, who won thirty games for the Cardinals in the 1934 season, heckled Greenberg throughout the seven-game series by hurling taunts at Greenberg like "Moses" and "kike." The Cardinal Enos Slaughter, who was considered a leader in shouting racial slurs at Robinson, inflicted a seven-inch gash in Robinson's leg with his shoe spikes. In 1947 Hank Greenberg played his last season for the Pittsburgh Pirates. In one game with the

Hank Greenberg in 1940, Jackie Robinson in 1950.
(Wikimedia Commons.)

Dodgers Greenberg collided with Robinson at first base. Greenberg, who had had to deal with antisemitic insults throughout his career, "whispered a few words into Robinson's ear," which Robinson later characterized as "words of encouragement." Greenberg advised him to overcome his critics by defeating them in games.[17]

I wish that my father's heart had been informed by Greenberg's magnanimity. In the mid-1950s Daddy and I often watched the Major League Baseball game of the week, which was broadcast on television on Saturday afternoons. Dizzy Dean was the commentator. Daddy had a penchant for telling me if someone was antisemitic. He would call the person "*rishus,*" a Yiddish word with the connotation of nastiness mixed with

hate. Daddy never said anything negative about Dizzy Dean. Had he ever known how Dean had heckled Greenberg or had he chosen to forget? That is an unanswerable question, but what is certain is that Daddy hated the Brooklyn Dodgers. He favored whichever team was playing against the Dodgers. What especially angered him was anything done well for the Dodgers by a black player, especially Junior Gilliam. I don't recall his ever-cursing Jackie Robinson. He saved his fulminations for Junior Gilliam. If Junior Gilliam got on base with a hit, Daddy would yell out, "Get that black *mamzer* out! That *shukhor* has no business on first base!" Daddy frequently peppered his language with Yiddish words. A *mamzer* was a bastard and a *shukhor* was a darky.

I always felt embarrassed when Daddy raised his voice so loudly. He didn't whisper his displeasure. Daddy and I would be watching television in the living room, and not more than twenty feet away Lula would be in the kitchen, doing some chores. How could she not have heard Daddy's rantings? Some adult members of my extended family would talk disparagingly about Negroes within earshot of them. They deluded themselves into thinking that the Negroes would not discern that they were the subjects of slurs and bigoted statements. Sometimes they would lower their voices, assuming that the Negroes would not hear or would not understand what was being said. My relatives thought that speaking a few words in Yiddish would disguise what they were saying. What a fallacy! It was not uncommon for Negroes working for Jewish families to learn Yiddish words and phrases. In 1993 Secretary of State Colin Powell met Yitzhak Shamir, the Prime Minister of Israel, in Jerusalem. Powell stunned Shamir when he said, "*Men kent reden Yiddish*," "We can speak Yiddish." Powell had not forgotten the Yiddish he learned while working for a Jewishly owned business in the Bronx in the 1950s.

Even though I did not like hearing Daddy rage against Junior Gilliam, I did pick up his intense dislike for the Brooklyn Dodgers. In the spring of 1966 I was a graduate student in American history at Tulane University. While reading a book on post–World War II American culture, I read a chapter about the Brooklyn Dodgers hiring Jackie Robinson. Then it clicked. Daddy apparently had never forgiven the Dodgers for breaking the custom of barring blacks from the major leagues. Strangely Daddy's animus toward the Dodgers did not spill over to the New York Giants. He never fumed when Willie Mays made a spectacular catch in the outfield

or knocked a home run. Being such a staunch southerner, Daddy ironically loved the New York Yankees. The Yankees did not fall from Daddy's grace when they hired their first black player, Elston Howard, in 1955. The eight years between Jackie Robinson's breaking the MLB color barrier in 1947 and Howard's joining the Yankees in 1955 had allowed hostile feelings to subside. I wrote in my journal, "My Daddy would have rolled over in his grave if he knew I was rooting for the Dodgers."

My Southern Education, 1948

On Tuesday, September 7, 1948, I started my first day at St. Rose of Lima School. It was the Catholic kindergarten directly across the street from Hebrew Union Temple. There were no public kindergartens in Greenville at this time, only private. One was at the Presbyterian church and the other at the Catholic parochial school. Jewish families sent their children to St. Rose of Lima, and there were eight Jewish kids, myself included, in a class of thirty-six. Mama didn't just drop me off. She went inside to speak to the nun who was the teacher of my class. Mama told the nun that I was Jewish and that she did not want me to recite any prayer in the name of Jesus. She asked that I be excused from reciting prayers along with the others in the class. Mama asked for permission for me to recite the *Shema*, and the nun assented to Mama's request. The Jews in Greenville had very cordial relations with the Catholics, and the nun's ready consent for me to say the watchword of the Jewish faith showed the level of respect between the Jews in Greenville and the Catholic community. This is my earliest Jewish memory. In retrospect, I can see that Mama's assertiveness was the first instance in a pattern in how she went about forming my Jewish identity.

Stevenson and Sparkman, 1952

As a nine-year-old boy in 1952, I did not understand well the political differences on race relations in the presidential campaign between Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. In my research I have learned that Eisenhower was going to continue vigorously the integration of the U.S. Armed Forces and to use federal authority to bring an end to segregation in Washington, D.C. Stevenson selected Senator John Sparkman of Alabama as his running mate. Because Sparkman was an avowed segregationist, Stevenson thought that he could preclude the splitting of the

Democratic Party that had occurred in the 1948 presidential election. In 1948 the "Dixiecrats" were incensed with President Truman's order to integrate the military. The "Dixiecrats," who chose the Confederate battle flag as their party's flag, were dead set on protecting southern states' rights to maintain racial segregation. My parents had opposing views; one was going to vote for Eisenhower and the other for Stevenson. From their conversations I must have picked up that Eisenhower was an integrationist and Stevenson was a segregationist.

Penchant for American History, 1952

I can trace my keen interest in American history to the time when I was a fourth-grader in 1952–1953. I started reading the books on American history published in the Landmark Series by Random House. One reviewer wrote, "The Landmark series is the best collection of children's histories ever written." As a jacket blurb on an old edition stated, the reasons [for the series' popularity] are obvious: good writers and important and appealing subjects from America's past. When I finished reading one volume, Mama would take me to a department store in downtown Greenville that had a small book section and I would pick another. My interest ranged broadly across all the eras and personages of American history. I accumulated about two dozen books in the series. In the eighth grade (1956–1957) I achieved the highest average in American history, and at the awards ceremony at the end of the school year I received a small cash reward from my American history teacher, Wilhelmina Cockerham.

Lula B. Watson, 1952

One night in the fall of 1952 we were taking our black maid, Lula B. Watson, home. My mother's older sister was driving. Mama was riding shotgun. In the back seat I was on the right behind Mama. My brother Stanley was sitting in the middle. Lula was on the left behind my aunt. My aunt and my mother must have been talking about the upcoming election and I blurted out: "If Eisenhower wins the election, does that mean we will have to go school with the niggers?" A deadly silence descended. As soon as the words had passed my lips, a sinking feeling overcame me and reminded me that Lula was no more than an arm's length from me. How low I felt! Lula broke the silence: "We don't want to go to school with you either!" She came back to work the next day and was there for another

twelve years. No one ever uttered one word about that incident after that night.

The measure of years Lula's ancestors had lived in the United States made her more American than I. The removal of Native Americans from Mississippi in 1830 as a result of the Indian Removal Act opened up territory for the cultivation of cotton, and planters imported thousands of black slaves from the Upper South.[18] Lula was likely a descendant of one of the slave families in Port Gibson, where she was born in 1909. She moved to my hometown Greenville in 1950. She came with her husband Ike and three children, two girls and a boy. Ike had a good job with a lumber company that harvested virgin timber and manufactured wooden products. Her family had been in America for many generations before my immigrant forebears left eastern Europe and reached the Mississippi Delta in the late nineteenth century. Yet my white skin entitled me to privileges that were denied to her and her family. Living in Mississippi conditioned a white person such as myself to say and do shameful things to and about blacks.

Lula once said to me, "When you become an adult, I will have to call you 'Mr. Fred.'" I replied to her, "Lula, I will always be Fred to you." I could not bear the thought that this woman would ever have to use a servile form of addressing me. She had come to work for us in 1950, when I was seven years old, and had watched me grow up. She sat by my bed and read to me when I was sick. She saw me naked. She washed, ironed, folded and put away my clothes in my chest of drawers and in the closet. She dripped cold water from a washcloth on my face to wake me up.

When I was in the ninth grade, I started smoking cigarettes without my parents' knowledge. I liked Lucky Strikes and would smoke one in my bedroom when I came home from school, if my parents were not there. At that time of day Lula had usually set up an ironing board in the kitchen. She had an unobstructed view of the front door, and the back door was about twenty feet behind her. If she saw Mama or Daddy coming in the front door or heard either of them opening the back door, she would warn me with a coded verbal signal. I would have time to hurry to the bathroom and flush the cigarette down the toilet. The smell of the cigarette smoke would not make my parents suspicious, because Lula smoked too. I gave her some of my cigarettes for her loyal vigilance. It was morally offensive to me that the color of my skin could confer upon me a superior status

with a title that one who was so familiar with me was compelled to use for the sake of Jim Crow sanctions.

Lula became an excellent cook under Mama's tutelage and she came to taking over the preparation of almost all of our evening dinners. Mama, a master in making cookies, pastries, pies, and cakes, also taught Lula the art of making desserts. When a marble spice cake, my favorite, arrived for me at the student post office at Tulane University, more likely than not it had been made by Lula. What always struck me as an inconsistency in the rules of racial etiquette is that Negroes were clean enough to prepare meals for whites but they were not clean enough to eat their meals with whites at the same table at the same time.

In 1964, a year before I completed undergraduate school at Tulane, Lula stopped working for my parents. Understandably she wanted to earn more at a commercial business than she could as our domestic. From then on I saw her only from time to time, when she would come to help out for holiday meals at the home of my maternal grandmother. How she would address me was solved when I became a rabbi in 1973. She called me "Rabbi Fred." That was OK with me, because Rabbi is an earned title and not one associated with an outdated form of racial discrimination.[19]

Efrem Cathlic

In the 1950s the only blacks whom I knew personally were the women who worked as domestics in our home and in the homes of my extended family and the man who mowed the grass, weeded the flower beds, and clipped the hedges in our yard. This man showed up at our back door in 1953, looking for work. He became our yardman for about fifteen years. Even though I was accustomed to hearing and understanding Black English, it was difficult for me to understand Efrem. In one conversation I asked him questions about his background. Did he have a family? He was a solitary soul. Where did he live? He had no address. What was his last name? He said it was "Cathlic." In the small-town segregated South in the 1950s Efrem Cathlic was totally dependent on the good will and paternalism of whites.

With his hollow cheeks Efrem always looked underfed. His hands and thick fingers were roughened by the dirty work he did. He walked with a slight stoop. Some of his teeth were missing and the ones that remained were yellowed. Efrem always wore a baseball cap pushed up to

the top of his forehead and discolored with sweat stains. His shoes were scuffed, the leather cracked. The tongues of the shoes would flap because there were no shoelaces. His wide feet would stretch out the cast-off shoes that did not fit him. His pants were tattered and there were holes at the knees long before they became fashionable.

Because Efrem was so thin, his pants would hang below his waist and the top of his soiled underwear would show. Lula, who was embarrassed by Efrem's appearance, would scold him for being so disheveled, but because of his deprived circumstances it was pointless to berate him. Sometimes I would notice Efrem at sunset, walking by the window of the kitchen on the way to the shed at the back of our yard where he stored his tools. One particular evening as he was passing by the window, I saw that he was wearing a pair of chinos that had once been mine. His shirt and shoes had come from some other house. His mixture of clothing was a sign that he relied on a succession of castoffs from the families whose yards he tended.

One night Efrem knocked at our back door. "Boss Lady," he began. It was the servile form of address to assure whites that he "knew his place." Mama would have preferred that Efrem would say "Mrs. Davidow," but he was stuck in an unwritten code of race relations. "Boss Lady, I wuz werkin' all day t'day in Miz Annie Lee's yard but she don't pay me. She sez, sez she, cum back t'morrer. Now I ain't got no munny. Kin you gimme sump'n t'eat?" Mama fed Efrem that night and many other nights, whether or not he had been denied his wages. Perhaps Efrem learned that he could turn his plea into a regular ploy to get fed. Regardless of that, Mama would feed him whenever he came around at suppertime and she would pay him his wages right after he completed his work in our yard. Efrem lived from hand-to-mouth, and as a Jewish family that stayed in the synagogue the entire day of Yom Kippur we were keenly aware of a verse in the afternoon Torah reading in the Reform prayer book, "Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor nor rob him: the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning" (Leviticus 19:13).

Once Lula told Mama that she was surprised that Mama would give Efrem such good food. I suppose Lula would have expected a white person to give to a black [person] food of inferior quality. Mama replied that she would never give Efrem any food that she herself would not eat. A

plate would be prepared for him from food that Mama would have placed on the table in our dining room. In October 1995, I rediscovered a journal I had written in the 1960s. I found an entry dated May 30, 1966. In it I recounted the story of Efrem and wrote about that night, noting: "Mama couldn't stand to give Efrem food that wasn't fit for a person in ordinary circumstances to eat." Now I knew why I chose top-quality canned foods for Operation Isaiah.[20] The apple had not fallen far from the tree.

In our house in Greenville there was a long, thin passageway from the kitchen to the back door. We called it the back hall. On one side of the hall, about six feet from the back door, there was a door that opened to a space we called the furnace room. When the house was built sometime in the 1920s, the furnace was fired with coal. In the early '50s the furnace was converted to natural gas. Two steps led down from the back hall to the floor of the furnace room. In the winter the furnace room was always warm. Efrem was not allowed to come into the kitchen. He would sit on the top step and that was where he would be served his supper. He would get coffee, sweetened to excess, in a 16-oz. Mason jar. His supper was placed on an aluminum pie plate or on an old china plate we no longer used. The knife, fork and spoon he used were designated just for him.

In Dixie Land olden days were not forgotten. Lula was, so to speak, like the house servant. She cooked our meals and used the same plates, utensils and vessels as we did in the dining room. Efrem was like the field hand who was not allowed to enter the house proper. Whatever was put on his plate was covered with Vermont Maid Syrup or Grandma's Molasses. Even when Lula prepared his food, she drenched it with those sweet fluids. She said that was what made any food appetizing for him. It was no wonder that the teeth still in his mouth were yellowed and decayed.

Bye Bye to the Ku Klux Klan, 1953

"You gotta 'nother think coming if you think you're going to take that cowboy hat to the Jamboree," Daddy [once] said with firmness and with a tone in his voice that would brook no opposition. Mama was standing at his side, nodding her head in agreement, horrified by three black letters on the hat. My older brother Stanley was preparing for his trip to the 1953 Boy Scout National Jamboree in Santa Ana, California. Stanley and his Boy Scout buddies were going to portray themselves as uber-southerners. They had taken facsimiles of Confederate currency, scorched

them with flames from matches and crumpled them to make them appear as if they were a century old. Fourteen-year-old boys from the Mississippi Delta, who believed the myth that one Rebel could whip ten Yankees, thought they could outsmart gullible northern boys and con them into exchanging real greenbacks for counterfeit Confederate bills.

To my parents what was much worse than this hare-brained scheme was what Stanley had written on the cowboy hat: three black letters two-inches high, KKK. Stanley did not know the awful significance of those three letters. He only knew that some group known as the KKK was strongly associated with the South and he meant it only for instant recognition as a southerner. But hate-filled, violence-prone white men, garbed in white sheets and white hoods, were anathema to my parents. Daddy told Stanley, "Either completely erase those letters or get yourself another hat!" Stanley was able to obliterate those letters, leaving no trace of them.

During the civil rights era bombings of black churches and synagogues, the murder of blacks and Jews, and police attacks using fire hoses and ferocious German shepherds against peaceful demonstrators were events that prompted Mama on a number of occasions to recall a time

Vicksburg Herald, *March 2, 1922.*
(Newspapers.com.)

when our town defeated the Ku Klux Klan, which was never again to gain a foothold in Greenville. Mama was fifteen years old in 1924, when a historic election was held in Washington County, of which Greenville is the county seat. The Klan was formed during Reconstruction and used violence primarily against African Americans to keep them from voting and to overthrow Republican state governments. However, it had never been permitted to enter Washington County. After 1920 the Klan experienced a recrudescence in the South. Leroy Percy, the preeminent political leader in Greenville, was a staunch opponent of the Ku Klux Klan. In 1922 he humiliated a man named Joseph Camp in an oratorical showdown in the Washington County Courthouse. Following the contest, in which Camp attacked blacks, Jews and especially Catholics, a resolution was passed condemning the Klan. Camp escaped the courtroom out of a side door, appealing for protection from a deputy sheriff, who was an Irish Catholic.[21]

The victory over the Klan created a lifelong memory for Mama. The flare-ups of racist violence in Mississippi during the days of the civil rights movement were horrendous: the brutal slaying of Emmett Till in 1955, the assassination of Medgar Evers in 1963, the killing of Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman in 1964 by the KKK.[22] Mama would wistfully remember that the people of Greenville had taken a stand against the KKK and won. Whenever she mentioned the 1924 election, I do not ever recall her saying anything about the uninhibited party at the Percy home and the arrival of her maternal grandparents, who joined in the drinking, frolicking and dancing.

In 1981 I was reading *Lanterns on the Levee*, a memoir by William Alexander Percy, the son of Leroy Percy.[23] Chapter 18 is entitled "The Ku Klux Klan Comes and Goes." I was taken by surprise and utterly delighted by a paragraph near the very end of the chapter, where Will Percy describes how V. A. and Sarah so enjoyed being at the party. I would have very much liked sharing that discovery with my mother but she had died in 1979.

Two Steps Forward, One Step Backward, 1954

Progress in my family on race relations could be likened to the idiom of "two steps forward, one step backward." One step forward was my parents' decision to address envelopes to Daddy's black customers using

"Mr. and Mrs." Another step forward in my family came on May 18, 1954, the day [after] the United States Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote the single opinion, overturning the 1896 Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* that held that "separate but equal" educational facilities were constitutional. As a result of *Plessy v. Ferguson* racial segregation in public schools became the law in all southern states and in some non-southern states.

Most white southerners considered Monday, May 17, 1954, "a day of catastrophe." On Tuesday the eighteenth, my brother Stanley, who was in the ninth grade at E. E. Bass Junior High School, initiated a petition that began, "We the undersigned will never go to school with Negroes." On Wednesday the nineteenth, Stanley stood up in class and retracted his petition. He told the class, "My father said, 'You're trying to do to Negroes the same thing the Nazis did to the Jews.'" I do not know what thoughts my father was thinking when he told Stanley to recant his position. Was Daddy remembering that his paternal aunt and her three adult children perished in the Holocaust, likely murdered by *Einsatzgruppen* in Shaki [Šakiai], Lithuania, in 1941? Perhaps a prayer in the Reform Union Prayer Book was imprinted on his heart, "As Thou hast redeemed Israel and saved him from arms stronger than his own, so mayest Thou redeem all who are oppressed and persecuted. Praised art Thou, O Lord, Redeemer of Israel." Whatever prompted Daddy to tell Stanley to back down was another progressive step.

Emmett Till 1955

I adopted Daddy's fervent feelings about being a southerner. When he declared, "We whipped their ears back at Shiloh," I heard his pride in the valor of Confederate soldiers for repelling Yankees at Shiloh. My investment of emotion in being a southerner was strong. I had a deep interest in the southern side of the Civil War. With an exception or two, I followed the rules of race relations prescribed by Jim Crow. I heard and made derogatory statements about Negroes. Yet I felt no hatred toward blacks, though it may seem disingenuous for me to make that claim.

In actuality, the violent acts perpetrated against blacks engendered my sympathy for their plight, hostility toward those who committed the

Emmett Till with his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, c.1950.
(Library of Congress.)

atrocities, and contempt for the public figures who encouraged and condoned extreme racism. The antisemitism of the KKK and other white supremacist groups was also, of course, a crucial factor in favoring blacks, whom they attacked physically and verbally. On August 31, 1955, sixty miles from Greenville, the body of Emmett Till was discovered and retrieved from the Tallahatchie River. Fourteen-year-old Till had been abducted from his uncle's home in Money, Mississippi, tortured, murdered and thrown into the river on August 28 by two white men who alleged that Till crossed the "color line" by flirting with the wife of one of them. The news about the lynching of Till sparked an outrage among decent people in Mississippi. My parents would have agreed with a writer in a letter to the editor in a Mississippi newspaper: "Now is the time for every citizen who loves the state of Mississippi to 'Stand up and be counted' before hoodlum white trash brings us to destruction." Yes, that is exactly what we thought of the murderers of Emmett Till and their ilk: "hoodlum white trash." Because Till's case received widespread attention, "Mississippi became in the eyes of the nation the epitome of racism and the citadel of white supremacy."[24]

The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision created shock waves in the South. From Virginia to Texas Southern [University], politicians sought

ways to block desegregation. Integration at Little Rock Central High School was to begin on September 4, 1957. Arkansas governor Orval Faubus tried to prevent the enrollment of nine black students at the high school by ordering the Arkansas National Guard to block the black students from entering the school. On September 23, President Dwight Eisenhower issued an executive order federalizing the Arkansas National Guard and ordered it to support the desegregation of Central High School. This executive order took the Guard out of Faubus's control.[25]

On September 24, President Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne Division of the United States Army to Little Rock. By the end of September, the nine were admitted to the school under the protection of the 101st Airborne Division and the Arkansas National Guard. Because Daddy was wont to express his opinions on politicians and current events with vehemence, I think I would recall any outburst he might have made about his opposition to desegregation, his approval of the actions of Governor Faubus, or his disagreement with what President Eisenhower had done.

All in all, there was little discussion about desegregation at home, although sometimes I would broach the subject of race relations with Mama. Once I asked Mama if she would eat at the same table with Harry Belafonte. She responded, "He probably wouldn't sit down with us." Though *Brown v. Board of Education* was like a tsunami slamming into the South and threatening to wash away 335 years of keeping blacks in their place, there were hardly any ripples of dissent in our home.

The Gray Ghost: *Mosby's Rangers, 1957*

On October 10, 1957, Daddy and I fell in love with a new TV series, *The Gray Ghost*. It was based on the exploits of Major John Singleton Mosby, commander of the 43rd Battalion of the Virginia Cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia. The 43rd Battalion was actually a band of partisan rangers who carried out raids against units of the Union Army with cunning and stealth under the leadership of Mosby, nicknamed [the] "Gray Ghost." The South never lost its cause while Mosby and his rangers rode through the Virginia countryside, licking the Yankees at every turn. The opening scene of every episode showed the 43rd Battalion with Mosby in the lead, galloping on a road toward the viewer, Confederate flags flapping in the wind. The theme music played while we watched this band of brothers forging ahead to whip the Yankees again.[26]

Daddy and I watched all thirty-nine half-hour episodes. We were transported to a time and place where the victories of a Confederate cavalry unit did not seem related to the fate of the Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on the afternoon of July 3, 1863. Though inspired by true stories, *The Gray Ghost* was like a great fantasy, and we could believe that the South was winning the war through this TV show, which never disappointed us. We could relive the glories of the Confederacy before July 3, 1863, through the triumphs of Mosby and his rangers. When I was a senior in high school, I bought a reprint of Mosby's memoirs and relished reading it.[27] I dreamed that I would be reincarnated as a horse soldier in the 43rd Battalion.

The last episode aired on July 3, 1958. I thought it was cancelled because it was reigniting sectionalism at the same time when the civil rights movement was gaining momentum. The show reminded southerners of their armed resistance to the federal government whose aim was to preserve the Union and to end the enslavement of African Americans. The *Gray Ghost* showed Johnny Reb outsmarting and outfighting Billy Yank. It could "aid and abet" southern resistance to desegregation. The ideas I have expressed here turned out to be a complete misperception of mine. It was cancelled because the production costs were too expensive to continue the series. Still, no doubt, some white southerners were probably encouraged to uphold states' rights to keep African Americans "in their place."

In the spring of 1961 the four-year-long celebration of the Civil War centennial started. Columbia Records came out with an album, *The Confederacy (Based on Music of the South During the Years 1861–1865).* I listened to the record countless times, especially the theme song of *The Gray Ghost*. Reverend Edmund Jennings Lee, IV, a distant cousin of General Robert E. Lee, voiced Lee's Farewell Address to the Army of Northern Virginia. I memorized the speech and recited it a number of times. At the end of side two of the record the voice of Douglas Southall Freeman was recorded giving his rendition of the Rebel Yell, starting with a low pitch and rising to a crescendo. It did not sound as if it would cause Union soldiers to quake in their boots. Nevertheless, because Freeman was an eminent historian known for his four-volume biography of Robert E. Lee, I regarded Freeman's Rebel Yell as authentic.[28] Recently I have listened to a recording of Confederate veterans at a reunion in the 1930s. Their yells sounded like

a howl or a screech, done three times. Charging en masse and yelling all at once, they could have indeed caused the boys in blue to tremble.

In the late summer of 1961 friends of mine and I gathered for a dinner and dance at a nightclub. I brought along a bottle of Rebel Yell Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey and after I had drank a few shots of the bourbon, I demonstrated my version of the Rebel Yell. In a few weeks we would all go on our separate ways to different colleges. Little did I know then what changes I would undergo in my thinking in the few years ahead.

E. E. Bass Junior High School, 1957

In the spring of 1957 I was in the eighth grade at E. E. Bass Junior High School. My most memorable teacher that year was Mrs. Wilhelmina Cockerham, whose grandfather had been in the Confederate army. Mrs. Cockerham taught American history. She had a standing tradition of taking her classes to Vicksburg in the spring. During the Civil War Vicksburg was a stronghold on the Mississippi River, connecting the east and west sides of the Confederacy. It fell to General Ulysses S. Grant on July 4, 1863. When President Lincoln received the news from Grant, he declared, "Thank God, the Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea." Mrs. Cockerham loved taking her classes to Vicksburg to bring history alive with a visit to antebellum buildings and the Vicksburg National Military Park and Cemetery, which is a major tourism attraction.

I loved American history and I was Mrs. Cockerham's best student. I had a keen interest in the Civil War and I was looking forward to the field trip to Vicksburg. Indeed, I was in Vicksburg on the very same weekend when my class went and visited the historical sites of the city. However, I was not with my class. My mother had another idea for what I would be doing in Vicksburg.

Lexington, Virginia 1957

The turn to my ardent focus on Civil War history and Confederate military heroes in particular was the outcome of a visit to Lexington, Virginia, on July 8, 1957. The itinerary of my Boy Scout troop on its way to the national jamboree in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, included a tour of the campus of Washington and Lee University. Robert E. Lee served as president of Washington College from October 2, 1865, until his death on

October 12, 1870. The College was almost immediately renamed Washington and Lee University. My troop entered Lee Chapel and saw the marble recumbent statue of Lee in his uniform. The statue, which is the centerpiece of the chapel, is placed where the altar would be in a church. This placement indicates the veneration in which the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia has been held in the South. Lee's body itself was buried beneath the chapel.

Recumbent statue of Robert E. Lee by Edward Valentine, c. 1872,
Washington & Lee University, Lexington, Virginia.
Photograph by Carol M. Highsmith.
(Library of Congress.)

For me being in that chapel lit a fire in my heart; for the four years of high school about to commence in the fall of 1957, I cherished the dream of going to undergraduate college at Washington and Lee University. Another thrill of visiting Lexington was seeing Virginia Military Institute, where Stonewall Jackson taught before the outbreak of the Civil War. Like Lee, Jackson was buried in Lexington. On the night of May 2, 1863, Jackson was struck in his left arm by two bullets from friendly fire. The amputation of his left arm was not the cause of death. Because he was bedridden for eight days, complications from pneumonia brought on his death on May

10. As Jackson lay dying, Lee sent a message to a chaplain attending to Jackson, "say to [Jackson]: he has lost his left arm but I my right." I did not think it was unseemly for me as a Jewish boy to hold Lee and Jackson in high esteem, because I knew at the time that a Jewish man, Judah P. Benjamin, who held three cabinet positions in the Confederate government, had been a trusted advisor to Jefferson Davis. Moreover, Daddy, who was always pointing out to me famous Jews, living or dead, could have likely told me about Judah P. Benjamin.[29]

Southern Federation of Temple Youth, 1957

When Mama, who had no interest whatsoever in the Civil War, much less in the Confederacy, found out that the Southern Federation of Temple Youth (SOFTY) had selected Vicksburg as the city for its 1957 spring conclave, she set in motion a plan for me to go to the conclave with the Greenville Temple Youth Group. She had decided that it was more important for me (and for her) that I be with Jewish teens from towns and cities scattered across Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee who would be brought together in one place for Jewish activities. First Mama spoke with Mrs. Cockerham and asked that I be excused from the eighth-grade field trip for a religious activity. Mrs. Cockerham understood Mama's rationale and gave her ready consent. Next Mama spoke to her good friend Elizabeth Friedman, who was the advisor for the Greenville TYG. There was a SOFTY rule that fifteen was the minimum age to join a TYG and to go to a conclave. Though I had just turned fourteen on March 16, Elizabeth needed very little arm-twisting to bend the rule for me. Elizabeth agreed with Mama that with my mature appearance and personality, I could pass for a fifteen-year-old.

On Saturday afternoon I was sitting on the slope of a hill overlooking downtown Vicksburg. I can still see myself with newly found Jewish friends, looking down upon the line of my eighth-grade classmates entering some historic building. The distance from my spot on the hill above to the line of my classmates below lingers in my memory as a sign that in the coming years I would feel a lessening attachment to the Christian students with whom I went to school in Greenville. Mama did not lack boldness in making sure that I had the Jewish experiences she wanted me to have. It was her way of giving me roots.

Mississippi Boys State 1960

In the summer of 1960 I was selected along with several other members of my class to attend Mississippi Boys State, an educational program developed by the American Legion. About three hundred rising seniors from high schools all across Mississippi convened for one week on the campus of Hinds Community College in Raymond, Mississippi. The purpose of Boys State was for the students to participate in activities in which they would learn how local, county, and state governments operated. On Thursday afternoon we boarded buses for a trip to Jackson, the state capital about a thirty-minute drive away. The highlight of the tour of the State Capitol was that we would be treated to an address by the Governor of the State of Mississippi. We sat at the desks of the legislators in the Mississippi House of Representatives. We rose—I reluctantly—when Governor Ross Barnett entered the chamber. When he started speaking, I leaned back in the comfortable leather chair of a state legislator and took a very pleasant thirty to forty-five-minute snooze while Barnett was bombinating. I felt no qualms for sleeping through his speech. I just knew that Mama and Daddy were giving me their tacit blessing for tuning out such a *mamzer* of the first water like Barnett.[30]

Greenville High School

Apparently my interest in the Civil War was known to many at Greenville High School. Even Frank Warnock, the new principal whose first year in the position coincided with my senior year, heard about my fascination with Mosby and lent me his copy of *The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby*. Later in my senior year I acquired my own copy of the book. I began a subscription to *American Heritage: The Magazine of History* with the December 1957 issue and kept a continuous subscription to it until the mid-1970s. My favorite articles in the magazine were about the Civil War and southern culture.

I took the course in American history at Greenville High School in my junior year (1959–1960). For the course I compiled a very thick album on the Civil War and wrote a paper on Major General J. E. B. Stuart, who became the commander of the cavalry corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. Stuart was the officer who authorized Mosby to form and lead the 43rd Battalion. In the spring of 1960 I received the sterling silver medal

Fred Davidow in his senior year at Greeneville High School, 1961. (Courtesy of Rabbi Fred V. Davidow.)

"For Excellence in History," sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution. In October 1960 I bought the deluxe two-volume edition of *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War* with the narrative by Bruce Catton. Sixty years later, as I am writing now in 2020, the set is still a treasured part of my library.[31]

However much I was enthralled by Lee, Jackson, Stuart, and Mosby, I never entertained the thought that the Confederacy should have won its independence. When I was in high school, I tacked two postcards of Abraham Lincoln onto the bulletin board in the bedroom of my home in Greenville. One is the image of a photograph of Lincoln leaning forward in a chair, his left elbow resting on the arm of the chair, his head slightly cast down toward his raised left hand. He is in a pensive posture, no doubt thinking about saving the Union and finding the general who could subdue the rebellion.

When I was a senior in high school (1960–1961), I memorized the Gettysburg Address, which my English teacher, Nell Thomas, praised as a superb example of powerful writing. Mrs. Thomas, who had a long and distinguished career at Greenville High School, especially liked how Lincoln used triads in his speeches. The best-known triad in the Gettysburg address is "of the people, by the people, for the people."

What is just as important as the literary quality of the writing is Lincoln's message that our "nation conceived in Liberty [is] dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal . . . [and] that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Here were Lincoln's aims in the war: preserve the Union and "proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Leviticus 25:10). This verse from Leviticus is cast in bronze on the Liberty Bell.

Joe Weinberg, 1961

One Jewish man who "leavened" Greenville was Joe Weinberg (1876–1969). He started as a merchant, became the president of the Greenville Bank and Trust Co., and was a leading philanthropist in the city. Weinberg was a friend of Leroy Percy, William's father, who led the fight to keep the Ku Klux Klan out of Greenville. In 1945 Weinberg was among those who gave financial help to Hodding Carter, the renowned Greenville newspaperman, in Carter's plan to gain full ownership of the *Delta Democrat-Times*. This newspaper was Carter's platform for challenging the status quo in Mississippi.

Joe Weinberg, like Carter, sought to develop good relations with the African American community in Greenville. There were two public high schools in Greenville before desegregation: the all-white Greenville High School and the all-black Coleman High School. One of the academic awards given to seniors at both schools was the "Joe Weinberg Mathematics Award." In the spring of 1961 a Christian classmate and I each received a Weinberg cup, for she and I tied for the highest academic average for four years of achievement in algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. A day or two after the awards ceremony at Greenville High School, I received a phone call from a secretary in the principal's office at GHS. She explained to me a problem. Coleman High School had not yet received its Weinberg cup and the awards ceremony at Coleman would not come off right if the black recipient would not receive the cup at the ceremony. "Would you mind giving up your cup for the ceremony at Coleman, and when the third cup is delivered, you will get that one?" I have always thought that I was asked to do this favor because I was Jewish and would agree without any reservation. And so I did.

NOTES

[1] James A. Padgett, ed., "The Life of Alfred Mordecai as Related by Himself," *North Carolina Historical Review* 22 (January 1945): 58–108; Wendy Machlovitz, ed., *Clara Lowenburg Moses: Memoir of a Southern Jewish Woman* (Jackson, MS, 2000); Seymour Atlas, *The Rabbi With the Southern Twang: True Stories From a Life of Leadership Within the Orthodox Jewish Congregations of the South* (Bloomington, IN, 2007); Elana Ginz, *How Can I Help You? Rebecca Teles: Memoir of a Southern Jewish Belle* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2017).

[2] *Gong Lum v. Rice*, 275 U.S. 78 (1927).

[3] Fred Davidow, "A Remembrance of Greenville, Mississippi," *Jewish Georgian* (January 1991); David Ruderman, "Greenville Diary: A Northern Rabbi Confronts the Deep South, 1966–1970," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 94 (Autumn 2004): 643–65.

[4] James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York, 1992). James C. Cobb, ed., *The Mississippi Delta and the World: The Memoirs of David L. Cohn* (Baton Rouge, 1985) provides the story of another Jew born in Greenville who went on to become an author and speechwriter for prominent liberal Democratic politicians. See also Howard Ball's memoir, *Taking the Fight South: Chronicle of a Jew's Battle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Notre Dame, IN, 2021) that details his experience as a college professor in Starkville, Mississippi.

[5] "Number of Inhabitants: Mississippi," accessed July 10, 2022, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-1/vol-01-27.pdf. Historians of small-town Jewish American life will find a memoir focused on Greenville, Mississippi, to be of interest. For a broader study see Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven, 2005). For local studies see Ewa Morawska, *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890–1940* (Princeton, 1996) and Lance Jonathan Sussman, *The Emergence of a Jewish Community in Richmond, Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1981), supplemented by his podcast on *The Jewish Community of Richmond, Indiana* (Indianapolis, 2021), produced by the Indiana Jewish Historical Society, https://podcasts.apple.com/ro/podcast/the-jewish-community-of-richmond-indiana-revisited/id1566739781?i=1000540624681.

[6] Stuart Rockoff, "Jews in Mississippi," Mississippi History Now, accessed July 10, 2022, http://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/issue/jews-in-mississippi; Ellen M. Umansky, "Paula Ackerman: Pioneer in the Pulpit," *Southern Jewish History* 14 (2011): 77–117.

[7] Louise Eskrigge Crump, "History of Greenville," accessed July 8, 2022, https://www.greenvillems.org/history-of-greenville.

[8] For background on the 1927 flood, see John M. Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (New York, 2007).

[9] "Number of Inhabitants: Mississippi," accessed July 10, 2022, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-1/vol-01-27.pdf; Crump, "History of Greenville."

[10] See C. Stuart Chapman, *Shelby Foote: A Writer's Life* (Jackson, MS, 2006); David L. Cohn, *Where I Was Born and Raised* (New York, 1948); and Hillary Jordan, *Mudbound* (Chapel Hill, 2008). The movie version of *Mudbound* appeared in 2017, directed by Dee Rees.

[11] "Population and Housing Unit Estimates," United States Census Bureau. May 24, 2020.

[12] Quick Facts: Plattsburgh city, New York," accessed July 11, 2022, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/plattsburghcitynewyork/PST045221.

[13] Bernard Goodman, Hebrew Union Congregation to Board of Trustees, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, November 7, 1963, Jewish Women's Archives, accessed July 10, 2022, https://jwa.org/media/letter-from-hebrew-union-congregation-to-union-of-american-hebrew-congregations-november-7-196. This letter was part of a famous confrontation between numerous congregations and the UAHC. Jack Nelson, *Terror in the Night: The Klan's Campaign Against the Jews* (New York, 1993); Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2003); Allan P. Krause, *To Stand Aside or Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and Civil Rights*, ed. Mark K. Bauman with Stephen Krause (Tuscaloosa, 2016).

[14] This story typifies the chain migration pattern of immigration to the United States.

[15] For background see John Doyle Klier, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881–1882* (Cambridge, UK, 2011).

[16] Lewis Baker, *The Percys of Mississippi: Politics and Literature in the New South* (Baton Rouge, 1983); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The House of Percy: Honor, Melancholy, and Imagination in a Southern Family* (New York, 1994).

[17] Arnold Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson: A Biography* (New York, 1998); Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York, 2008); John Rosengren, *Hank Greenberg: The Hero of Heroes* (Berkeley, CA, 2014); Vince Staten, *Ol' Diz: A Biography of Dizzy Dean* (New York, 1992).

[18] Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830. Mississippi's Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek followed later the same year, but removal took place between 1831 and 1833. Arthur H. DeRosier, Jr., "The Indian Removal Act of 1830," *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, accessed January 25, 2022, https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/indian-removal-act-of-1830.

[19] For an extremely insightful novel on the relationships between Black maids and Jewish families see Roy Hoffman, *Almost Family* (New York, 1983).

[20] Operation Isaiah is a national movement to collect usually canned food for the hungry during the High Holidays run by individual synagogues. Its name is derived from the scripture from the Prophet Isaiah, "to share your food with the hungry."

[21] Baker, *Percys of Mississippi*; Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi: A History* (Jefferson, NC, 2010).

[22] The literature on all of these murders is extensive. See, for example, Chris Crowe, *Getting Away With Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* (New York, 2003); Devery S. Anderson, *Emmett Till: The Murder that Shocked the World and Propelled the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson, MS, 2017); Adam Nossiter, *Of Long Memory: Mississippi and the Murder of Medger Evers* (Boston, 1993); Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *We Are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi* (New York, 1988); and Howard Ball, *Murder in Mississippi: United States v. Price and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Lawrence, KS, 2004).

[23] William Alexander Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter's Son* (New York, 1941).

[24] Hugh Stephen Whitaker, "A Case Study in Southern Justice: The Murder and Trial of Emmett Till," *Rhetoric and Public Affair*s 8 (Summer 2005): 219.

[25] See Michael J. Klarman, *Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, 2007); Roy Reed, *Faubus: The Life and Times of an American Prodigal* (Fayetteville, AR, 1997); Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York, 2004 [1976]).

[26] Frank McDonald directed the television series. Jeffrey D. Wert, *Mosby's Rangers* (New York, 1991); Jeffrey Mitchell, *The Grey Ghost of the Confederacy: The Life and Legacy of John Mosby* (n.p., 2017).

[27] John Singleton Mosby, *The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby*, ed. Charles Wells Russell (Whitefish, MT, 1968 [1917]).

[28] Douglas Southall Freeman, *R.E. Lee: A Biography* (New York, 1949).

[29] For veneration of Benjamin as part of Lost Cause ideology, see David Weinfeld, "Two Commemorations: Richmond Jews and the Lost Cause During the Civil Rights Era," *Southern Jewish History* 23 (2020): 77–124. For a more balanced take on Benjamin, see Paul Finkelman, "An Israelite with Egyptian Principles," *Jewish Review of Books*, 12 (Winter 2022): 22–23.

[30] For Barnett's role in attempting to prevent the desegregation of the University of Mississippi, see William Doyle, *An American Insurrection: The Battle of Oxford, 1962* (New York, 2002).

[31] Bruce Catton, *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War* (Washington DC, 1960).

REVIEW ESSAY

Memoirs and Archives: Celebrating the Jews of Atlanta

by

Jacob Morrow-Spitzer*

What's Next? Southern Dreams, Jewish Deeds and the Challenge of Looking Back while Moving Forward. By Janice Rothschild Blumberg. Savage, MD: Bartleby Press, 2022. 373 pages.

The Jewish Community of Atlanta. By Jeremy Katz. Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2021. 127 pages.

The Temple: The First 150 Years. By Catherine Lewis, Jeremy Katz, and Anna Tucker. Atlanta: The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, 2020. 122 pages.

At a time when the state of Georgia is receiving renewed national political attention, three recently published books are focusing on the state capital's significant Jewish history. These volumes spotlight the historical contributions of Atlanta Jewry, including the many famous—and some lesser-known—events and people in its past. One is the memoir of an Atlanta woman's full and impressive life, while the latter two are illustrated histories focusing on the city's Jewish community. Read together, they highlight the dynamic Jewish presence in a place repeatedly at the forefront of national prominence and draw awareness to a city that deserves the continued attention of scholars of Jewish history.

The Harvard historian Vincent Brown once said that every history book should simultaneously be a story, an argument, and an archive. In Janice Rothschild Blumberg's enthralling new memoir *What's Next?*, a reader can find all three components. The longtime Atlantan Jewish

* The reviewer may be contacted at jacob.morrow-spitzer@yale.edu.

leader, advocate, and writer has detailed her life in a volume that scholars and the public alike will find both insightful and captivating. *What's Next?* provides not only a window into Blumberg's remarkably rich life, but also a deeply personal chronicle of what it means to hold intersecting identities as a Jew, a woman, and a southerner.

Born in 1924 to a Bostonian father and a mother with long Georgian roots, Blumberg (née Oettinger) was raised in what she calls a "southern middle-class German Jewish cocoon" (15). Her memoir opens with a detailed description of her family's past. She is the great-granddaughter of Atlanta's Rabbi Edward Benjamin Morris "Alphabet" Browne, who is the subject of Blumberg's 2012 book *Prophet in a Time of Priests*. Blumberg then portrays the southern society in which she came of age. Well before her involvement in organized Jewish life or her role in the midcentury civil rights movement, she spent her adolescence where "Jim Crow reigned supreme, the Klan burned crosses on Stone Mountain, people celebrated Confederate Memorial Day instead of the national holiday . . . [and where] local Jews still cowered, fearing another anti-Semitic outbreak" in the decades after the lynching of Leo Frank in 1915 (4).

Like so many early twentieth-century southern Jews, Blumberg grew up in a highly assimilated Reform milieu. She and her coreligionists decorated trees with colored lights at Christmas and rarely attended synagogue. In regional fashion, she explains, "we and our parents were taught to seek assimilation in everything other than religion and shun all outward signs of Jewishness as somewhat *déclassé*" (55).

Although she would later become an internationally acclaimed Jewish leader, mingling with the "who's who" of the Jewish religious and political world, Blumberg's explicit connection to institutionalized Judaism came during her first marriage in 1946 to Jacob M. "Jack" Rothschild. As the young rabbi at the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation (colloquially known as "The Temple"), he catapulted her into her new life as "the rabbi's wife." Sometimes willingly and sometimes more reluctantly, she emerged as a leader of Atlanta's Reform society. Her husband suddenly died in 1973, but her prominence in Jewish communal life grew international two years later when she married David M. Blumberg, the president of B'nai B'rith International. The couple traveled extensively in their fourteen years together before his death. What the author humorously calls

their "26,000-mile honeymoon" consisted of an astonishing number of international visits and vacations in the wake of their marriage.

Although Blumberg imparts countless significant experiences in her 373-page memoir, ranging from her extensive journalism to her ardent Zionism to her meetings with heads of state, she remains best known in Atlanta for her involvement in the civil rights movement. In October 1958, white supremacists bombed The Temple, and Blumberg recalls in vivid—and sometimes emotional—detail the events of the day and its aftermath, including her testimony in the highly publicized trial. As the movement continued to grow into the 1960s, she and Jack would mingle among civil rights leaders, including developing a close friendship with Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King. Still, Blumberg addresses this critical era of her life with humility. Although Jack's sermons condemned segregation, she admits that she "was never intentionally an activist" (94). (That is a "flattering misconception" (76), she asserts). She also reminds readers that the couple's racially liberal politics were hardly shared by all of the city's Jews.

Despite the prominence of her two husbands, the author was not relegated to their shadows. During her first marriage, second-wave feminism was empowering women to explore independent identities—a development that she and other American *rebbetzins* "appreciated . . . but were not yet ready to follow. We needed a passion for doing something outside of the congregation," she recalled, "but seldom knew where to find it" (72). Blumberg would come to fill this void through a burgeoning writing career and a lifelong passion for playwriting, journalism, and academic scholarship. Appearing in magazines, journals, and theaters across Georgia, her writings burst into Atlanta's high cultural society, and she became the first Jew to be named president of the city's prestigious Women's

Guild. Her passion for writing and scholarship has continued throughout her life, illustrated through her publishing of several books and holding of positions of academic prominence, including a stint as president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

What's Next? is an exciting and valuable memoir in which Blumberg balances personal narrative and a fast-paced life of accomplishment. It is at times moving and emotional, at other times humorous and light, and often pleasantly unreserved. (Readers will discover one scene of a "giddy" Blumberg going lingerie shopping en route to a New York City hotel rendezvous in her mid-70s.) It is also a history of remarkable achievement and personal growth, and, perhaps most crucially for the scholar, a deeply enriching archive of a Jewish woman from a changing South. Hers is the story of a woman who came to unearth her identity while building upon the traditions and values of family, region, culture, and religion. She has documented her life in a memoir that will sit alongside those of prominent American women, southerners, and Jews.

Given her importance to Atlanta's Jewish history, it is no wonder that Blumberg appears in both new illustrated volumes. Jeremy Katz's book, *The Jewish Community of Atlanta*, is part of the vast "Images of America" series. A former senior archivist of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta, he has collected, edited, and put text to hundreds of photographs drawn from the Joseph Cuba Archives for Southern Jewish History. As a largely celebratory account of the Jewish community and its contributions to greater Atlanta's business and cultural life, this short book showcases the widespread achievements and occasional setbacks of the city's Jews, as well as the rich collections held by the Cuba Archives.

After a brief foreword by Eric Goldstein and Katz's introduction, the first chapter highlights the early Jewish settlers of the "Gate City." It had a small Jewish population before the Civil War, which, like other towns across the South, mainly consisted of peddlers and merchants. A true New South city, Atlanta "rose from the ashes" of the Civil War in the postbellum years, Katz writes, in part due to the business fortitude of its growing Jewish population (8). From the book's opening pages, images portray the magnificent achievements of Atlanta's "Jewish pioneers," which include the establishment of the local Atlanta public school system, the founding of the state's first chartered nonprofit (the Hebrew Orphans' Home), the

erection of early southern synagogues, and the individual and communal accomplishments of Jewish women like Rhoda Kaufman and Annie Teitelbaum Wise. The former served as a preeminent social worker and the latter became a prominent administrator in the Atlanta schools. Furthermore, Katz demonstrates Jewish communal accomplishments, displaying photographs of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation ("The Temple") in 1887, the Congregation "Ahavath Achim Section" at Oakland Cemetery in 1892, and rabbis like Joseph I. Cohen and Tobias Geffen.

Jewish mobility, communal growth, and acculturation are interrupted in chapter 3, "A Powder Keg," in which Katz recounts the events surrounding the Leo Frank affair (1913–15). Images portraying Frank, his family, the trial, the lynching, and the aftermath exhibit a fresh angle on this case, providing the reader with visuals of an episode with deep significance to local, national, and even international observers. The following five chapters then resume the story of Jewish triumph and celebration, including the enlightening chapter 7, "The Olympic Games." Just as city governments often utilize the Olympics to invest in local infrastructure, Katz describes the Jewish community following the same path, financing a new federation building (the Selig Center) and the current William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in anticipation of the 1996 Atlanta Games.

Although *The Jewish Community of Atlanta* impressively overviews some of the prominent people, institutions, organizations, and events across sixteen decades of Atlanta's Jewish past, it is not a book to pick up for a fully nuanced view of Atlantan Jewish history. For the general reader—the likely audience for this work—it is exactly what Katz describes as a book that "chronicles the remarkable resilience and achievements of the Jewish community" (9). An academic reader, however,

should be cautioned to recognize the triumphalism that casts a veil over the study. The book's introduction, for example, dubiously notes that in the New South "Jews were widely accepted in both the Black and White communities" (8). Contradicting Janice Rothschild Blumberg's account of her family's uneasiness with inviting a Black acquaintance to stay with them (29–30), as well as numerous scholarly studies including Eric Goldstein's book, *The Price of Whiteness*, Jewish race relations were more complex than a cross-racial embrace. Another example is the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill, a massive factory that the Jewish immigrant and "keen businessman" Jacob Elsas founded in 1889. Katz omits mentioning the racist labor strikes targeting Elsas's management practices (17). Triggered by racial unrest between white and Black workers and Elsas's steadfast anti-unionism, the Jewish factory owner—who at the turn of the century was Atlanta's largest employer—temporarily won the strike by affirming his commitment to segregation and firing Black workers from his factory. (See Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War*, especially 115–17.)

While readers should be cognizant of this book's triumphalist approach, they should no less revel in some of the remarkable achievements in shaping modern Atlanta and the vast photographic archive of Jewish people, places, and events that Katz scoured in the making of this volume. This book at its best is as a celebration of Jewish communal life and the seemingly endless contributions that Jews made to civic life. Furthermore, it presents a treasure-trove of images that Katz teases as "merely scratch[ing] the surface of the story and photograph collections at the Breman" (7).

Utilizing the Breman photograph archive and much more, the third volume is the most narrowly focused. *The Temple: The First 150 Years* is a history of Atlanta's prominent Reform synagogue, the foremost institutional centerpiece of the city's Jewish life. It is the place where Blumberg's great-grandfather "Alphabet" Browne and her late husband Jack Rothschild both served as rabbis and is the subject of several photographs from Katz's illustrated history. Bound as a hardcover coffee-table style book, *The Temple* opens with a preface by the current senior rabbi, Peter Berg. The volume then offers a detailed eleven-page introduction that surveys moments from before the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation's founding in 1867 through its most recent five-year strategic plan in 2017. (The

congregation did not erect its first building until 1877.) Five chronological chapters then bring the reader on a journey through The Temple's past. Along with this volume comes a companion book, *By Cloud & By Fire: Six Principles for the Journey Home*, which Rabbi Berg coauthored with Barbara R. Thompson. It is a spiritual and religious guidebook that includes one chapter specifically on the history of The Temple—"We Are Our History, Our Future."

A visually exciting and textually engaging book, *The Temple* is a cover-to-cover museum of communal history. Images, sketches, timelines, artifacts, demographic data, and scanned archival documents are an aesthetic delight. Stories that Blumberg and Katz record are also scattered across the pages, sometimes providing deeper archival layers. For instance, the entire eulogy for Rabbi Rothschild is reprinted, as is his sermon delivered in the wake of the temple bombing in 1958. Janice Rothschild Blumberg receives a two-page spread, including a photograph of her acting in a Temple Sisterhood production of "Fascinating Women in American Jewish History." Also included are many new moments in Atlanta's Jewish past, including exhibitions on interracial and interfaith relations, modern social justice efforts, and the history of the synagogue's Torah scrolls.

Like Katz's book, triumphalism undergirds some of these stories. The editors place emphasis on communal unity rather than conflict. Chapter 2, "A Dramatic Transformation: 1895–1946," for example, highlights an era when "the congregation focused on assimilating into southern society." Rather than acknowledge the widespread tensions between mid-nineteenth century central European Jews and the more recent arrivals from eastern Europe, the authors simply state that synagogue membership "struggled to grow . . . largely because Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe began establishing their own

congregations" (26). (Blumberg more explicitly writes in her memoir that "ancestry, not affluence, determined one's status" (14) within Temple society.) Like Katz's book, this volume is targeted toward the general reader and offers an accessible, multimedia introduction to a deeply important American Jewish institution.

Taken together, *What's Next?*, *The Jewish Community of Atlanta,* and *The Temple* signify a growing interest in documenting the Jewish story of a city with a vibrant and influential history. While all three are celebratory in nature—of a life, of a community, of a synagogue—they do much to inform readers of the many personalities, institutions, and events in their relationship to the broader city. All three similarly point to valuable new archives for historians to study and can launch future analyses of Jews living in a city that famously called itself "Too Busy to Hate."

Book Reviews

Taking the Fight South: Chronicle of a Jew's Battle for Civil Rights in Mississippi. By Howard Ball. Notre Dame University Press, 2021. 280 pages.

As a native of Mississippi, I read with rapt interest Howard Ball's memoir about his experiences—both the achievements and the obstacles—of living in Starkville, where he taught political science at Mississippi State University (MSU) from 1976 to 1982. The clash between a New York Jewish liberal activist and white reactionaries was inevitable. Ball won a few victories but wearied of the Sisyphean struggle. It echoed a little of the experience of Rabbi Abraham Ruderman, who grew up in Malden, Massachusetts, went to college at Boston University, and was ordained at the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City in 1941. He served my hometown congregation in Greenville from 1966 to 1970 but ran into stiff criticism because he claimed a "moral mandate to speak out" against racial discrimination. I was rooting for Professor Ball because I am a southern-born-and-reared rabbi who developed a visceral revulsion to the injustice and violence that racists perpetrated in the region.

Ball claimed to find his opposition to discrimination policies in *tikkun olam*, the Judaic value of ameliorating social ills. He writes that it "was in my DNA and in my soul" (xvii). At his bar mitzvah ceremony in 1950, he learned of Hillel's three questions: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?" Ball's adult answers to these questions defined him "as a human and as a Jew" (xviii). When he told his mother that he and his wife, Carol, and their three daughters were moving to Mississippi, she blurted out, "You are

meshuggeneh!" Moving to Mississippi certainly put the family in some very hot water, but it was fortunately below the boiling point.

Starkville's white Protestants treated Blacks, Catholics, and Jews as "others." The Catholic priest became a friend who invited Ball to speak to his confirmation class on the Jewish understanding of the Messiah. Ball's elucidation of the concept proved so successful that he returned annually. The Catholics who served on the faculty at Mississippi State often came from the New York metropolitan area. Ball considered them *landsmen*—more so than the local Jews. He pitched for the Catholic softball team, and his teammates emblazoned his T-shirt with a Star of David. Carol Ball and her two older daughters also wanted to educate public school children about Judaism. The trio told stories about Hanukkah, Purim, and Passover, sang songs, and shared the foods associated with these holidays. The family also demanded that Bible readings and prayers be stopped in their daughters' public schools. The two older daughters felt the stigma of activism. They wanted to join a Girl Scout troop but were given the disingenuous excuse that no vacancies existed. However, an all-Black group existed without an adult leader. Carol Ball volunteered to be the leader of the troop, which became the only integrated one for Girl Scouts in Oktibbeha County, of which Starkville was the county seat. Such activism aroused the enmity of Starkville Jewry, which preferred to remain invisible as Ball discovered. He and his family became pariahs. Not once did a Jewish family invite the Balls to dinner in their six years in Starkville.

In June 1978, at the end of Ball's second year at Mississippi State, he became the head of the political science department. He remained in this position until he left four years later. At the helm of the department, Ball accomplished his greatest success at the university. He managed to develop strong, lasting relationships with his colleagues and with the university's president. Ball and his faculty quickly developed a graduate curriculum for a master's program in public policy and administration (MPPA). He intended to recruit Black students, especially Black female students. The president of MSU, James McComas, whom Ball described as a consummate mensch, wholeheartedly backed Ball's plan to upgrade the graduate program in public administration. McComas made funds available to the political science department for research and travel support. A substantial source of funding for this program came from the

Mississippi legislature, "An Act to Establish the Mississippi Public Management Graduate Intern Program." How this legislation came about makes for one of the most interesting stories in *Taking the Fight South*.

In early 1980 McComas asked Ball and his wife to attend in his place a meeting at the White House, to which President Jimmy Carter had invited the MSU president. On the way back to Mississippi, the Balls sat, by coincidence, in the same row on the plane as Robert Crook, an influential state senator. Crook told Ball that he wanted to pass legislation to create a program for public management graduate students to serve as legislative interns. Ball told him that he would prepare a draft bill within two weeks. Ball kept his promise to deliver the draft bill, and Crook kept his promise. The bill, which whizzed through the Mississippi legislature, was enacted into law as written. Crook knew that most of the interns were Black men and women who would be working in Jackson to assist state agencies and legislative committees. Crook's home was in Ruleville in Sunflower County. He was a protégé of U. S. Senator James Eastland, an arch-segregationist. Crook's southern bona fides were impeccable. A lifelong Democrat even after most white Mississippians became Republican, he studied the history of the "War Between the States" and belonged to the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Crook's overriding interest, however, was the training of Black students in public administration through their service as legislative interns.

Living in Starkville eventually became too heavy a burden for the Ball family. The liberalism of Carol Ball, who taught math at Starkville High School, continued to generate unease at the school. Their daughters had to endure the insensitivity of teachers and the daily intrusion of Protestant religion in the public schools. Ball's sterling academic successes

at MSU spurred resentment, including the objection that too many Black students were enrolled in the MPPA graduate program. In the last two years of living in Starkville, menacing middle-of-the-night telephone calls from the KKK frightened the family. Ball imagined terrifying acts of violence inflicted on his family. At the end of his fourth academic year at MSU, he began looking for a new academic position.

In one of his last meetings with President McComas, Ball mentioned his surprise that he had received very few hateful letters from crazy racists. McComas explained: "Let me tell why you didn't receive those hate letters." McComas then showed him "the Ball file," filled over the course of four years with hate mail. How had McComas responded to this avalanche? He did nothing. When Ball asked McComas why he had never informed him, McComas replied: "It was none of your business. You were doing things I wish others on campus would do to enhance the quality of graduate education at State. The last thing you needed was my sending you copies of these evil notes." That was one reason among others why Ball regarded McComas as a mensch.

Howard Ball left MSU for the University of Utah in the summer of 1982. In 1989 he moved to the University of Vermont, where he retired as professor emeritus in 2002. A fitting conclusion to *Taking the Fight South* was Ball's return to Mississippi in January 2005 to attend the trial of Edgar Ray "Preacher" Killen. The defendant was the Klan leader who had orchestrated the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner in the summer of 1964. Ball persuaded the managing editor of the *Burlington Free Press* to designate him as a special correspondent to cover the trial. He regarded the judge and the defendant as personifying two opposites: "goodness and evilness" (182). On June 21, 2005, the forty-first anniversary of the crime, the jury returned the verdict, holding Killen guilty on three counts of manslaughter. Judge Marcus Gordon sentenced Killen to twenty years in prison for each count, to run consecutively. Both men had grown up in the same small town of Union and had been neighbors. "Preacher" Killen had conducted services at the church that Gordon's parents attended, and Killen had presided over their funerals. Ball pondered the mystery: what had made these two men so different? After the trial Gordon told Ball that his parents "taught me to recognize the difference between right and wrong" (p. 187). Ball could have imagined *tikkun olam* at work in the heart of an upright Mississippi judge.

Howard Ball does not use the current term "systemic racial injustice," but that is what he confronted in Mississippi—entrenched white power arrayed to block the civil rights of Blacks and to intimidate whites as well as Blacks who were bold enough to challenge racial discrimination. Ball's courage to step into the cauldron of racism in Mississippi was rooted in his conviction that *tikkun olam* is "an elemental prescription for Jewish behavior." Eventually the threats from the KKK, the ostracism by the local Jewish community, and the snide comments from some MSU faculty wore away Ball's resolve to continue the fight in Mississippi. However, what Ball was able to accomplish at MSU with a sizable cohort of Black students in the MPPA graduate program was a remarkable achievement. In 1982, just before Ball left MSU, his program was ranked sixth best in the Southeast—behind only Duke University, the University of Virginia, the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and the University of Georgia. That I consider impressive laurels.

Rabbi Fred V. Davidow, Havertown, PA
The reviewer may be contacted at: RabbiFVD@aol.com.

A Better Life for Their Children: Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the 4,978 Schools that Changed America. Photographs and Stories by Andrew Feiler. Foreword by Congressman John Lewis. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2021. 127 pages.

The cover of *A Better Life for Their Children: Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the 4,978 Schools that Changed America* shows a schoolroom with three rows of desks and chairs—some clearly old style, one a newer model with an attached arm-desk—facing a blackboard at the front. Four glass fixtures hang from a wooden ceiling while natural light from three large double-hung windows on the right illuminates the room. A small American flag adorns the blackboard; to its right, in one corner, stands a black potbelly stove. On the other side of the blackboard, a globe sits on a mostly empty bookcase.

It is a puzzling black-and-white photograph that seems to evoke a bygone era, but one that belies in many ways the story Andrew Feiler tells through his text and images. The cover photograph is ordinary; the book

it fronts for is extraordinary. The cover photo portrays a school without pupils; the book introduces readers to schools that transformed the lives of many of their students. The cover photo suggests a typical schoolroom; the book uncovers an atypical, hidden history of benevolence, striving, commitment, and passion beneath a façade of schools that dotted the former states of the Confederacy. The cover photo is nameless; the book provides rich specific details for each and every photograph. Yet, in some ways, the cover photograph perfectly exemplifies the history that Feiler uncovers. This past has largely been unseen, although it has been previously told by historians.

Feiler brings the story of the Rosenwald schools—that brave experiment in education for segregated African Americans in the South—into contemporary visual consciousness. As his title suggests, his photographs lead readers to view a rich and complicated American heritage. By combining image and text within a standard format that presents a horizontal photograph on the top two-thirds of a page with commentary on the bottom third, Feiler engages readers first with the power of his superbly framed and printed photographs and then with his deft narrative.

Although the book is structured chronologically, it often seems to meander, taking the reader through various states as the author-photographer discovers first this school and then another. But this impression is deceptive. Feiler initially presents a succinct summary of the meeting of Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington that led to the benefactor's decision to support construction of elementary schools for African American children. He details the framework of the agreement: a three-way partnership between Rosenwald's philanthropy, African American fundraising contributions, and county public education funds. This tricky and subtly managed process put the

largest burden initially on African American parents and community members to raise the monies in part through labor and in-kind contributions to build schools.

As the reader goes through the book, Feiler introduces additional layers of complexity. The design of these schools, for example, needed to follow a certain pattern, in part to preserve their modesty and not draw a backlash from potentially jealous whites who might burn them down. The photographs introduce readers to design features like folding doors that divided the classrooms in two-, three-, or four-teacher schools.

The extraordinary partnership and commitment of Julius Rosenwald and African Americans to the importance and value of education emerges from the dialogue of photograph and text the deeper one goes into the book. Although Washington initiated the school program, Rosenwald continued it after the death of the head of the Tuskegee Institute. Rosenwald's deep dedication to education and his belief in its importance resonated with African Americans throughout the South who embraced the program. The partnership of a wealthy Jewish philanthropist with largely rural, poor African Americans and educated Black leaders who helped design the schools presents a different account of Jewish engagement with African Americans than the more familiar and popular version that focuses on the struggle for civil rights after World War II.

Midway through the book, Feiler offers a few statistics: South Carolina had 481 Rosenwald schools, at least one in each of its forty-six counties, and an average of ten schools per county. North Carolina had 787 schools in ninety-three of its one hundred counties, or more than eight schools per county (65). Viewing page after page of straight, elegantly composed photographs of modest school buildings set in rural landscapes, the reality of this small sample of images registers profoundly. Feiler's photographs pay tribute to the history embodied in the remaining buildings while also honoring some of the men and women who studied and taught in these schools, or who seek to preserve their history.

One of his most powerful photographs serves as the frontispiece for the book. It features an elderly couple dressed in coat and hat and standing in an empty building holding an enormous elaborately framed portrait of what clearly appear to be ancestors. Feiler does not explain how he came to take the photograph until page 5. Yet the extraordinary encounter effectively epitomizes the intersection of his dogged research and personal

persuasiveness that uncovered incredible stories of profound commitment along with rich visual treasures. By the time the reader meets Elroy and Sophia Williams again on page 33 (the two figures in the frontispiece photograph), the compelling character of their story has been amplified by a dozen earlier accounts of Rosenwald schools that were part of the initial phase of the program before it rapidly expanded.

That expansion produced Rosenwald schools throughout the South, as the statistics suggest. During these years of Jim Crow and segregated schooling, the Rosenwald school buildings allowed Black children to gain an education. From the beginning, Feiler notes how schools followed farming schedules that reduced the time available for learning. But he also records the push to extend the number of mandatory months of education. And in the 1930s, some of the buildings were designed as secondary schools, built of brick and holding multiple classrooms.

Most of the Rosenwald schools were destroyed in the decades after the 1954 Supreme Court Brown decision that defined separate schools as inherently unequal. This project to record images of the remaining schools captures the textures of this incredible experiment. The rich details in these photographs invite readers to linger, to notice those quotidian elements that were part of the lives of countless children, and to recall a milieu from a century ago. Feiler has restored that world to our collective memory.

Deborah Dash Moore, University of Michigan
The reviewer may be contacted at ddmoore@umich.edu.

Port of No Return: Enemy Alien Internment in World War II New Orleans. By Marilyn Grace Miller. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2021. 304 pages.

Astride the Mississippi River about 110 miles upstream from its mouth, New Orleans has over the decades acquired numerous sobriquets: the gateway to North America; the birthplace of jazz; the northernmost Caribbean port; the nation's bohemian heart; the town with a promising past; the historical center of the American slave trade; the land of Mardi Gras and enchanting dreams. Marilyn Grace Miller's book

has dubbed New Orleans "the port of no return," because in the riparian preserve, captivity in a federal detention center irrevocably altered aliens' lives during what came to be known as "the good war."

The geography of the city that served as the dominant hub of the slave trade foreordained the character of detention centers in World War II. The antebellum vessels deposited cargoes of Africans on the plantations along the Mississippi River, where the luckless victims of "the peculiar institution" were then engaged in agriculture for their white owners' profit. The value of a plantation depended on its frontage along the river; the greater the footage, the more easily vessels could be docked to load and unload cargo. These plantations typically supplied the model for twentieth-century detention centers that separated aliens from the civilian population. During and after both world wars, federal immigration officers jailed enemy aliens in a network of fortress-like camps and detention centers on the lower Mississippi. The proximity of New Orleans to bayous and the adjacent Gulf of Mexico made the city eminently suitable for isolating aliens from the citizenry. On the southern bank of the river opposite New Orleans, the Algiers detention center figured prominently in the camp system that is the subject of *Port of No Return*.

This monograph examines "the internment of named alien enemies . . . to manage perceived security threats both within and beyond U.S. borders during World War II" (2). The application of such policies in a port city like New Orleans constitutes a chapter of American history, Miller asserts, that is "rarely taught and little known" (2). Historical study tends to focus on the concrete, the specific, perhaps even the singular, and this book claims that "not only did the Crescent City play a pivotal role in the . . . matrix of World War II internment, but also that this role, like the city itself, was utterly unique" (3). But *Port of No Return* also casts an ominous shadow over the internment programs of the twenty-first century, when very young children could be put in cages, separated from their parents whose identification records could be ignored or "lost," thus creating orphans. The Trump administration modified the uses of the detention camps, so that asylum seekers were sent back to their countries of origin and children were distributed throughout the United States without documentary identification. This incarceration policy was designed to terrify migrants and refugees and thereby discourage them in the cruelest fashion from coming to the U.S. Miller's topic can be understood as a signal of

troublesome questions about the commonplace description of the United States as "a nation of immigrants" (207).

For many of the captives at the Algiers center, the label of "enemy" was a misnomer. Numerous detainees never exhibited any hostility to the United States. After all, about 75 percent of them were Jewish, and they were often quite frightened of their neighboring Nazi sympathizers. Many of these "enemies" lacked English language skills and therefore could not explain their fears to their captors. Members of the Border Patrol of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) often suspected Jews of disloyalty to the United States. These monitors had little appreciation of what it meant to have been put in German concentration camps. The possibility that Nazi spies might be mixed with the Jewish survivors of Buchenwald and Dachau made the monitors wary of German detainees, even if the Third Reich might have classified them as "non-Aryan." The support of NGOs from the Jewish community, such as the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and the Jewish Welfare Board, lessened the plight of the Algiers Jewish detainees. Other aid came from the National Refugee Service and the YMCA.

But the Algiers detention center did in fact house "enemy aliens" who were foes of the American republic. They were Nazis. In the recreation hall, they and their sympathizers replaced American flags with swastikas and German flags, as though prefiguring the neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klansmen and Christian nationalists who demonstrated in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, vowing that "Jews will not replace us." In the 1940s, the Nazis and their allies managed to wrest control over camp life from the federal monitors, perhaps more easily because of the antisemitic sentiments that the INS guards often harbored. To read Miller's book is to discern continuity with the immediate postwar era when federal agencies drew upon avowed Nazis and former Nazis to help with anti-Communist intelligence abroad and to build in Alabama the space program that would be deemed essential to the geopolitical struggle to contest Soviet power.

The author of this disturbing volume teaches in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Tulane University, which was built on land that had once been a slave plantation, like numerous estates along the Mississippi River. The current president of the university, Michael Fitts, has sought to reckon with the antebellum history of Tulane. But its morally problematic past (like that of other institutions of higher learning) is

hardly confined to the era that ended with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. Miller's research has uncovered, for example, the stain of Nazism at Tulane prior to the Second World War in the person of Professor Herman Beyer.

A celebrated archeologist with extensive experience in Latin America, Beyer pioneered the excavation of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. But he never renounced his German citizenship, and he admired the Third Reich—even to the extent of wearing (on at least one occasion) a swastika armband in his office. Beyer professed to believe, according to the New Orleans press, that Hitler had made Germany more democratic than it had been under the constitution of the Weimar Republic (125). The stigma of pro-Nazism antagonized Beyer's colleagues, especially once the United States entered the war. In 1942 he resigned from Tulane, a gesture that its president, Rufus Harris, accepted with pleasure. That Beyer was detained during the war at Algiers terminated whatever influence he had enjoyed at Tulane, where the German language program was eliminated during the war as well. That he felt degraded because of the association of the facility with the history of Black slaves may be regarded as a suitable comeuppance. That he was confined among Jews may be regarded as a rather mixed blessing. Beyer died shortly before the war ended, and then most of the detention camp that Miller's research has admirably saved from oblivion was dismantled.

The wartime story of Algiers that *Port of No Return* indispensably tells needs to be placed in the widest historical context. Such camps have been and probably will continue to be repurposed. They receive asylum seekers and COVID-19 victims. But such camps have also constituted an enduring stain upon the most heavily incarcerated population in the western world. These camps entail the cruel confinement of human beings for

indeterminate intervals without adequate concern for the protection of due process of law. Unlike prison inmates, camp detainees do not have to be released on a specific date, which assures continuity for both current and new inmates. In many locales, camps are privately owned, and their owners profit from long-term contracts and concessions. By providing long-term employment to an extensive staff, such camps can become community anchors and can consolidate government links to the local population. For these reasons, detention centers in the United States are unlikely to disappear.

Miller wants Algiers to be understood as something more than a wartime episode but as an example of an international phenomenon. Her rich bibliography and notes refer to the frequency with which foreign governments have established detention centers and concentration camps. Alexander Solzhenitsyn's massive trilogy, *The Gulag Archipelago*, is undoubtedly the most ambitious and influential effort to describe the workings of the Soviet corrective labor camps of the past century. But Miller's eye is also on the present, and her epilogue, "A New War on Aliens as Enemies," underscores the "rallying cries for the reimplementation and expansion of World War II–style detention and internment programs [that] increased during the campaign . . . of Trump, but there was substantial defense for them even before 2016" (248). This story is not over.

Shael Herman, Tulane University Law School (Emeritus)
The reviewer may be contacted at shaelherman@comcast.net.

Behind the Magic Curtain: Secrets, Spies, and Unsung White Allies of Birmingham's Civil Rights Days. By T. K. Thorne. Montgomery: New South Books, 2021. 368 pages.

Of all the authors who have written books about the history of race and civil rights in 1960s-era Birmingham, Alabama, T. K. Thorne is surely one of the most unusual. Her background includes multiple careers as a police officer, an executive director of a downtown business improvement district, a historical novelist, a mystery writer, and now a writer of nonfiction. And she has done it all in or around her hometown of Birmingham, a famously benighted community that has long served as a

convenient symbol of White racism, interracial violence, and economic and social inequality.

Thorne knows all about the failings and prejudices of the city's White citizens, as she demonstrates in a whirlwind of both factual and impressionistic revelations of life "behind the magic curtain." But she is determined to save us from the easy and conventional stereotypes that obscure the complexity and diversity of White Birmingham, commonly known as "Bombingham" among civil rights activists. Thorne goes beyond the rampaging Klansmen who attacked the Freedom Riders in 1961 and killed four Black girls attending Sunday School at 16th Street Baptist Church four years later. She goes beyond the Bull Connor–led policemen who used attack dogs and high-pressure hoses to intimidate and injure young Black protestors in 1963. She goes beyond the "Big Mule" power-brokers who ruthlessly maintained control over local and state politics in order to sustain both racial and class privilege. The result is that Thorne finds a wide spectrum of behavior and belief in the White community, an assortment of heroes and villains, with most residents falling somewhere in between.

As she explains in the book's introduction, "For Whites in Birmingham, positions on race and segregation existed on a continuum that stretched from strident white supremacists who wielded bombs and murder to those who risked social and financial ostracism, even their lives, to meet in secret with Black friends and activists and take unpopular stands. In between were varying degrees of segregationists. The majority of Whites disapproved of Klan violence but stood against desegregation" (xi).

A gifted storyteller, Thorne takes a biographical, quasitheatrical approach to her subject. Her purposes are to entertain and instruct, and she does both admirably. Taking full advantage of an extraordinarily wide network of friends and acquaintances and relying on an impressive research base of both written and oral sources, she introduces a fascinating cast of characters summarized in a sensationalist subtitle reference to "Secrets, Spies, and Unsung White Allies." For a book dedicated to exploring the internal dynamics of a city burdened with deep traditions of racism, disfranchisement, and social and economic chasms, there is an abundance of whimsy and even occasional glibness, which some readers may find jarring and inappropriate. Yet Thorne always finds her way back to the

overall story line of individuals dealing with racist pathology and related problems.

She begins this story with the saga of Tom Lankford, a courageous *Birmingham News* reporter and photographer who covered the local police beat beginning in 1959. Lankford risked life and limb to keep his editors informed about the nefarious activities of Bull Connor, the city's explosive and archconservative commissioner of public safety, and his Klan allies. Lankford's heroism was almost always behind the scenes, and the vast majority of his contemporaries had no knowledge of the extent of his risk-taking during and after the Freedom Rider crisis.

After devoting several chapters to Lankford's exploits, Thorne turns to the Jewish community's largely hidden involvement in the local civil rights struggle. She traces this involvement back to Samuel Ullman, the president who usually conducted religious services at Temple Emanu-El, who fought for the advancement of Black education as a member of Birmingham's board of education during the 1880s, and his wife, Emma Mayer Ullman, who worked to extend hospital care to all local citizens, Black and White. Later, focusing on the mid-twentieth century, Thorne profiles a number of Jews who joined the Birmingham Council on Human Relations (BCHR) and pushed for racially progressive policies, although not generally for outright racial integration. A number of Jewish couples including Betty and Robert Loeb, Dorah and Mervyn Sterne, Fred and Gertrude Goldstein, and Abraham and Florence Siegel joined Christian allies in this important effort, risking social and economic reprisals. Thorne devotes an entire chapter to "The Jewish Connection," a tentative but unmistakable trend towards concern for civil rights that emerged after the April 1958 discovery of fifty-four sticks of dynamite that the Ku Klux Klan planted under the flooring at Temple Beth-El. After that near

miss, Karl Friedman and others organized an ad hoc group known as the Jewish Committee. Its members realized that the Jewish community could no longer remain silent on civil rights issues and interracial and interethnic intimidation and violence.

Thorne is careful not to make more of this than is warranted. White involvement in the Birmingham civil rights struggle, whether on the part of Jews or Christians, was often hesitant and tepid, she acknowledges, and should not be confused with the stalwart and unflinching activism of a significant portion of Birmingham's Black community during the 1960s. No one in the White community rivalled the indomitable Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, whose Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) welcomed and protected the Freedom Riders in 1961 and spearheaded two years later the nonviolent direct action campaign that bravely withstood police and vigilante pressure to bring about the beginnings of desegregation in a segregationist stronghold thought to be impregnable. In Birmingham, as elsewhere, the movement found the vast majority of its strength in the Black community.

Yet Thorne is correct in pointing out that even in Birmingham the White contribution to the civil rights struggle was not inconsequential. A complete picture of that struggle has to take into account the often hidden actions of Whites trying to accommodate or advance a movement that they did not fully understand or endorse. Thorne's narrative is peopled with men and women who may have been less than heroic but who nonetheless risked censure and harm to become involved in a multifaceted effort to improve the human condition as it existed in Birmingham. Her nuanced portraits of influential figures such as the attorney Chuck Morgan, the business leaders David Vann and Sid Smyer, the detective Marcus Jones, and the journalists Vincent Townsend and Edward Harris remind us of the complexity and irony of historical change. We can only hope that with this eccentric but fascinating book, Thorne has laid to rest the reductionist stereotypes that have dominated public and even scholarly understanding of what happened in Birmingham during the tumultuous 1960s.

Nevertheless, the city's Jewish community deserves further study. Mark H. Elovitz's 1974 communal history treats "a century of Jewish life in Birmingham," according to his book's title, but needs updating. When the Southern Jewish Historical Society met in Birmingham in 2013,

participants appreciated the necessity and the value of studying how the city coped with change. T. K. Thorne's new book constitutes a welcome contribution to such retrospectives.

Raymond Arsenault, University of South Florida–St. Petersburg
The reviewer may be contacted at roarsenault@gmail.com.

Judah Benjamin: Counselor to the Confederacy. By James Traub. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021. 200 pages.

As James Traub points out in his contribution to the Yale Jewish Lives series, Judah P. Benjamin's acquisition of 140 fellow human beings made him "by far the largest slave-owning Jew in America" (36). Nonetheless, Traub begins and ends his book by highlighting the two most extended utterances that Benjamin ever gave on the subject of the humanity of Black people. The volume opens with a description of his 1843 speech before the Louisiana Supreme Court. The attorney who would eventually become the second most powerful official of the Confederacy sought to exempt the insurance underwriters who had hired him from liability in the face of a slave revolt at sea. Benjamin therefore argued that a slave was a human being whose heart "swells with love, burns with jealousy, aches with sorrow, and pines under restraint and discomfort" (1). Twenty-two years later, as U. S. Grant's Army of the Potomac closed in on Richmond and Benjamin was desperate to raise the fighting spirit of the Confederates, he spoke in favor of freeing enslaved men so that they might serve in the military. Traub evinces no interest in exculpating Judah Benjamin for his wholehearted and nearly career-length participation in the propagation and defense of slavery. But the biographer is nonetheless drawn to the apparent "paradox" of Benjamin's service to such an unjust and seemingly un-Jewish cause.

Succinctness is a requisite quality for the volumes in the Jewish Lives series, which makes perfectly understandable Traub's decision to employ Benjamin's vexing legacy as a freedom-touting enslaver as the central framing device for this book. That Benjamin is a significant figure in Jewish American history is unquestionable. In 1852 he became the first Jewish

person to be elected to the U.S. Senate. (Florida's David Yulee, who was born a Jew and was elected to the Senate in 1845, would be the other possible contender for this distinction, but he advanced his career by claiming to be an Episcopalian, whereas Benjamin never made the slightest pretense of having changed faiths.) Shortly after Benjamin's election to the Senate, Franklin Pierce offered him a position on the Supreme Court, but Benjamin turned it down so that he could continue his career in politics. In the aftermath of Lincoln's election in 1860, Benjamin resigned his senate seat in order to serve under his former senate colleague Jefferson Davis, first as Attorney General, then as Secretary of War, and finally as the Confederacy's Secretary of State. When that eventful phase of his career came to a close with Lee's surrender, Benjamin completed a spectacular escape from federal authorities, reached England, and went on to achieve great success there as an honored barrister. These events and others in his vacuum-packed life have already been extensively chronicled, especially by Robert Douthat Meade in 1943 and most recently by Eli N. Evans in 1988. In 2021 some thematic ingenuity was necessary for a biographer, which may be why Traub sometimes overstates the depth of the mysteries at hand.

Traub's strongest suit is his ability to pose fascinating questions about his subject. At the heart of his exploration of Benjamin's life is a quandary: Why did so talented a historical figure choose to devote himself to such an unjust cause? As Traub phrases it: "Charm, brilliance, tact—how can they weigh in the scale against a life made possible by slavery and devoted to the defense of slavery?" (6). Jewish Americans who kvell over the success of coreligionists—whether in the antebellum South or in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century sports arena—would therefore find the career of Judah P. Benjamin especially troubling. Even when

Traub's readers leave aside trying to assess the Confederacy's counselor's true feelings about slavery and racial oppression, this book poses other questions too. Was Benjamin gay? With little in the way of substantive evidence to support such a claim, a 2012 *Tablet Magazine* article by Daniel Brook speculated that "the scant historical record would suggest that Benjamin was . . . a gay bachelor in the contemporary sense of the word." A mere decade after his marriage, his wife Natalie and their daughter Ninette left Benjamin for Paris where they remained.

But how will we ever know if Judah Benjamin regretted the fact that he led a single life? Was he ashamed, proud of, or indifferent to the fact of his Jewish origins? Benjamin never uttered a single word on that topic either. Traub's biography raises all of these questions but, quite wisely, resists trying to answer them directly. If we can say one thing with confidence, after all, it would be that Benjamin would never have asked such questions about himself. The mysteries that attend his life are solely those that we impose upon it. That Traub chooses nonetheless to haunt the margins of his biography with so many unanswered and unanswerable questions is a testament to one certainty: the Jewish American imagination gravitates towards powerful symbolic icons, and Benjamin's fascinating life offers a plethora of possible implications.

Traub is well aware that neither Benjamin's Jewish origins nor anyone else's in the South (nor in the North, for that matter) would have predisposed him to hostility to slavery. Traub rightly notes that to expect Jews to differ in this respect from anyone else is misinformed and anachronistic. American Jews in the early nineteenth century were far too insecure in their social standing to risk challenging the racial status quo. "Our instinct to hold Judah Benjamin to a higher standard because he was a Jew," the biographer does not hesitate to declare, "ignores the near universal ownership of slaves among Southern Jews of means" (59). Traub nevertheless engages in a bit of historic speculation on the subject of Benjamin's actual racial views. In doing so, he seems to depart not only from the purely factual into a realm of what-ifs, but also from the realm of biography as a genre securely tied to history. In his chapter on Benjamin's boyhood and adolescence in Charleston, for instance, Traub notes that residents of "Dutch Town," the working-class neighborhood in which his subject and his family lived, would have heard the anguished screams of slaves being whipped in the nearby workhouse where punishments were

meted out (14). For better or worse, the biographer wants his readers to imagine what it was like to be the young Judah Benjamin hearing those screams.

Later, in a more sustained effort to prod his readers, Traub engages in a detailed description of racial categories in New Orleans, where Benjamin began his career as an attorney and launched his political career. "Nowhere in America was the question of race more complicated than in New Orleans," the author points out as a prelude to reintroducing the story of Benjamin's plea for the defendants in the 1843 suit, in which he spoke so eloquently about the humanity of enslaved Blacks. The upshot of Traub's disquisition on Benjamin's exposure to Louisiana's arcane racial hierarchies is that, deep down, his subject might well have believed, as did Thomas Jefferson, that Blacks were full-fledged human beings who just happened to be the victims of chattel slavery. "By this time," Traub writes, "Benjamin had spent fifteen years in New Orleans' mixed-race milieu" and "had seen free people of color every day performing many of the same tasks that white people did, and demonstrating the same attributes and attitudes" (31–32). His paraphrase of Shylock's famous vindication of the humanity of Jews, Traub conjectures, suggests that what Benjamin heard as a boy in Charleston and observed as an adult in New Orleans shaped and complicated his racial beliefs.

Traub's attention to Benjamin's experiences as potential evidence of his most closely held feelings about human bondage is curious. Despite the healthy skepticism that the biographer evinces about the moral distinctness of Jews as historical actors, Traub hesitates to abandon the possibility that his subject was conflicted and perhaps even troubled by his actions. This book argues, effectively enough, that Benjamin "deserves our attention" (3). But Traub also seems to want to explain that *why* Benjamin merits our interest has something to do with the moral discomfort this topic forces us to consider today. Because Benjamin left such a scant paper trail, his status as an archetypal Jewish American is enigmatic. The meaning of his life lies more in twentieth- and twenty-first-century misgivings about the record of Jewish slaveholding and support for the Confederacy than in Benjamin's reluctance to clarify his intentions or beliefs. At the beginning of this book, Traub writes that Benjamin "revealed virtually nothing of himself," and that the "inner recesses of [his] soul remain a mystery" (3). He thus "succeeded very well in erasing himself from

history" (4). That several full-length biographies already laid the groundwork for his volume and that the enormous scholarship on the antebellum South and on the brief history of the secession provides the context for what Benjamin *did* in the world suggests that we may already know what we need to know.

Given the number of fairly comprehensive biographies that have been written about this politician and plantation owner, Traub's strangest claim is that Benjamin actually "succeeded very well in erasing himself from history" and "hardly registers more than a footnote outside the very specialized world of nineteenth-century Jewish studies" (4). Traub may be attempting to justify his new treatment of a well-gone-over life. Perhaps he wishes to hint that people who write about early Jewish American history lack an audience. Ultimately, his suggestion that Benjamin has been ignored by historians is, quite simply, inaccurate. Ironically, the strongest proof for the error of his claim may be the fact that his book, for all of its readability, falls short of proposing any new ideas about or shedding any fresh insight into its subject. To his credit, Traub is faithful to the existing record of scholarly work on Benjamin and properly attentive to the extant primary source materials. Had Benjamin been truly ignored by historians and biographers (not to mention fiction writers, who have also featured him prominently), Traub's book might have been in a position to break new ground.

Michael Hoberman, Fitchburg State University
The reviewer may be contacted at mhoberman@fitchburgstate.edu.

Exhibit Reviews

The Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience. New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (MSJE) in New Orleans opened to the public in May 2021. Located one block north of the former "Lee Circle" monument on Howard Avenue and just across the street from where the original Temple Sinai stood, the site is within walking distance of both the World War II Museum and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art.

The new museum evolved from its original creation at the Henry S. Jacobs Camp, a summer camp for Jewish children in Utica, Mississippi. In 2000, the museum expanded into the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. It closed in 2012 due to its inaccessibility, but eventually, in hopes of reaching a larger audience, New Orleans was selected as the new location for the museum. Throughout its evolution, its mission has remained the same: to preserve and highlight the unique and remarkable history of southern Jews.

While creating the exhibitions, curators at the MSJE faced a time-space conundrum: how to fit three hundred years of southern Jewish history into a mere nine thousand square feet of exhibition space. Working with these limitations, they designed a chronicle to "tell the overall arc of the history," using "selected stories of individuals and families that personify specific events, attitudes, and experiences" through images, documents, and artifacts to engage, educate, and entertain visitors.

The museum tour begins with an eight-minute orientation film that introduces the Jews of the South describing how the early settlers stepped

into the unknown and over time assimilated into their communities with people of different backgrounds.

The first of three exhibition galleries describes Jewish immigration and acculturation in the South up to the twentieth century. Large wall displays include broad themes, the "arc of the history," such as "From Immigrants to Early Settlers" and "Internal Migration: Following Rivers and Rails" (a map displaying railroad stops where Jews settled), "Navigating Southern States," "Building Southern Culture," and "Varieties of Acceptance." Throughout the museum, individual items are used as specific examples of the broad aspects of the lives that Jews led in the South. However, space limitations and a lack of scope of content may leave visitors with a sense of missing continuity.

Focused displays that individualize the broad themes include a map, captioned in Hebrew, entitled "Guide of the United States to the Jewish People," a Dun & Company business credit report for Lehman Brothers in Alabama, and a "Notice of Sale" for BelleChasse, Judah Benjamin's plantation, complete with a listing of male and female slaves. Additional items on display include a copy of the Richmond Prayer issued by Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Shalom in Richmond in 1789 congratulating President Washington on his inauguration; a letter from Jacob A. Cohen of North Carolina to Rev. Max Lilienthal protesting his views on slavery; a Hebrew-French prayer book belonging to the Hirsh–Levy families in Louisiana with handwritten inscriptions; Moses Coplan's Alabama citizenship documentation; a business ledger of the Cohn Brothers dry goods store in Rodney, Mississippi, from 1889; and a cotton trade document of H. Abraham & Sons in New Orleans, among many other items.

The first gallery is dominated, however, by a fully equipped pushcart. Peddling often provided the first career step for many young men in the South and offered a kinship connection with each other and acculturation with the gentile community. An impressive presentation, a description of each item in the cart would have lent fuller understanding of everyday lives of these early entrepreneurs.

The second gallery focuses on Judaism. Religious artifacts are displayed throughout the room: a *kippah*, *tallit*, tefillin and bag, a Haggadah, a circumcision knife, and a *ketubbah*. A Torah scroll is also presented with a crown, breastplate, and mantle from Congregation Gemiluth Chessed in Port Gibson, Mississippi, now a closed synagogue that the MSJE has long

(Courtesy of Gallagher & Associates, photo by Jeremy Bittermann.)

championed. An interactive touch screen entitled "Foundations of Judaism: A test of traditions, knowledge, and Yiddish" is skewed toward younger visitors. A display explaining how and why Reform Judaism evolved into the largest denomination in the South would be as explanative of southern Judaism as the pushcart is in the first gallery.

The third gallery focuses on the twentieth century, starting with Zionism, the aftermath of World War II, and the Holocaust. "New Americans, New Southerners" highlights thirteen survivors who made their way to the South. The exhibition includes a video of six "New Americans," describing how and why they made their way south and their experiences living and being southerners. Rene Fink of North Carolina discusses "surviving survival" of the Holocaust and settling in his new home, and Norbert Friedman recalls being told "you're not a southerner, and you're Jewish," upon arriving in Georgia. Another section, "Documenting Immigration," provides views of some of the paperwork needed by four families making their way to America.

The civil rights section follows and includes a civil rights party poster from Mississippi, an anti–David Duke newspaper article from 1991 when he ran for governor of Louisiana, and descriptions of several southern Jewish women activists from states throughout the South. Another interactive video highlights a set of 1966 interviews conducted by Rabbi P. Allen Krause in of southern rabbis discussing their activities in the civil right movement such as their clerical roles, regional tensions, societal backlash, rabbinical responses, and attacks they suffered. Although viewing the videos takes time, visitors should make the effort as this is undoubtably one of the more provocative sections of the entire exhibition.

The last room of the exhibition features two large murals, "Summer Camp Sweethearts," married couples who originally met at the Henry S. Jacobs camp, and "Vistas of Southern Jewish Life." The tour ends with the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, a state-by-state, town-by-town online resource, chronicling the experiences of southern Jews in towns and cities throughout the South and a valuable resource for researchers.

(Courtesy of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience. Photograph by Frank Aymami.)

All museums hope that every picture tells a story, and the MSJE provides a vivid view. Every display is its own gem, but three hundred years of Judaism in thirteen states, each with its own story, cannot convey the depth to communicate that story in such a limited space. Despite the physical limitations, the MSJE offers patrons an insightful introduction to the history of Jews in the South, while the encyclopedia and the other interactive displays provide great resources for deeper research.

Irwin Lachoff, Xavier University of Louisiana
The reviewer may be contacted at ilachoff@hotmail.com.

History with Chutzpah: Remarkable Stories of the Southern Jewish Adventure, 1733–Present. Curated by Sandra Berman and Jane Leavey. Breman Museum, Atlanta, Georgia.

The twenty-fifth anniversary exhibition of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, *History with Chutzpah: Remarkable Stories of the Southern Jewish Adventure 1733–Present*, tells the story of Georgia and Alabama's diverse Jewish history and culture. Co-curators Sandra Berman and Jane Leavey used over three hundred artifacts, documents, and photographs from the Breman's Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archive for Southern History, as well as numerous oral histories as historical evidence. The breadth of content is indicative of the fact that both curators are well versed in the community's history and the Breman's collections: Berman served as the founding archivist and Leavey as the founding executive director of the Breman.

Located in Midtown Atlanta, the Breman boasts three gallery spaces, an auditorium, a research library, and an archive that holds the largest repository for Jewish history in the Southeast. When visitors arrive at the start of the *History with Chutzpah* exhibition, they step into an alcove that resembles an old-fashioned library and serves as a liminal space between the present and the past. This sensation is strengthened by several eye-catching artifacts and oral histories that grab your attention throughout the space. Berman and Leavey structured the exhibit around the themes of "Courage and Conformity," "Hope and Survival," "Success and Loss," "Patriotism and Perseverance," "Benevolence and Community,"

(Courtesy of the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)

and "Murder and Mayhem." By organizing the exhibit around these themes rather than chronologically, it is easy for visitors to dive into whichever section most deeply resonates with them.

"Courage and Conformity" introduces visitors to Jewish stories of immigration and integration into American society. Included in this section are examples of Jews who fought segregation, such as dentists Marvin and Irving Goldstein, who opened the first integrated dental office and hotels in the region. Juxtaposed are those who accepted the status quo, such as Charlie Lebedin of Leb's restaurant, who refused to integrate his deli despite sit-ins and protests. The exhibit demonstrates that Jews have served as both agents of change and masters of assimilation—to the pride and the dismay of the community.

"Hope and Survival" documents stories about Jewish resistance to oppression including pogroms and the Holocaust. These oral histories are some of the most moving, as are the trunks and suitcases stacked in the

(Courtesy of the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)

center of the room that carried the belongings of Holocaust survivors. For many of these immigrants, the American South was a place to start anew and a symbol of hope.

"Success and Loss" explores the Jewish economic condition, specifically how Jews found their niche as "mom-and-pop" shop owners in America and how the Depression and subsequent decades challenged this lifestyle. Some of the names in this section are recognizable as American success stories. For example, on display are artifacts from Jacobs' Pharmacy, where Joseph Jacobs first sold Coca-Cola as a fountain drink. Particularly eye-catching is a coin-operated kiddie ride in the shape of the blue horse from Montag Brothers, Inc., a local paper company that highlighted the uniquely colored horse in its branding.

In "Patriotism and Perseverance," visitors learn how American Jews participated in politics and the armed forces as early as the Revolutionary

War and how they persisted despite discrimination. Dr. Perry Brickman, in his oral history, gives an account of how he and his classmates uncovered rampant antisemitism at the Emory Dental School during the 1950s and 1960s, which eventually led to a formal apology from Emory University. The closing panel depicts Jon Ossoff, the first Jewish United States Senator elected in Georgia, and features the *chumash* of civil rights activist Rabbi Jacob Rothschild that Senator Ossoff used during his swearing-in ceremony, which pulls these themes into the present day.

The specter of antisemitism is brought home in "Murder and Mayhem," which includes stories of temple bombings and the lynching of Leo Frank. The exhibit includes a miniature of the pencil factory where Mary Phagan was murdered, the crime of which Leo Frank was accused and for which he was lynched in 1915 despite a commutation of his sentence by the governor of Georgia. A remnant from The Temple bombing of 1958 also serves as a physical example of the violence inherent in antisemitism, as does the failure to bring the bombers to justice.

The exhibition concludes on a more positive note in "Benevolence and Community," which highlights stories of Jews in civic and social engagement and the arts. This section shows the great breadth of Jewish engagement in the region and throughout the country and features award-winning playwright Alfred Uhry of *Driving Miss Daisy* fame, philanthropists such as Emma Mayer and Bill Breman, and community and civil rights activists like Janice Rothschild Blumberg. In the closing panel titled "Women of Note: Ladies Aid Societies to Community Leadership," visitors learn about generations of Jewish women who have served their community.

The theme of the exhibit, chutzpah—Yiddish for having extreme self-confidence or audacity—is highlighted throughout the exhibit. It is perhaps most evident in the oral histories that play on a loop in each section, memories that prove insightful and moving stories that bring the past to life. Interviewees reflect on living through the civil rights movement, surviving the Holocaust, and causes that inspired activism and philanthropy that transformed the South. Many of these narratives are engaging and difficult to step away from.

Although the oral histories stand out, in some areas the audio sources overlap, which can be distracting. Also not uncommon for AV

equipment in exhibitions, one of the terminals was down. Fortunately, the exhibition contains so much interesting content that it is easy to move on from technical challenges to the next story.

History with Chutzpah is impressively interactive and visually stimulating, including multimedia through which visitors can quickly browse or dive deeper into themes and stories. A fitting close to the exhibition, there is a small recording booth in which visitors can give five-minute oral histories of their own, serving as a reminder that Jewish history continues today and that we all have the agency to demonstrate chutzpah that benefits the community.

Leah Lefkowitz, Atlanta History Center
The reviewer may be contacted at lelefko@gmail.com.

A Source of Light. Curated by Steve Silver. Aiken County Historical Museum (March 4–May 22, 2022) and Augusta Jewish Museum (May 29–July 15, 2022). www.asourceoflight.org.

On March 4, 2022, over a hundred current residents and descendants of the Jewish community of Aiken, South Carolina, in addition to dozens of civic leaders, reporters, and historians, gathered to celebrate the centennial of the state charter that formally established congregation Adath Yeshurun. The weekend-long festivities began with the official opening of the *A Source of Light* exhibit, which tells the story of Aiken's historic Jewish community. The exhibit is a product of joint efforts by curator and principal researcher, Steve Silver, and Lauren Virgo, executive director of the Aiken County Historical Museum. Della Hertzberg served as chair of the Centennial Committee, which organized the weekend's events.

Moving chronologically, the exhibit begins with the earliest documentation of Jewish life in Aiken. While the names of the original Jewish merchants and families are unknown, two historical sources from 1856 attest to a Jewish presence and suggest friendly relations between Jewish and Protestant neighbors. Jewish immigration from eastern Europe at the turn of the century fueled the growth of Aiken's Jewish community. A display case of peddlers' licenses from the early 1900s speaks to a growing

immigrant population, and large Jewish families who trace their roots to Aiken, including the Efrons, Poliakoffs, Poliers, Rudnicks, Suraskys, and Wolfs, begin to appear in the historical record.

A Source of Light traces the patterns of early twentieth-century Jewish life that are now familiar. Aiken's earliest east European Jewish-owned shops were first established in the late 1880s when Harry Louis Polier opened a dry goods store. More stores quickly followed. The opening of the Augusta-Aiken Railway in 1902 drew enterprising migrants to the area and, within a few decades, Jewish merchants were operating more than twenty stores in downtown Aiken. With economic success came the desire to formalize the institutions of a religious community. In January 1913, the trustees of the Sons of Israel purchased a burial ground. Although planning for a synagogue began as early as 1907, it was not until March 1921 that the South Carolina secretary of state issued a certificate of incorporation for the organization of a synagogue in the city. Residents managed to raise ten thousand dollars to cover the cost of building the synagogue. Construction was completed in July 1925, and the synagogue has been in continual use ever since.

With economic success came greater degrees of Jewish political and communal engagement. *A Source of Light* highlights the handful of Aiken's Jewish elected officials who served at the municipal and state level, including Mandle Surasky, who won election as mayor in 1941. Irene Rudnick was the first Jewish woman elected to the South Carolina state legislature, where she served from 1972 to 1986. The exhibit likewise highlights the various important entrepreneurial and communal leadership roles assumed by Jewish women in Aiken.

The waxing and waning of Aiken's Jewish community is closely tied to the overall evolution of the town and local economy. The arrival of the railway, the "Winter Colony" for the affluent, in addition to the construction of the Savannah River Site nuclear facility in the 1950s, all served as catalysts for successive waves of Jewish immigration. Despite this influx, remaining Jewish-owned stores began to close in the 1960s, compelled by the exodus of college-educated younger generations and the changing nature of retail. Today Aiken serves as a destination for equestrians, weekend travelers, and retirees eager to settle in the quaint southern town. Continued migration has sustained synagogue membership in a way that most southern towns lack, but residence does not translate into

*(Courtesy of the Aiken County Historical Museum.
Photograph by Lauren Virgo.)*

*(Courtesy of the Aiken County Historical Museum.
Photograph by Barry Bornstein.)*

the attachment of old. *A Source of Light* concludes with a plea for support from more recent Jewish transplants and those with historic ties to Aiken who now reside elsewhere.

There is a common refrain that southern Jewish history *is* the history of Jewish merchants, and the overarching framework of *A Source of Light* shares this view. The general message of the exhibit is that Jewish success in Aiken was made possible by a long-standing "culture of tolerance and inclusiveness in Aiken" that made the southern town an appealing destination for Jewish migrants. Speaking with those who were born and raised in Aiken, it is clear that they harbor fond memories of growing up in the predominantly Protestant southern town. While the memory of the violent murder of peddler Abraham Surasky in 1903 is still alive and well, antisemitism appeared to be the exception, not the rule.

Given this overarching message, the question of race is a notable absence. With the sole exception of a small placard dedicated to renowned civil rights lawyer Isadore "Shad" Polier, which hangs adjacent to a photo of him standing near Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the Lincoln Memorial, nowhere does the exhibit reflect on the history of race relations in Aiken, nor does it address how local Jewish merchants responded to efforts to desegregate private businesses. Southern Jews have a long history of serving African American clientele, extending credit to Black customers when other white-owned businesses would not, and of employing African American workers in their stores and homes. Moreover, southern Jews often found themselves caught in the crosshairs of civil rights protests and boycotts and white supremacist organizations such as the White Citizen's Council and the Ku Klux Klan. Many southern Jews were forced to navigate an uneasy balance between maintaining their livelihoods, their moral commitments, and their desire to maintain acceptance among the privileged white majority. It remains unclear what racial dynamics existed, in addition to what exactly transpired in Aiken during this tumultuous era.

The story of southern Jewish life is best understood through the lens of small-town Jewish merchants and their families, who thrived for over a half century across the American South. Although *A Source of Light* claims value in the universalness of the story it tells, I would argue that its greatest contribution lies in the particulars of an intimate, local history that individualizes alternative patterns of Jewish life, migration, economy, and

community that are often eclipsed by more well-known stories of Jewish success in urban centers, particularly in the northeast.

Ashley Walters, College of Charleston
The reviewer may be contacted at waltersa1@cofc.edu.

Website Review

The Jewish Merchant Project. Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina in partnership with Historic Columbia and the College of Charleston. https://merchants.jhssc.org. Reviewed May 2022.

The Jewish Merchant Project is an invaluable resource for researchers and others interested in the history of Jewish merchants in South Carolina. The descendants of these merchants will find the project a helpful addition in creating their family histories. It will also be of interest to chambers of commerce and other economic and regional development interests as well as historians of economic history. The goal of the website is to chronicle the merchants of the state who established businesses beginning in the late nineteenth century. A joint endeavor by the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina (JHSSC), Historic Columbia, and the College of Charleston, the impetus for the project came from Senator Isadore Lourie, who served in the South Carolina General Assembly from 1965 until his retirement in 1993. Lourie realized that Jewish life in the small towns of South Carolina was disappearing and that chronicling the history of merchants comprised one way to keep that history alive.

The introductory article written by Stephen J. Whitfield, titled "Merchants: The Marrow of the Southern Jewish Experience," provides a good place to start navigating this website. Whitfield provides a broad overview of the significance of Jewish merchants in the South and demonstrates how Jewish migration created Jewish networks across continents whose contacts made it possible to secure credit and gain access to goods. South Carolina, like other southern states, provided an attractive

(https://merchants.jhssc.org/merchant-map/#merchants.)

destination for Jews seeking business opportunities as a means of making a living and controlling their lives. Both central and eastern European Jews established businesses across the state, from small hamlets to large towns. The website documents stories of businesses and their founders and includes an online map showing the locations of stores, complete with illustrations and narratives.

The Merchants List provides the names of businesses chronicled thus far and their locations in the state. By clicking on a star, the reader discovers a short history of a particular business enterprise found on the Merchant Map. For example, by clicking on the city of Greenwood, a Merchant Story pops up, in this case "R. Rosenbaum, Clothier." A short history highlights information on the founder, Rubin Rosenbaum, who emigrated from Warsaw, Poland, and settled in Greenwood with his family in 1901, establishing R. Rosenbaum, a dry goods and clothing store. His sons, Morris, Jacob, and Herman, helped in the store, and, after their father's death, two of the sons operated the business until 1930. Illustrations of advertisements from local newspapers as they appeared during the years the firms operated supplement these brief histories. Some

(https://merchants.jhssc.org/merchants/r-rosenbaum.)

Merchant Stories include photographs of the family who owned the enterprise as well.

The website reveals that Jewish merchants in South Carolina included liquor salesmen, dry goods merchants, grocers, tailors, and butchers who operated meat markets. Jewish merchants owned dry goods stores, ladies ready-to-wear, shoe stores, pawn shops, jewelry stores, and five-and-ten-cent stores. Simon Brown's Sons in Blackville sold horses, mules, buggies, wagons, and harnesses in the early twentieth century. After the horse-and-buggy era, they started selling Chevrolet cars. Samuel Libbert, from Manchester, England, moved to Lake City and opened a retail dry goods store where his wife, Anna, made the store's dresses by hand. Familial networks of migration and settlement drew prospective Jewish merchants to South Carolina. Traditions of mutual assistance and familial cooperation in pooling capital resources helped kin establish business enterprises. Many merchants achieved considerable success and flourished for decades after their arrival.

After researching Jewish businesses in the upcountry for several years, I noticed many prominent upstate Jewish merchants missing from

the website. Take for instance, Price's Men's Store, a landmark Jewish business in Spartanburg established in 1903 and still operating in the heart of downtown. Similarly, many Jewish businesses in Greenville and small upcountry towns are not included. Furthermore, it would be helpful to place these individual histories into the larger history of South Carolina merchants with analysis provided of the goods stocked and sold in their stores and the status of these merchants within their communities. This no doubt would require additional research but would provide a depth of analysis missing from the repository of merchants currently chronicled. The website does, however, provide a digital submission form allowing individuals to contribute additional businesses to the growing number of merchants included in this project.

Jews have been at the forefront of entrepreneurial activity in America since the nineteenth century. They moved into regions with promising and profitable market conditions. Many Jews emigrated directly from Europe to South Carolina, while others settled in other parts of the United States before a secondary migration brought them to the state. Many Jewish businesses operated for several generations as children and grandchildren of the founders continued the family business. Several, in fact, are still operating in the twenty-first century.

Jewish merchants have played an extraordinarily important role in providing goods and services to rural and urban Americans. Jewish merchants changed or adapted as storekeepers expanded their merchandise and new establishments surfaced to provide the latest consumer goods. Entire families participated in business endeavors with wives, children, siblings, nieces, and nephews often working in the family enterprise. As noted on the website, Jake Lurey opened a shoe store in Spartanburg, which he ran with the help of his father and brother, Morris, whereas Hyman Drucker, from Kartuz Beresa, Poland, opened a clothier and dry goods store in Honea Path with the help of his wife, Clara Kaplan. They operated the store until 1947.

The Jewish Merchants Project offers an important historical chronicle of Jewish merchants in South Carolina, providing insight into one of the most significant areas of Jewish endeavor in the United States.

Diane C. Vecchio, Furman University
The reviewer may be contacted at diane.vecchio@furman.edu.

Glossary

Chametz ~ all foods that are forbidden on Passover, especially those that are leavened or fermented, which must be removed from the home in preparation for Passover

Chumash ~ a book containing the text of the Torah, often with commentary

Chutzpah ~ gall, effrontery, brazen nerve, presumptuous arrogance

Haggadah ~ book read during the Passover Seder describing the exodus from Egypt and related ritual and customs

Hanukkah ~ Festival of Lights, eight-day holiday commemorating victory of the Maccabees over Syrian rulers, 167 BCE

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

Kashrut ~ Jewish laws governing food; the system of Jewish dietary laws

Ketubbah ~ Jewish marriage contract

Kippah ~ yarmulke, skull cap

Kristallnacht ~ literally *night of broken glass,* November 9–10, 1938; Nazi-sponsored pogrom throughout Germany and Austria bringing widespread murder, arrests, and destruction of property, including synagogues, escalating the violence against Jews

Kvell ~ to be extraordinarily pleased, proud, delighted

Landsman (*plural*: **landsleit** or **landsmen**) ~ a fellow countryman; someone from the same area in Europe

Mamzer ~ bastard (colloquial)

Mensch ~ upright, honorable, decent human being

Meshuggeneh ~ crazy, nuts, out of one's mind

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

Mohel ~ person who performs ritual circumcision

Passover ~ Pesach; spring holiday commemorating the deliverance of the ancient Hebrews from Egyptian bondage

Purim ~ holiday celebrating the heroine Esther, who saved the Jews from the villain Haman

Rebbetzin ~ rabbi's wife

Rishus (or **rishes**) ~ from the Hebrew *rish-ut*, or wickedness; malice

Rosh Hashanah ~ literally, *head of the year*; the new year on the Hebrew calendar; one of holiest days of the Jewish year

Sabbath (or **Shabbat**) ~ Friday night to Saturday night at the appearance of the first stars

Seder ~ ceremonial meal, usually held on the first and second evenings of Passover, commemorating the exodus from Egypt

Shanda ~ scandal, shame, embarrassment

Shema ~ Jewish confession of faith in the oneness of God, frequently recited during religious services

Shochet ~ ritual slaughterer, kosher butcher

Shtetl ~ small town or village in eastern Europe associated with Jewish residence

Shukhor (from Hebrew, *shachor*, black) ~ derogatory expression for a Black person, comparable to *darky* in English

Siddur (*plural:* **siddurim**) ~ prayer book for holidays and festivals

Tallit ~ prayer shawl

Tefillin ~ phylacteries; small boxes enclosing Jewish prayers attached with leather straps to forehead and forearm in a prescribed manner referred to as "laying tefillin"

Tekiah gedolah ~ A long, loud blast on the shofar signaling the end of Yom Kippur

Tikun olam ~ literally, *repairing the world*; the Jewish ideal that each individual acts in partnership with God in behalf of social justice to improve the world

Torah ~ Five Books of Moses; first five books of the Bible; the body of Jewish law and ritual tradition

Trefe ~ non-kosher food

Yom Kippur ~ Day of Atonement; holiest day of the Jewish year

Note on Authors

Raymond Arsenault is the John Hope Franklin Professor of Southern History emeritus at the University of South Florida. He is the author of several prize-winning books including *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice, The Sound of Freedom: Marian Anderson, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Concert That Awakened America,* and *Arthur Ashe, A Life*. He is currently completing a biography of the civil rights icon John Lewis.

Andrew Harrison Baker is a lecturer in the Department of History and Geography at Clemson University. He holds a Ph.D. in history from Auburn University and researches the late twentieth-century American South with a particular interest in politics, economic development, and southern cities. His book reviews have appeared in *The Alabama Review*, *The Journal of Mississippi History*, *The Middle Ground Journal*, and other publications.

Rabbi Fred V. Davidow has written of his experiences growing up in the Mississippi Delta and recounts his journey from his admiration for the Confederacy to his advocacy for civil rights in the memoir "Reconstructed Rebel." Davidow earned a B.A. from Tulane University, an M.Ed. from Delta State University, a master of arts in Hebrew literature and rabbinic ordination from Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. He also holds an advanced certificate in clinical pastoral education from Scottish Rite Children's Hospital, Atlanta. Davidow lived in Atlanta for twenty-three years, filling pulpits at The Temple, Congregation B'nai Israel (Riverdale, GA), and Temple Shir Shalom (Duluth, GA). He created the Atlanta Jewish Community Chaplaincy in 1988 and served in that position until 1993. He retired in 2018 after serving for eleven years as the chaplain at the Glendale Uptown Home, a nursing home in Philadelphia.

Paul Finkelman is the Chancellor and Distinguished Professor of History at Gratz College, the oldest independent Jewish college in the United States. From 2017 to 2021 he served as Gratz's president. He has published about two hundred scholarly articles and many books, mostly on U.S.

southern history, legal history, and American Jewish history. His most recent major book is *Supreme Injustice: Slavery in the Nation's Highest Court*.

Karen S. Franklin, coeditor of the memoirs section of *Southern Jewish History,* has been director of family research at the Leo Baeck Institute for over twenty-five years as well as a consultant for the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. She has served as president of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, chair of the Council of American Jewish Museums, and cochair of the board of governors of JewishGen.org. She is currently on the board of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

Joshua J. Furman is the founder and curator of the Joan and Stanford Alexander South Texas Jewish Archives at Rice University, where he also serves as associate director and lecturer in the Program in Jewish Studies. He teaches American Judaism, Black-Jewish relations, Jewish foodways, and immigration. Furman contributed a chapter about Houston's Jewish neighborhoods in *Making Houston Modern: The Life and Architecture of Howard Barnstone* (2020) and an essay on migration in American Jewish history for the volume *Interpreting American Jewish History at Museums and Historic Sites* (2016). He chairs the SJHS grants committee and is a member of the historical advisory committee of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience in New Orleans. He received his Ph.D. in modern Jewish history from the University of Maryland in 2015.

Shael Herman holds a J.D. degree from Tulane Law School where he holds professor emeritus status. He is the author of *Tout Fait Maison: A Law Code Crafted by the Eighteenth Century Jewry of Metz* in *Review of Rabbinic Judaism.*

Michael Hoberman is a professor of American literature at Fitchburg State University in Massachusetts. He is a graduate of Reed College and received his Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. In 2010, he was a Fulbright Senior Professor of American Studies at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. His books include *New Israel/New England: Jews and Puritans in Early America* and *A Hundred Acres of America: The Geography of Jewish American Literary History*. Currently he is writing a book

titled *Imagining Early American Jews: Popular Representations of Jewish American History in the Contemporary Era*.

Irwin Lachoff received an M.A. in history with a specialization in archives and records management from the University of New Orleans. He recently retired as archivist at Xavier University of Louisiana. His article, "Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century New Orleans: Achieving 'the Spirit of Progress and Enlightenment' through Acculturation, Residential Patterns, and Personality," appeared in *Louisiana History*.

Leah Lefkowitz majored in history and English, focusing on medieval and early modern studies, at Brandeis University after which she earned her M.L.I.S.: Archives Management Concentration at Simmons College, along with a M.A. in history. After graduating, she worked for a year and a half as a reference assistant at Houghton Library of Harvard University. In 2015 she began work at the Atlanta History Center as the manuscript archivist, where she manages, catalogs, curates, and promotes the manuscript collection. In addition, she serves as vice president of the Georgia LGBTQ History Project.

Owen E. Lourie is a historian at the Maryland State Archives specializing in Maryland government and military history during the colonial era and early republic. He holds an M.A. in history from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He is currently at work on a social history of the Maryland Line, chronicling the soldiers of the Maryland 400 during the Revolutionary War.

Deborah Dash Moore is Frederick G. L. Huetwell Professor of History and Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. An historian of New York Jews, her most recent book is *Jewish New York: The Remarkable Story of a City and a People.* Her current interests focus on Jewish American photographers. She is the author of the forthcoming volume, *Walkers in the City: Jewish Street Photographers of Mid-Century New York*. She also serves as editor-in-chief of the Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization.

Jacob Morrow-Spitzer is a Ph.D. candidate at Yale University, where he is writing a dissertation on Jewish politics and citizenship between the Civil War and the 1920s. His most recent article examines the shifting

Black perceptions of Jewish whiteness in the nineteenth-century American South (*American Jewish History*, 2022). He received his M.A. from Yale and a B.A. in history and Jewish studies from Tulane.

Lance J. Sussman is rabbi emeritus of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, PA, and past chair of the board of Gratz College in Melrose, Park, PA. Sussman is a historian of the American Jewish experience and has written several books including *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* and "The Myth of the Trefa Banquet: American Culinary Culture and the Radicalization of Food Policy in American Reform Judaism" in *American Jewish Archives.* He has taught at Princeton, Binghamton University (SUNY), and Hunter College among other schools and is coeditor of the memoirs section of *Southern Jewish History.*

Diane Vecchio is professor emerita of history at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. Her latest publication is "New Jewish Women: Shaping the Future of a New South" in *Southern Jewish History* (2020), and her *Jews and Business in South Carolina: An Upcountry History* recently received a publication contract.

Ashley Walters completed her Ph.D. in Jewish history from Stanford University. She is an assistant professor of Jewish studies and an affiliate faculty member of the women's and gender studies program at the College of Charleston. She also directs the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. Walters is currently finishing a monograph titled *Intimate Radicals: East European Jewish Women, Anglo-American Intellectuals, and Progressive Desires,* about interracial and interclass romances in the early twentieth century U.S. and coediting and contributing to a collection of essays on Jewish women's literary culture and gender politics in the U.S. along with Lori Harrison-Kahan and Annie Atura Bushnell.

Purchasing Journals and Articles

Free search and download of the full contents of all but the two most recent volumes of *Southern Jewish History* are available on Academia.edu. Visit the journal's page at http://independent.academia.edu/SouthernJewishHistory.

Full contents of all but the two most recent volumes, including all three issues of *The Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* (1958–63), are also available on the SJHS website: http://www.jewishsouth.org/contents-southern-jewish-history-volume.

Individual articles from recent issues may be ordered as pdfs for $7.00 each at http://www.jewishsouth.org/store/articles-pdfs.

Print copies of most past volumes may be purchased online at http://www.jewishsouth.org/store/printed-journals or by mailing a check made out to the SJHS to: Managing Editor, PO Box 271432, Corpus Christi, TX 78427.

Current volume: $15 for members; $20 for nonmembers; $40 for libraries/institutions.
Back issues: $10 for members; $15 for nonmembers; $40 for libraries/institutions.

Please add $20 for mailing outside the U.S.

SJH *Website*

Indexes of past issues and authors, a cumulative glossary, complete errata, and *SJH* award winners can be found at www.jewishsouth.org/about-southern-jewish-history

Research Grants Available

The Southern Jewish Historical Society awards annual grants to support research in southern Jewish history. The application deadline for each year's awards is in June. Information is available at www.jewishsouth.org/sjhs-grants-applications.

The Project Completion Grant is intended to facilitate the completion of projects relevant to Jewish history in the southern United States. Such projects might include the publication of books or exhibit catalogs or the preparation of exhibit modules. Grants may not be used to fund research or travel. Grants from the Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter Fund can be focused on research specific to Florida Jewish history.

The Research/Travel Grant assists individuals with travel and other expenses related to conducting research in southern Jewish history.

The Scott and Donna Langston Archival Grant encourages the preservation of archival materials related to southern Jewish history.

Join the Southern Jewish Historical Society

https://www.jewishsouth.org/store/annual-membership
or send a check to Memberships, PO Box 71601, Marietta, GA 30007-1601

Student (individual only) ~ $15
Individual or family membership levels
General member ~ $36
Patron ~ $50
Century ~ $100
Cedar ~ $500
Sycamore ~ $1,000
Magnolia ~ $2,500

www.jewishsouth.org

Contents of Back Issues
Southern Jewish History *(1998–2021)*
The Journal of the SJHS *(1958–1963)*

NOTE: Free search and download of the full contents of all but the two most recent volumes of *Southern Jewish History* are available on Academia.edu. Visit the journal's page at http://independent.academia.edu/SouthernJewishHistory.

Full contents of all but the two most recent volumes, including all three issues of *The Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* (1958–63), are also available on the SJHS website: http://www.jewishsouth.org/contents-southern-jewish-history-volume.

An index of all journal content by author's name is available on the SJHS website: https://www.jewishsouth.org/index-authors.

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

VOLUME 24 (2021)

Volume 23 (2020)

VOLUME 22 (2019)

VOLUME 21 (2018)

VOLUME 20 (2017)

VOLUME 19 (2016)

Volume 18 (2015)

VOLUME 17 (2014)

VOLUME 16 (2013)

VOLUME 15 (2012)

VOLUME 14 (2011)

VOLUME 13 (2010)

VOLUME 12 (2009)

VOLUME 11 (2008)

VOLUME 10 (2007)

VOLUME 9 (2006)

VOLUME 8 (2005)

VOLUME 7 (2004)

VOLUME 6 (2003)

VOLUME 5 (2002)

VOLUME 4 (2001)

VOLUME 3 (2000)

Lynchburg's Swabian Jewish Entrepreneurs in War and Peace, *Richard A. Hawkins*

Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans, *Scott Langston*

VOLUME 2 (1999)

The Jews of Keystone: Life in a Multicultural Boomtown, *Deborah R. Weiner*

Lives of Quiet Affirmation: The Jewish Women of Early Anniston, Alabama, *Sherry Blanton*

Jewish Merchants and Black Customers in the Age of Jim Crow, *Clive Webb*

Mercy on Rude Streams: Jewish Emigrants from Alsace-Lorraine to the Lower Mississippi Region and the Concept of Fidelity, *Anny Bloch*

Kosher Country: Success and Survival on Nashville's Music Row, *Stacy Harris*

"From the Recipe File of Luba Cohen": A Study of Southern Jewish Foodways and Cultural Identity, *Marcie Cohen Ferris*

VOLUME 1 (1998)

Why Study Southern Jewish History? *Gary P. Zola*

"Ride 'em Jewboy": Kinky Friedman and the Texas Mystique, *Bryan Edward Stone*

Synagogue and Jewish Church: A Congregational History of North Carolina, *Leonard Rogoff*

Amelia Greenwald and Regina Kaplan: Jewish Nursing Pioneers, *Susan Mayer*

PERSONALITY PROFILE, Harry Reyner: Individualism and Community in Newport News, Virginia, *Gertrude L. Samet*

AS TOLD TO MEMOIRS, Ruth and Rosalie: Two Tales of Jewish New Orleans, *Bobbie Malone*

THE JOURNAL OF THE SJHS

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1 (NOVEMBER 1958)

Foreword, *Jacob R. Marcus*

Moses Myers and the Early Jewish Community of Norfolk, *Malcolm H. Stern*

Acquisitions to SJHS Collection at Valentine Museum

Tombstones That Tell a Story, Charleston's Historic Coming Street Cemetery, *Thomas J. Tobias*

Franklin J. Moses: Chief Justice of South Carolina, *Harry Simonhoff*

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2 (OCTOBER 1959)

Religious Freedom and the Jew in Colonial Virginia, *Louis Ginsberg*
Rebecca Gratz and Henry Clay: an American Jewess Observes a Leader's Drive for the Presidency, *Joseph R. Rosenbloom*
Rev. M. J. Michelbacher (Illustration)
A Letter from Herman Hecht to his Son Armand Hecht
Monticello and the Levy Family, *Malcolm H. Stern*
George Jacobs, A Versatile Jew, *Emilie V. Jacobs*

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3 (NOVEMBER 1963)

The American Civil War, *Robert W. Waitt, Jr.*
Not Forgotten—Henry Gintzberger—Private C.S.A., *J. Ambler Johnston*
Acrostic for Rosa Cohn, *W. Flegenheimer*
Some Notes on the History of the Organized Jewish Community of Norfolk, Virginia, *Malcolm H. Stern*
Program for Confederate Memorial Ceremony—Hebrew Cemetery

Charleston Research Fellowship

The Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston invites applications for its research fellowship program. The fellowship offers a stipend of $500/week for up to two weeks. Depending on availability, we may be able to provide free on-campus housing. Applications are welcome from scholars, graduate students, journalists, filmmakers, artists, or exhibition curators whose work would benefit from doing research in Charleston. Preference will be given to researchers using materials from the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College's Addlestone Library.

Applicants should submit a cover letter explaining their research needs and the proposed length of the fellowship period; a curriculum vitae; and a brief proposal describing the project (maximum two pages). Applications are due March 1 for summer stipends (May–August) and August 1 for those planning to visit during the academic school year (September–April). Please address inquiries or your completed application to Center Director Ashley Walters at waltersa1@cofc.edu.

Prize winners for most original costumes at the 1901 Grand Purim Masquerade Ball were featured on the following year's invitation to the annaul event, sponsored by the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Orangeburg, South Carolina. Author Julia Peterkin, second from left, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1928 for her novel *Scarlet Sister Mary*. From the Jewish Heritage Collection, courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

COLLEGE of CHARLESTON
PEARLSTINE/LIPOV CENTER FOR SOUTHERN JEWISH CULTURE

Join the Southern Jewish Historical Society

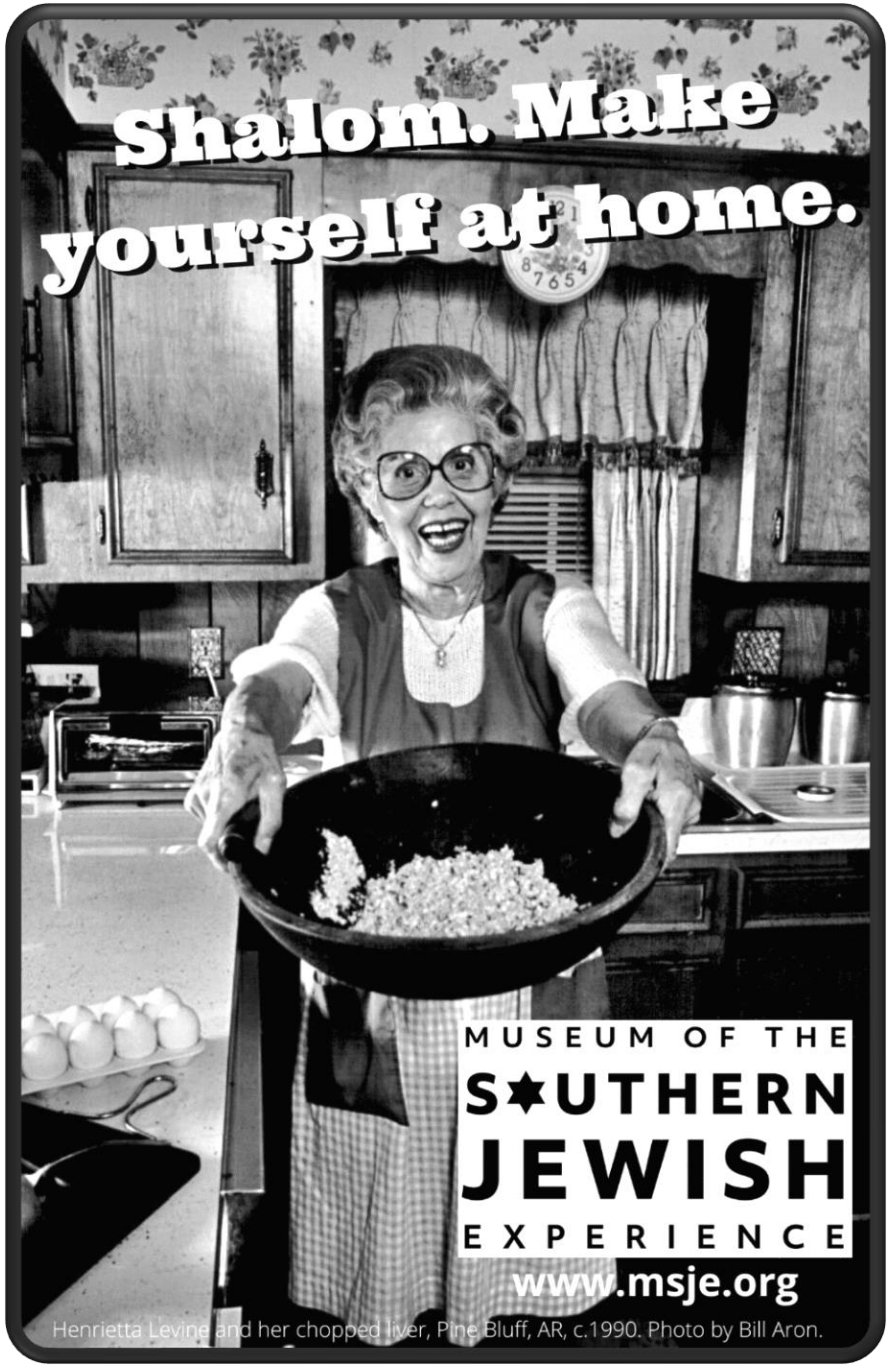
https://www.jewishsouth.org/store/annual-membership
or send a check to Memberships, PO Box 71601, Marietta, GA 30007-1601

Student (individual only) ~ $15

Individual or family membership levels

General member ~ $36
Patron ~ $50
Century ~ $100
Cedar ~ $500
Sycamore ~ $1,000
Magnolia ~ $2,500

www.jewishsouth.org


Shalom. Make yourself at home.
MUSEUM OF THE
SOUTHERN
JEWISH
EXPERIENCE
www.msje.org
Henrietta Levine and her chopped liver, Pine Bluff, AR, c.1990. Photo by Bill Aron.