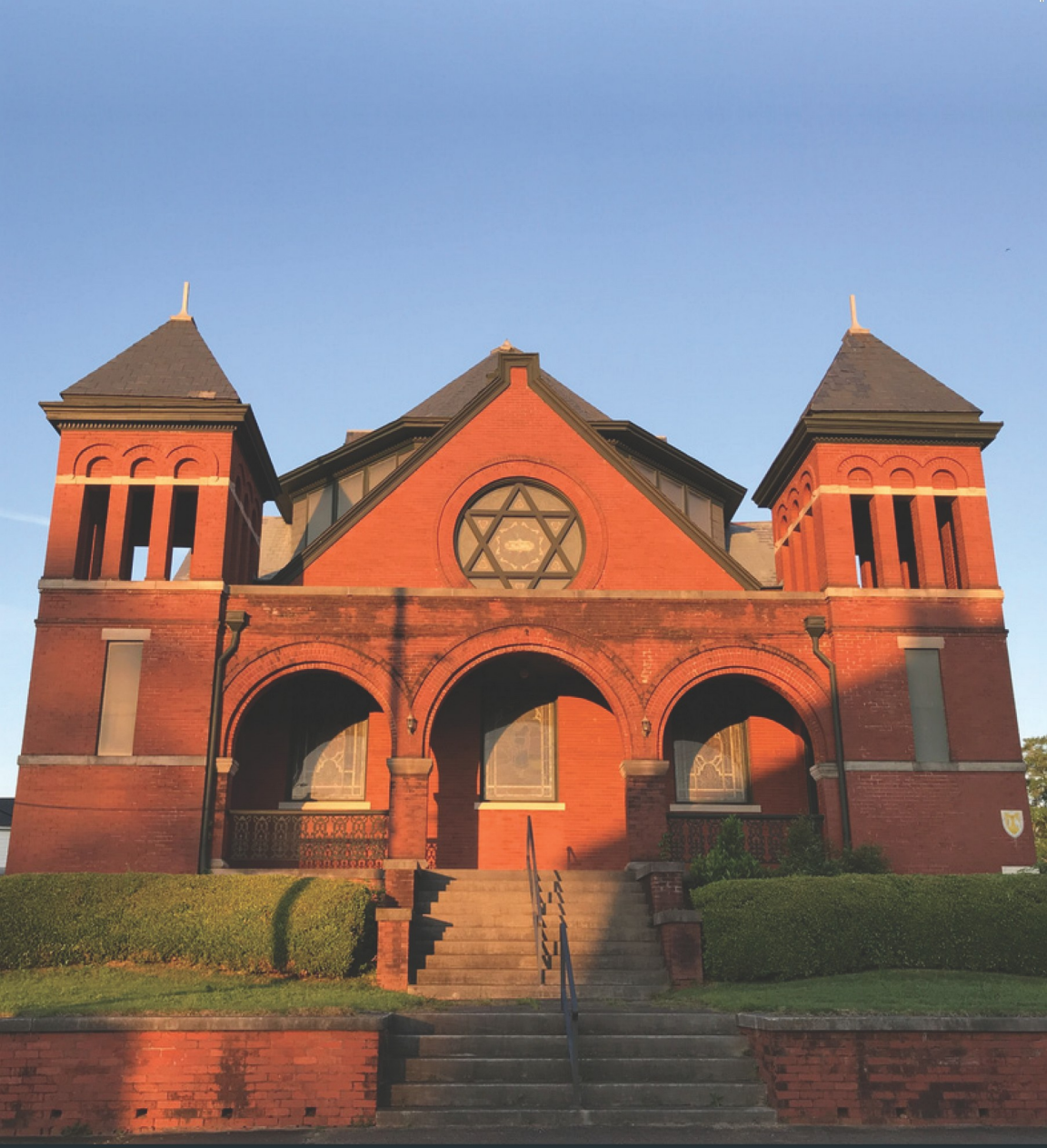

Southern Jewish HISTORY

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SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

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COVER PICTURE: Temple Mishkan Israel in Selma, Alabama. The activities of Selma's small Jewish community during the civil rights era are the subject of the article by Amy K. Milligan in this issue. (Photograph by and courtesy of Amy K. Milligan.)

From the Editor . . .

President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration have been justly criticized for not allowing more refugees into the country from Nazi Germany. Claudia Anderson returns to these pages with an article on a little-known program designed to disperse refugees away from New York and train them for productive work. Although on the plus side for American assistance, program limitations and the small number of young people involved support the argument for the shallow nature of American assistance. Although a national effort, Georgia provided the program pilot and other southern states including Texas appear as exemplars.

Amy K. Milligan's article discusses the Jews of Selma, Alabama, in relation to the civil rights movement. She opens our eyes to a synagogue president who stands out as an ardent and even violent segregationist, a few congregants who spoke out in favor of civil rights with horrible consequences, and a majority who may have favored civil rights for African Americans but remained silent out of fear. Margaret Norman and Melissa Young treat a different, but related, aspect of the same period: the attempted bombing of a synagogue in Birmingham, pervasive antisemitism, and how the Jewish community attempts to come to grips with its very mixed civil rights history in hindsight.

The latter two articles also address racism and antisemitism. The definition of Black then and now remains clear and virtually unalterable; whereas the definition of Jew was and, in some ways, remains open. Without going into all definitions of *Jew*, two stand out here: 1. a member of a religious group—Judaism; and 2. a distinct, in-between race, White but different and possessing inferior characteristics.

These issues led me to a decision about a book review that I have never faced as an editor: should I include a review of a book with hardly anything to do with southern Jewish history or thank the reviewer and apologize for not including his work? In the end I opted to include the review because of what it imparts concerning definitions of identity. As the reviewer indicates, Francis Cardozo had a Jewish father and Black mother. The book fails to go into Jewish history and indicates that Judaism had no bearing on Cardozo's life as a Congregational minister and Black

activist/politician during Reconstruction. In *Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag Governor of South Carolina* (9, 152–53), Benjamin Ginsberg discusses alliances between Jews and Blacks in Reconstruction South Carolina using Francis Cardozo and Franklin Moses, Jr., as examples. According to then-contemporary *halacha*, neither Cardozo nor Franklin Moses should be defined as Jewish since, while their fathers were born Jewish, their mothers were Christian. Both Reconstruction Republicans were raised and lived as Christians, married Christian women, and actively participated in their churches. Yet Franklin Moses, Jr., faced denunciation as a Jew, and his biographer identifies him as such. These variances reflect a conundrum concerning our understanding of race and identity—and thus the rationale for including the review of Neil Kinghan's Cardozo biography. Cardozo's identity as Black was and remains indelible, whereas his Jewish origin is easily discarded. Franklin Moses, Jr's identity as Jewish was equally indelible regardless of his father's and his attempts to "pass" as White Christians. Their biographies thus raise our consciousness of the intertwining of race and religion in American history. Blackness overcame Cardozo's Jewish origins, whereas religious origin limited Moses's Whiteness.

Timothy Riggio Quevillon uses advertising in African American newspapers to gain insights into the behavior of Jewish businessmen. By doing so, his primary source article explicates the relationship between Black newspapers and shoppers and Jews in the 1920s. Decades ago, Arnold Shankman and Hasia Diner, among others, utilized such primary sources. Quevillon reminds us to go beyond Jewish sources for different insights.

Lance Sussman and Karen Franklin provide the memoir of a Russian immigrant. Oscar Dreizin, like so many others in small-town America, lived and conducted business among Black and White people in rural Georgia. As his memories illustrate, he depended on family and *landsmen*—for better and worse—in his occupation and social life. World wars and economic depression impacted him greatly, and, like so many other Jews in similar circumstances, he and his wife ultimately moved to a larger city where they could benefit from a larger Jewish population and Jewish institutions.

The editor of the exhibit and film review section of the journal, Jeremy Katz, moved from the Breman Museum to Hamilton College in New

York a few years ago. After seven wonderful years of service to the journal, he has resigned as section editor because his current position has moved him away from southern Jewish history. His dedication, hard work, and collegiality will be sorely missed. We wish him the very best in his new endeavors.

Since the last journal volume, mortality within the society and profession has reared its inevitable head. Dolly Wax, the spark of so many warm exchanges at numerous conferences going back decades, passed away followed by her husband Bernie. Bernie Wax helped found the SJHS in his role as executive director of the American Jewish Historical Society. His heart and allegiance moved from the AJHS to the SJHS where he attended almost every meeting, including the first in Richmond with Dolly, and he served on the board for decades. When the society decided to establish the journal, the then-treasurer opposed the move because of financial concerns. Bernie assumed the role of treasurer with the pledge that he would oversee the journal's financial needs. He met that obligation for almost two decades and became a proofreader even of the last volume before his death. Founding managing editor Rachel Heimovics Braun

Bernie and Dolly Wax. (Courtesy of Rebecca Stapel-Wax.)

remembers the Waxes as good friends from the 1960s, when he worked for the Illinois State Historical Society, and she was with the City of Chicago. Bernie, as director of the AJHS, came to Charleston, South Carolina, in 1990 to install Rachel as president of SJHS. Besides many joyful visits with Dolly and Bernie at SJHS conferences, another special time occurred when they visited Rachel in Orlando. On November 7, 2004, during the wedding luncheon when Rachel married Mati Braun, the Waxes called to extend best wishes. Never to be forgotten. To Rachel Heimovics Braun, Bryan Stone, and (at least I like to think) especially me, Bernie became a dear friend to whom we could always turn.

In memoriam tributes for Eli N. Evans and Lee Shai Weissbach appear in this volume, but I want to add a few personal comments. Eli was a founding member of the SJHS who gave the keynote presentation at the first conference in Richmond in 1976. With his book *The Provincials*, other writings, and numerous presentations he did more to popularize southern Jewish history than any other individual, and he became the popular face of the field. When the society established *Southern Jewish History*, Eli announced the first financial contribution to its publication. Subsequently, he suggested to me that, besides articles on history, it should include works on southern Jewish literature—short stories, poems, etc.—a path not taken!

Lee Shai trained in and wrote about French history before venturing into southern Jewish history during the early 1990s. Switching fields typified those who entered American Jewish history at the time. His switch began with Kentucky, since he taught at the University of Louisville, and the material was thus conveniently available. Researching and writing on small-town life led him to find far more similarities than differences with similar Jewish communities throughout the country, a conclusion challenging southern Jewish exceptionalism that he expanded on in his magnum opus, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America* (2005). Through the years I edited Lee Shai's articles in a special issue of *American Jewish History* (September 1997), which was reprinted in *Dixie Diaspora*, and on the Franco-Jewish experience in the South (*SJH* 2011). I established a policy of editorial board members serving for five-year terms and then rotating off. Lee Shai was only one of two people to serve indefinitely. His counsel was always well thought-out and persuasive.

When the journal was established, Lee Shai told me that it should not be necessary, but that articles in the field should appear in mainstream publications. I whole-heartedly agreed with him then, as I do now. Yet we also agreed that during the late 1990s manuscripts in the field had difficulty finding homes in academic journals. Whereas that is far less the case today, many manuscripts submitted to the journal continue to require far more hands-on assistance with revision than they would likely receive from either *American Jewish History* or the *American Jewish Archives Journal*. For better or worse, the need for *SJH* continues.

As with Dolly and Bernie Wax, Sandy and I always made it a point to enjoy at least one meal at numerous conferences of the SJHS and biennial scholars' conferences of the AJHS with Lee Shai and, when she attended, Sharon Weissbach. In over three decades, I never remember disagreeing with Lee Shai on any issue concerning the field or society.

May the memories—and legacies—of Eli Evans, Bernie and Dolly Wax, and Lee Shai Weissbach indeed be a blessing to their families and all who knew and came to love and respect them.

Mark K. Bauman

In Memoriam
Eli N. Evans (1936–2022)

"All research is me-search" is a cheeky little rhyme that academic scholars sometimes throw around—although not everyone likes it. In an intellectual environment that holds objectivity as a value of the highest order, to admit that scholarly investigation is driven by an urge to understand one's place in the world seems like an act of sheepish self-deprecation, or a confession of self-absorption. When we adjust our assumptions about scholastic detachment, however, this catchphrase can offer significant insight: it reminds us of the inescapable potency of subjectivity, of the influence our contexts and circumstances exert over us. Even while we strive for the objective view, we cannot help but see the world through our own eyes. In some instances, it is more productive to embrace the impulse than to spurn it.

Eli Nachamson Evans, who passed away in July of 2022 at the age of eighty-five, knew the truth of this maxim better than most. Born to a Jewish family that settled in the South in the first decade of the twentieth century, Evans focused his historical lens on the community he grew up in and on southern Jewish identity writ large. His career ranged formidably: professionally trained in law, he found success as a political aide, as a journalist and essayist, and as leader of several philanthropic organizations. But he achieved special distinction (particularly for readers of this publication) as one of the founders of the modern scholarly field of southern Jewish history.

It might be said that Evans's pivotal role in the origin story of the Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS) stemmed from his departure

Eli Evans at the SJHS conference in Austin, 2014.
(Courtesy of Barbara Green Stone.)

from the South. His childhood and adolescence in Durham, North Carolina, instilled deep affection for the region, as well as curiosity about how growing up southern had molded his world view. He was also keenly aware that being Jewish in the South—accepted and privileged in some respects but excluded and distrusted in others—had shaped him just as acutely. By the late 1960s he had relocated to New York City, where he found himself again, as he later described it, "a minority in a majority culture"—this time among northeastern Jews who regarded "Jew" and "southerner" as distinct categories without the possibility of overlap.[1] Enter Willie Morris, a friend and fellow southern transplant to the city, who had recently taken the reins as editor of *Harper's Magazine*. Morris

encouraged Evans to write about his heritage and family history, assigning him a series of articles on the subject.[2]

The magazine assignment eventually became his first book. Published in 1973, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* reveals its me-search intentions in its subtitle. "I have attempted to bare the soul of the Jewish South," he proclaims in its first pages, by probing "the subjective edges of the experience."[3] *The Provincials* interweaves memoir and stories of Evans's kinfolk with journalistic profiles of Jewish southerners past and present, deftly shifting between intimate self-reflection, historical narrative, and engagement with contemporary sociological study. His investigations traverse geographically from Virginia to Texas and temporally from the colonial era through the late 1960s.[4] But autobiography and family history serve as his primary framing devices, as he seeks to place his and his family's experiences within their broader regional context as both Jews and southerners.

Evans was not the first author to give account of Jewish life in the American South; the bibliography of *The Provincials* lists more than thirty books and articles on the subject. But nearly all of these focused on elite Jewish institutions and "founding" families in urban settings and were largely celebratory in tone. *The Provincials* stood out as something new in three important ways: its recognition of diversity and complexity within southern Jewish history; its sprightly style and wry humor, which enhanced its appeal to a general reading public; and a willingness to employ a critical perspective when the situation merited, even as Evans made clear that he was a native of the tribe under scrutiny.

The Provincials was issued in the same year as *Jews in the South*, a collection of nearly two dozen essays coedited by Leonard Dinnerstein, an academic historian who had recently published a book about Leo Frank. The following year, *Our Southern Landsman*, written by Harry Golden—a New York-born humorist and political liberal who founded and edited the *Carolina Israelite*—hit the shelves. Academic scholars and community historians found inspiration in these three books, which ranged widely in tone and methodology even as they collectively focused on a seemingly narrow topic. Evans's friend and informal historical advisor Saul Viener, who had attempted to create an association of southern Jewish historians in the late 1950s, recognized an opportunity to try again. Leveraging his contacts at several local and national Jewish organizations, Viener

successfully reconvened the organization, and in October 1976, the SJHS held what would turn out to be its revival conference in Richmond, Virginia. Evans, whose book had been so pivotal to the organization's rebirth, delivered the conference's keynote address.[5]

Evans intended that his speech to the revived SJHS would serve as a call to action. While countless books and articles had been written about Jewish life in America, he pointed out, too few took southern Jews and their histories into consideration. The time was ripe to "look more energetically at the gaps in our knowledge." He endorsed the method he had relied on most heavily in his research for *The Provincials*, urging his audience to become amateur oral historians. The last of the generation of Jewish immigrants who had ventured south at the turn of the century would not be around much longer, he warned; so buy a tape recorder, schedule some interviews, and prepare questions that will encourage your subjects to "unravel memories at their own pace." Ask them about their reasons for coming south and staying there; ask how they maintained Jewish identity and practice in spaces where Jews were rare. Ask their American-born children about their childhoods and neighborhoods, the foods they ate, the clothes they wore, the friends they made. Inquire about politics, economic crises, wars, race, and antisemitism. Most important, he declared, find out "the psychological experiences of being Jewish in the South, the emotional experiences . . . *how did they feel*?"[6]

So, according to Evans, *how did southern Jews feel*? *The Provincials* offers something like a unifying theory of southern Jewish experience and presents the author as himself a representative specimen. First and foremost, Evans wrote, southern Jews were "molded by the ethos they grew up in," identifying fervently with their region and "rooted deep in the soul of southern history." At the same time, they felt "the Jewish longing for a homeland" in an environment shaped by Christianity and white supremacy, which created an "emotional reality of religious isolation" and cultural outsiderness. This contradiction, in a section known for its "foreboding distrust of the foreigner," had encouraged in southern Jews a "habit of low profile—an instinctive shyness" and a tendency to assimilate.[7]

The pressure to fly under the radar exerted particular force when it came to race. According to Evans, southern Jews of European descent were assumed to be white, and they did not challenge the assumption. But

Evans insists that Jews' absorption of white southern attitudes only went so far. "From their earliest encounters," he wrote, "Negroes and Jews in the South have had a special relationship." This connection first played out in commercial transactions, when Jewish retailers and employers treated their Black customers and workers more agreeably than did other whites. It blossomed into affinity over their shared identification with the Exodus story, as well as their "mutual fear of the white society they lived in." But fear compelled southern Jews to "keep their attitudes to themselves" and assimilating into whiteness provided sufficient cover. Thus Jews who ran for public office in the New South could regularly count on Black voters as a bloc; yet when Jewish candidates won, they usually served as moderates on racial issues and steered clear of direct alliance with Black civil rights advocates.[8] (Evans's family history bears on this phenomenon: his father was mayor of Durham from 1951 to 1963—the first Jew to be elected to that position.)

These racial tensions and psychological dissonances fell away, however, when it came to the state of Israel. Earlier southern Jewish orientations toward Zionism had been diverse and contentious. Attitudes began to shift midcentury, however, as the horrors of the Holocaust were fully revealed. "All came to realize," Evans insisted, in one of the book's most egregious overgeneralizations, "that identification with Israel was the only hope for the American Jewish community." However, it was not only southern Jews who expressed vigorous support of Israel after the Six-Day War, when Evans was doing research for his book; Christians, and especially white southern Baptists, also embraced the cause. Evans recognizes that the region's overwhelming political support for Israel offered southern Jews an opportunity to develop shared attachments with their white gentile neighbors, though he sees non-Jewish southerners' affection for Israel emerging from different political and cultural concerns than, for instance, his grandmother's (who in 1919 had founded the first southern chapter of Hadassah). White southern Christians, on the other hand, admired Israel in the late 1960s and early 1970s because of its dogged militarism; its strategic position in the global fight against communism; its role in fundamentalist Christian belief as fulfillment of biblical prophecy; and, by their perception, its presence in the Middle East as "a white enclave encircled by dark and heathen peoples."[9] (Evans does not air the

possibility that southern Jews might also admire Israel for three of those four reasons.)

Evans's interest in the emotional and psychological experiences of "everyday" southern Jews coincided with the growth of oral history, and "history from the bottom up," in the 1960s and 1970s. Unsurprisingly, his first book exerted a profound impact upon the field's development. Yet this preoccupation could also lead him astray—especially when he leaned into the imperative to analyze southern Jewish subjectivity as a historical category. In 1988, he published *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate*. A Sephardic Jewish immigrant and Louisiana slave owner who held three different positions in Jefferson Davis's administration, Benjamin is one of the more enigmatic historical figures of the Civil War era—not least because he destroyed all of his personal papers before he died. By the time Evans developed an interest in Benjamin, two substantial biographies had already been produced, although neither had taken up Jewishness, much less southern Jewishness, as a topic of analysis. Benjamin's Jewish identity, Evans declared, would be the primary line of inquiry and historiographic contribution of his work. His book's introduction makes clear that he was personally invested in the question: "Part of my fascination" with Benjamin, he admits, "comes from my own life as a Jewish southerner. . . . He is somehow familiar to me because there are certain changeless verities to growing up Jewish in the Bible Belt and passing for white in that mysterious underland of America."[10]

Evans's claim that Benjamin's identity as a southern Jew not only influenced every aspect of his life but was a causal factor in his choices as both a civilian and as a leader failed to convince reviewers. While they recognized the antisemitic vitriol of many of Benjamin's contemporary detractors, the general consensus—at least among academic historians—was that Evans presented insufficient proof for many of his assertions. Instead, one reviewer wrote, the biography wielded "unsubstantiated and highly questionable conjectures" as evidence of Benjamin's Jewish soul.[11] Another lamented that Evans's hypothesis "must remain an undemonstrated if intriguing theory."[12] Clearly, in his hope of finding universality and continuity of southern Jewish identity (as he understood it), he had assumed knowledge of Benjamin's inner life. But his assumptions ran further than the available evidence allowed—an ambitious endeavor that was bound to annoy historical specialists.

David Brion Davis, whose historical studies of Anglo-American slavery were in the process of transforming and modernizing the field, was especially stinging in his critique. Davis condemned the book as a work of "Lost Cause" mythology, brimming with discredited stereotypes of enslaved Black people and claims that Benjamin was a "benevolent" slaveowner, and guided by a "Confederate perspective" on the military history of the Civil War.[13] One assumes that Evans, a committed liberal, would have been horrified by such accusations. However, he occasionally reveals similar tendencies in *The Provincials* too; in one glib and cringeworthy aside, he describes male Jewish college students' choices of female sexual partners—*haimish* Ashkenazi Jews, or exotic and forbidden white Christians—as akin to "the 'massa' in the sweet arms of his lady in the manor house secretly yearning for the wild taboos in the slave quarters."[14]

Nonetheless, Evans did recognize the South's ugly history of racial oppression. He celebrated changes in southern urban politics, as increasing numbers of Black voters reshaped the political landscape—a phenomenon he examined in his third book, a collection of essays titled *The Lonely Days Were Sundays*.[15] Meanwhile, he promoted southern Jewish history as a subject of academic and popular interest. His generous support was crucial to the founding of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, his alma mater, and he graciously served as mentor and friend to scholars and fellow history enthusiasts. In his 1976 keynote address to the SJHS, he counseled his audience that collecting old community stories "will be a contribution to history but that's incidental; it will leave a treasure for your family."[16] Five decades since the publication of Evans's first book, the field is not only a space for me-search (or we-search); it's also a site of analytic rigor and internal debate, which is as it should be. As he had hoped, communities and ways of life previously invisible in histories of the region have been rendered visible. His contributions to southern Jewish history, and thus to both southern history and American Jewish history more broadly, have been the true treasure, valuable beyond measure.

Marni Davis, Georgia State University

NOTES

[1] Eli N. Evans, *The Lonely Days were Sundays: Reflections of a Jewish Southerner* (Jackson, MS, 1993), 5.

[2] Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York, 1976), ii.

[3] Ibid., iv.

[4] The 2005 edition of *The Provincials*, published by UNC Press, added a new introduction by Evans and five additional chapters, including one on Jewish Atlanta since Sam Massell's mayoral defeat in 1973, and several about the death of Evans's parents.

[5] Eric L. Goldstein, "Making History: An Interview with Saul Viener," *Southern Jewish History* 10 (2007): 67–72.

[6] Eli N. Evans, "Southern-Jewish History: Alive and Unfolding," in *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville, 1979), 158–67, emphasis in original. The essay is noted in the text as "based on" the 1976 keynote address.

[7] Evans, *Lonely Days were Sundays*, 5; Evans, *Provincials*, iv, 40, 260–61; Evans, "Southern-Jewish History," 160.

[8] Evans, *Provincials*, 304, 141.

[9] Ibid., 108–10.

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

[11] Edward S. Shapiro, "Review: Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 82 (January–April, 1992): 563.

[12] Stephen E. Maizlish, "Review: Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin*," *Journal of Southern History* 55 (August 1989): 499.

[13] David Brion Davis, "Review: Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin*." *American Jewish History* 78 (December 1988): 304.

[14] Evans, *Provincials*, 184.

[15] Evans, *Lonely Days were Sundays*, 80–84, 130, 318.

[16] Evans, "Southern-Jewish History," 167.

In Memoriam
Lee Shai Weissbach (1947–2022)

The community of American Jewish historians received the word in late September that our friend and colleague Lee Shai Weissbach had passed away. We all enjoyed being with him and learned so much from him.

Briefly in terms of biography, Lee Shai was born in British Mandatory Palestine, did his undergraduate studies at the University of Cincinnati, received his doctorate from Harvard University, and taught during his entire career at the University of Louisville, where he held a number of administrative positions. At Louisville his students and colleagues respected him. He taught in Israel and attended conferences in England, South Africa, and so many other places, combining his zest for scholarship with his zest for travel.

We were saddened by the news, recognizing that we had lost a dedicated scholar, an enthusiastic participant in all of our gatherings and publication projects, and a warm human being who loved nothing better—other than being with his wife Sharon, children Kobi and Maya, and their children—than being at a conference chatting with everyone and anyone, brimming with the joy of making connections and learning from others. Those who met Lee Shai at the meetings of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, the American Jewish Historical Society, or the Association for Jewish Studies, whether other academics or members of the interested public, could not but notice his spark.

Lee Shai always found something to discuss with nearly anyone. He found out who in his extraordinary and always expanding network of friends and contacts connected to whom, and he derived such joy from

regaling people, whether he just met them or whom he had known for decades, with stories about the many webs that linked him to them and them to others. He was truly a "people person."

Lee Shai Weissbach contributed much to our field. He began his career studying French history, focusing particularly on child labor and the state and philanthropic efforts to reform it. No doubt he loved the subject. His book, gracefully written, revealed his commitment to meticulous scholarship and, as in his later writing, he cleverly derived much meaning from small, previously ignored details buried in French documents and archives.

But those of us who knew Lee Shai well—and I met him when he and I, at aged fourteen, attended the same summer camp—knew that his heart lay with Jewish subjects, history in particular, but the contemporary community as well. His commitment to the Jewish world, past and present, was nothing but passionate, and his writings, particularly on Jews in small-town America and the synagogues of Kentucky, where he lived,

Lee Shai Weissbach with his wife, Sharon, at the SJHS conference in Asheville, 2012. (Courtesy of Sharon Weissbach.)

reflected his understanding of himself as a scholar but also as a Jew who believed that by studying the past, Jews in the present would not only learn facts but would strengthen their commitments to Judaism and the Jewish people. As in his first book, his later ones, including his annotated version of his grandfather's memoir, which Lee Shai translated from Hebrew, brimmed with excitement and wonder. He showed how matters that others considered mundane and not of historical significance indeed revealed much about the times and places in which Jews went about the process of building communities and living in them.

Lee Shai Weissbach taught us about the importance of maps and places. After all, he would have said, our subjects lived in real places, and they moved around the world. To know them we had to literally see where they had been. He also attended to material objects, architecture, and other visual documents more than as mere illustrations but as central to his project of trying to understand how Jews lived and how they related to that which Lee Shai loved so much—their Jewish identities.

Since I go so far back with Lee Shai, I may feel his passing with a different kind of sadness and poignancy than the many others whom he met in his adult decades as a scholar of American and southern Jewish history. They, like I, recognize that we have lost a genuine human being.

Hasia Diner, New York University

Training and Dispersing Young Jews Fleeing Hitler: The National Youth Administration Refugee Program and the South

by

Claudia Wilson Anderson *

The widely circulating tale of "Operation Texas" provides a compelling narrative about future President Lyndon B. Johnson rescuing Holocaust refugees and hiding them in National Youth Administration (NYA) housing. The story includes intrigue, false passports, and illegal aliens hidden in resident centers run by a U.S. government agency. While I previously challenged the credibility of this account, the underlying history of the NYA and its refugee youth program remains to be fully told.[1]

The origins of the tale trace to the dedication of the new synagogue for Congregation Agudas Achim, the Conservative congregation in Austin, Texas. During the festive ceremonies on December 30, 1963, the chairman of the building committee, Jim Novy, delivered a short speech introducing his long-time friend, Lyndon Johnson. Novy cryptically credited Johnson and Jesse Kellam, both former Texas state directors of the NYA, with making little-known arrangements to lodge Jewish immigrants at NYA resident centers in Texas in 1940. The NYA was created during the Great Depression to help youth between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four continue in school or receive vocational training by providing them part-time jobs, thereby allowing them to earn money without sacrificing their education.[2]

Novy was a Polish immigrant who had entered the United States through Galveston in 1913 at the age of sixteen, and his remarks referred to a project to resettle European refugee youth who had fled Hitler's

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persecution and entered the country legally in the late 1930s and early 1940s. With the help of the National Refugee Service (NRS), refugee youth between eighteen and twenty-four came to Texas and other states where they lived in NYA resident centers and received vocational training and schooling through the NYA. Novy served as the NRS liaison with the Texas NYA, helping to support the young men enrolled in the program in his state.[3] The effort was part of a national partnership, a small but historically interesting cooperative effort, set in the context of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, to resettle and train refugee youth who fled to the United States under the immigration quota system then in effect.[4]

The Galveston Movement, the IRO, and the NYA/NRS

It was against this background that many young refugees landed in New York City but failed to find suitable employment there. Although Congress limited the use of federal relief funds to assisting citizens of the United States, the NYA, with assistance from the NRS, a private nonprofit organization, found a way to help. It is this story Novy referenced in his speech at the Congregation Agudas Achim synagogue dedication. The story begins at the national level but with important ties in the South. A total of 265 refugee youths participated in the program with 102, or 38.5 percent, located in six southern states.[5] Twenty-two state NYA programs participated, with six located in the NRS's southern district: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Texas.[6] As we shall see, three centers in Georgia provided the pilot for the national program, and Florida was the first to place women in the refugee program. Novy's program in Texas provides historians with an excellent case study.

When Novy agreed to serve as the liaison in Texas between the NYA and the NRS, he must have felt a deep personal connection with the young men arriving in the state from New York City. In 1913, Novy's father in Poland, fearing Russian pogroms and seeing no future for his son, Shimeon Novodvorsky, decided that his son should join his two older brothers who were already in America. Shimeon made his way from Knishin, Poland, to the port city of Bremen, Germany, where he boarded the *SS Chemnitz* and sailed for Galveston under the auspices of the Galveston Movement, a project to settle refugees in the interior of the United States away from more congested cities in the East, particularly New York. The ship docked in Galveston on Yom Kippur eve, and the esteemed and

beloved Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston's Congregation B'nai Israel came aboard and delivered a sermon. The next morning about 130 travelers disembarked with assistance from Rabbi Cohen. Immigration officials permitted them to conduct High Holiday services, and at day's end, they ate a meal prepared by the local Jewish community and slept at the U.S. Immigration Station. The next day, with help from Cohen and Galveston's Jewish Immigrants Information Bureau, Shimeon boarded a train to Dallas where his brothers, Louis and Sam, waited. The brothers took Shimeon to their new home in Ennis, Texas, where they had started a junk business. Sam and Louis had already shortened their last name to Novy, and Shimeon soon adopted the name Jim Novy.[7]

The Galveston Movement and the Industrial Removal Office (IRO), whose beginnings preceded those of the Galveston Movement, sought to resettle Jewish immigrants fleeing Russian pogroms between 1907 and 1914. The organizations funded plans to settle or resettle immigrants in the interior of the United States, outside of congested cities on the East Coast where large populations of Jews had already settled. Their goals were to provide more economic opportunities for the immigrants and to stem a feared growth in antisemitism in eastern cities. Jacob Schiff, philanthropist and founder of the Galveston Movement, also hoped to shift some of the responsibility for helping newly arrived immigrants from the New York Jewish community to Jewish communities across the country. The IRO resettled immigrants who entered the United States through ports on the East Coast, particularly New York, but the Galveston Movement recruited immigrants in Europe and brought them to the port of Galveston, diverting them from large eastern cities. Once in Galveston they boarded the railroad and dispersed across the western half of the United States.[8]

Years later, with similar goals in mind, the NRS provided resources to resettle refugees fleeing Hitler's regime. As part of their resettlement strategy, the NRS partnered with the NYA to relocate refugee youths who had entered the country through Ellis Island and were living in New York City. Just as with the IRO and the Galveston Movement, the NRS developed a network of people in Jewish communities who assisted by matching immigrants with jobs and providing them with social and moral support. The NRS drew heavily on this network when implementing the NYA partnership. The NRS, although identified with the Jewish faith, was officially nondenominational, and they planned to include Christian

refugees fleeing discrimination in Europe in their project with the NYA. Although the Galveston Movement and IRO focused on helping Jewish immigrants, Cohen, who did so much work in Galveston, was also well-known for assisting immigrants of other faiths who disembarked in Galveston and needed help. Although the NRS operated much like the earlier IRO and Galveston Movement, its partnership with the NYA exhibited differences. The Galveston Movement focused on diverting Jewish immigrants to states west of the Mississippi River to avoid competition from African American labor in the South, while the NRS and the NRS-NYA partnership resettled many youths in the South. The youths the NRS recruited for the NYA also spoke some degree of English and often had been well-educated, unlike many of their Russian predecessors who landed in Galveston in the early twentieth century.[9]

Little has been written about the NYA's refugee program or the participation of southern states. In 1992, historian Richard Reiman devoted a chapter to the partnership in his book, *The New Deal and American Youth: Ideas & Ideals in a Depression Decade*. Reiman's account includes the reactions of four young men from the first group of NRS refugees to enroll in the NYA program when they arrived in Monroe, Georgia. He makes no other references to refugees sent to the South. Dan Puckett, in his book *In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama's Jews, the Second World War, and the Holocaust,* described the refugee program at the NYA residential center in Gadsden, Alabama.[10] Other than these references on this noteworthy chapter in American history, no other substantive scholarship has appeared.

Texas as a Case Study

To aid with Jewish refugee settlement in Texas, Jewish leaders held a conference at the St. Anthony Hotel in San Antonio on October 20, 1940, to organize the Texas National Refugee Service. Although some Texas communities already worked with the NRS to aid and resettle refugees, until the organization of the Texas NRS, the state lacked a unified approach to participation in the NRS's national programs. The conference elected Herbert Mallinson of Dallas as the new chairperson and several other men as vice chairs representing cities throughout the state. Jim Novy won election as the vice chairman from Austin.[11]

Well before the meeting, Novy began working with the NRS Resettlement Department to support the NYA refugee youth program in the

Jim Novy, c. 1940. (Wikimedia Commons.)

Jesse Kellam. (Courtesy of LBJ Library, Austin, TX. Image 35to43-13-20.)

state. Because of his friendship with the NYA state director, Jesse Kellam, the NRS selected Novy as its liaison for the program. At the luncheon session of the Texas NRS organizational meeting, Novy reported on the NYA: "In resettlement of the refugees comes the question of acclimating them to the new conditions. . . . After the refugees get here we must adjust them to the new life. To make provisions for them to earn a livelihood."[12]

From its beginning in 1935, the NYA operated student aid programs and out-of-school nonresident work projects, but to participate young people had to be able to reach schools or work sites. In late 1936, to address the problem of unemployment among rural youth unable to travel to schools or work sites, the NYA began operating cooperative resident centers where participants could live away from home and receive work experience. Resident centers offered job training but were also intended to teach a "philosophy of life" which included a "bit of tolerance, a bit of fairness, a bit of cooperative-mindedness," the sort of life skills and civic values deemed necessary in a democracy.[13]

Negotiations with Kellam took place in December 1939, whereupon Kellam allocated the NRS twenty-five places in resident centers. Jewish communities in Houston, Austin, and Dallas demonstrated enthusiasm. The Houston Jewish community agreed to finance young men at a resident project near their city. Although the Dallas community agreed to finance refugees, no NYA resident centers existed near enough to Dallas for community members to visit regularly, thus the NRS did not place youth recruited for the refugee program in the Dallas area. Administration of the program came from Austin as the home of the NYA state headquarters, and refugees were placed at Inks Dam Residential Center and Ranger Residential Center, both near Austin.[14]

At the time of the San Antonio meeting, the NRS had filled twelve of the allocated spots; thirteen went unfilled.[15] NYA records do not indicate exactly why the spaces remained vacant, but a letter from the NRS Vocational Field Secretary, Oscar Littlefield, to Jack La Zar, the NYA director at the North Haledon Center in New Jersey, may offer a clue. When La Zar asked about placing nine enrollees in his center, Littlefield responded that "extraordinary care must be exercised in selecting candidates and preparing them for N.Y.A. Center life." Littlefield therefore preferred to refer candidates "singly or in small groups," and continued, "Naturally, I cannot ask you to hold vacancies open indefinitely pending

application." The Texas enrollees were referred to Texas singly or in groups of four or less. Kellam may not have been able to hold spots open long enough to fill all twenty-five with refugees. By the end of 1940, Littlefield also found it difficult to recruit enough refugees to fill spaces in the program.[16]

Possibly money played a part in the decision not to send more refugees to Texas. Local committees were expected to raise money and contribute to participants' salaries. Two resettlement committees in Texas supported NYA refugees. The Texas Émigré Service supported the seven refugees who, taken together, spent a total of thirty-two months at Ranger and Inks Dam, an average of about four and a half months each. The Refugee Committee of Houston supported five in South Houston who altogether spent thirty months in the program, or an average of six months each. The NRS figured the cost for one month for one refugee at approximately thirty dollars. The Texas Émigré Service did not contribute money for the salaries, although a private donor, possibly a refugee's family member, contributed $225. The Houston committee contributed half of the cost for its refugees. This does not explain why only twelve refugees came to Texas because almost half of the local committees in the states supporting refugees also did not contribute money for their salaries, and with the exception of the Boston resettlement committee, none of the local committees contributed more than 50 percent of the cost of wages for its refugees. Thus, money is not the simple explanation for the inability to fill all twenty-five spaces, but it may have been a factor.[17]

Littlefield often forwarded biographic information on enrollees as well as their letters to W. Thacher Winslow, the NYA staff member in charge of the refugee program. Littlefield encouraged enrollees to write to him with their reactions to the program—possibly a requirement. Correspondence found in the records of the Georgia Farm School and Resettlement Bureau relating to NYA refugees in Georgia indicated that the young men there were required to send monthly letters to the NRS in New York reporting on their work.[18] Although Littlefield referred many biographies and letters to Winslow, a relatively small percentage of the enrollees are actually represented in the NYA records at the National Archives. For example, no letters in Winslow's files from enrollees in Georgia exist, but there are several from Texas enrollees.[19] Either Winslow did not save most of the correspondence or Littlefield only referred a small

portion to him. Such letters in Winslow's file are very positive, and Littlefield may not have referred negative letters to him.

The letters from Texas are typical of those Littlefield referred to Winslow from across the country. They express appreciation for being able to enroll, describe conditions at the residential center, outline daily work schedules and classes, talk about recreational activities, and comment on the friendliness of the NYA staff and the American youths at the centers.[20] Good food provided a common theme in the letters from the state and the rest of the country. About the only complaint was that training did not progress quickly enough; occasionally letters expressed some frustration with the slow pace of vocational classes.[21]

By examining Winslow's NYA files and the NRS Resettlement Division files, historians can learn the names of the twelve refugee youths who resettled in Texas and gain substantial insight into their lives. By 1940, when the refugee youths arrived in Texas, the state's NYA had largely shifted to defense-related projects, and young men received training in metal and mechanical crafts, radio, aviation, and electrical skills. The resident center in South Houston stood out as an example of a war production training project preparing thousands of workers for the shipbuilding industry and other defense-related jobs in the private sector.[22] Austrians Fredric Rieders, Harry Goldberg, and Kenneth Burley, the first refugees assigned to a Texas NYA center, went to South Houston.[23] Soon after arriving, Rieders wrote to Littlefield in February 1940. He indicated that his work rotated between a week in the auto shop and a week on a construction project building an airplane hangar. He expressed his pleasure and gratitude at the living conditions:

> When we arrived on March 18 at the project, we were very cordially welcomed; all the boys were and still are almost incredibly friendly and help us where ever we need any. When we got supper, I thought it was especially prepared for our reception, but I was wrong, as I noticed the following day. You would not believe me if I wrote you how good the food we get is and we can fill our plates as often as we want to. This is but one of the pleasant surprises of which I find every day more and more.
>
> On the second floor are our bedrooms, where we sleep, four in a room and in almost every one of them is a radio, there are further more on the second floor two nice classrooms, where we attend

> twice a week school, learning civics, English, mathematics and public speaking, it's a little too elementary but sometimes its really interesting, yes and there is a second bathroom too. Sometimes it reminds me more of a hotel at a summer resort, than on a vocational school.[24]

Austrian born Kenneth Burley, who lived in Belgium before coming to the U.S., also wrote from South Houston:

> Even if you hadn't asked me to report to you about my impressions, I would have done it by myself because it is so marvelous here. . . . The living conditions are grand here! I have not had such good and fine food even when I lived in much better conditions, even if it sounds unbelievable. . . . I learn a lot of useful things at once—auto mechanics, manual work, in general, the language, and the customs. . . . You did not lead me to expect as much as this.[25]

The next group of refugees came in late March to the Ranger Resident Center in Central Texas near Austin and the smaller town of San Marcos. Twenty-three-year-old Herman Lille had grown up in Poland, whereas William Freundel, age nineteen, and Joseph Rosenkranz, age twenty, hailed from Vienna. Freundel had escaped to Belgium and then traveled to Cuba; Rosenkranz had escaped to Switzerland and then, like Freundel, gone to Cuba. The fourth person, Harry Westheimer, was an eighteen-year-old from Munich, Germany. The Ranger Center taught fundamental skills of metal and woodworking, and the young men at that site manufactured supplies for Camp Wolters, an Army base in Mineral Wells, Texas.[26]

In May, Fred Horton went to the Inks Dam Resident Center, seventeen miles from Burnet, another small town near Austin. This center accommodated 250 enrollees who gained work experience in a variety of fields including carpentry, landscaping, drafting, woodworking, food preparation, metalworking and plumbing.[27] Horton wrote on May 12 that he was adapting well, making friends, and organizing an orchestra:

> I am here in the camp one week now and I must say that I really like it. The teachers and the boys are so nice to me that I feel really at home. My work is not too hard, I guess, but if it is hard, I don't feel it, because it is so wonderful to work in such beautiful surroundings. . . . Our camp is on the Colorado River and we go

Buildings and classroom at the Inks Dam Residential Center in Central Texas.
(Photos by NYA, courtesy of LBJ Library, Austin, TX.
Images 1973.149.1-9 and 1973.149.1-41.)

> swimming and fishing after work. . . . I try to form an orchestra now, because I see that there are such a lot of boys, who are interested in music and who play really well too. I hope that we will have success.[28]

Horton updated Littlefield in June:

> We train 4 hours a day and work 4 hours a day. . . . The training consists of practical working on automobiles, trade tech. and different other courses as first aid, business law, library work and so on. . . . In the afternoon, I work as carpenter and this has nothing to do with my training. . . . But I really like it very much now. The heat gets worse every day and I am very astonished sometimes that it does not matter to me at all. Only the moskitos get very bad sometime and won't let me sleep. We got a good medical against the moskitos, if one can stand it a whole night. We pull our sheets over our head and it looks like, as if 60 mummies would lay in our barack.[29]

In his second letter, Horton mentioned two other NYA refugees, Bernat Ackerman, who came from Hungary, and Bernard Stern from Vienna. Ackerman and Stern, originally scheduled for the Ranger Center in San Marcos, apparently went to the Inks Dam Center instead.[30]

Refugee Egon Goldmann wrote in early June describing the South Houston Resident Center, including a complaint about the slow pace of training. He argued that a year's worth of training at the center could be taught in two months at a factory:

> About food I can tell you the same what you already read in my schoolmates' letters. It is very good to satisfy the most pretentious person. We work 40 hours a week and go to schoolclass 3 hours a week. . . . This school gives us a good opportunity to step in into the real American life, to live with Americans, always to speak American, to learn their customs and actings, to learn the history of the U.S. and to learn to love this Nation what will give us our homeland. But, Mr. Littlefield, I have to tell you, that we will learn here automechanics in one year so much we could learn in a shop or factory at most in 2 months.[31]

The last enrollee in the Texas program, Allan Frank, was a nineteen-year-old German who arrived at the South Houston center in September 1940. His family had departed Germany for Amsterdam in 1933. In June 1939 he and his father immigrated to the U.S. from Holland. The

biographical information Littlefield sent to Winslow judged Frank's education at the level of a high school graduate or someone in junior college.[32]

The refugees came to Texas from Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Poland. Several came to the United States after escaping to a third country, such as Cuba, where they waited for visas to enter the U.S.[33] Most had the equivalent of a high school education, although some boasted additional training. All immigrated to the United States under existing immigration quotas. The young men's letters from Texas and other states describe the centers' American residents as welcoming and the settings as agreeable. Judging from their letters, the refugees found acceptance from the non-Jewish Texan youths in their programs and had very positive experiences. The executive director of the Jewish Community Council in Houston, J. B. Lightman, wrote to the NRS director of field relations describing a trip he and others made to the resident center to evaluate the refugees' situation there. He ended the letter thusly: "All in all, we believe the project is worthwhile and so long as the fine cooperation of the government in this respect continues, and our financial resources permit, we shall continue to accept more boys . . . with a view toward making them productive assets to our American economy."[34] After Lightman's letter, the NRS assigned Egon Goldmann and Allan Frank to South Houston.

After Hitler invaded Poland in September 1939, the refugee situation in Europe grew more urgent. Hitler's antisemitic policies became even harsher, and at the same time, the United States and other countries, while expressing sympathy for the refugees, tightened their entrance requirements. Notwithstanding an improved economy, the American public still feared immigrants from Europe would take jobs from citizens; Congress cotinued to favor restrictive policies; and many feared more liberal policies would allow spies and saboteurs to enter the country. The State Department responded by implementing more stringent alien controls. In addition to the bureaucratic roadblocks, many foreign shipping lines refused to accept German money and, as the war progressed, passenger lines reduced the number of their transatlantic crossings, making it more difficult for refugees to find passage to the United States.[35]

Although the local Jewish communities may have been willing to accept more refugees, Littlefield commented in a letter to Winslow at the beginning of 1941 that "activity has been slight. I believe the principal reason is the unavailability of suitable candidates for N.Y.A. training and

resettlement in the same large numbers as a year ago." In May 1941, Littlefield cited the improving economy and "the fact that very few of the present-day immigration includes young people of N.Y.A. age." By the end of October 1941, Littlefield had added the draft, or military service, to the reasons for poor recruitment. As the supply of suitable candidates dwindled, Littlefield stepped up recruitment within the immigrant communities in New York City, seeking to relocate unemployed youths who were already settled in the metropolis. He met with limited success.[36]

The Texas NYA refugees' experience typified those at NYA centers in other states. The young men's letters from Texas and other states describe the centers' American residents as welcoming and the settings as agreeable. The centers provided the refugees with a bridge to a new life in the United States by offering the opportunity to earn money, learn a vocation, and become accustomed to the U.S. work environment. Just as in other states, training at resident centers varied widely, but its objective was to provide youth with "work experience" under conditions simulating private industry. For example, an enrollee might work in a shop with a skilled mechanic to learn auto repair rather than being taught in a more formal setting. Fredric Rieders mentioned in his letter to Littlefield that he worked in the auto shop.[37] The centers selected by the NRS provided supplemental related training classes and included courses such as English, math, and civics. Generally, the classes, including vocational training, did not have a fixed term, and refugee enrollees stayed in the program until they were proficient enough at a skill to be employed. The overall average duration for a Texas refugee was 5.2 months, close to the national average of 5.7 months for all the refugee enrollees.[38]

The Texas youths' work assignments often failed to relate to their training. The work allowed them to earn money for their room and board with some left over for pocket money. Often the work assignments at the camps involved renovation, construction, or landscaping and land management projects, including renovating and constructing facilities for NYA use such as dormitories. The many civic projects included construction of community centers or additions to schools and libraries. The Inks Dam NYA students worked on projects sponsored by the Lower Colorado River Authority and the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries. Often cities, counties, or state agencies contributed the materials for a project while the NYA supplied the labor. NYA workshops produced wood or metal products

such as furniture for public buildings or the military. In 1938, before refugees enrolled in the NYA, the NYA youths worked between thirty-six and forty-six hours per month and earned a maximum of twenty-two dollars a month. They paid the NYA for room and board and had at least eight dollars left over for themselves. At the time the refugees first came to Texas, the national NYA had set the maximum number of hours a resident center enrollee could spend on work projects at seventy hours per month, but this increased to a maximum of one hundred hours per month with enrollees earning no more than thirty dollars a month. Most refugee youths paid twenty dollars for room and board with ten dollars left over for themselves.[39]

The NRS organized the NYA refugee program in cooperation with local Jewish committees that provided moral, religious, and emotional support and worked to find the refugees jobs and help them integrate into the community when they were ready to leave the residential centers. The NRS did not place refugees in a resident center if the area lacked a local Jewish committee to oversee the program and help the refugees. J. B. Lightman, who wrote Littlefield on behalf of the Jewish Community Council in Houston, described how one of the women working with refugees arranged for the young men to come into the city for a Passover Seder.[40] This sort of community action supported the young men's religious and cultural life. The NRS also expected the local committees to identify potential jobs for the refugees and help them begin their work lives. One of the refugees, Joseph Rosenkranz, who arrived at the Ranger Center in March 1940, worked for Milton Smith, the manager of his family's manufacturing company, Economy Furniture, and prominent member of the Austin Jewish community. Herman Lille, who also arrived at the Ranger Center in March, worked at the Austin Army & Navy Store owned by John Hurwitz in October 1940. Hurwitz became the president of Congregation Agudas Achim in 1955.[41]

Although neither the NRS nor the NYA maintained records on enrollees after they left the program, many immigration, military, census, and obituary records in Ancestry.com contain clues to their later lives. For example, Herman Lille moved to Connecticut in 1941 and by 1950 operated a liquor store there. In 1944 Joseph Rosenkranz graduated with honors from the University of Texas at Austin with a bachelor of science degree in pharmacy. He moved to New York, graduated from the

Columbia School of Social Work, and served as an administrator for the New York City Division of Senior Centers. Bernat Akerman was living in Dallas in 1942 when he registered for the draft, and he enlisted in the army in 1943. By the time of the 1950 census, he was living in the Bronx and worked as an accountant. In 1984, he served as the president of Congregation Sons of Israel in Yonkers. Fredric Rieders had returned to New York by the time he registered for the draft in 1942. During the war, he served in the army as a surgical technician with an armored division in France and Germany. After being discharged, he earned degrees in chemistry from New York University and in 1952 his doctorate in pharmacology from Thomas Jefferson University. He served on the faculty of Jefferson University, became a well-known toxicologist, established Philadelphia's poison-control center, wrote more than one hundred scientific articles and book chapters, and received a distinguished alumnus award from Jefferson University.[42]

Allan Frank registered for the draft in Houston in March 1942 and enlisted there in October. After the war, he returned New York where he was employed as a purchasing agent for a department store. Kenneth Burley registered for the draft in Houston in October 1940 and listed his employer as the Refugee Service Committee. Since the committee was responsible for his salary at the NYA, he was likely still at the NYA Center in October after arriving there in March. In 1944, he married in Chicago, and in the following year enlisted in the army at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, listing his occupation as "accountant." In 1950, he worked as a "food cost accountant" in the field of hotel accounting in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. William Freundel registered for the draft in 1942 in Chicago and listed his employer as the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. He was at Camp Atterbury, an army post in Indiana, when he was naturalized in 1943. By 1950, he worked part-time as a retail shoe salesman in New York City, probably while in law school at New York University where he graduated in 1954. He was subsequently admitted to the bar and practiced law from an office in Manhattan.[43]

Egon Goldmann registered for the draft in Houston in October 1940 while working for the Kay Manufacturing Corporation. He enlisted in the army in May 1941 and served until 1953. By 1962 he had settled permanently in Santa Clara, California. Harry Westheimer registered for the draft in February 1942 while living on Long Island. He listed his employer

as the Eagle Precision Tool & Die Corporation. He enlisted in the military in 1944 and, by 1950, worked as a tool and die maker at a wholesale tool factory in Queens.[44]

The program in Texas, involving twelve refugees, was small, particularly when compared with statistics on immigration in 1940 when these young men came to the state. That year, the United States issued 27,355 immigration visas to Germans and Austrians, and the NRS count of Jewish refugees entering from all countries in its 1940 fiscal year was 42,424. The twelve refugees sent to Texas reflected a tiny portion of the 5,109 refugees resettled by the NRS in the country the same year, but measured against the total number of immigrants the NRS resettled in Texas, the Texas NYA refugee program was small but more significant. The NRS had two ways of counting the immigrants they resettled: they counted families as units and each person as an individual. A single person without a family was one unit and one individual. In the year that the refugee youths came to the Texas NYA, the NRS resettled eighty-five units in Texas including 124 individuals. Thus, the refugee youths represented 14 percent of the units resettled and almost 10 percent of the individuals who came to Texas through the NRS. On the other hand, from the standpoint of the NYA, the number of places occupied by the refugees was miniscule. In an average month in fiscal year 1940, the Texas NYA employed 14,552 youths in its out-of-school programs, which included the residential programs.[45]

When the number of refugees Texas incorporated into the NYA is compared with other southern states that participated, Texas, with twelve, ranked below Georgia and Florida with twenty-eight each, Oklahoma with nineteen, and Alabama with thirteen. Texas ranked above North Carolina which counted only two but did not participate in the program until late 1941. When compared with the rest of the United States, Texas ranked in the middle with New Jersey at the top with more than thirty-three participants.[46]

The NYA refugee program in Texas was so small that it did not come to the attention of the press in 1940 and received no coverage in local newspapers; it remained virtually hidden from scholars for decades.[47] Novy's words at the synagogue dedication, with Johnson and the press there to hear them, eventually brought the program to the attention of a graduate student who promoted the program in his dissertation as an illegal, clandestine rescue operation carried out by Johnson and Novy.[48]

One reason to study the program is because the "Operation Texas" myth surrounds it. The lack of press coverage and the fact that few people other than Novy even remembered the program enabled a graduate student to promote the program as a rescue operation carried out in secret, outside of the law, and involving hundreds of refugees. What actually happened and how this small program benefited the participants is thus important to understand and set the record straight.

Novy's dedicatory remarks in 1963 exactly described his state's NYA refugee program, except that he did mix up Kellam's and Johnson's roles. Novy, as the liaison between the local NYA and the NRS, managed the scholarships the young men received and made sure their room and board expenses were covered. In February 1942, the assistant executive director of the NRS thanked Novy for his able leadership in the handling of local refugee work. While the letter may not have been specifically thanking him for his work with the NYA program, it illustrated Novy's strong commitment to the NRS and to assisting refugees.[49]

A primary objective of the NYA refugees project was to resettle refugees outside of New York City, and as a resettlement project it was only temporarily successful in Texas. None of the nine refugees traced through Ancestry.com stayed in Texas, and five eventually returned to New York. Although the program was small, it impacted the lives of the young men. In addition to providing the refugees with the same benefits the program held for citizens, including employment, income, and the chance to have vocational training and learn work discipline, the program offered them a secure place where they could become accustomed to their adopted country. The refugees trained and nurtured in Texas led successful lives and contributed to their adopted country, communities, and professions.

The National Program

The Texas program operated as part of a national operation. According to NYA and NRS staff reports, the origins of the NYA refugee program traced to March 1938 when the State Department, with the support of President Roosevelt, appealed to twenty-nine nations for a cooperative effort to support the immigration of refugees from Austria and Germany. Subsequently, Roosevelt suggested that the United States develop a special program for the adjustment and Americanization of refugee youth. Either at Roosevelt's urging or in response to the State Department's appeal,

Charles W. Taussig, the chair of the NYA National Advisory Committee to the President, decided to act. Taussig, a close friend of Roosevelt and a member of the president's "Brain Trust" who had risen to prominence as head of the American Molasses Company, enlisted the help of three advisory committee members: Father Edward R. Moore, the pastor of St. Peter's Catholic Church in New York who was well-known for his work with youth; Owen D. Young, a diplomat and industrialist from New York who organized Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and later headed the General Electric Corporation; and Dr. David de Sola Pool, the prominent New York rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel (the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue). Over lunch, the four discussed courses of action the NYA could take to support the immigration of refugees from Austria and Germany. On May 5, Pool followed up with a letter to Taussig enclosing information from the National Youth Aliyah Committee of Hadassah about transferring Jewish children from cities in Germany and Austria to Palestine and housing them in youth villages. The rabbi envisioned a

Franklin Roosevelt, Aubrey Williams, and Charles Taussig at Hyde Park, NY, October 29, 1937, a meeting that preceded discussion of the refugee program. (Courtesy of FDR Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, NY.)

Letter from
Rabbi David de Sola Pool to
Charles Taussig, May 5, 1938.
(Courtesy of FDR Presidential
Library and Museum,
Hyde Park, NY.)

similar rescue program in which the NYA aided the immigration of European youth, both Jewish and Christian, "who find themselves violently extruded from the life of their homeland." Once in the United States, they would be enrolled in the NYA. The rabbi suggested that the Hadassah/Palestine model could be modified and used across the United States by housing refugees in the cooperative NYA youth resident centers. Refugees would receive training and a wage until they were better equipped to find a job in industry.[50]

Planning for the program initially moved at a fast clip. Taussig asked Pool, Moore, and Young to join him on a subcommittee of the NYA National Advisory Committee to consider ways for the NYA to assist refugees entering the United States, and planning for a program began. By mid-May, Taussig wrote newsy letters to subcommittee members detailing rapid progress. He had had several discussions with Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles about NYA aid to refugees. Welles asked James McDonald, the acting chair of the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees and former High Commissioner for Refugees of the League of Nations, to get in touch with Taussig.[51] Next McDonald, Welles, and Taussig met for lunch, and then Taussig had a long talk with

McDonald who believed the NYA could be of "great service." Following his meeting with Taussig, McDonald planned to meet with the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees and then with NYA administrator Aubrey Williams, who was also "enthusiastic." Taussig even discussed the program with Eleanor Roosevelt, who was "interested and favorably disposed."[52]

Although Pool conceived the program as a rescue effort, the discussion soon focused on resettlement, assimilation, and Americanization of refugees already admitted to the country rather than rescue. Taussig's discussions with Welles probably led the group to change direction. The Immigration Act of 1924 controlled immigration into the United States through strict immigration quotas, but after the *Anschluss*, when Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, Roosevelt combined the quotas for Germany and Austria. Because of the increased number of refugees fleeing those countries, however, pressure on the combined quota remained. Not inclined to widen the quotas, Welles probably discouraged Taussig from attempting an effort leading to increased immigration. The meetings with Welles ended in May, although Taussig's discussions with McDonald continued.[53]

Next Williams asked the NYA state directors of Alabama, Oklahoma, Illinois, Ohio, New York, and Wisconsin, as well as regional directors from the Midwest and Northeast regions and NYA deputy executive director Richard Brown, to meet with him and Taussig. Taussig wanted to outline the plan and have the directors quietly test reactions in their states since the program would require financial and moral support from local Jewish communities. The group met in Washington, D.C., on May 19. W. Thacher Winslow, a young Harvard-educated NYA staff member and expert on foreign youth programs, also attended.[54] The next day, at the suggestion of the State Department, the group went to New York to meet with McDonald. The conference led to the conclusion that a refugee youth aid program could be carried out:

> 1) if there were sufficient local interest and support; 2) if the youth's wages were paid out of private funds; 3) if little or no publicity were given to the enterprise, especially at first; and 4) if emphasis were placed on the fact that the youth were coming here under regularly existing quotas and would, in time, become American citizens.[55]

These four provisions recognized the political realities and financial hurdles the NYA had to overcome to implement a successful program. Given these considerations, the state directors returned to their homes with instructions to "sound out the sentiment of various members of the state and local advisory committees as well as other interested individuals as to the feasibility of the program." Winslow would oversee and coordinate the program. McDonald subsequently wrote Williams congratulating him and Taussig on the success of the May 19 meeting and expressing appreciation for their "initiative."[56]

By 1938, anti-immigration and antisemitic fervor were both on the rise in the United States. For public relations and legal reasons, the NYA had to locate private funding to support noncitizens in the new initiative. In 1936, Congress responded to anti-immigration sentiments by restricting the use of federal relief funds. That year, it prohibited the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and thus the NYA, which was administered by the WPA, from "knowingly" using federal work relief funds appropriated by Congress to benefit aliens known to be in the country illegally. Although the law covered all undocumented immigrants, its effects fell disproportionately on Mexican American families in the Southwest. WPA administrators, particularly in the South and Southwest, often assumed those who could not furnish paperwork proving their legal status resided in the country illegally. In 1937, Congress expanded the ban on WPA employment to aliens who had not filed papers declaring their intention to become citizens. Congress also established a priority scale for WPA employment: first veterans, then American citizens, then noncitizens who had filed citizenship papers. In 1938, Congress allowed the WPA and NYA to hire aliens who had filed citizenship papers by June 1938, but the following year, Congress excluded all noncitizens and required anyone employed by the WPA or NYA to file an affidavit declaring their citizenship.[57] Congress "continued to respond to anti-immigrant public pressure in 1939 by failing to pass the Wagner-Rogers bill, a proposal to admit twenty thousand German refugees aged fourteen and under to the United States outside of the immigration quotas. Despite congressional hearings and public debate, the bill failed to reach the House or Senate floor for a vote.[58]

Because of these restrictions, the NYA faced the challenge of aiding refugees without cost to the government. NYA resident centers offered

that opportunity. Since the NYA already had sufficient personnel and equipment to place additional youths in the resident centers, the refugee program could be operated economically with the assistance of private funding.[59]

By mid-June, four state directors had responded to Taussig's call to "sound out the sentiment" in their communities. The reports ranged from tepid to highly enthusiastic. Karl Hesley of New York, the first state director to respond, wrote, "Supervisors received the idea most favorably and voted unanimously to do all within their power to help." Hesley also reported that his staff voted, also unanimously, to contribute to a fund to support one youth refugee for a year in New York. The state director from Illinois responded eagerly: "When the time comes to act I think we shall be in a position to take care of about 1,000 over the period of each year." His was by far the most optimistic estimate. From Alabama came assurances of support from the local Jewish organizations, church ministers, and civic leaders. Although reporting community support, the Ohio director noted, "It would seem that very little help can be expected outside of the Jewish people in assimilating the Jewish refugees although there are many exceptions in communities where there are individuals who are particularly alive to the problem."[60]

The reports included suggestions on how to proceed. On June 13, 1938, Winslow wrote to Taussig: "A number of plans have been suggested as to what procedure should be followed, but I imagine that you and I had better get together with the national committee in New York before deciding upon which one should be followed." At that point, Hesley, forging ahead in New York, reported in mid-June that he had placed two local refugees on NYA projects in Schenectady.[61]

Later in June, Winslow went to New York to confer with Taussig, McDonald, and Young. They decided Winslow would "work with Mr. [George] Warren, the Executive Secretary of the President's Committee on [Political] Refugees, getting the case histories of the youth who might be placed." The following Friday, Warren and McDonald sailed to France to attend the Evian Conference, Roosevelt's international initiative to address Europe's immigration crisis. Winslow reported to other NYA officials, "no definite arrangements can be made until he [Warren] returns at the end of July." Following Winslow's meeting with Taussig, McDonald, and Young in New York, he wrote Hesley and other NYA leaders

advising them not to place any more than a few additional refugees on NYA projects unless they first conferred with Taussig. Winslow noted, "we believe it advisable to await Mr. Warren's return before entering upon the caring of refugees on a large scale." Winslow considered Hesley's two refugee recruits as an experiment in implementing the program, "knowing that this will be of value to helpers in every community," but Winslow was not eager to expand refugee participation without Warren's involvement.[62]

While McDonald and Warren attended the Evian Conference, progress on the refugee project stalled, although Winslow continued to explore the reactions of state directors. From Oklahoma came "a rather welcome reaction to the program"; in Minnesota the director found good cooperation in only four of seven principal cities consulted, and he stated the "matter needs close supervision and must be handled cautiously." The report from Wisconsin also cautioned that "work must be done quietly to be most effective." Hesley updated Winslow with the news that thirty boys in the resident training center in Alfred, New York, expressed willingness to finance the room and board of one refugee boy at their facility. The faculty at Alfred University and townspeople offered money for extra expenses above room and board.[63]

In late June Winslow married and combined NYA business with a honeymoon. Winslow and his wife headed by train to Seattle where he made a speech to the National Conference of Social Work and ultimately visited NYA state directors in Oregon, Colorado, California, and Utah to discuss the proposed program. Winslow reported to Taussig that only the state director from Utah was "at all dubious about the possibility of handling these youth." Winslow asked the four state directors to "make soundings as to how many they might be able to handle [in the program] and to report to me." Soon after he returned, the state director of Georgia, Dillard Lasseter, visited Winslow in his office. Lasseter expressed enthusiasm: "he could take care of 100 in very short order and would probably be able to handle 200 within a few months."[64]

Near the end of July, Winslow had intended to write the NYA regional directors "asking them to inform the state directors in their respective territories of the proposed plan and to request them to make the required soundings as to the possibilities of placing refugee youth." He delayed that notification because someone leaked news of the May

meeting with state and regional directors to the *Milwaukee Journal*, and a brief story appeared on July 13 asserting that the NYA would bring hundreds of Jewish youths from Europe and "give them a new start in democratic America." The article stated that Taussig had "recently conferred in New York with Aubrey Williams and NYA directors from six mid-western states on how the problem might be handled." The article continued that Taussig reportedly offered to "transport about 4,000 Jewish youths" if immigration restrictions could be relaxed. In a letter to Taussig, Winslow commented on the newspaper piece "with so many misrepresentations." In view of the article, Winslow decided to wait to send a letter to the regional directors until McDonald and Warren provided them with more definitive information.[65] The "misrepresentations" seemed to justify the May assessment to avoid publicity.

During the summer, either before leaving for the Evian Conference or soon after returning, McDonald connected Winslow with the National Coordinating Committee for Aid to Refugees and Migrants Coming from Germany (NCC), the predecessor of the National Refugee Service.[66] The NCC, a private committee, was organized in 1934 at the suggestion of the State Department and maintained close links with the Intergovernmental High Commission for Refugees established at the League of Nations in 1933 to deal with problems associated with Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany. Numerous people were active in organizing the NCC, including James McDonald. Joseph Chamberlain, professor of public law at Columbia University, served as its chairman and Cecilia Razovsky as the executive director and secretary.[67] Many national Jewish refugee organizations, as well as several prominent Christian organizations, coordinated with the NCC, with financial support largely provided by the American Joint Distribution Committee. The NCC's purpose was "to coordinate the activities of national agencies engaged in service to emigres and refugees, and to act as a national clearing agency for all activities undertaken on behalf of emigres coming to the United States." McDonald served as its honorary chair, while Warren sat on the board of directors.[68]

On August 23, after McDonald's return from Europe, he and Winslow met in the NCC offices in New York with Razovsky; Frank Ritchie, director of the American Committee for Refugees; Dr. S. C. Kohs, national field director of the NCC Fund; and Rev. Joseph O. Ostermann, director of the Committee for Catholic Refugees from Germany.

McDonald explained the background of the NYA's proposed program, and Winslow described how the NYA could be of assistance. A long discussion ensued "about what steps should first be taken to bring about a mutually helpful program of cooperation." Ultimately, the group decided that Winslow should draw up procedures for the program and submit them to the group for study.[69]

Winslow quickly drafted operating procedures. State directors would notify Winslow of openings; New York NCC officials would select case histories of candidates; an official designated by the NYA would interview the candidates; and the NCC would forward case histories and reports of the interviews to Winslow who would send them to state directors for selection. Winslow would notify the NCC of selections; the NCC would send state directors information about the scheduled arrival of each refugee youth; state directors would confirm arrivals and submit reports on the progress of the youth. The procedures would "apply first to those already in this country and next to those youth brought over directly from abroad." These initial talks apparently included discussions of bringing refugees directly from Europe and enrolling them in the NYA. According to the procedures, Warren would be involved at several points and serve as a middleman for communication with the NCC.[70]

Next, Aubrey Williams introduced the refugee program to the three quarters of state directors not included in the initial conversations and meetings at a state directors' conference beginning September 7, at the Hotel New Yorker. The day before the meeting, Winslow met with Razovsky, Kohs, and other NCC representatives who approved Winslow's working procedures with minor changes. The next day Razovsky and Kohs met at the hotel and spoke with the assembled directors.[71]

Winslow summarized the meeting: "About one hour and a half of the three-hour conference was devoted to the subject of assisting youth refugees, since a good three-fourths of the directors knew nothing about the proposed plan." Taussig explained the program; Winslow described how it might function; and Razovsky and Kohs explained NCC operations. The NCC promised to send Winslow a list of communities in which the NCC had active local committees so he could inform the state directors about them. Winslow observed, "It is apparently going to be possible for the NYA to assist a number of youth who have already been placed with relatives or sponsors but who are completely idle."[72]

After this point, no discussion exists in the records of the NYA or the NCC of bringing refugees directly from Europe with the intention of enrolling them in the NYA and, except for two refugees employed in Schenectady, the NYA did not employ refugee youth who had already been resettled in communities outside of New York City. Because of the high concentration of Jewish refugees in that city, fear existed that the influx of new refugees would spark increased antisemitism. The goal of the NCC, and later the NRS, was to move refugees out of New York City and distribute them to communities across the country.[73] Again the motivation mirrored that of the earlier Galveston Movement. The NCC Resettlement Division would work with the NYA and identify refugee youth in New York who were suitable for resettlement.[74] Winslow explained in a memo on February 4, 1939, "Theoretically, at least, every refugee coming from Germany is known and has been aided by this National Committee and its affiliated committees." He summarized the primary objectives of the program thusly:

> Among these refugees are an undetermined number of single youth who, though coming to the United States under the sponsorship of a relative, are nevertheless at loose ends. The major purpose of the NYA's program is thus to assist in getting these youth out of New York City and send them to various parts of the country where they can be more readily assimilated and Americanized.[75]

During the discussions at the Hotel New Yorker, Dillard Lasseter, the state director from Georgia, disclosed that a Jewish group in Georgia had raised one hundred thousand dollars to start a farm training school for refugee youth. After Winslow had discussed the refugee program with him the previous summer, Lasseter met with a small group of Jewish leaders affiliated with the Georgia Farm School and Resettlement Bureau to discuss agricultural training and resettlement of refugee youth. He suggested they support refugees in existing NYA residential agricultural training units rather than implementing their project.

The meeting included Edward Kahn, the executive secretary of the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund and director of the Atlanta Federation for Jewish Social Service. Kahn became a primary contact for the project and eventually was named as the Georgia Farm School and Resettlement Bureau administrator. Harold Hirsch, president of the Atlanta Jewish

Welfare Fund and chairman of the Georgia Farm School and Resettlement Bureau, presided at a subsequent meeting where Lasseter and the group agreed to go forward with the NYA project. Kahn and Hirsch were arguably the most important individuals in the Atlanta Jewish community: Kahn as an attorney with a strong interest in social work who spent years leading the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund, and Hirsch as the vice president of Coca-Cola for legal affairs and the force behind a critical meeting in 1936 that brought the Jewish community together to reorganize its social service organizations and help aid those suffering from Hitler's antisemitic policies.[76] Their participation reflected the importance they placed on young refugees and the commitment of Atlanta's Jewish community. Although the group had raised money for a farm training school, Hirsch undertook a separate fundraising campaign to finance the maintenance of the youths recruited by the NYA. Kahn, Eugene Oberdorfer, a vice-chairman of the bureau, and O. R. "Oscar" Strauss, Jr., its secretary, began planning with the NYA and NRS. Lasseter estimated his NYA program could absorb about 150 refugees. The NCC and the NYA undertook this project as their initial experiment, their pilot project, in resettling and training refugee youths in NYA resident centers.[77] Georgia thus became the testing ground for the development of the program's procedures and selection criteria, serving as a national model.

During the meeting at the Hotel New Yorker, the state director from Virginia, Dr. W. S. Newman, mentioned a similar project in Virginia and suggested he go to the organizers and offer NYA assistance, but ultimately the Virginia NYA did not enroll refugees in the state.[78] The day after their meeting, the state directors, along with Williams, Taussig, and Winslow, traveled to Hyde Park, where they had been invited to have lunch with Eleanor Roosevelt at her cottage, Val-Kill. Williams anticipated that the president and first lady would attend the meeting. As it turned out, Mrs. Roosevelt was at her son's bedside at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, where he was hospitalized with a gastric ulcer, but the president drove over to Val-Kill for the luncheon. Mrs. Roosevelt had a very close relationship with the NYA, and Kellam of Texas wrote Williams expressing what was no doubt the sentiment of many of the directors: "The meeting at Hyde Park lacked only her presence to have been perfect."[79]

Eleanor Roosevelt had a deep concern for youth and the hardships the Great Depression created for them. When Aubrey Williams and Harry

Hopkins, a trusted adviser to FDR and administrator of New Deal public relief programs, came to her with the idea for an agency to address the needs of out-of-work and out-of-school youth, she agreed to present the idea to the president. The president felt his administration had the Civilian Conservation Corps to address problems of youth, but Mrs. Roosevelt convinced him of the need for the NYA. He reportedly asked her, "Do you think it is right to do this?" They talked about the political risks of instituting the program, and Mrs. Roosevelt said her husband told her, "If it is the right thing to do for young people, then it should be done. I guess we can stand the criticism." In the forward to the book *A New Deal for Youth: The Story of the National Youth Administration*, Taussig wrote, "I cannot fail to mention one outstanding personality who, though having no official connection with the NYA, is recognized by acclamation as its spiritual leader. I refer to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt." She visited NYA projects, arranged meetings with the president for its leadership, and promoted its programs.[80]

After the New York meeting, progress on the refugee program slowed to a crawl. Historian Reiman suggests that during the meeting with President Roosevelt, he may have intervened and wanted refugee assistance limited to a handful of refugees per state. As Reiman acknowledges, no transcripts or memos describing the meeting with the president exist. The slowdown may not have originated with the president. In several letters, Winslow explained: "Because of the complexity of the situation, certain unavoidable delays in starting the program on a national basis have occurred."[81]

Indeed, numerous circumstances slowed implementation. First the program lacked structure. By September 8, when the meeting with the president took place, only the two refugees Hesley had brought into the resident center in Schenectady had been enrolled in the program. This was before selection procedures existed. Hesley subsequently discovered that both youths were citizens who were unaware of their citizenship, and he switched them to the NYA payroll. Born in the United States, their parents had taken them to Europe soon after birth. Even so, Winslow regarded their recruitment as "concrete progress." Once Winslow and the NCC established procedures, adapting and implementing them may have caused delays. The cumbersome procedures centralized communications with George Warren. Before long the procedures evolved, and the NYA was

"cooperating directly" with the NCC Resettlement Division without Warren's intercession.[82]

The NCC wanted to ensure that the refugees who received support for resettlement were well-suited for their training. The NYA no doubt wanted candidates who were unlikely to cause public relations problems. The procedures Winslow established included interviewing each refugee to determine their suitability. Setting up the interview process provided yet another bureaucratic hurdle to overcome and may have initially delayed the program. Ultimately, the Vocational Service for Juniors, a private New York–based nonprofit organization, agreed to conduct the interviews. The former head of the service, Dr. Mary Hays, served as NYA director of vocational services, and the Vocational Service for Juniors was closely allied with the NYA.[83]

The vetting procedures slowed the selection and placement of candidates throughout the three years the program operated. Occasionally, state directors complained about the slow rate of placement. To one such complaint, Littlefield responded, "Since our group is fundamentally different in character from the Americans on N.Y.A., and since they face entirely different conditions and problems, we believe that extraordinary care must be exercised in selecting candidates and preparing them for N.Y.A. Center life."[84]

Securing funding further complicated progress. When the NYA partnered with the NCC, that agency planned to work with local Jewish philanthropic organizations and committees in the states that would share the program's costs. Nonetheless, most of the funding came from the NCC and later NRS.[85] In January 1939, Winslow wrote to Hesley:

> The situation is now not so much a matter of selecting youth—the Vocational Service for Juniors is placing at least one person at our disposal for this purpose and the machinery for comparatively rapid selection has been set up—but we are now somewhat stumped on the matter of funds. Though Miss Razovsky and Mr. Salinger [head of the NCC Resettlement Division] have mentioned such funds as definite, there have been a number of delays in getting the money.[86]

Finally in February, Winslow reported that largely through the efforts of Edgar Salinger of the NCC Resettlement Division, the necessary operational funds had been secured. The NCC received a grant of three

thousand dollars from the Lavanburg Fund of New York to launch the program. Fred L. Lavanburg, a philanthropist who made his fortune in the dye and color industry, established the foundation in 1927 to provide low-income, nonprofit housing for families and children unable to find housing, but Lavanburg also funded service programs for underprivileged children, juvenile delinquency, racial discrimination, and poverty.[87]

Beyond these difficulties, the situation at the NCC's Resettlement Division, the unit coordinating with the NYA to recruit refugees, provided the most serious reason for delay. In 1938, the growing number of refugees entering New York caused the Resettlement Division to radically reorganize its working procedures, expand staff, and appoint a new director. In early 1939, the reorganized division was still adjusting to the changes. A breakthrough occurred in February 1939 when the Resettlement Division moved its staff member, Oscar Littlefield, to full-time responsibility for the NYA program with the title of vocational field secretary. He quickly made plans to visit NYA resident centers in New England to survey them and talk with local committees.[88] Littlefield became a key figure in the program.

In February 1939, the NCC commissioned an assessment of its overall operations. Because of the increased flow of refugees, the resulting report concluded that the NCC had outgrown its original design and recommended the creation of a new organization, the National Refugee Service (NRS), to centralize administration of services rather than coordinate services offered by other organizations. Incorporated in May 1939, the NRS began operations in June, taking over the work of the NCC and its affiliated agencies. Although formally nonsectarian, it had a more specific Jewish identity than the NCC.[89] In April, before incorporation, the NRS hired Dr. William Haber, a professor of economics at the University of Michigan, as its executive director. Haber previously served as a deputy administrator in Michigan with the WPA and as that state's NYA director. With NRS's incorporation, the NCC Resettlement Division became the NRS Resettlement Department.[90]

Although the overall reorganization was a positive development for the refugee program, the initial upheaval and reordering of priorities created by the reorganization further slowed refugee program progress. On a trip to the NRS offices in New York in January 1940, Winslow noted,

"For the past two months, because of the reorganization of the NRS and a sudden very large influx of refugees from Europe, placement activity was slowed down."[91] After the NRS reorganization, Littlefield continued full-time responsibility for recruiting and monitoring refugees for the NYA program.

Launching the Refugee Program

In September 1938, as the NYA and NRS began to select refugee youth for the Georgia pilot project, the situation in Europe continued to deteriorate. That month Germany, Italy, Great Britain, and France signed the Munich Agreement, enabling Hitler to begin his takeover of Czechoslovakia. Soon the Nazis carried out the November pogrom, *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass, attacking Jewish communities, burning synagogues, and destroying Jewish businesses, schools, hospitals, and other buildings. With this the refugee crisis became even more acute. Despite these events, the American public stood firmly against expanding quotas and allowing increased numbers of European refugees to enter the country. In the week following the events of *Kristallnacht*, a Roper poll drew a response of 71 percent opposed to admission of "a larger number of Jewish exiles from Germany." The next month, December 1938, the same question drew a response of 83 percent opposed.[92] With the congressional elections of 1938, the Democratic Party maintained its majorities but lost seats in the House and Senate. As the presidential election approached in 1940, there was little chance Roosevelt or Congress would support increased immigration.

Against this backdrop Winslow reported to Taussig at the end of September 1938 on the number of refugees each state director determined his program could accommodate. Winslow based his figures on the letters written after the program was proposed in May and on conversations with state directors after their September meeting in New York. Twenty-six states reported a willingness to accept refugee youths with most indicating they could take five or more. Except for the Illinois director's estimate of one thousand, Georgia's estimate was the highest at 150. This no doubt reflected Lasseter's enthusiasm for the project and probably his knowledge that a group in Georgia had already accumulated a substantial fund to resettle and train refugees interested in agriculture. Winslow believed that Illinois's estimate of one thousand was "over-optimistic" but

thought the state could take one hundred. Some states gave no estimate but expressed a willingness to participate. California's estimate was for twenty to forty; Florida and Oklahoma came in on the high end at ten or fifteen and fifteen or more, respectively. Disagreement came from Illinois and California over the procedures worked out by the NCC. Both states wanted to enroll refugees already settled in their states and did not want the NCC in New York to recruit candidates for them. The NCC attempted to work with Illinois and California to establish procedures similar to those implemented for other states. Apparently, California and Illinois were the only states to resist the procedures developed by Winslow and the NRS and, in the end, the California NYA did not take any refugees and Illinois enrolled only five.[93] The records are not clear whether NYA leadership in California and Illinois wanted to recruit locally, or whether their local Jewish resettlement committees made the decision.

The NCC Resettlement Department and Winslow decided to limit the initial implementation of the program to one state as a pilot project. They selected Georgia since local Jewish communities had already raised money for a refugee project and expressed a willingness to participate in the NYA program. The Georgia Farm School and Resettlement Bureau led by Harold Hirsch raised thirty-five thousand dollars to support agricultural training for refugees in the NYA, but it stipulated that the money be used specifically for agricultural training. This stipulation caused further delay and tensions between the NCC and the Georgia Farm School when the NCC found it difficult to recruit youths interested in farming as a career.[94]

The Georgia Pilot Project

When the first seven German youths arrived in Georgia to attend agricultural programs in Monroe, Clarkesville, and Tifton, the NYA issued a press release announcing the project. The *Atlanta Constitution* published a story largely based on the press release stressing that the youths were privately funded and had entered the country legally under the immigration quotas. By late January, eight refugee youths were attending school in Monroe at the Georgia Vocational and Trades School, and a very favorable article about them by Ralph McGill appeared on the front page of the *Atlanta Constitution*.[95]

At the time of the article, McGill served as executive editor of the newspaper. As a teenager, he had developed what would be a lifelong friendship with a Jewish student, Rebecca Mathis, and her family. The family exerted a strong influence in McGill's life. He said in his autobiography they gave him, "an awareness of international events and of forces which were involved in them." In 1938, the year before the first NYA refugees came to Georgia, McGill had received a Rosenwald Fellowship, which funded six months of travel and study in Europe. During those months, he visited Berlin, where he saw Hitler speak, and Vienna where he met with two Jewish families. McGill said the fellowship "enabled me to travel in Europe, to broaden my perspective, to shake off the narrow provincialism which still holds so many captive." It was no wonder then that the year after returning, he wrote an article on the refugees arriving to enroll in Georgia's NYA. As an editor, McGill became well-known for his attacks on prejudice and bigotry. In 1964, when he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Lyndon Johnson, he asked his friend Rebecca Mathis, by then Rebecca Gershon and a prominent and active member of the Atlanta Jewish community, to be one of his guests at the ceremony.[96]

McGill's article highlighted the refugees' arrival, stressed that they were well-liked and hard-working, and placed the emphasis on teaching them American ways and citizenship. He declared, "Already the spirit of America has caught them. They want to be very good Americans." The press release and subsequent publicity helped prepare the secular community for the presence of the refugees. At the time, the NYA Georgia state director, Dillard Lasseter, said, "If the experiment in agricultural training for the first group of youths is successful, the enterprise may be extended through additional private funds to accommodate about 75 additional young people on NYA projects in the state." Regardless of the Georgia Farm School's seriousness about its requirement that young men recruited for the program be trained in agriculture, the NRS found it difficult to find young men who wanted to be farmers. S. C. Kohs, the director of the Resettlement Department at the NRS, wrote to Edward Kahn: "in the process of canvassing the first 100 prospective students, we have found only one thus far who manifested a preference for specialized agriculture." He indicated that it would be impossible to meet a quota of twenty-five refugees with primary interest in agriculture. Because the

NRS continued to experience such a difficulty, the program failed to reach its full potential in Georgia.[97]

Four of the first seven refugees to go to the state, Theodor Advokat (age seventeen), Leo Erber (age twenty-four), Ernst Gertler (age twenty-four), and Stephen Loeb (age twenty-two), went to the Georgia Vocational and Trades School in Monroe. Stephen Loeb, from Germany, and the other three born in Vienna, each had at least ten years of formal schooling and some work experience. Before being barred from school in Germany, Theodor Advokat had intended to study medicine. Ernst Gertler served in the Austrian army and, when Germany took over Austria, the Nazis imprisoned him for "some weeks." He arrived in New York in December 1938 where he lived with an elderly uncle. Leo Erber's father was in a concentration camp, while his mother and sisters still lived in Vienna and a brother resided in Palestine. Erber was "without resources." Stephen Loeb had experience in automobile repair and had worked with diesel engines. A cousin in New York showed willingness to assist him financially. Advokat expressed interest in "skilled trades," while Gertler, Loeb, and Erber wanted to study auto mechanics.[98]

Ernst Gertler, left, and Leo Erber receive instruction in poultry culling from J. C. Lane, vocational agriculture teacher at the Georgia Vocational and Trades School, Monroe, GA. Atlanta Constitution*, January 22, 1939. (Reprinted with permission of the* Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.)*

After arriving in Monroe, the four refugees wrote to Ben Goldman at the NCC describing their warm welcome from NYA personnel in both Atlanta and Monroe but indicating that none of their Jewish sponsors appeared in either place to greet them. On arrival, they were surprised to find reporters on hand to take photos and ask questions. When the young men got to the resident center, they found that their meal expenses had not been covered; they needed to buy work clothes; and their training was not what they anticipated. Their letter contained the unspoken implication that communication problems existed that should be worked out between the local Georgia committee, the NCC, the NYA, and the refugees. The director of the Resettlement Department at the NCC, S. C. Kohs, responded to the students that the Jewish leaders in Atlanta were making arrangement to keep in touch with them and "be assured that they did not see you immediately upon your arrival only because of a misunderstanding as to the time you were to arrive."[99]

Three of the young men in the first group of seven, John Corser (age seventeen), Alexander Hirsch (seventeen), and Siegfried Hirsch (twenty), went to Habersham College in Clarksville, and a fourth, Martin Weiss (twenty), arrived in Georgia soon after the first seven to go to Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton. Corser, born in Vienna, and Alexander Hirsch, from Germany, were both interested in radio transmission. Siegfried Hirsch, also from Germany, wanted to concentrate on carpentry. Martin Weiss had immigrated to Palestine from Germany as a teenager with his parents and a brother. He had experience in agriculture and in auto repair and hoped to work maintaining tractors and combines on a large farm.[100]

The NRS continued sending young men until the total reached twenty-eight in November 1939. In fall 1939, the NYA added openings at West Georgia College in Carrollton to the NYA refugee programs. Camp supervisors informed the NCC that most did well, but health problems and struggles with English plagued several. One supervisor observed, "Fred's English, like the peace of God, passeth all understanding." The pilot program illustrated the necessity for the young men selected for the program to speak English and that became a NRS selection criterion. Many of the enrollees had no interest in farming. The student evaluations submitted to the NYA for Henry Preis, another enrollee, observed, "Have

no idea that he will ever try to farm. His main ambition is to become a Ph.D." Also experiencing health problems, Preis returned to New York.[101]

Tensions between the Georgia committee and the NRS over the recruitment of candidates continued over the lack of interest in farming. The NCC national organization, rather than the Georgia committee, paid the expenses and wages of the eighteen young men enrolled in nonagricultural studies in the state's resident centers. By May 1939, three of the young men, including Theodore Advokat and Martin Weiss from the original eight, had returned to New York. That month, the Georgia committee reviewed the young men's cases and found jobs for those uninterested in farming.[102]

The Georgia Farm School and Resettlement Bureau had an extensive network of committees composed of members of the Atlanta Jewish community who provided resources and assistance to Jewish refugees settling in the Atlanta area. Oscar Strauss, Jr., the grandson of one of the founders of Atlanta's Rich's Department Store, was the secretary and later a vice-president of the Farm School and Resettlement Bureau while also serving as chair of its Agricultural Projects Committee. The committee assumed responsibility for the adjustment and welfare of the NYA youths. The Farm School organization also had a Committee on Placement and Economic Adjustment and a Committee of Placement Advisors to help refugees find jobs. By mid-June, seven NYA youths were in commercial or industrial jobs in Atlanta and Athens, with one going to Abbeville, South Carolina, to work in a shirt factory.[103]

Several of the youths continued to receive Farm School and NCC help after leaving the NYA. Charles Hamburger, who arrived in January after the initial group, had health problems and lost twenty-five pounds. He was unable to do farm work, and the Farm School found a foster home for him in Elberton, Georgia. He continued to receive a stipend from the NCC, graduated from high school, and went to work in his foster family's department store. One student, Amos Vogelbaum, continued to receive Farm School support after leaving the NYA while he took additional courses in poultry farming at the University of Georgia. He returned to New York and in April 1941 was considering an offer to manage a farm in New Jersey.[104]

Henry Lindenbaum was another of the Georgia NYA youths to receive continued support from the Farm School. Lindenbaum, a refugee

from Vienna who had come to New York with his family, stood out among the Georgia enrollees. Henry went to the NYA resident center at West Georgia College for courses in agricultural chemistry, and he became a lab assistant for his teacher. The teacher wrote to the Farm School recommending Henry as "having unusual knowledge and skill in chemistry for a young man his age." The teacher went on to say, "Henry has grown so attached to the subject that I doubt that he will be happy in any other line of work." The NYA Project Coordinator at West Georgia College commented, "Henry's record is to be commended. He has proved himself very ambitious." Henry transferred to the Georgia Institute of Technology, where he changed his major to chemical engineering and graduated at the top of his class in 1944. He completed a master's degree in chemical engineering at Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn and in 1952 earned a doctorate at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). He served as the director of the Institute of Gas Technology in Illinois, becoming its president and a trustee in 1974. He was a world-renowned expert on energy. At some point along the way, he dropped the last four letters of his last name, changing it to Henry Linden.[105]

John Corser, one of the first to arrive in Georgia, so impressed his teachers and the Farm School that he received funding from the Rosenwald Fund to study electrical engineering at Georgia Tech. Unfortunately, his story had a tragic ending. Corser was unable to overcome the unhappiness that had accompanied him from his home in Austria, and he died by his own hand while a student at Georgia Tech.[106]

The Farm School records do not contain complete information on the youths after they left the NYA program. A report of January 1941 appears in the Farm School files and states that ten of the students "adjusted to other occupations" outside of agriculture. Twelve returned to their families in New York. One took a position in poultry farm management, and four remained in training. This count probably omits Josef Rappaport, who returned to New York after just a few days because his mother arrived in New York. By January 1941, several of the youths had plans to attend college and had scholarships or found relatives or others to support them. For those who returned to New York, the Farm School explained that they failed to adjust, experienced health problems, or just wanted to rejoin their families.[107]

TABLE 1. Status of NYA Refugee Enrollees in the Months after Leaving the NYA Programs

Name	Dates in Program	NYA Project	Course	Report Date and Status	Address on Report Date
Theodore Advokat (Advocat)	1/39-4/39	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	6/39 Unable to adjust. Returned to NYC.	NYC
William Blatt	1/39-6/39	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	7/40 Works in office of department store.	Athens
Ludwig Bodem	2/39-6/39	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	6/39 Left project to take poultry course at U. of Ga. until 1/40. 1/40 Secured position with chicken hatchery.	6/39 Atlanta; 1/40 Atlanta
Leo Erber	1/39-6/40	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	7/40 Since leaving school, worked as stock clerk with wholesale shoe concern.	Atlanta
Werner Feibelman	6/39-11/39	Clarkesville	Agriculture	11/39 Left voluntarily to rejoin family. Decided not to pursue agricultural work.	NYC
Fred Frankl	1/39-6/39	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	6/39 Worked for freight company as general assistant. 11/39 Obtained position as mechanic in garment factory.	6/39 Atlanta; 11/39 Atlanta
Ernest Gertler	1/39-6/39	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	7/40 Until recently worked for overall factory in Athens, Ga. Left to join relatives.	Athens, then NYC
Karl (Charles) Hamburger	1/39-6/39	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	7/40 Left school because of poor health; placed with private family in Elberton, Ga. Graduated high school June 1940. Will work for foster parents in Elberton (dept. store).	Elberton, GA
Alexander Hirsch	1/39-7/39	Clarkesville	Radio	7/39 State Radio Transmission Dept (NYA project). 8/39 Obtained position in battery dept. at auto service station. 11/39 Position with auto parts factory also attends U. of Ga. Extension Evening School.	7/39 Atlanta; 8/39 Atlanta; 11/39 Atlanta
Siegfried Hirsch (Fred)	1/39-8/39	Clarkesville	Woodwork	7/40 Since leaving school, working in office of furniture mfg. company.	Rome, GA

TABLE 1, continued.

Name	Dates in Program	NYA Project	Course	Report Date and Status	Address on Report Date
Jerry Kahn *	11/39-6/40	Clarkesville	Agriculture	7/40 Farm near Atlanta; working during summer in Dalton, Ga. in bedspread factory; 8/40 he accepted job as a shipping clerk.	Near Atlanta
Jacob Katz	6/39-10/39	Tifton	Agriculture	10/39 Left voluntarily to continue study of agriculture at U. of Southern California.	Los Angeles
Walter Kornfeld	11/39-6/40	Carrollton	Agriculture	7/40 Further study-poultry course, U of Ga. 3/41 Working at commercial hatchery in Atlanta (Ga. State Hatchery).	7/40 Athens; 3/41 Atlanta
Hans Korsower (John Corser)	1/39-6/39	Clarkesville	Radio	7/40 After leaving Habersham, continued studies at Ga. School of Technology.	Died on May 26, 1940
Henry Lindenbaum	11/39-7/40	Carrollton	Agriculture	7/40 Interested in agricultural chemistry. Trying to find position with fertilizer company.	Atlanta
Stephen Loeb	1/39-6/39	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	7/40 Since leaving project works for garage.	Athens
Walter Mai	6/40-6/40	Carrollton	Agriculture	7/40 Unable to adjust; returned to parents	NYC
Walter Medak	1/39-6/39	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	6/39 Left project to take poultry course at U of Ga. until 1/40; 1/40 Worked in hatchery. 4/40 Obtained position as shipping clerk with furniture company.	6/39 Athens; 1/40 Atlanta; 4/40 Columbia, SC
Henry Preis	6/39-12/39	Tifton	Agriculture	1/40 Left school because of health problem. Returned to relatives.	NYC
Josef Rappaport **	2/39	Clarkesville	Agriculture	2/39 When he received word that his mother was arriving in New York City from Europe, he left the NYA project. His sister had obtained a job for him in NYC.	NYC
Manfred Rubinstein	1/39-6/39	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	6/39 Clerk in retail store. 4/40 Traveling for beauty supply house.	6/39 and 4/40 Anderson, SC

TABLE 1, continued.

Name	Dates in Program	NYA Project	Course	Report Date and Status	Address on Report Date
Max Schwarz	6/39-12/39	Tifton	Agriculture	1/40 Left school: did not wish to continue in agriculture; health problems also; obtained position as worker in pants factory. 4/40 Returned to parents.	1/40 Atlanta; 4/40 NYC
Wolfgang Sonntag	6/39-8/39	Clarkesville	Agriculture	8/39 Left school; unable to adjust.	NYC
Frank Spiegel	1/39-7/39	Monroe	Auto Mechanics	7/39 Worked as attendant in gas station. 10/39 Obtained position with auto electric concern; works in factory as salesman.	7/39 Atlanta; 10/39 Atlanta
Helmut Strauss	1/39-6/39	Monroe	General High School Courses	6/39 Worker in shirt factory. 7/40 Recently returned to relatives who are giving him college education.	3/39 Abbeville, SC; 7/40 NYC
Joseph Tobias	11/39-6/40	Carrollton	Agriculture	7/40 Returned to NYC to join relatives for summer; plans to return to study agriculture at U of Ga. in fall; 9/40 has been attending U of Ga. taking agriculture course.	6/40 NYC; 9/40 Athens
Amos Vogelbaum ***	9/39-6/40	Clarkesville	Agriculture	7/40 Further study: poultry course U of Ga.; 3/41 Finished work at U of Ga. Returned to the home of his parents.	7/40 Athens; 3/41 NYC
Martin Weiss	1/39-5/39	Tifton	Agriculture	5/39 Left voluntarily to return to East.	NYC

SOURCE: "Citizenship Records of Refugee Youth", "Agricultural Project-NYA, Citizenship Record," Georgia Farm School Records.
LEGEND: Monroe: Georgia Vocational and Trades School; Clarkesville: Habersham College; Tifton: Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College; Carrollton: West Georgia College.

* Jerry Kahn couldn't find an adequate wage as a farm worker and accepted a job as a shipping clerk. Report of B. Rich, Secretary, "Agricultural Projects Committee Meeting," August 14, 1940, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941."
** Joseph Rappaport left the program after a few days. Kahn to Kohs, February 22, 1939, "Agricultural Training, 1938-1941."
*** Amos Vogelbaum finished his work at the University of Georgia and returned to NYC. He was offered a position as manager of a farm in Woodbine, New Jersey. Mrs. P. H. Philips to Littlefield, April 8, 1941, "Agricultural Training, 1938-1941."

Toward the end of the program, the Farm School experienced trouble placing those trained in agriculture in decent paying jobs. One of the last to leave the NYA program, Joseph Tobias, had help from the Farm School taking extra agricultural courses at the University of Georgia after leaving the NYA. When he finished his coursework, the Farm School committee could not find him a suitable job. The report of the Agricultural Projects Committee on the status of young men still "Under Care" stated: "We made several contacts for him in the truck farming line in which he was interested, but the opportunities for conditions above that of a sharecropper are scarce." Tobias decided, with the help of his family, to continue his education at the University of Georgia.[108]

About the same time, another student, Jerry Kahn, completed his NYA training and needed a job quickly to help support his parents in New York. The job in farming that the committee found for him paid only three dollars a week, and the living conditions were poor. The committee then found a job paying fifteen dollars a week as a shipping clerk, and Kahn took that position. The Agricultural Projects Committee report concluded: "an evaluation should be made by the Committee of the real outlook for self-sustaining positions in agriculture. If, in the Committee's opinion, such positions are not obtainable for young boys, it is the recommendation of the Secretary that the question of diversion of Farm School funds be taken under consideration by the Committee." One of the secretary's suggestions was to consider farm family resettlement. At a meeting of the Agricultural Projects Committee on August 14, 1940, members discussed the difficulties of placing the young men in farm positions when they had opportunities for better pay and an easier life in urban jobs. Many also felt pressures from their families for money. The committee agreed that farm family resettlement appeared to be the next practical step in helping refugees.[109]

After the meeting of the Agricultural Projects Committee in August 1940, only four additional young men came to Georgia to participate in the NYA. In June 1941, the president of the Farm School and Resettlement Bureau, Eugene Oberdorfer, wrote in his annual report:

> The number of youths qualified and willing to come to Georgia for agricultural training dwindled almost to the vanishing point. At the same time the "backlog" of unsettled refugees concentrated

> in New York, where they had landed in America, became more formidable each passing day. It soon became apparent that in order to shoulder our fair share of the general responsibility that it would be necessary for Georgia, like other States, to accept a reasonable monthly quota of refugees for general resettlement.[110]

Thus the mission of the organization shifted. Even so, the only state to enroll more refugees in the NYA than Georgia was New Jersey, which had at least thirty-three. Florida matched Georgia's total with twenty-eight. Four additional southern states participated: Oklahoma with nineteen enrollees, Alabama with thirteen, Texas with twelve, and North Carolina, which joined the program in 1941, with two.[111]

The Georgia experience seemed to prove the value of starting the program with a pilot project, and the pilot no doubt led to improved procedures and communication. An NRS program evaluation observed:

> From the needs and the experiences of this group, procedures and principles were gradually evolved which became the basis for later practices. The Georgia experiment demonstrated to all concerned that the project was both constructive and practical, and that it was worth expanding into other areas.[112]

The evaluation is curious since the project was plagued by problems and, in several respects, appeared to be a failure. Few of the students used their agricultural training, and many left the program to return to New York. Many of the problems traced back to the Farm School's insistence on agricultural training and on the failure of the national organization to listen to the Farm School's demands. Although the pilot program did not have the benefits the Georgia Jewish community hoped to see, it did provide a safe environment for the participants to adjust to their new homeland.

Under the guidance of Winslow and Littlefield, the refugee program moved forward. Two youths moved to the Nepaug Village resident center in Connecticut. A youth sent to Connecticut left because he was strictly Orthodox and, although warned ahead of time that the food would not be kosher, he was not happy. Two refugees went to a resident center at Kingston, Rhode Island, and five traveled to Massachusetts to resident centers in Holyoke and Upton.[113]

Program Expansion

The next state to enroll refugees was Florida. In early June 1939, the first female refugees to participate entered Camp Roosevelt, a resident center for women in Ocala. The NYA received inquiries from the two Florida senators, Charles Andrews and Claude Pepper, about the girls, and in an unsigned report on the refugee program, the author of the report (probably Winslow) attributed the senators' inquiries to the fact that the NYA did not issue a press release explicitly explaining the arrangement in the state. The report noted that other projects have been "quite openly and thoroughly publicized in most of the other States."[114]

Alabama next received refugees. By early September 1939, fifty-nine refugee youths had been placed in residential centers in ten states, including Alabama (four), Georgia (twenty-three), Florida (six), New Hampshire (five), Massachusetts (six), Connecticut (two), Rhode Island (two), New York (three), Missouri (five), and Michigan (three), and the plan soon added fourteen more refugees bringing the total to seventy-three. Plans were underway to expand the program to Ohio, Texas, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and California. Other states expressed interest.[115]

In summer 1941, Littlefield wrote a lengthy report for the NRS Resettlement and Field Service Department covering the first twenty-six months of the program. He compiled statistics about the participants that remain the main source for information about the operation of the NRS side of the refugee program. According to Littlefield's report, at the end of the first twenty-six months, March 31, 1941, 235 refugees had participated in the program, 204 young men and 31 young women. At the time of Littlefield's report, 96 of the 235 refugees, or 40 percent, had been placed in five of the states in the NRS's southern district: Alabama (ten men), Florida (twelve men, fifteen women), Georgia (twenty-eight men), Oklahoma (eighteen men, one woman), and Texas (twelve men). Of the women, just under 50 percent were in Florida.[116] The NYA added more refugees after March 31, 1941, including two in North Carolina, a state in the NRS southern district that had no prior participants, another in Florida, and three in Alabama.[117]

Approximately 87 percent of the 235 refugees hailed from Germany and Austria with the rest from Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Italy, and Yugoslavia. Approximately one quarter arrived in the United States one

month or less before enrolling in the NYA; another 40 percent had been in the country over a month but less than six months. The remaining refugees had resided in the country from six months to more than three years. [118]

The Resettlement Department selected program participants, choosing approximately one-third of those who applied. Referrals came from the NRS reception and case work departments, and, as the arrival of refugees in New York began to slow, the NRS recruited from the immigrant community already in New York. Littlefield reported, "Applications were periodically stimulated through announcements in the German and Jewish press, and through youth meetings sponsored by the NRS." In January 1941, Littlefield explained to Winslow, "We have been embarking upon some extensive local promotion to stimulate a larger number of applicants."[119]

The criteria for admission were based on the requirements of the NYA and individual resident centers, as well as conditions established by the NRS. The most basic requirement was for applicants to be between eighteen (seventeen in some states) and twenty-four years old. They had to possess a permanent immigration visa, be healthy, speak English well enough for everyday needs, be sufficiently outgoing to adjust to the communal environment of a resident center, and be willing to do manual labor, participate in group activities, and "adopt prevailing mores and attitudes of the new environment." Some of these requirements, such as the one that candidates speak English well, were no doubt reinforced by lessons learned in the Georgia pilot project. A physician examined each applicant to evaluate their health needs, and a trained case worker interviewed him or her considering "stability, flexibility of character, and capacity for adjustment." Whether NYA training would measurably enhance a youth's skills and employability provided the ultimate criterion.[120]

The NCC planned to include Christian refugees in the NYA program, and the American Committee for Christian-German Refugees selected Wolfgang Sonntag to go to Georgia. Sonntag, described as "a non-Aryan Christian," was eighteen years old. He returned to New York after two months in the Georgia program because he was "unable to adjust."[121]

Since the primary goal of the NYA program was resettlement, young men and women agreed as a condition of enrollment to permanently resettle in the specific community or area covered by the local sponsoring committee. A responsible family member or the person who sponsored

the young person's immigration to the United States had to approve the youth's participation in the NYA and, if possible, meet all or part of the costs. When accepted in the program, the refugee received transportation funds through the NRS and moved to an NYA resident center. If the young person had no one to provide support (and most did not), the NRS and/or local resettlement committees assumed the costs.[122]

When NYA administrators first contemplated the refugee program, they thought the youths could be aided on local nonresident and residential projects, but "because of difficulties in organization—particularly in the local communities—it was found easier to assist the youth through placement on resident projects." In May 1940 and in early 1941, Winslow wrote to some state directors asking about incorporating refugee youth into nonresident projects as an experiment. No evidence exists of this happening. The resident projects offered an economical way to care for the refugees since they operated on a cooperative basis where youth did "much of their own cooking, raising of vegetables, and other housekeeping tasks." The resident centers seemed the best and most expedient way to meet the NYA Americanization goals for these young people.[123]

By March 31, 1941, the NYA had utilized fifty-nine resident centers, and, with the addition of North Carolina after that date, the total came to sixty. The centers enrolling refugees provide a sample of their variety. Located in rural and urban settings, some were rustic camps; others were rehabilitated institutional buildings; and many were dormitories connected to colleges or vocational schools.

For example, Fort Roosevelt, a resident center for girls in Ocala, a small farming community in North Central Florida, had been a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers facility used to house laborers and engineers working on the Cross Florida Barge Canal project. The facilities, situated in a grove of live oaks and pines on 130 acres of land, included a dining hall, a large, fully equipped kitchen, extensive recreational features, and more than fifty modern cabins with stoves and refrigerators, electric hot water heaters, and bathrooms with showers. About two hundred students attended classes four hours a day, Monday through Friday, and worked in the afternoon, many sewing garments, to earn twenty-four dollars per month. Part of the twenty-four dollars went to the NYA for participants' room and board. Many of the courses offered to the young women had a fixed term. For example, the beautician course lasted fifty weeks whereas other

Buildings at Camp Roosevelt, Ocala, FL, c. 1936. (State Archives of Florida.)

courses required only five months. In 1941, after the NYA's shift to training for defense industries, Camp Roosevelt enlarged, enrolled young men, and began offering courses that included auto mechanics, woodworking, and aviation repair, courses not open to the women.[124]

In contrast were very rural resident centers such as the 101 Ranch in Ponca City, Oklahoma, which hosted at least three refugees. The NYA site was an old ranch on an eighty-acre tract. The NYA youth tore down many of the fifty buildings on the tract and used the lumber to renovate others. The barn was refitted as a dormitory for fifty young men who raised cattle, swine, and chickens. The site also had a foundry, blacksmith shop, and workshops for woodworking and auto repair. Although many of the resident centers were in rural locations, some were established in urban settings close to industrial sites where young men could easily find jobs after being trained. South Houston, about twenty miles from the center of Houston, Texas, served the hub of

Beautician training at the NYA's Camp Roosevelt, Ocala, FL, c. 1940.
(State Archives of Florida.)

the Gulf Coast shipbuilding industry where students could "learn by doing."[125]

Habersham College in Clarkesville, Georgia, part of the NYA pilot, provided a different example of the program. A no-frills institution located in a small town in the mountains of northeast Georgia, the college served 250 men and women enrollees. The 325-acre campus belonged to the Ninth District School of Agricultural Arts (the A&M) but was unused. NYA students renovated dilapidated buildings on the property into dormitories and made the furnishings, including beds, tables, chairs, and cabinets. The college offered subjects including farming, radio service, metal work, and ceramics. Girls were required to study home economics, although the boys helped them cook meals. In addition, students took academic subjects like practical math, English, history, and citizenship. The facilities included a chicken hatchery, mill, workshop to repair farm implements, and woodshop, enabling students to have actual "work

experience." American NYA students at the college earned thirty dollars, paid twenty dollars for tuition, and kept ten dollars, but Lasseter arranged for the refugee students to pay a discounted tuition. For their work, the refugee students earned $27.20 a month, of which $17.20 went to the school for "subsistence, instruction, and supervision," with the student keeping ten dollars but saving the NRS or the Farm School $2.80 a month on each student.[126]

In many cases the NYA established resident centers at existing colleges and trade schools. In Gadsden, Alabama, participants attended the Alabama School of Trades and lived in the school's dormitories. In 1939, the school had a student body of 225, which included full-time registered students who paid $250 a year for tuition, board, and other expenses; part-time work students who received aid from the school; and 118 NYA youth. NYA students earned twenty-four dollars per month on construction jobs, maintaining the school's buildings and grounds, or working in the vegetable gardens and caring for farm animals that provided food for the school. Of this, students paid the school nineteen dollars per month, giving them five dollars for spending money. The school, under the control of the state Board of Education, offered industrial courses such as auto mechanics, welding, woodworking, mechanical drawing, and applied electricity, besides classes in industrial history, mathematics, science, and English.[127]

The resident centers were created to address youth unemployment and the general lack of preparation for working in industry, and most offered "work experience" training rather than rigorous academic instruction.[128] Often teachers were skilled craftsmen, such as an auto mechanic who worked with the students in a workshop rather than a classroom and offered instruction, supervision, and guidance while the students learned the trade. Some of these centers provided little classroom instruction. At the Inks Dam Resident Center in Burnet, Texas, students lived in a rural setting by the Colorado River in barracks built by NYA enrollees. The center offered work experience in a variety of trades including carpentry, auto mechanics, landscaping, drafting, food preparation, metalworking, and plumbing. The students also had study and supervised activities in citizenship, typing, shorthand, drafting, and other subjects related to business success. One of the center's projects included building a fish hatchery below Inks Dam on the Colorado River in Central

Texas, and many of the young people worked on projects cosponsored by the Lower Colorado River Authority and the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries. In 1940, the center accommodated 250 youths and had plans to expand.[129]

Although the requirements fluctuated over time, most refugee youths were expected to spend eighty-five to one hundred hours a month at assigned work tasks, often, but not always, related to the training program. Refugees in every case received the prevailing rate of wages from nongovernment sources. Because of the refugees' unofficial status, the NRS considered the payments to be scholarships rather than wages or compensation.[130] Littlefield's report on the program at twenty-six months of operation estimated the cost:

> Each month of attendance by every one of the 235 refugee youths represents a cash outlay of approximately $30 from some nongovernmental source. Actually, the $42,130 so expended between February 1, 1939, and March 31, 1941, represent contributions from the National Refugee Service (and the National Coordinating Committee), the Lavanburg Fund, in New York City, local resettlement committees, private social agencies, fraternal orders and philanthropic individuals, in the country at large, and, in two instances, from the staffs and American youth of the resident centers themselves. Besides these sources, relatives and sponsors of the refugee enrollees, when they possessed the means, contributed wholly or partially in a number of cases.[131]

Littlefield's report included a chart showing the following information:

TABLE 2. Division of Scholarship Costs with Respect to Source

Source of Funding	Amount	Percentage of Total
National Refugee Service	$27,470.00	65%
Cooperating Committee, including all local sources	9,715.00	23%
Lavanburg Fund	3,000.00	7%
Reimbursed by relatives, affiants, etc.	1,145.00	3%
Provided or raised by NYA	800.00	2%
Total	$42,130.00	100%

SOURCE: NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," NYA Records.

The going wage for work participants usually ranged between twenty-six and thirty-five dollars a month. Of this, the refugees, as well as citizen students, turned over about twenty dollars to the resident center for food, lodging, and other expenses, retaining the balance in cash. For citizens in the NYA, the payment also included medical and dental expenses. At the Inks Dam Center in Texas, for example, NYA youth earned thirty dollars per month and paid eighteen dollars to the NYA.[132]

According to Littlefield, other expenses were met separately, including the costs of transportation from New York City to a resident center, work clothes, required equipment, tuition for certain related training courses, and health and accident insurance. Relatives and sponsors paid some of these expenses, but when they could not, the NRS provided transportation and work clothes. The NRS or local committees paid other expenses or worked out a shared arrangement. At the Georgia Farm School, Jewish doctors and dentists in the Atlanta area volunteered medical and dental services through the Farm School's health committees.[133]

The NRS placed refugees only in resident centers where a local resettlement committee participated and cosponsored the program. The resettlement committee designated a subcommittee or individual to deal directly with the NYA, thus acting as a liaison between the NRS and the local NYA officials. For example in Texas, Jim Novy acted as liaison, and in Georgia the Farm School worked through Edward Kahn. The committees usually contributed funding for the refugees, administered their scholarships, and assisted in monitoring them while they were with the NYA. When refugees left the program, the local committees helped them find jobs and resettle. Just as important, local committees assumed responsibility for aspects of the refugees' social, recreational, and religious life, including participation in celebrations of religious holidays. During the course of the program, twenty-seven sponsoring committees, assisted by more than thirty additional committees, cooperated with the NRS to place refugee youth across the nation.[134]

Skills considered more feminine dominated training for women. For example, at Camp Roosevelt, the women's resident center in Ocala, training focused on traditional female roles associated with marriage and family and included sewing, homemaking and housecleaning, waitressing, clerical and beautician employment, and nursing assistance.[135] Just as the young men did, the young women often expressed appreciation.

Letter from Elizabeth Neuman, a resident at Camp Roosevelt, to Oscar Littlefield, July 5, 1939. (Courtesy of NYA Records, NARA.)

One young woman, Daisy Schwarz, wrote from Camp Roosevelt, "the teachers and the girls are especially nice to us. We are like a big family and I am so glad to be one of them." Helen Bilber, also at Camp Roosevelt, wrote she "could not believe, that after this last year of troubles, there could be a place as good as this. . . . I am sorry for those refugees, who still believe, that the only place in U.S.A. is New York, and who do not try to go in different states."[136]

When the NRS selected a refugee, it made every effort to identify his or her interests and select a beneficial program. Even so, refugees frequently departed from the original training plan and changed to another course of training within the NYA. In other cases, with the help of local resettlement committees, the youths transferred to a non-NYA vocational school or college. For example, the Georgia Farm School assisted Henry Lindenbaum when he transferred from the NYA program to Georgia Tech. Few of the resident centers had formal terms with fixed termination dates. The average stay for a refugee youth as of March 31, 1941, was 5.7 months, but many stayed longer. In most cases, refugee youths remained

in the program until they were able to find a job. The final report of the NYA, written in 1943 when the agency shut down, notes that the refugees "all had far more educational background than the NYA youth with whom they lived and worked."[137] A few selected for the program were unable to adjust to their new circumstances and left the NYA soon after enrollment.[138]

Littlefield noted in his report that the great majority of enrollees were unemployed when they applied for the program and faced several handicaps:

> Their European training and experience were frequently inapplicable to American industrial requirements; the differences in industrial practices and training methods were confusing and often demoralizing; language handicaps and lack of understanding of American mores and attitudes added to the confusion. The N.Y.A. refugee project was aimed as much toward orienting the youth in the conditions of American industry as it was toward equipping them with vocational skills.[139]

In July 1939, as part of a government reorganization, the NYA moved from the WPA's jurisdiction to that of the new Federal Security Agency, a sign it was "no longer a purely relief organization." The NYA functions now offered educational opportunities for skills needed for employment to needy unemployed young people. In September 1942, the NYA moved to the War Manpower Commission, reflecting the earlier transition to training programs for jobs in defense industries. By 1943, with the improving economic situation in the country, Congress felt the NYA was no longer needed and ordered its termination. Under the terms of the Labor-Federal Security Appropriations Act of 1944 and the Second Deficiency Appropriations Act of 1943, the agency was to be liquidated by January 1, 1944.[140] The refugee project had ended well before that.

The NYA Refugee Program Comes to an End

When the NYA ceased operations in 1943, its published final report contained a single page describing its refugee youth program, and it cited statistics on the program that were gathered in November 1939. The report leaves the impression that recruitment for the program ended in fall 1939, after eighty-five refugee youths had been placed in NYA resident centers. The information appears to come from a report prepared in early

December 1939 using the November statistics. However, the program lasted into 1942 and served 265 refugees.[141]

The NRS continued to place refugees in the NYA program until near the end of 1941. The numbers had dwindled, and it appears the last placement occurred in November 1941. However, young people already enrolled remained into 1942 and presumably finished their training. For example, reports in the NRS records from the local resettlement committee in Gadsden, Alabama, include references to two refugees who continued their training into 1942.[142]

In October 1941, Littlefield reported a total of thirty-four enrollees and expected to add three more at the end of October and in November. He explained to Winslow that "because of the draft, improved employment opportunities for youth in general, and because of the very small number of youth immigrating at the present time, we expect a continued diminution in the number of candidates available for our project."[143]

Littlefield accepted a position with the United Jewish Appeal in January 1942 and left the NRS. He wrote to Winslow, "I have enjoyed working cooperatively with you during the past three years. From the point of view of constructive accomplishment and personal satisfaction, these years have been my best so far." Winslow responded, "I am sorry to hear that you are leaving the National Refugee Service, as I know full well how you were the spark-plug for this whole refugee-NYA project and that you are responsible for its unusual success." The NRS named Robert Dolins, an assistant in charge of resettlement, to replace Littlefield, but it appears that recruiting for the program came to an end with Littlefield's departure and, more significantly, the bombing of Pearl Harbor and America's entry into war.[144]

Evaluation of the Program

No records outline the exact expectations Charles Taussig, Aubrey Williams, and Thacher Winslow had when they met with six state directors, two regional directors, and NYA deputy executive Brown in May 1938 to explore the program's feasibility. They apparently hoped to recruit refugee youth in Europe, help them immigrate to the United States, and then bring them into the NYA. The initial discussions included rescue as well as resettlement and must have included questions concerning the number of refugees the program could absorb.

As previously indicated, the *Milwaukee Journal* story of May 1938 alleged a Taussig goal of four thousand refugees. Although Winslow denounced the article's accuracy, that number appeared again in a memo about the Georgia Farm School training project, the NYA pilot. In September 1938, Edward Kahn wrote Harold Hirsch: "Mr. Lasseter stated that the N.Y.A. had in mind a group of 4000 refugees who are in and around New York City." The letter quotes Lasseter as thinking "that between 60 and 70 young men and women could be placed in N.Y.A. resident training projects in different sections of the State." These two documents may have referred to a pool of candidates rather than expected enrollees, but, even so, early expectations for enrollment appeared high. In February 1939, Winslow wrote to Taussig that he anticipated "openings for 278 refugee youth" in the coming six months, but by November 1939, the program had enrolled only eighty-five.[145] The program never achieved the numbers mentioned in the planning stages, nor did it provide a rescue program for European refugee youth.

Although failing to meet those early goals, the program evolved into a small but successful resettlement option helping many young people adapt to American life and become productively employed.[146] Antisemitism reached its peak in the United States in the years from 1938 to 1945. As previously indicated, for this reason resettlement outside of New York City became an important part of the NRS strategy.[147]

In an average month, 27,685 American citizens were actively enrolled in resident center programs. In a typical month like June 1940, when the NYA included eighty-nine refugees actively training in resident center programs, the refugees constituted only 0.32 percent, or less than one third of one percent, of the monthly average.[148] The NYA program was a much more significant element in the NRS resettlement operation, even though still a small portion of its overall numbers. Over the three years of the NYA refugee program, the NRS resettled 11,828 individuals, representing 6,572 units or families.[149] Of these, 265 were NYA placements, constituting approximately 4 percent of units and approximately 2.24 percent of all the individuals resettled. The program was sufficiently important to the NRS to employ a full-time administrator. However, those incorporated into the NYA surely represented a small portion of the immigrant youths of NYA age who entered the country between 1939 and 1941.

Upon leaving the program almost all the refugees for whom the NRS had data found suitable employment, although not necessarily related to their training. Oscar Littlefield offered the following observations in his report on the first twenty-six months of the program. Total enrollment up to March 31, 1941, was 235. Of those, nine dropped out before completing one month; thirteen went on to pursue educational plans; and seventy-four were active enrollees at the end of March 1941. The other "139 young men and women left the N.Y.A. centers, presumably ready for employment." Ninety-two found placements in occupational fields of their training, and twenty-three in unrelated fields. The remaining twenty-four included those who did not enter industry and those for whom the NRS failed to obtain data.[150]

Local resettlement committees did not always maintain contact with the participants, so the statistics concerning successful resettlement are incomplete. Where the NRS did have data, it appeared that approximately 70 percent of those who finished their training resettled near their resident center. Approximately 13 percent resettled in other areas, and approximately 17 percent returned to New York. If a refugee had parents joining him or her, the NRS would help the parents resettle with the youth.[151]

The NYA experience often shaped the refugee participants' view of the United States. In 1940, Winslow's office produced a manuscript, "Experiment in Americanization," which was intended to be reproduced as a pamphlet. It summarized the history of the program and highlighted the refugees' assimilation into American life, quoting from an editorial, "Good Americans," probably written by Ralph McGill, which appeared in the *Atlanta Constitution*: "Great teachers and sympathetic companions have taught these refugee youngsters in one short year the rich lessons of America. They will make good Americans, and by their example will make others better Americans."[152] While this document could be labeled propaganda, it did illustrate the program's focus on assimilation. Refugees often wrote about their experiences integrating into American life.

The program also affected American youth. The resident centers provided relief and job skills training to rural young people, many of whom had lived isolated lives and had limited educational backgrounds.[153] Meeting contemporaries raised in other countries and learning of their struggles must have had a broadening effect on Americans of the same generation at the resident centers. The final report on the NYA in 1943

declared, "According to reports from the resident project supervisors, American youth benefited from their daily association with the refugees from Fascism."[154]

Just as in Atlanta and Austin, Jewish communities across the country came together and organized committees to coordinate with the NRS to assist with every aspect of the resettlement of refugee families and individuals coming from Europe. These people likely felt they were doing at least a small part in helping those oppressed by Hitler. Many also must have linked the refugees to memories of their own or their family histories of immigration. Jim Novy of Austin and Edward Kahn of Atlanta, both Polish immigrants, likely felt a strong kinship with the refugees.

Finally, the NYA refugee program offers a full and persuasive explanation of Novy's brief and cryptic remarks at the synagogue dedication in 1963 about young refugees in the NYA. Even so, the tale of "Operation Texas" has been a persistent story reappearing regularly in the press, in scholarly works, and in Wikipedia. The story appeared again in March 2023 when Saul Singer, who serves as senior legal ethics counsel with the District of Columbia Bar, included the story in a column on Lyndon Johnson he wrote for the *Jewish Press*.[155]

In 2019, the Texas Holocaust, Genocide, and Antisemitism Advisory Commission (THGAAC) awarded a grant to the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas to investigate the "Operation Texas" story. The Ackerman Center was unable to find evidence that Lyndon Johnson participated in an illegal effort to aid refugees. At the conclusion of their study, Dr. Nils Roemer, the director of the Ackerman Center, moderated a workshop on "Operation Texas." The workshop participants included Roemer; Philip Barber, a graduate student and researcher at the Ackerman Center; Dr. David Bell of the University of Houston, who was on the founding Board of Directors of the Houston Holocaust Museum; and me.[156] The NYA refugee project is an interesting story in its own right, but the prevalence of the "Operation Texas" story lends it yet another interesting facet. Thus, this is the story of a small yet important program with impact on many levels at a time of limited American aid to refugees from Hitler's persecution.

NOTES

My thanks to Mary Knill, an archivist and colleague in Maryland, who graciously volunteered to supplement my research by spending hours tracking down letters in the NYA Records at the National Archives. She found marvelous nuggets that enhance this article, and I am exceptionally grateful to her, Dr. Roemer, and the Ackerman Center.

[1] Claudia Wilson Anderson, "Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson, Operation Texas, and Jewish Immigration," *Southern Jewish History* 15 (2012): 81–118.

[2] "Synagogue Dedicated By Johnson," *Austin American*, December 31, 1963; "President of the United of States Lyndon B. Johnson Dedicates Congregation Agudas Achim, Austin, Texas," LP Recording, Austin Custom Records, Austin, Texas, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library (hereafter cited as LBJPL); U.S. Federal Security Agency and War Manpower Commission, *Final Report of the National Youth Administration, Fiscal Years 1936–1943* (Washington, DC, 1944), iii–vi.

[3] E. I. Treiman, "The Life of Jim Novy," *Texas Jewish Press* (San Antonio, TX), January 17 and May 2, 1941; "Memorandum on Texas for State Meeting in San Antonio on October 20, 1940," n.d., "Texas, n.d., 1940," box 3, National Refugee Service Records, Collection I-92, American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History, New York (hereafter cited as NRS Records, AJHS, and CJH).

[4] The history of the ups and downs of immigrant restrictions into the United States has been well documented. See David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941* (Amherst, MA, 1968); Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (Bloomington, IN, 1987); and Saul S. Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed: United States Policy Toward Jewish Refugees, 1938–1945* (Detroit, 1973). Robert N. Rosen, *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust* (New York, 2006) provides a somewhat more positive account of Roosevelt's position.

[5] National Refugee Service, Inc., Resettlement and Field Service Department, "Report of the First 26 Months of the NRS Youth Retraining Experiment Conducted Jointly with the National Youth Administration," August 4, 1941, 24, "Miscellaneous Corres," E-3, box 2, National Youth Administration Records, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as NYA Records); "Composite Table Showing Amount of Resettlement Work Done from January, 1941 through April, 1942," File 1001 and Spreadsheets, "Resettlement in 1941 by Community and District," File 1003 and Tables, January through December 1941, and "Resettlements by Community," File 1005, microfilm 48, National Refugee Service Records, RG 248, YIVO Institute, CJH (hereafter cited as NRS Records, YIVO). Oscar Littlefield's NRS report with statistics up to March 31, 1941, showed that 235 refugees participated in the program. The table in NRS Records, YIVO showing participation after March shows thirty additional students were added in April through November 1941 for a total of 265. A detailed study of spreadsheets in NRS File 1003 shows that nine refugees went to NRS's Southern Region in 1941: North Carolina (two), Alabama (four), Florida (one), and Oklahoma (two). An analysis of the monthly charts "January through December 1941, Resettlements by Community" shows three of the nine who were sent to the South came

before April and would have been included in Littlefield's total of 235; six are in the thirty added between April and December.

[6] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," Table XIII, 20–21, NYA Records; Spreadsheets, "Resettlement in 1941 by Community and District," 9D, File 1003, microfilm 48, NRS Records, YIVO; Oscar Littlefield to Thacher Winslow, January 16, 1941, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," E-3, box 3, NYA Records; NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 24, NYA Records; Littlefield to Winslow, October 24, 1941, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; "National Refugee Service, Inc., Resettlements by Districts, December, 1940, and Cumulative Totals, January–December, 1940," File 1004, microfilm 48, NRS Records, YIVO. The tables list the districts as defined by the NRS. In a letter to Winslow, January 16, 1941, Littlefield indicated that North Carolina would soon join the program, and the 1941 spreadsheet indicates North Carolina took two refugees. North Carolina is not included in Littlefield's statistics ending March 31, 1941 as it joined after that date. Thus, twenty-two states participated rather than twenty-one as reported by Littlefield in his report ending March 31.

[7] Treiman, "Life of Jim Novy," *Texas Jewish Press*, February 7, February 21, April 18, May 2, May 23, May 30, and June 6, 1941; Bernard Marinbach, *Galveston: Ellis Island of the West* (Albany, NY 1983), xiii–xiv, 1–5.

[8] Much has been written about the IRO and the Galveston Movement. See Marinbach, *Galveston: Ellis Island of the West*; Ronald A. Axelrod, "Rabbi Henry Cohen and the Galveston Immigration Movement, 1907–1914," *East Texas Historical Journal* 15 (March 1977): 24–37; Gary Dean Best, "Jacob H. Schiff's Galveston Movement: An Experiment in Immigration Deflection, 1907–1914," *American Jewish Archives* (April 1978): 43–79; Joshua J. Furman, "'A Good Place to Emigrate to Now': Recruiting Eastern European Jews for the Galveston Movement in 1907," *Southern Jewish History* 25 (2022): 99–137; Jane Manaster, "Galveston Movement," *TSHA Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 12, 2023, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/galveston-movement; Bryan Edward Stone, "The Galveston Diaspora: A Statistical View of Jewish Immigration Through Texas, 1907–1913," *Southern Jewish History* 21 (2018): 121–76; and Hollace Ava Weiner, "Removal Approval: The Industrial Removal Office Experience in Fort Worth, Texas," *Southern Jewish History* 4 (2001): 1–44.

[9] Wyman, *Paper Walls,* 26; NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 4–5, 12, NYA Records; "Guide to the Records of the National Refugee Service, 1934–1952, 5-6, NRS Records, YIVO, accessed January 15, 2023, https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/7/resources/3595; Thacher Winslow to Charles Taussig, February 4, 1939, "Reports, Miscellaneous Youth, 1935–1941," box 14, Charles Taussig Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY (hereafter cited as Taussig Papers); David de Sola Pool to Charles Taussig, May 5, 1938, "Refugees 1938," box 14, Taussig Papers; Littlefield to Oscar Strauss, Jr., May 16, 1939, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Littlefield to P.A. Wales, December 24, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Henry Cohen II, *Kindler of Souls: Rabbi Henry Cohen of Texas* (Austin, 2007), 59, 121; Axelrod, "Henry Cohen," 33; Best, "Jacob H. Schiff's Galveston Movement," 49, 68–69, 71, 79.

[10] Richard A. Reiman, *The New Deal and American Youth: Ideas and Ideals in a Depression Decade* (Athens, GA, 1992), 157–72; Dan J. Puckett, *In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama's Jews, the Second World War, and the Holocaust* (Tuscaloosa, 2014), 53, 61–62.

[11] William Rosenwald to Dear Friend, September 25, 1940, "Texas, n.d., 1940," box 3, NRS Records, AJHS; "Texas Refugee Service Formed at Conference in San Antonio," *Texas Jewish Press*, October 25, 1940.

[12] "Memorandum, October 20, 1940," NRS Records, AJHS; Treiman, "Life of Jim Novy," *Texas Jewish Press*, January 23, 1942.

[13] Betty and Ernest K. Lindley, *A New Deal for Youth: The Story of the National Youth Administration* (New York, 1972 [1938]), 86–87; "Digest of Proceedings at National Advisory Committee Meeting, Lowrey Hotel, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 31 and November 1, 1938," "Resident Centers," 3, "National Advisory Committee Meeting, September 6 and 7, 1939—New York" E-1, box 2, NYA Records.

[14] "Memorandum, October 20, 1940," NRS Records, AJHS.

[15] NRS, "Resettlements in the State of Texas, January 1, 1937–September 30, 1940, by Cities and Types of Resettlement," "Texas, 1940," box 3, NRS Records, AJHS.

[16] Littlefield to Jack La Zar, October 25, 1940; Littlefield to Winslow, January 16, 1941, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[17] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," "Table IX," 4, 22–23, NYA Records.

[18] O.R. Strauss, Jr., to D.B. Lasseter, November 24, 1939, and Lasseter to Mrs. Philip Phillips, June 23, 1939, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," box 1, file 5, Georgia Farm School and Resettlement Bureau Records, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta (hereafter cited as Georgia Farm School Records). Georgia Farm School and Resettlement Bureau Records can be found online through the Breman Museum, accessed May 20, 2023, https://archivesspace.thebreman.org/repositories/2/resources/59.

[19] See "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[20] American youth at the resident centers welcomed the refugees and made them feel accepted. One young man, Ernst Liffgens, wrote from Gadsden, Alabama, "The boys here and everyone is very nice and friendly and I get more and more acquainted with the habits of this country." At the camp in Shakopee, Minnesota, a young refugee, Hans Quittner, became seriously ill, and, according to Littlefield, "the camp almost as a body, natives and refugees alike, volunteered as blood donors." Liffgens to Littlefield, August 21, 1939; Littlefield to Winslow, June 25, 1941, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[21] Peter Hilden wrote from the center in Gadsden, Alabama, "We have a very large room, and the food is delicious." Yet another young man wrote from Camp de Soto in Florida, "The food is really very good and you can always have as much as you want." Another detail often mentioned was access to a radio. Peter Hilden to Littlefield, August 21, 1939; Bernard Horn, Peter Berman, and Raoul Hassberg to Littlefield, March 5, 1940; Harry Rosenberg to Littlefield, May 12, 1940; Egon Goldmann to Littlefield, June 8, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[22] Carol A. Weisenberger, *Dollars and Dreams: The National Youth Administration in Texas* (New York, 1994), 93–94.

[23] Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Harris County, Texas, Ancestry.com.

[24] Fredric Rieders to Littlefield, February 4, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records. Here and throughout, quotations from primary documents are rendered as they appear in the original, errors included.

[25] Kenneth Burley, Declaration of Intention to Become Citizen, May 13, 1940, Ancestry.com; Kenneth Burley (Kurt Berlstein) to Littlefield, n.d., "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[26] "Resettlements in Texas in Cities Other than Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, January 1–November 30, 1940," December 26, 1940, File 1002, microfilm 48, NRS Records, YIVO; Biographic Statements: Herman Lille (c. March 20, 1940), William Freundel (March 21, 1940), Joseph Rosenkranz (March 20, 1940), "Refugee Youth–Inactive," NYA Records; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Eastland County, Texas, Ancestry.com; Deborah Lynn Self, "The National Youth Administration in Texas" (master's thesis, Texas Tech University, 1974); Weisenberger, *Dollars and Dreams,* 87–88.

[27] "Resettlements in Texas," NRS Records, YIVO; Weisenberger, *Dollars and Dreams*, 88. A table in "Resettlements" shows Fritz Horowitz scheduled to go to the Texas NYA with Stern and Ackerman in April 1940. Horton's letter and US Census data list Horton at the camp, leading to the conclusion that he Americanized his name.

[28] Fred Horton to Littlefield, May 12, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[29] Horton to Littlefield, June 4, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Egon Goldmann to Littlefield, June 8, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[32] Biographic Information, Allen Frank, August 30, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records. Although the biographic statement spells his name "Allen," records in Ancestry.com, such as Frank's draft card, indicate he spelled his name "Allan Frank."

[33] Wyman, *Paper Walls*, 168–72.

[34] J. B. Lightman to Ephraim Gomberg, April 30, 1940, "Texas, n.d., 1940," box 3, NRS Records, AJHS.

[35] Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed*, 105–107, 117–19; Wyman, *Paper Walls*, 152.

[36] Littlefield to Winslow, January 16, 1941, May 23, 1941, and October 24, 1941, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; "Composite Table Showing Amount of Resettlement Work Done from January, 1941 through April, 1942," File 1001, microfilm 48, NRS Records, YIVO; "National Refugee Service, Inc., December, 1940 Resettlements and Cumulative Totals January–December, 1940 by Type Resettlement," File 1001, microfilm 48, NRS Records, YIVO. The total number recruited declined from 117 in 1940 to 48 in 1941.

[37] Rieders to Littlefield, February 4, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[38] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," Table IX, 19, 22–23, NYA Records. The table indicates the twelve refugees spent a total of sixty-two months in the Texas programs with twelve refugees for an average stay of 5.2 months each.

[39] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 3–7, 9, 19, 21, NYA Records; Weisenberger, *Dollars and Dreams*, 75–79, 88; "Final Report, National Youth Administration for the State of Texas [June 1935–July 1943]," 7–9, 39–45, E-329, box 6, NYA Records; *Final Report of the NYA*, 113–14.

[40] J.B. Lightman to Ephraim Gomberg, April 30, 1940, "Texas, n.d., 1940," box 3, NRS Records, AJHS.

[41] Joseph Rosenkranz WWII Draft Registration Card, July 1, 1941, Ancestry.com; "Austin, Texas," ISJL Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed April 22, 2023, https://www.isjl.org/texas-austin-encyclopedia.html; Herman Lille WWII Draft

Registration Card, October 16, 1940, Ancestry.com; John Hurwitz WWII Draft Registration Card, October 17, 1940, Ancestry.com; Austin City Directory, 1941, 332, Ancestry.com; Congregation Agudas Achim, "Past Presidents," accessed April 22, 2023, https://theaustinsynagogue.org/past-presidents/.

[42] Herman Lille, Petition for Naturalization, November 8, 1944, Ancestry.com; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, Hartford County, Connecticut, Ancestry.com; University of Texas at Austin, *Annual Commencement 1942-1950*, "The Sixty-First Annual June Commencement, June 26, 1944," Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; "Austin Student Placed First on UT Pharmacy Honor Roll," *Austin Statesman*, July 13, 1944; "Rosenkranz, Joseph," *White Plains (NY) Journal News*, December 7, 2006; Frederic Rieders WWII Draft Registration Card, June 30, 1942, Ancestry.com; Sally A. Downey, "Fredric Rieders, 83, toxicologist," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 6, 2005.

[43] Allan Frank WWII Draft Registration Card, March 19, 1942, Ancestry.com; Allan Frank WWII Army Enlistment Record, October 7, 1942, Ancestry.com; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, New York County, New York, Ancestry.com; Allan Frank, Find a Grave Index, Ancestry.com; Kenneth Burley WWII Draft Registration Card, October 16, 1940, Ancestry.com; Kenneth Burley, Cook County, IL, Marriage Index, 1930–1960, Ancestry.com; Kenneth Burley WWII Army Enlistment Records, 1938–1946, Ancestry.com; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, DuPage County, Illinois, Ancestry.com; William Freundel WWII Draft Registration Card, February 16, 1942, Ancestry.com; William Freundel Naturalization Record, May 23, 1943, Ancestry.com; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, Bronx County, New York, Ancestry.com; New York City Directory, 1959, Ancestry.com; "Lawyers of the United States (Kansas through North Carolina)," Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory, 1959, 1804.

[44] Egon Goldmann, U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1985, Ancestry.com; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, Hudson County, New Jersey, Ancestry.com; Egon Goldmann, California Marriage Index, February 23, 1962, Ancestry.com; Egon Goldmann, Find a Grave Index, Ancestry.com; Harry Westheimer WWII Draft Registration Card, February 15, 1942, Ancestry.com; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, Queens County, New York, Ancestry.com. Although Veterans Affairs BIRLS File show a break in service, the 1950 census shows Goldmann in the armed services. The last three refugees, Fred Horton, Bernard Stern, and Harry Goldman, have names which are common and not easily traced through Ancestry.com.

[45] "How many refugees came to the United States from 1933–1945," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed May 12, 2023, https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/how-many-refugees-came-to-the-united-states-from-1933-1945; NRS, "Refugees . . . 1941: The Annual Report of the NRS, Inc.," c. May 1942, "Jewish Refugee Immigration to the U.S., July, 1932–June, 1941," 15, File 265, microfilm 12, NRS Records, YIVO; "National Refugee Service, Inc., Resettlements by Districts, December, 1940 and Cumulative Totals, January–December, 1940," File 1004, microfilm 48, NRS Records, YIVO; *Final Report of the NYA*, 254.

[46] No tallies exist for the number of participants in each state after March 31, 1941. The March 31 figures can be found in the NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months" 20–21, NYA Records. To arrive at totals for the southern states and estimates for other states for the entire

program, I analyzed the material cited in endnote 5. New Jersey had at least thirty-three enrollees and probably more.

[47] Searches in Newspapers.com identified no stories in Texas about the NYA refugee project during 1940.

[48] Louis Stanislaus Gomolak, "Prologue: LBJ's Foreign Affairs Background 1908–1948," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1989), 48–51.

[49] "President of the United States Lyndon B. Johnson Dedicates Congregation Agudas Achim, Austin, Texas," LP Recording, Austin Custom Records, Austin, Texas, LBJPL; Arthur Greenleigh to Jim Novy, February 9, 1940, "Texas, 1942," box 3, NRS Records, AJHS.

[50] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 1, 24, NYA Records; Winslow to Taussig, July 3, 1940, with attached undated report "Experiment in Americanization," 2–3, "Winslow, Thacher 1940–1941," box 20, Taussig Papers; "C.W. Taussig Dead; Roosevelt Deputy," *New York Times*, May 11, 1948; "Report on Refugee Youth," " Proceedings of Meeting of the National Advisory Committee of the Federal Security Agency, National Youth Administration, September 6 and 7, 1939," 54, E-1, box 2, NYA Records; "Pontifical Mass for Msgr. Moore," *The Tablet: A Catholic Weekly* (Brooklyn, NY), June 7, 1952; "Owen D. Young, 87, Industrialist, Dies," *New York Times*, July 12, 1962; "Rev. Dr. David de Sola Pool Dies at 85," *New York Times*, December 2, 1970; Taussig to Pool, May 14, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers; Pool to Taussig, May 5, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers.

[51] McDonald later served as the first U.S. ambassador to Israel.

[52] "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 54, NYA Records; Taussig to Pool, May 14, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers.

[53] Wyman, *Paper Walls*, 48; Winslow to Taussig, August 6, 1938, "Winslow, Thacher, 1937–1939," box 20, Taussig Papers.

[54] Taussig to Pool, May 14, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers; Thelma McKelvey to Taussig, May 19, 1938, "McKelvey, Thelma, 1938," box 5, Taussig Papers; "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 58, NYA Records; Frida Burling, *Finally Frida* (Chevy Chase, MD, 2004), 88–89.

[55] "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 55, NYA Records.

[56] "National Youth Administration National Advisory Board [Report]," June 17, 1939, 4, "McKelvy, Thelma, 1939," box 5, Taussig Papers; "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 58, NYA Records; James McDonald to Aubrey Williams, May 27, 1938, E-40, box 1, NYA Records.

[57] Cybelle Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State, from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Princeton, 2012), 215–19, 227–32, 238–39. Chapter 9 contains an excellent description of the evolution of the provisions barring noncitizens from work-relief programs and the effects on various minorities.

[58] Wyman, *Paper Walls*, 75–98. Wyman's book contains an excellent analysis of congressional consideration of the bill and its failure to pass.

[59] *Final Report of the NYA,* 131; Winslow to Taussig, February 4, 1939, "Reports, Miscellaneous Youth, 1935–1941," Taussig Papers.

[60] Karl Hesley to Richard Brown, May 26, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers; William Campbell to Brown, June 3, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers; John Bryan to Brown, June 7, 1938; S. Burns Weston to Brown, June 3, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers. For

information on the Alabama Jewish community and their aid to Jewish refugees, see Puckett, *In the Shadow of Hitler*, 40–75.

[61] Winslow to Taussig, June 13, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers; Winslow to Hesley, June 23, 1938, "Karl D. Hesley, April–June '38," E-39, box 12, NYA Records.

[62] Winslow to John Lasher, June 23, 1938, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Winslow to C.B. Lund, June 23, 1938, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Winslow to Taussig, September 1, 1939, "Winslow, Thacher, 1937–1939," box 20, Taussig Papers; Winslow to Hesley, June 23, 1938, "Karl D. Hesley, April–June '38," E-39, box 12, NYA Records.

[63] "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 55, NYA Records; Winslow to Taussig, August 6, 1938, "Winslow, Thacher, 1937–1939," box 20, Taussig Papers; Hesley to Orren Lull, July 29, 1938, "State Directors—NYA 1938–1939," box 15, Taussig Papers.

[64] Burling, *Finally Frida*, 91, 93; Winslow to Taussig, July 23, 1938, "Winslow, Thacher, 1937–1939," box 20, Taussig Papers.

[65] Winslow to Taussig, July 23, 1938, "Winslow, Thacher, 1937–1939," box 20, Taussig Papers; "Seek to Assist Jewish Youth," *Milwaukee Journal,* July 13, 1938.

[66] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 1, NYA Records. It is difficult to tell when the NYA initiated contact with the NCC. A memo from Winslow to Taussig on September 29, 1938, in box 14, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers, summarizes progress on the refugee program and mentions the meeting at NCC New York offices on August 23, 1938. Winslow regularly informed Taussig of his work on the project and makes no mention of contacts with the NCC in reports to Taussig as late as July 23, 1938, well after McDonald had left for the Evian Conference. At the meeting in June which included Winslow, McDonald, and Young, the three decided Winslow would work through George Warren getting case histories of youth who might be placed. Likely they planned for Warren and Winslow to get the case histories from the NCC, but no evidence exists of NCC's direct contact with Winslow or other NYA officials until the meeting on August 23, 1938, at the NCC

[67] Cecilia Razovsky, an extraordinary, tireless, and dedicated activist working on behalf of Jewish refugees, began working on immigration issues for the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), served as the executive director of the National Coordinating Committee for Aid to Refugees and Immigrants from Germany (NCC), and served as assistant to the executive director of the National Refugee Service. For more information see: "Cecilia Razovsky," The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women, Jewish Women's Archive, accessed April 28, 2023, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/razovsky-cecilia.

[68] "National Coordinating Committee for Aid to Refugees and Emigrants Coming from Germany," January 21, 1939, File 118, microfilm 6, NRS Records, YIVO; Board of Directors of the National Coordinating Committee," File 118, microfilm 6, NRS Records, YIVO; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Guide to the YIVO Archives, "National Coordinating Committee for Aid to Refugees," accessed April 28, 2023, http://www.yivoarchives.org/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=33738.

[69] Winslow to Taussig, September 29, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers.

[70] "Working Procedures for Handling of Youth Refugees," September 7, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers.

[71] Winslow to Taussig, September 29, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Wyman, *Paper Walls*, 26.

[74] Winslow to Taussig, February 4, 1939, "Reports, Miscellaneous Youth, 1935–1941," Taussig Papers.

[75] Ibid.

[76] "Harold Hirsch, 57, Atlanta Attorney," *New York Times*, September 26, 1939.

[77] Edward Kahn to Harold Hirsch, September 13, 1938; Kahn to Eugene Oberdorfer, October 17, 1938; Kahn to S.C. Kohs, January 5, 1939, "Correspondence and Related Material, 1938–1942," box 1, file 15, Georgia Farm School Records; Benjamin Goldman to Kahn, December 29, 1938; Lasseter to Hirsch, January 10, 1939; Kohs to Oberdorfer, February 2, 1939; Oberdorfer to Richard Rich, March 27, 1940, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records; Hirsch to Subscriber, May 15, 1939, "Agricultural Project—Farm School Pledge, 1939–1942," box 1, file 2, Georgia Farm School Records; Winslow to Taussig, September 29, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers. Richard Rich headed Rich's department stores.

[78] Winslow to Taussig, September 29, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers; NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 20–21, NYA Records.

[79] Winslow and Orren Lull phone conversation, August 22, 1938, E-39, box 123, "Thacher Winslow," NYA Records; "President Going to Son's Bedside Before Operation at the Mayo Clinic," *New York Times*, September 9, 1938; "Cummings Tells FDR of Success," *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, NY), September 9, 1938; Jesse Kellam to Aubrey Williams, September 24, 1938, E-40, box 52, NYA Records.

[80] Mildred W. Abramowitz, "Eleanor Roosevelt and the National Youth Administration, 1935–1943: An Extension of the Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 14 (Fall 1984): 569–80; Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of Their Relationship* (New York, 1971), 539–40; Charles Taussig, "Forward," in Lindley, *A New Deal for Youth*, xiii–xiv.

[81] Reiman, *New Deal and American Youth*, 168–69; Winslow to Glenn Callaghan, December 29, 1938, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records. See also National Youth Administration, "Report on Refugee Youth," c. December 1939, "Refugees (1939–1941)," box 14, Taussig Papers.

[82] Winslow to Taussig, September 29, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers; "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 59, NYA Records.

[83] Winslow to Taussig, September 1, 1938, "Winslow, Thacher, 1937–1939," box 20, Taussig Papers; "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 59, NYA Records; Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Day," *Atlanta Constitution*, April 30, 1938; "NYA Officials Confer Here on Florida Program," *Tampa Times*, April 17, 1940.

[84] Littlefield to Jack La Zar, October 25, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[85] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 22–23, NYA Records.

[86] Winslow to Hesley, January 10, 1939, E-39, box 11, "Karl D. Hesley, Jan 1937–March 1939," NYA Records.

[87] Winslow to Taussig, February 4, 1939, "Reports, Miscellaneous Youth, 1935–1941," Taussig Papers; "They Learn the Lessons of America," *Jewish Exponent* (Philadelphia, PA), December 27, 1940; "Lavanburg-Corner House Fund Records," American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History, accessed January 4, 2023, https://archives.cjh.org

/repositories/3/resources/15596; "Lavanburg Foundation Records," New York Public Library, accessed April 28, 2023, https://archives.nypl.org/mss/18389.

[88] NCC Report, "Resettlement Division Report to Mr. Harry Greenstein," February 13, 1939, 75, 76–85, File 68, microfilm 4, NRS Records, YIVO; Winslow to Taussig, February 4, 1939, 1, "Reports, Miscellaneous Youth, 1935–1941," Taussig Papers; NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 2–3, 59, NYA Records.

[89] NRS, "Refugees . . . 1939: The Annual Report of the NRS, Inc," May 1940, "Report of the President," 3, File 265, microfilm 12, NRS Records, YIVO; "Guide to the Records of the National Refugee Service, 1934–1952, NRS Records, YIVO, accessed January 15, 2023, https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/7/resources/3595.

[90] "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 59, NYA Records; "Dr. William Haber to Direct German Refugee Aid in U.S., *Chicago Tribune*, April 29, 1939; "Biographical Statement [for William Haber]," n.d., File 75, microfilm 4, NRS Records, YIVO; William Haber, "National Refugee Service, Inc: Report of the Executive Director on Activities During the Month of July 1939," 6, File 36, microfilm 2, NRS Records, YIVO.

[91] Winslow to Herbert Little, January 30, 1940, "Mr. Winslow," E-84, box 8, NYA Records.

[92] Wyman, *Paper Walls*, 210.

[93] Winslow to Taussig, September 29, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers; Winslow to Taussig, February 4, 1939, "Reports, Miscellaneous Youth, 1935–1941," Taussig Papers; NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 20–21, NYA Records.

[94] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 2, NYA Records; "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 61, NYA Records; Lasseter to Winslow, January 11, 1939, "Winslow, Thacher, 1937–1939," box 20, Taussig Papers; Winslow to Lasseter, January 7, 1939, and S.C. Kohs to Edward M. Kahn, January 4, 1939, "Correspondence and Related Material, 1938–1942," Georgia Farm School Records.

[95] NYA Press Release, January 22, 1939, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records; "7 German Youths Get Start in Georgia," *Atlanta Constitution*, January 22, 1939; Ralph McGill, "Refugees Learn How America Lives," *Atlanta Constitution,* February 3, 1939.

[96] Harold H. Martin, *Ralph McGill, Reporter* (Boston, 1973), 14–15, 56–57, 60–64, 213–14; Ralph McGill, *The South and the Southerner* (Boston, 1959), 54–55.

[97] Ralph McGill, "Refugees Learn How America Lives"; NYA Press Release, January 22, 1939, "Correspondence and Related Material 1938–1942," Georgia Farm School Records; "7 German Youths Get Start in Georgia"; Kohs to Kahn, January 4, 1939, "Correspondence and Related Material 1938–1942," Georgia Farm School Records; Georgia Farm School and Resettlement Bureau, Inc., "Georgia Progress: Community Service in the Resettlement of Newcomers," September 1941, vol. 2, 11, "Bulletins, Newsletters and Pamphlet, 1940–1941," box 1, file 12, Georgia Farm School Records.

[98] Biographic information on Theodore Advokat, December 28, 1938, and Leo Erber, Ernest Gertler, and Stephen Loeb, n.d., "Correspondence and Related Material 1938–1942, Georgia Farm School Records; Kohs to Lasseter, January 14, 1939, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records.

[99] Ernest Gertler, Stephen Loeb, Leo Erber, and Theodore Advokat to Ben Goldman, January 22, 1939, "Refugees (1939–1941)," box 14, Taussig Papers; Kohs to Ernst, Steve, Leo, and Teddy, February 6, 1939, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records.

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[101] Lasseter to Kahn, October 26, 1939, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records; Evaluation of Fred Frankl, April 15, 1939, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Evaluation of Frank Spiegel, June 15, 1939, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 12, NYA Records; Henry Preis Evaluation Form, November 27, 1939, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; "Citizenship Record of Refugee Youth, Henry Preis, December 1939, "Agricultural Project—NYA, Citizenship Record," Georgia Farm School Records.

[102] "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 61–62, NYA Records.

[103] "Georgia Progress," September 1941, "1941–1942 Standing Committees and Their Functions," 4, and "Agricultural Projects [Report]," 18, Georgia Farm School Records; "Oscar Strauss, Jr. Family Papers Finding Aid," Breman Museum, accessed May 5, 2023, https://archivesspace.thebreman.org/repositories/2/resources/92; Oberdorfer to Littlefield, June 22, 1939, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records; Citizenship Forms, "Agricultural Project—NYA, Citizenship Record," Georgia Farm School Records.

[104] Citizenship Forms, "Agricultural Project—NYA, Citizenship Record," Georgia Farm School Records; "Citizenship Record of Refugee Youth, Karl Hamburger," July 1940, "Agricultural Project—NYA, Citizenship Record," Georgia Farm School Records; Mrs. P.H. Philips to Littlefield, April 8, 1941, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records.

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[106] "Minutes of Executive Council Meeting," May 15, 1940, "Executive Council—Minutes and Related Material, 1939–1942," Georgia Farm School Records; "'Blitz' Refugee Hangs Self Here," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 27, 1940."

[107] Georgia Farm School and Resettlement Bureau, Inc, "Work of Committee on Employment and Economic Adjustment—June 1939 to January 1941," "Placement Committee—

Minutes and Related Material, 1939–1941," box 4, file 3, Georgia Farm School Records; Kahn to Kohs, February 22, 1939, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records; "Citizenship Records of Refugee Youth," "Agricultural Project—NYA, Citizenship Record," Georgia Farm School Records.

[108] Report of B. Rich, Minutes of the Agricultural Projects Committee Meeting, August 14, 1940, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records.

[109] Ibid.

[110] "Georgia Progress," September 1941, Georgia Farm School Records. See "Report of the President: Eugene Oberdorfer," 11, Georgia Farm School Records. On Oberdorfer's role in the Atlanta Jewish community, see Mark K. Bauman, *The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation: Living Up to the Name and the Legacy, The Temple and its People to 2018* (Atlanta, 2023).

[111] See sources in endnote 5.

[112] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 2, NYA Records.

[113] "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 61–63, NYA Records.

[114] Ibid., 63–64.

[115] Ibid., 60–61, 65.

[116] Ibid., 20–21.

[117] Littlefield to Winslow, January 16, 1941, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Spreadsheets, "Resettlement in 1941 by Community and District," File 1003, microfilm 48, NRS Records, YIVO.

[118] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 14, NYA Records.

[119] Ibid., 12; Littlefield to Winslow, January 16, 1941, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[120] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 12, 13, NYA Records.

[121] Winslow to Taussig, February 4, 1939, "Reports, Miscellaneous Youth, 1935–1941," Taussig Papers; Pool to Taussig, May 5, 1938, "Refugees 1938," Taussig Papers; Excerpt from letter to Oscar Strauss, Jr., May 16, 1939, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; "Citizenship Record of Refugee Youth," Wolfgang Sonntag, August 1939, "Agricultural Project—NYA, Citizenship Record," Georgia Farm School Records.

[122] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 13, 20, NYA Records.

[123] Winslow to Ivan Munro, May 8, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Winslow to C.B. Lund, February 13, 1941, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Winslow to Taussig, February 4, 1939, box 14, "Reports Miscellaneous Youth, 1935–1941," Taussig Papers.

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[125] Helmut Sommer to Littlefield, July 9, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; "Final Report National Youth Administration for the State of Oklahoma," June 26, 1935–July 3, 1943," 23–24, E-329, box 5, NYA Records; "Final Report National Youth Administration for the State of Texas, [June 1935–July 1943]," 68–70, E-329, box 6, NYA Records; Weisenberger, *Dollars and Dreams*, 94, 163.

[126] Glenn Hogan to Kahn, November 16, 1939, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records; "NYA at Habersham Closes First Year," *Atlanta Constitution*, January 22, 1939; "NYA's Habersham College Teaches Students Trades," *Macon Telegraph*, August 7, 1939; Lasseter to Hirsch, January 10, 1939, "Agricultural Training, 1938–1941," Georgia Farm School Records. Today the site houses the Clarkesville campus of North Georgia Technical College. North Georgia Technical College, "About Us: Our History," accessed May 12, 2023, https://northgatech.edu/about-us/.

[127] "Boys Get Chance to Learn at Institution in Gadsden," *Birmingham News*, April 30, 1939.

[128] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 3, NYA Records.

[129] Weisenberger, *Dollars and Dreams*, 88; "Dream of Fishing Paradise along Colorado Will Not Fade; Federal Fish Hatchery Plan, Now One-Half Complete, Will Assure Sport," *American-Statesman* (Austin, TX), September 22, 1940; "Four Inks Dam NYA Boys Completely Satisfied-Have Regular Jobs Now," *Taylor (TX) Daily Press*, May 23, 1940.

[130] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 5–6, 21–22, NYA Records.

[131] Ibid., 22.

[132] "NYA Activities, Dormant Since June 30, Pick Up," *Tyler (TX) Courier-Times*, August 11, 1940; NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 113–14, NYA Records.

[133] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 21–22, NYA Records; "Reports of the Medical Advisory Committee and Dental Advisory Committee at the Farm School and Resettlement Bureau, Inc., Annual Meeting, June 24, 1941," "Annual Meeting—1941," box 1, file 7, Georgia Farm School Records.

[134] "Reports of the Medical Advisory Committee and Dental Advisory Committee," 4; Winslow to Taussig, February 4, 1939, "Reports, Miscellaneous Youth, 1935–1941," Taussig Papers; NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 20, NYA Records.

[135] Nelson, "Camp Roosevelt," 178–79.

[136] Daisy Schwarz to Littlefield, August 12, 1939, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Helen Bilber to Littlefield, July 23, 1939, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[137] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 19–20, NYA Records; "Report on Refugee Youth," "Proceedings of Meeting," 60, NYA Records; *Final Report of the NYA,* 131.

[138] "They Learn the Lessons of America," January 3, 1941.

[139] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 24, NYA Records.

[140] *Final Report of the NYA,* 27, 29, iii–iv.

[141] Ibid., 131; "Report on Refugee Youth," c. December 1939, "Refugees (1939–1941)," box 14, Taussig Papers; NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 12, NYA Records; "Composite Table Showing Amount of Resettlement Work Done from January, 1941 through April, 1942," File 1001, microfilm 48, NRS Records, YIVO.

[142] "Composite Table Showing Amount of Resettlement Work Done from January, 1941 through April, 1942," NRS Records, YIVO; Littlefield to Winslow, October 24, 1941, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Puckett, *In the Shadow of Hitler,* 62; "Report of Monty Kandel, Gadsden, Ala.," c. December 29, 1941, File 1039, microfilm 50, NRS Records, YIVO.

[143] Littlefield to Winslow, October 24, 1941, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[144] Littlefield to Winslow, January 16, 1942, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records; Winslow to Littlefield, January 31, 1942, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[145] "Seek to Assist Jewish Youth, *Milwaukee Journal*, July 13, 1938; Winslow to Taussig, July 23, 1938, "Winslow, Thacher, 1937–1939," box 20, Taussig Papers; Kahn to Hirsch, September 13, 1938, "Correspondence and Related Material, 1938–1942," Georgia Farm School Records; Winslow to Taussig, February 4, 1939, "Reports, Miscellaneous Youth, 1935–1941," Taussig Papers; "Report on Refugee Youth," c. December 1939, box 14, "Refugees (1939–1941)," Taussig Papers.

[146] As late as December 1940 and January 1941 the *Jewish Exponent* ran a series of three articles praising the program and pointing out that it offered refugee youths training in job skills, a period to adjust to living in America and learn English, and a chance to start feeling at home in a region of the United States. "They Learn the Lessons of America," *Jewish Exponent*, December 27, 1940, January 3, 1941, and January 10, 1941.

[147] Wyman, *Paper Walls,* 14, 24–26.

[148] *Final Report of the NYA,* 180; list attached to letter from Littlefield to Winslow, June 26, 1940, "Refugee Youth—Inactive," NYA Records.

[149] National Refugee Service, "Refugees. . . . 1941: Annual Report of the NRS," "Number of Units and Individuals Resettled by District of Resettlement, January 1939–December 1941," 14, File 265, microfilm 12, NRS Records, YIVO.

[150] Ibid., 24–26; NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months," 24, NYA Records.

[151] NRS, "Report of the First 26 Months,"26, NYA Records.

[152] Winslow to Taussig, July 3, 1940, with attached undated report, "Experiment in Americanization," 16, "Winslow, Thacher 1940–1941," Box 20, Taussig Papers.

[153] Hubert Atherton and Robert Perin to Mary Hayes, September 29, 1939, E-40, box 1, NYA Records. In the letter Atherton, the state director, and Robert Perin, a camp director in New Mexico, described the isolated background of many youths in the camp and the effect of the isolation. This extreme example illustrates the limited life experience of many of the rural youth.

[154] *Final Report of the NYA,* 131.

[155] The story appears in books by Robert Dallek, Randall Woods, and Bryan Edward Stone and in an article by James Smallwood in the journal of the East Texas Historical Association that was reprinted in their fiftieth anniversary issue. Robert Dallek, *Lone Star Rising: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1908–1960* (New York, 1991), 170; Randall B. Woods: *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (New York, 2006), 139–40; Bryan Edward Stone, *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (Austin, 2010), 175–76; James Smallwood, "Operation Texas: Lyndon B. Johnson, the Jewish Question and the Nazi Holocaust," *East Texas Historical Journal* 47 (Spring 2009): 3–17 and 50 (Fall 2012) 88–106; "Operation Texas," Wikipedia, accessed January 15, 2003, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Texas; Saul J. Singer, "LBJ: An Unheralded Holocaust Hero," *Jewish Press*, March 1, 2003, accessed April 29, 2023, https://www.jewishpress.com/sections/features/features-on-jewish-world/lbj-an-unheralded-holocaust-hero/2023/03/01/.

[156] The workshop, "'Operation Texas': LBJ and the Holocaust," took place via Zoom on December 7, 2021. Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies, University of Texas at Dallas, "'Operation Texas': LBJ and the Holocaust," December 7, 2021, accessed May 30, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eW9uLT-EWPU. This paper is a result of research inspired by the workshop.

Witnessing History: Civil Rights and the Jews of Selma, Alabama

by

Amy K. Milligan *

"Well, here's one for your book," Leonard laughed. "You know, it's funny. I just told you that we never faced any antisemitism, but one night one of them [Ku Klux Klan members] showed up at our house. They were just tryin' to shake people up, make 'em scared. Mother and Daddy served the Blacks in their store, and we were Jews, so, you know, they didn't like us." He paused and took a breath. "One night, one of them KKK guys showed up at our house, bangin' on the door in the middle of the night. Scared the shit outta us. Daddy opened the door and just stood there, probably thought he was gonna see a cross burning on our lawn. The idiot in the sheet yelled at him and then Daddy, well . . ." Leonard paused for dramatic effect, knowing that I could not anticipate the way the story would turn. "He looked him in the eyes, right through the holes he had cut in that goddamn sheet, and he said, 'Go home, John. I sold you that sheet last week.' And that robed idiot ran for the hills, straight across our lawn. Daddy closed the door and then he sat there for the rest of the night with his back against the door, holdin' his gun. Mother made us children sleep in the bathtub. But he never did come back, except to shop in our store. But he didn't never buy another sheet from us."[1]

Leonard's description of an encounter with the KKK in Selma stood out among my interviews. I have spent the last seven years collecting oral histories from Jews who live or have lived in Selma. When I asked these individuals directly about whether Jews in Selma had trouble with

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antisemitism, the KKK, or the White Citizens' Council (WCC), almost unanimously they responded that Selma was a great place to be Jewish—and I knew they earnestly meant it. Yet, as our conversations developed, several stories like Leonard's emerged, leaving me to wonder about the ways in which whiteness and Jewishness intersected and how the Jews of Selma understood their role during and after the civil rights movement.[2]

In this essay, I trace the evolution of white supremacy in Selma from the KKK to the WCC, discuss the various stances on integration espoused by Selma's Jews, and assess how Selma's Jews perceived their experiences as unique in comparison to other southern communities that also experienced the civil rights movement.

Ethnography, Folklore, and Interviews

I write as a qualitative ethnographer, folklorist, and historian. Since 2017 I have recorded over two hundred hours of interviews with informed consent that form the backbone of a larger manuscript on the Jews of Selma. These interviews are supplemented by archival and textual sources that contextualize the experiences of those who lived in Selma, including a data set collected by then-student sociologist Marshall Bloom during the 1960s. In this essay, I analyze seventy-two interviews conducted between 2018 and 2022. The interviewees—thirty-nine women and thirty-three men—ranged in age from seventy to ninety-six years old. All lived in Selma during the civil rights movement. Presently only three Jews still reside in the city. As part of the larger research informed consent process standard within my field, interviewees were offered the choice to use a pseudonym. Many chose to do so, and I have honored their requests in this text.

As a folklorist and ethnographer, I work with memory—something that can shift and change shape with time. I have contextualized the memories of those whom I interviewed with historical details, but I also have shared their unedited recollections, making note when they have misremembered facts. As a folklorist, I do this because I understand that memory shapes our decisions and the ways in which we approach the world, even if it is not the factual truth. The stories that we are told and that we tell ourselves and others become our personal reality, and it is imperative that we continue to interrogate these narratives for truth. I

offer the memories of my interviewees here as their personal beliefs, assessing them for truth and accuracy against the historical backdrop in which they exist.[3]

Degrees of Whiteness: From the KKK to the WCC

The Ku Klux Klan has a long history in Alabama.[4] After World War I, the Klan experienced national and statewide renewals.[5] American society typically sees this type of xenophobic pushback and marginalization of cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious minorities around economic and social conflicts, especially after wartimes or during times of cultural or political dissonance. Once again, postwar white Americans became distrustful of anything or anyone they perceived as foreign or unchristian. Although most of Selma's Jews had resided in the United States for generations, an influx of eastern European Jews occurred between 1880 and 1920. As the Klan fixated on proving things to be "100 percent American," these new Americans were aware of the fragility of their whiteness as both immigrants and Jews. One interviewee, Marty, a seventy-two-year-old retired educator, shrugged as he reflected on his family: "at least we looked white." He continued, "In Selma there were whites and Blacks. And the Blacks were Christians. And the whites were Christians, too, except for the Jews. So in Selma there were whites, Blacks, and Jews. It doesn't really make sense, and the Jews were white, but also not a hundred percent in the white community. You follow?"[6] Marty described what sociologists call provisional whiteness, a label that reflects how some immigrant or ethnic communities are afforded the privileges and power of whiteness by complying with white narratives and upholding the social structures of white supremacy. However, at tension points, this whiteness can be lost or contested.[7]

For American Jews, racial categorization has historically been complicated.[8] When looking specifically at Selma, for example, 1830 and 1840 city census data divided the population of the city into two categories: white and Black, categorizing Jews as Black.[9] By 1870, these categories expanded to include white, enslaved Black individuals (on the census labeled "slaves"), Black freed people, and Hebrews.[10] Not until the early 1920s were Jews regularly categorized as white on city documents.

The evolution of the privileges of provisional whiteness afforded to Jews throughout the United States allowed Selma's Jews to become

involved in civic and local government leadership, as well as to own shops and businesses that filled the downtown streets and flourished within white southern society. Selma's Jews were not reminded of their societal difference until the resurrection of the KKK in the 1910s. Initially the city held the Klan at arm's length. Selma had large Catholic and Jewish populations—both groups targeted by the Klan—and although the Black community certainly would not agree, white citizens believed that Selma acted relatively fairly to its Black population, holding onto a misguided and racist belief that Black individuals accepted segregation and should be satisfied with their situation.

As the Klan gained power, many of Selma's white citizens believed they were morally above its divisive and violent tactics. On January 10, 1923, in a prominently placed article, the *Selma Times-Journal* quoted local Kiwanis President W. B. Craig: "there is no room for bigotry in Selma. Let's laugh the Ku Klux Klan out of America."[11] Shortly thereafter, the Kiwanis, American Legion, the Selma Bar, and the Selma Medical Association issued a joint "Statement in Opposition to the Ku Klux Klan in Selma," which they ran as a full-page advertisement "to demonstrate that they [were] against the mask and the flowing robe." They called on citizens to recognize that "the Klan can serve no necessary purpose in this City and may lead to untold harm in upsetting the relations of goodwill now existing among neighbors and friends." They concluded by calling on faith groups, noticeably including Jews and Catholics: "We devoutly hope that all classes and creeds among our people, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Christians, Catholics, Jews and all, may continue to find in our community's bounds the fullest social, civil, and religious freedom and that all elements and all faiths may continue to stand together in behalf of good will, good neighborliness, good citizenship, and a generous charity that reaches to the community's utmost needs." Two days later, the paper's editorial announced, "Selma has no room within her confines for that ugly malevolent institution of the devil known as Ku Kluxisms, and her citizenship has risen almost as one man to speak in thunder tones against this nursery of suspicion and hate gaining a foothold in her midst." The Selma City Council, a signatory of the original statement, responded by banning the wearing of masks, an action aimed at preventing Klan members from hooding in public and thereby attempting to hide their identities.[12]

Selma Times-Journal*, May 18, 1923. (Newspapers.com.)*

Were one only to look at the newspaper, local opposition to the Klan seemed clear. Yet this is misleading. By December 1923, a provisional Klan chapter organized in Dallas County, and shortly thereafter two hundred new members were initiated at a ceremony held on Orrville Road. By 1926, Alabama's Klan succeeded in electing two members to public office: Governor Bibb Graves and Senator Hugo Black.[13] Locally the Klan held steady, evoking fear in Selma's citizen minorities and influencing local politics and business. Even the American Legion came under attack by the statewide Klan when it chose Moritz Frohlich, a Jewish lawyer from Selma, to represent them on the national executive committee. Frohlich's presence suggested ludicrously to the Klan that the American Legion was no longer "100 percent American."

World War II brought important changes to the city. Selma's economy dramatically changed when Craig Airfield opened nearby. The agricultural economy experienced a downturn, and Black farmers sought employment in the city. Selma, which had previously been 90 percent white, now demographically split almost equally between its Black and white populations.[14] As the city's demographics changed, the white citizens of Selma supported "separate but *more* equal" facilities. One interviewee, Harriet, an eighty-eight-year-old retired writer, described these changes: "There was a new Black high school, new Black churches, new athletics for Blacks. Things were changing real fast, and the Jewish community knew it, too."[15]

Although Jewish businesses had engaged with Black patrons previously, new Jewish shops opened in what Harriet referred to as "the Black part of town," and downtown shops engaged openly with Black clientele, several also employing Black salespeople. In a 2021 interview, Claire recalls her memories of shopping in Jewish stores as a young Black girl. She reminisced: "I remember goin' into Barton's [department store] with my mama. She was a cook, and that white family paid her checks. But we couldn't cash 'em 'cause Mama didn't have a bank account. But the Bartons always took care of us. They cashed her checks every week, then we'd shop a little in their store. They made us feel welcome even though we was different races." She paused in reflection before adding, "I think Jews understood a little bit better, you know, gettin' what it's like to have people hatin' you, least that's how I always felt." We nod at each other and then her eyes sparkle. She laughs, "One more thing I

remember. The Jewish stores? They had the best Christmas displays in town!"[16]

Despite some positive interactions like Claire described, Selma's citizens knew their city contained racial tensions long before it became a lightning rod for the civil rights movement. On April 26, 1953, the *Selma Times-Journal* fanned the flames of racism that had been brewing in the city since the 1940s with the headline "Attack Foiled by Young Mother in Bout with Negro; Invader Disarmed and Chased from Home." The story especially caught the city's attention because the woman in question was Jean Rockwell, the mayor's daughter. Rockwell was allegedly attacked by a Black man while alone in her apartment with her two small children. Although numerous arrests were initially made, Rockwell did not identify any of the men as her attacker.[17]

A comparable report had appeared a month earlier, and nine similar reports from other women followed Rockwell's alleged attack. The city filled with rumors, fear, and gossip. One interviewee, Sarah, a seventy-six-year-old retiree, remembered, "You didn't know who to believe. I was a young woman, and a Jew no less. My parents were afraid I would be raped. Their fear became my fear."[18] Several Black community organizations, including the Elks and Veterans of Foreign Wars, offered rewards for the capture of the attacker, but white Selmians largely overlooked their effort. On May 16, William Earle Fikes, an intellectually disabled man who worked at a local garage, was arrested after being persuaded to confess to the crimes.[19] Ultimately, Fikes received a sentence of ninety-nine years in prison but, to the surprise of the white community, escaped the electric chair. The trial mobilized Selma's Black community and connected them for the first time to national resources like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which supported Fikes throughout his trial.

The division and mistrust between Black and white Selmians continued to escalate, and white politicians harnessed these fears for political gain. For example, Walter Given announced in a campaign speech that the NAACP aimed "to open the doors of our white women to Negro men."[20] He used this type of fearmongering racism to secure election as Dallas County's state senator and later organized WCCs across the Black Belt.[21] When he became president of the statewide WCC in 1958, he moved its headquarters from Montgomery to Selma—a nod to the fact that Selma's

WCC had been the first in Alabama. Its creation, largely in reaction to the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas,* appeared on the cover of the *Selma-Times Journal* on November 28, 1954. The article announced a meeting to "reveal [a] plan of defense for segregation." The call for action indicated that "the white population in this county controls the money and this is an advantage that the Council will use in a fight to legally maintain complete segregation of the races." The author of the article explained that they intended to make it difficult or impossible for any Black community members who advocated for desegregation to "find and hold a job, get credit, or renew a mortgage." Anticipating backlash, the group demurred: "we are not anti-Negro; we only want segregation maintained. And we are not vigilantes. We will operate openly, and violence is the furthest thing from the minds of the council members. We have lived with Negroes all of these years without trouble, and it is our utmost desire to continue this happy relationship but on a segregated basis."[22] An estimated 1,200 white men gathered at the Dallas County Courthouse the next night, where over six hundred white Selmians paid three dollars each to join the organization.

Selma's WCC, modeled after the organizations in Mississippi, was replicated throughout the state as white citizens joined together to oppose integration. These councils perceived themselves as a highbrow and nonviolent alternative to the KKK. Unlike the noisy parades, harassment, vandalism, and violence of the Klan, WCCs used boycotts, economic pressures, and tactics like firing those who tried to register Black voters. Although not formally sanctioning violence, violent rhetoric filled their meetings and writings, laying the groundwork for additional racial conflict.

Selma's WCC actively advertised that, unlike the Klan, it was open to Jewish and Catholic members. The inclusion of Jews stood in opposition to other Alabama WCCs that contested the whiteness of Jews and rejected Jewish membership. In February 1956, several northern Alabama WCCs distributed antisemitic pamphlets that blamed Jews for integration. Shortly thereafter, the North Alabama Citizens' Council began requiring that members have a "belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ."[23] The debate around allowing Jewish membership split Alabama's WCCs. Birmingham's Asa E. Carter led the northern Alabama group, which maintained that those who admitted Jews into the group were connecting with the

"anti-Christ, atheistic elements with Communist ideologies who [used] the Negroes as a tool." The other group, led by Alabama senator Sam Engelhardt of Macon County, noted that if WCCs excluded Jews, "we won't have anybody left to help us."[24] In a letter to the *Selma Times-Journal*, cosigned by at least one Jewish WCC member, WCC leaders "repudiate[d]" antisemitism because it had "no place and definitely [was] not a part of our organization" and that the only requirement for council membership was "to be a white, law-abiding citizen."[25]

Selma's WCC made its first big move in August 1955 after twenty-nine Black parents signed a petition to the Selma school board calling for the integration of public schools. Immediately, eight of the signatories lost their jobs, followed soon after by eight additional firings. This pressure prompted five individuals to retract their signatures, maintaining that they did not understand the petition when they signed it. The council continued applying economic and social pressure on signatories, silencing their voices through figurative strangulation. The WCC then acted against John Smitherman, a local Black grocer. Smitherman stopped carrying Cloverleaf Creamery items in his store after Cloverleaf fired Joseph Holmes for signing the petition. The creamery sent a white woman to investigate why sales had declined so dramatically. Smitherman, caught off guard, gave the woman his phone number and asked her to call him later to discuss the matter—an action she misconstrued and misrepresented as an indication of his sexual desire.[26]

Days later, William D. Bailey, a local police officer, and several accomplices set fire to what they believed was Smitherman's home. Upon learning that they had ignited the wrong house, they returned the next night and fired shots into Smitherman's home, injuring his wife, Helena. Bailey and his accomplices were temporarily jailed but not indicted, and the charges were eventually dropped. Days later, Bailey committed suicide. Along with additional harassment of those who signed the petition, these actions sent a clear message about how the white community would protect the guilty among them at the expense of innocent Black individuals, as well as the depths of law enforcement's racism and complicity.[27] Despite not formally espousing violence, the message of the council was clear: do not cross us.

While the WCC flexed its power over the Black community, Selma's Jews became increasingly aware of what was happening to Jews around

the state. Their concern centered around the boycott of Jewish shops; rising antisemitism and the potential (whether realized or not) for violence against Jews; the destruction or bombing of synagogues and other buildings; and the blackballing of Jews from organizations and society groups. The feeling that it was worse somewhere else elicited a romanticized notion in Selma that kept many of Selma's Jews feeling as if they ought to be thankful for how good life was for them in Selma. They certainly could see what was happening elsewhere to Jews, as well as what happened when individuals transgressed white societal norms in their city. Therefore, like most white southerners, they stayed within the boundaries of their segregated world.

In reflecting on this time, interviewees presented idyllic memories of growing up in Selma. For example, seventy-four-year-old retired businessman Alan contrasted his experience in Selma with that of Jews throughout the Deep South: "We had it real good in Selma. I mean, when you think about what was happening to other Jews, we knew we were accepted in Selma, so we'd have been fools to want to live somewhere else."[28] In her interview, Helen, an eighty-two-year-old homemaker, recalled the fear her family felt about attempted synagogue bombings. She recounted, "They were blowing synagogues up, you know. Dynamite and guns." She remembered, "You know that story about the kid who shot up the temple [in Gadsden, Alabama] during prayer and those guys were just left bleeding out. So, yeah, living in Selma was like living in Mayberry," referencing the fictional community portrayed on the *Andy Griffith Show*.[29]

Indeed, the Gadsden tragedy particularly impacted the perceived security of Selma's Jews and was frequently mentioned in interviews. Just two and a half hours north of Selma, Gadsden's Congregation Beth Israel was another small Jewish synagogue comparable to Selma's Temple Mishkan Israel. On March 26, 1960, as the congregation gathered to dedicate a new addition to their building, a Molotov cocktail came crashing through the window, although it failed to ignite. The congregation scrambled, and sixteen-year-old Jerry Hunt circled the building with a .22 caliber rifle and fired several shots before driving away. Two members of the congregation, Alvin Lowi and Alan Cohn, were shot and seriously wounded although, thankfully, both survived the attack. As the terrorized congregation waited for the police, they sang "Bless this House" together, eventually finishing their dedication service as an act of steadfastness and

Selma Times-Journal,
March 27, 1960.
(Newspapers.com.)

bravery. As reports came out after Hunt's arrest, he confessed that he had gone to a rally for John Crommelin, a local antisemitic politician. He also recounted that after losing a game of chess to a local Jewish boy, he decided to paint red swastikas on a local Jewish store and later determined to attack the temple.[30]

Interviewees also frequently referenced news of the attempted synagogue bombing in Birmingham on April 28, 1958, as eliciting fear among Selma's Jews. Although the fifty-four sticks of dynamite set outside of the building failed to explode, the threat of violence was imminent and real, as were the swastikas painted on Temple Beth-El. Interviewees expressed

clear awareness of the increasing discrimination and attacks against Jews across the state. Other instances of antisemitic violence mentioned in interviews included the attempted bombing at Temple Emanuel in Gastonia, North Carolina; a dynamite explosion at Miami, Florida's Temple Beth El; the bombing of the Jewish Community Center of Nashville, Tennessee; a second homemade bomb at Temple Beth-El in Birmingham; the bombing of the Jewish Center of Jacksonville, Florida; and the bombing of The Temple in Atlanta, Georgia, by the "Confederate Underground," an event so newsworthy that President Dwight Eisenhower released a statement denouncing the violence. The frequency with which interviewees identified these events speaks to the weight they exerted in the moment and in their memories.

Selma's Jews and Integration

When it came to integration, where did Selma's Jews stand?[31] The simple answer is, like most white southerners, they were divided. Still, their experiences differed from other white Selmians because of the space that they occupied between the Black and white Christian populations of their city. They received the economic, political, and social benefits of being white, but, like other Jews in the South and throughout the United States, their Jewishness overlays their experiences of whiteness.

In 1965, one hundred Jews lived in Selma, all of whom held membership at Temple Mishkan Israel. Fifty-five were of German Jewish descent and boasted long family roots in the city; twenty-one were eastern European immigrants or their children; eleven had moved to Selma from the Northeast; and thirteen were Holocaust refugees who had been resettled in Selma. The majority identified as moderates or moderate integrationists (60 percent), liberals (15 percent), or ambivalent (5 percent). Those identifying as liberal were more likely to come from the Northeast, to have lived outside of the South, and to work in businesses that were not customer service oriented. In a 1966 survey of the entire temple membership, nearly all Jewish women and most of Selma's store owners classified themselves as moderates.[32]

Twenty percent of the Jewish community identified as segregationists. However, their voices were the loudest, influencing the public perception of Jewish opinions. As student sociologist Marshall Bloom wrote in his 1966 thesis, "since their [segregationist] opinions conform to

local norms, they do not feel they are risking anything by talking." However, in oral histories conducted during the civil rights movement, numerous Temple Mishkan Israel members called their segregationist peers negative terms like "extremists" and "asses," suggesting that they were not representative of the larger Jewish community.[33] Selma's Jewish segregationists were predominantly male, the descendants of Selma's old German Jewish families, and highly assimilated southerners. Almost all these men belonged to the WCC. When interviewed in 1966, they articulated a far stronger sense of being Alabamian than they did of being Jewish, which often manifested as negative feelings towards Jews outside of the South. These social identities are comparable to other southern Jewish segregationists.[34]

These men especially articulated anger and distrust toward B'nai B'rith, a long-standing national Jewish fraternal organization that had been publicly discussing integration in partnership with other national organizations like the Anti-Defamation League. Many southern Jews, even those who were not segregationists, believed that B'nai B'rith's stance might stimulate antisemitism. As one interviewee told Bloom in 1966, "I hate northern Jews. They threw us to the wolves. B'nai B'rith told us there were more Jews in one block in Brooklyn than in Alabama," alluding to feeling invisible as a Jew in the Deep South.[35]

In January 1956, members of Selma's B'nai B'rith lodge issued a public statement asking "northern Jewish groups" to stop intervening in affairs outside of Jewish issues. They wrote, "Jewish Citizens of Selma Alabama . . . vigorously protest the various actions taken, and literature published by the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League and the constituent agencies of the National Community Advisory Council in its support of desegregation."[36] This letter was followed in 1960 by another written to and published in the *Montgomery Advertiser*, undersigned by ten of Selma's Jewish community members expressing "complete disapproval" of the American Jewish Congress's request that Georgia's governor pardon Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This letter stressed that there was "not a congress or governing body of American Jewery [*sic*]," nor one entity that speaks "for all people of Jewish faith," especially not the American Jewish Congress, which they accused of being "composed of so-called 'liberals' residing chiefly in the larger eastern cities" and with "no membership that we know of in the South [that]

does not represent the thinking of the vast majority of southern citizens, whether Jewish or Christian."[37] Arthur J. Lewis and Sol H. Tepper, respectively the most vocal Jewish integrationist and the most vocal Jewish segregationist in the city, signed the letter, indicating that the distrust of northern and outsider meddling in southern affairs was a topic about which they agreed.

Seventy-three-year-old Janet, a self-identified moderate, retired businesswoman, and enthusiastic community volunteer, explained this skepticism: "They came on in with guns ablazin' and they didn't know the lay of the land. They didn't stop for a minute to think about what a mess they left behind for us to clean up. I agreed with their stance, but they didn't care to know us, the ones they left behind in their wake."[38] Many interviewees expressed the same sentiment that when representatives of northern Jewish organizations came to Selma proudly identifying themselves as Jewish, they made it difficult for the local non-Jewish community

Tepper's Store at Broad Street and Water Avenue, Selma, c. 1955–1960.
(Courtesy of the Selma – Dallas County Library.)

to distinguish between the opinions of national or northern-based organizations and local Jews. Alan observed, "Our neighbors were asking questions and we didn't even know what [the northern Jewish groups] were out there doing or saying, but they said it on behalf of all Jews, on our behalf, without knowing us."[39] Marty added, "They made a lot of false assumptions about the South. The worst part is that I actually agreed with them, politically, you know. I just didn't agree with how they did it."[40]

Selma was home to one of the most infamous and vocal southern Jewish segregationists, Sol Tepper. In contrast to Georgia's Charles Bloch and South Carolina's Sol Blatt, who held advanced degrees and conducted high-profile legal and political careers, Tepper, who is not identified with a pseudonym, remained in Selma after serving in World War II and worked in the family business. He was a prominent member of the local WCC and author of countless inflammatory opinion pieces and editorials. An active member of Temple Mishkan Israel, he served several terms as congregational president. For Tepper, segregation was a Jewish issue. In one of his letters to Jewish integrationists, he observed, "I am proud of my Jewish heritage. I am not proud that you call yourself a Jew. In fact, I say you are not." Although most members of Temple Mishkan Israel considered his views radical, Tepper retained his synagogue membership. Sarah commented, "where else could he go? There weren't other synagogues. We couldn't turn a Jew away because we didn't agree with him. But good God, he was just so vocal about his ideas."[41]

In 1963 Tepper established the Committee for the Economic Improvement of Colored People. The group mailed letters and published advertisements in northern newspapers offering to "help move Negroes to your city. . . . [W]e can supply any number that you desire." The group attempted to cloak itself in respectability and claimed it was "helping" Black Selmians. In their campaign, they wrote, "The colored people of the South have not had the opportunities for advancement which they are capable of attaining. . . . [W]e have concluded that your area has a labor shortage and since you have set an example of employment regardless of race and your citizens believe in equal opportunities for all, we would like to send a number of our colored people to your area for employment. Please let us know the number needed."[42] Unsurprisingly, no one took Tepper and his committee up on their offer. The committee argued this

lack of response proved that northern integrationists were unready to integrate in the ways they pressed southern cities to do.

Tepper has captured the American imagination, not because of his Jewishness but because of the ways in which he is an easily identifiable villain. For example, National Public Radio released a serialized podcast in 2019 called *White Lies* that investigated the 1965 cold case of Rev. James Reeb, a Unitarian minister who was beaten to death by segregationists in Selma. The podcast understandably wove Tepper's story throughout, as it is difficult to talk about civil rights in Selma without including one of the loudest antagonistic voices. Ultimately, Tepper stood as part of the sheriff's posse on Bloody Sunday at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, poised to attack, and was involved in the violent riots that ensued. He serves as the perfect foil to the revered image of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marching with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Within American Jewish narratives, the counterpoint of Tepper and Heschel is utilized as a reminder of the coexistence of good and bad in the Jewish experience.

However, Heschel was not a Selmian, although his role remains an important one in the larger history of Jews and civil rights. The Lewis family provides the lesser-known local Jewish counterpoint to Tepper. They were one of the only white families willing to take a definitive and public stance for integration within the Jewish community as well as within the city. As the conflict heated in Selma, their experience reinforced the Jewish community's silence.[43] CBS Radio interviewed three Selmians under pseudonyms, two of whom were Jewish. Arthur Lewis, who appeared as "Herbert Golden" on the program, urged his fellow Selmians to "maintain law and order." After the interview, he and his wife Muriel wrote a private letter to friends stating their position as moderates and asking for racial harmony. The WCC illegally opened the letter prior to its delivery, photocopied, and widely distributed it throughout the city. This disclosure resulted in significant harassment of the Lewises: midnight phone calls, the contentious end of long-time friendships and business partnerships; a boycott of their automobile business; and hate mailings that were photocopied and distributed around Selma. This hate literature utilized classic antisemitic tropes and called Arthur "an oily, greasy Kike who became rich during World War II by working people for starvation wages."[44]

In their letter, the Lewises noted that Bloody Sunday prompted them to finally speak out: "Until the riot on the bridge on our terrible black

Marchers south of the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 21, 1965, the first day of the Selma to Montgomery March. Front row: John Lewis, unidentified woman, Ralph Abernathy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Bunche, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, F. D. Reese. Note the man at far right in a yarmulke, or "freedom cap." (Courtesy of the Alabama Department of Archives and History. Donated by the Alabama Media Group. Photograph by William McCormick, Huntsville Times.*)*

Sunday we kept our views quiet." They closed their letter: "We are confused, more than ever tonight. We must live with ourselves, but we also want to live here. It would be so easy to be quiet, but it would not let us sleep any easier than we do now. All we ask from you is partial understanding, and compassion." They concluded, demonstrating a keen awareness of the danger in which their letter placed them, "We ask that you do not show it to your friends or even talk about it; this information is for the people who mean something important to us." Soon after, fifty-three-year-old Arthur sustained two heart attacks, the second of which ended his life. Muriel held the harassers responsible for her husband's death: "All this carrying on just brought [what] killed him."[45] Even if Tepper lacked the backing of the majority of Selma's Jews, a public posse stood behind his beliefs. In contrast, Arthur and Muriel Lewis stood publicly alone.

Unlike the Lewises, the rest of Selma's Jewish integrationists and moderates stayed publicly silent on civil rights. The temple took no official stance and issued no public statements. Despite 80 percent of those surveyed in 1966 perceiving themselves and their families as integrationists (in contrast to an estimated 30 percent of the general white population), they remained tightlipped.[46] They spoke about the fear they felt as being "next in line," articulating an acute understanding of their

Arthur J. Lewis (right) receiving award from Joe N. Greene, Birmingham Red Cross, 1955. (Courtesy of Amy K. Milligan.)

otherness as Jews, even in a community that largely accepted them.[47] In particular, they felt concerned about the boycott of white merchants by Black activists and how it directly impacted the sales of Jewish stores, especially those with a predominantly Black clientele. The threat of losing their remaining customers loomed large, prompting most of Selma's Jewish business owners to remain silent to align with neither integrationists nor segregationists. Both moderates and those who called themselves ambivalent generally hid their beliefs within the Jewish and general communities.

Temple Mishkan Israel became heavily involved in the resettlement efforts of the United Service for New Americans (USNA) program after the Holocaust, and the thirteen Holocaust refugees who lived in Selma overwhelmingly sympathized with the Black community, enumerating the similarities that they saw between how Hitler treated Jews and the treatment of Black Americans. However, they were quiet about their beliefs, the least likely to be vocal about integration, but simultaneously felt the most strongly about its importance.[48] The swirl of antisemitic rhetoric, nationally and locally, impacted the Holocaust refugees and their willingness to speak out. When interviewed in 1966, one Holocaust refugee proclaimed, "I'm on the side of the Negroes. How could I not?"[49] Despite these beliefs, the refugees' sense of precarity deeply shaped their involvement in the civil rights movement. In his 1966 interview, another interviewee told Bloom, "If I were young, I would do something." His wife retorted, "No, you wouldn't." And he replied, implying that he at least desired involvement: "Well, maybe I wouldn't, but . . ." The couple was reluctant to be interviewed, citing concerns for the safety of their family and fear about what would happen if others learned about their sympathetic beliefs.[50] In a private conversation in 2019, one of Selma's Holocaust refugees, Jacob, discussed experiencing similar anxiety: "We had the most to lose. We already were poor, and our psyche [was] broken. I wanted to do something." He paused for a moment, then continued, "I should have done something. But I didn't. That's the truth. I didn't. But I am sorry."[51]

One particularly difficult issue for Selma's resettled refugees to navigate during the civil rights movement was the rhetoric of comparing Bloody Sunday and the Holocaust. In the days immediately following Bloody Sunday, ABC televised *The Nuremberg Trials*. Midway through the

Members of Selma's resettled refugee community.
Frieda Kahn, aged sixteen, c. 1918; Hermann Berger, aged twenty-two, c. 1926;
Hermann and Frieda Berger outside the Bendersky's Store in Selma, n.d.
(Courtesy of the Alabama Holocaust Education Center,
Birmingham. Donated by Hanna Berger.)

documentary, a news broadcast interrupted with a long segment about Bloody Sunday, helping viewers link the violence and hate of the two events. The next day, numerous individuals from across the United States traveled to Selma and overran the streets. No rental cars were to be found, and people began caravanning and carpooling from Montgomery's airport to Selma. Religious identity motivated many of these activists to join the cause, including Jews who felt it especially incumbent on them to participate. They could not stand by and watch hate, injustice, violence, and racism, turning a blind eye like had been turned to Jews during the Holocaust. While these individuals certainly were meritorious in their dedication and bravery, it left Selma's Holocaust refugees feeling unmoored. Many were not in the psychological or economic state in which they felt that they could engage freely with the movement. Holocaust education had not yet entered the American lexicon, and they were watching others (many without full knowledge of their experiences) interpret their trauma and link it to the civil rights movement. Although their lived experiences were why they privately identified as integrationists, they felt uncertain about the application of the Holocaust as a device, especially by those who knew little or nothing of their stories or trauma.

Although public silence emanated from Temple Mishkan Israel, individuals expressed strong feelings about the role that the temple and its members should play. Nancy, a retired women's clothing buyer, reflected, "Sol [Tepper] was a piece of scum. He was a racist, a terrible man. We don't get to pick who is in our community, but we do have to deal with them. The Jewish community is just so small, and he was part of it." She reminisced about the Lewis family: "It was just hard. I was young. I look back now and wish I had been more like them, but I did the things that I could, even if they weren't as public." At ninety-five years old, she confessed for the first time to her family that she accompanied the family maid, Sadie, to the courthouse to help her sign up to vote. She recalled thinking, "I'm gonna see that she's not intimidated, and she'll get to vote." When Sadie was turned away, Nancy stood her ground and told them, "Do you know who my daddy is? Sadie's [part of my] family. She gets to vote." In the end, she approached the rest of the line of registering voters and told them, "You tell me if they give you trouble. I'll get the paper to publish the names of these bigots who are preventing Blacks from voting."[52] She admitted that she knew she was leaving for graduate school

soon and that if she were to have stayed in Selma, she did not know if she could have been quite as brave.

Seventy-six-year-old Ellen, a recently retired social worker, told a similar story about her quiet protest: "I was more liberal. I wanted to take up for the Blacks and stand up for their rights, and I was a fresh-faced college girl at a school in the North, so I thought I knew something." She began writing letters to the local paper: "You are discriminating because there are nothing but dirt roads in the Black section and all these paved and gold streets for the whites." Although afraid to sign her name to the letters, she continued to send them. After about two months, the city paved Green Street, which ran through a Black neighborhood. Her focus turned to the rabbi, and she wrote to him asking him to speak out: "'The Jews were discriminated against, and now you are discriminating against Blacks.' I was so mad. But he did nothing."[53]

Indeed, Temple Mishkan Israel's Rabbi Lothar Lubasch remained silent. Lubasch, identified here without pseudonym, had just arrived in the city in 1959. He had fled to the United States in 1937 from Hitler's Germany and took several pulpits before arriving in Selma, where he served from 1959 until his retirement in 1975. Lubasch was the longest-serving rabbi in the history of Temple Mishkan Israel and had the distinction of being the temple's last full-time rabbi. He accepted the pulpit appointment at the age of sixty-three and retired at age seventy-nine, also making him one of Selma's oldest rabbis. He died one year after retirement.

The congregation looked to Lubasch for guidance, but he offered no public statements and little private guidance. He did not speak about race or civil rights from the pulpit, nor did he want the temple to acknowledge the movement in any way. When physician Zanvel Klein visited Selma as part of the Medical Committee for Human Rights, he noted that Lubasch did not seem to correlate his experiences in Nazi Germany with that of the Black population of Selma, and he responded with "every cliché in the book, from Negro irresponsibility to 'would you marry one?'" In this way, Lubasch stood in contrast to the other Holocaust refugees in Selma, who remained united, albeit publicly silent, about supporting integration. During his visit, Klein and his associates were invited by two of these refugee families for dinner, which he called "a brave act" given their somewhat precarious experiences as refugees. Klein recalls that at one dinner a woman and her daughter hosted them, but her husband was not present

Rabbi Lothar Lubasch, 1965.
(Judson College Year Book. Courtesy of Amy K. Milligan.)

because he was "in the hospital suffering from severe depression" brought on, they suspected, by the successful boycott that had closed his family's business.[54]

The reasons for Lubasch's silence remain unknown, but in interviews, Selma's Jews commented on how the resurgence of the Klan across Alabama undergirded their silence and lack of action, even for those who identified as integrationists. For example, on August 2, 1958, fifty cars filled with Klan members arrived for a nighttime "parade" through Selma's Black neighborhoods, blasting their horns and yelling from the cars in reaction to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s arrival to speak at the Baptist Sunday school. Although the city had refused to issue parade permits to the Klan (as well as to the delegation sent to welcome King), the police did not arrest members of the motorcade, insisting that it was not a parade because it did not include a marching band. Other fear-inducing tactics included erecting "welcome signs" on the roads leading into Selma painted with sawmill blades dripping with blood from their teeth. Although technically illegal, these signs were not removed because Governor John Patterson, whom the Klan supported, insisted that the signs remain. The police and governor essentially issued the Klan a green light to terrorize citizens.

By March 7, 1965, when Bloody Sunday became the turning point of the civil rights movement, Jewish activists from across the country poured into the city.[55] The prominent presence of Jews in the march resulted in some Black freedom marchers wearing yarmulkes, which they called "freedom caps," symbolizing solidarity and oneness under God and honoring the participating rabbis present. But white and Black Selmians were confused by these Jewish protestors—were they there because the temple had invited them; were they part of the temple; did this mean that Selma's Jews supported the march; did the temple hand out yarmulkes to Black freedom marchers? Tensions heightened and the lines blurred between local and national voices, and local Jews felt certain that, once again, outsiders were speaking on their behalf. Most Jews stayed at home and watched televised news coverage, but others left the city because they feared what might happen next. Shop owners closed their stores hoping they would not be looted, and yet another Jewish storeowner was hospitalized from the stress of the boycotts. The national coverage of Jews in the city depicted Heschel marching arm and arm with King, as well as Tepper standing at the foot of the bridge, weapon in hand, with the sheriff's posse. Yet, other than Tepper, Selma's Jews were not captured in this footage, even if the rest of America seemed to think that the images they saw on their television screens included members of Temple Mishkan Israel.

The March: Reactions and Impact

Journalist Gay Talese wrote, "Memphis was where Dr. King was murdered in 1968 by a white man, and yet that city had not been demonized as Selma had been after Bloody Sunday, even though on the latter occasion not a single demonstrator had been killed."[56] Indeed, within a short period, Selma went from a relatively unknown city in the Deep South to an iconic location for civil rights history. Historian Alston Fitts explained, "Selma's name has been etched indelibly into the nation's memory. Visitors to the city often ask to be shown the place where Bull Connor unleashed his dogs, which is in Birmingham; or where George Wallace stood in the schoolhouse door, an event in Tuscaloosa; or even where Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated, a Memphis tragedy. It is hard, sometimes, to convince them that every significant event in the history of the civil rights movement did not take place in this one small southern town."[57]

The *Selma Times-Journal* reported daily on the events that *did* happen in Selma. Roswell Leslie Falkenberry, the newspaper's editor, committed to reporting fairly and truthfully about what ensued, which led the WCC to attack him and the paper. The WCC believed that the paper openly attacked "white unity" and wanted to hold Falkenberry accountable. Despite significant threats, Falkenberry persisted with unbiased reporting.[58]

Tepper wrote extensively to the newspaper during this period, with so many letters that Falkenberry could not possibly publish them all. Still, the editor ran a representative sample of Tepper's correspondence so that he could offer differing perspectives. Moreover, he noted in his editorials that he respected Tepper's willingness to sign his name to his words. Despite Falkenberry's commitment to presenting unbiased accounts of events, Tepper accused the *Selma Times-Journal* of no longer being objective because it "furnished aid and comfort to this kinky-haired, thick-lipped, mulatto, race-baiter Martin Luther King."[59] Other WCC members also took issue with Falkenberry's reporting and called on local merchants to remove their advertising from his newspaper. Jewish business owners again felt caught in the crosshairs. In interviews they indicated that they supported freedom of the press but feared that continuing to advertise in the newspaper would result in being targeted by the WCC for additional boycotts.

In response to the WCC's pressure to withdraw advertising, prominent Jewish businessman Charles Hohenberg and another local businessman, Frank Wilson, called a meeting of "concerned moderates" at the Hotel Albert in April 1965. The group gathered more than 1,100 signatures on a petition, and on April 16, a special session of the city council heard the moderates' position. Their statement opened, "In light of recent developments in Alabama, we feel the business community has an obligation to speak out for what it believes to be right. The vast majority of the people in Alabama, like other responsible citizens throughout our nation, believe in law and order, and in the fair and just treatment of all their fellow citizens. They believe in obedience to the law regardless of their personal feelings about its specific merits. They believe in the basic human dignity of all people of all races." Several chambers of commerce, the Alabama Bankers Association, the Alabama Textile Manufacturers Association, and the Associated Industries of Alabama undersigned the

document, which ran as a full-page advertisement throughout the state. On the following page, local Selmians took out an advertisement endorsing the message. Numerous civic and business associations were listed, as well as individual signatories, including thirty-five of Selma's one hundred Jews.[60] These signatories provided the first public endorsement of moderate or liberal stances by a large number of Jews.

The city council reversed its stance on boycotting advertising with the newspaper, but not without significant contentiousness. During more than two hours of heated debate in which, as the paper reported, "Names were called, tempers flared, and voices became impassioned," the WCC demanded that the chamber's previous stance be re-endorsed because the new position paved the way for school integration.[61] During the arguments, Jerome Siegel, a member of Temple Mishkan Israel and the founder of the Committee of One Hundred, an organization designed to draw business and industry to the city, stepped forward and stood alongside McLean Pitts, the city attorney, to discuss the implications of such decisions on local industry. Siegel maintained that it was already difficult to attract and retain industry in the city and that these radical voices and actions were angering Hammermill and Dan River Mills, which were unhappy with the city's current politics. The withdrawal of such manufacturers could potentially threaten the city's already fragile economy. Still, Tepper and his followers dug in their heels, insisting that if the white community remained united behind Sheriff Jim Clark, they would defeat integration. Despite Tepper and the WCC's efforts, Selma's formerly all-white schools opened with thirty-one Black students on September 3, 1965.[62]

Navigating the Legacy

Selma's Jews existed in a locational heart of the civil rights conflict. Four key factors illuminated their experiences of the movement: (1) their perceptions of danger, (2) the impact of Holocaust refugees on their community response, (3) the testing of their provisional whiteness, and (4) their role in truth telling.

The Jews of Selma perceived themselves to be uniquely or especially in danger economically and physically. In reality, the fears that they experienced were similar to those articulated by Jews across the state who also feared that their businesses would be boycotted if they did not fall in line

with the white status quo. The repetition of these narratives among Selma's Jews reinforced the potential of this economic threat. Likewise, they perceived that they were potentially at higher risk for physical threats, especially as a small community, as they repeatedly discussed the attempted synagogue bombings, the Gadsden shooting, and concerns for their physical safety in a city with a KKK presence and a WCC that utilized violent rhetoric.

Regardless of whether the Jews of Selma faced imminent danger, they perceived themselves to be at risk. This perception of danger does not excuse inaction or negative actions, but it does offer context toward the psychological motivations and perceptions of the individuals involved. By drawing a contrast between themselves and other Jewish communities in cities at the heart of the civil rights movement, they perceived themselves to be at even higher risk. Although their experiences were similar to Jews across the state, Selma's Jews felt that their experiences differed from those of Jews in Montgomery and Birmingham, for example. As Alan explained: "Those were big cities, they had infrastructure, police, lots of citizens. Selma was a small town." Nancy echoed a similar sentiment: "We saw what was happening in the big cities, but when it happened here, I just don't think people can understand how small Selma is until they come here and [see] how spread out everything is."[63]

However, perhaps the greatest contributing factor of Selma Jews' heightened perception of risk comes from the presence of Tepper in their congregation. His antagonistic and provocative voice echoed throughout the entire state. Moreover, he proudly identified himself as a Jew *and* as a Jew from Selma, which drew unwanted attention to other members of the congregation who feared that they would be mistakenly aligned with Tepper's views. Simultaneously, they also feared speaking out against Tepper. In his interview, after a long pause, Marty noted: "Listen, how else can I say this? It wasn't a good look for us as Jews. We couldn't win either way we cut it." Leonard agreed: "It was bad enough what he was saying, but then he had to go and say 'And I'm a proud Jew from Selma, Alabama.' I cringe just thinking about it." He added: "The one thing I did respect, though, was that he had the balls to say it as himself and not hide behind a hood. Sol was himself. He said what he meant, and he meant what he said. I didn't agree with him, but I can respect that he was man

enough to say it to someone's face and not hide like a coward."[64] Because of the increased tension in the city caused by the presence of Tepper, the Jews of Selma perceived themselves to be at higher risk and had a heightened awareness of their instability, and, although other southern Jews were experiencing similar anxieties, Tepper's presence exacerbated their fears.[65]

The impact of the presence of Holocaust refugees in the community heightened Selma Jews' feelings of precarity. Interviewees repeatedly said that they had "never experienced antisemitism." While this was their self-perception, their interviews are filled with anecdotes and stories that suggested otherwise: at minimum, they experienced antisemitic microaggressions. After I considered the post-Holocaust stories of Selma, this tension came into focus. In a community that had willingly offered placement for a disproportionately high number of Holocaust refugees—Selma's seventy Jewish families resettled six refugee families in comparison to Birmingham's Jews, who resettled eleven families among their one thousand households—even the nonrefugee perceptions of antisemitism were predicated on experiences of the Holocaust.[66] Selma's Jews also contrasted their acceptance in their city with the experiences of Black Selmians, whom they believed to be mistreated. When compared with the Holocaust and racism, they believed that they had never experienced "true hatred."

Although they grew up feeling fully integrated into white society, during the 1960s Selma's Jews were reminded of their provisional whiteness. One only need to consider the tensions of the KKK and the WCCs across the state—all the KKK groups affirmed their hatred of Jews, whereas the councils literally divided over the issue of whether Jews were white enough to gain membership. These tensions, underscored by the fear of violence, demonstrated how, for many Jews in Selma, their whiteness was, seemingly for the first time in their lifetime, contested. Full awareness of this tension varied, nonetheless the stability which they had previously felt shifted. Aligning themselves with the Black community or with the white northern protestors called for a reckoning of their comfort and privilege. If they were "like them," they took on risk for what would happen after the protests ended. As retired entrepreneur Larry observed: "When they left, we were left behind, and we had to live with our neighbors. We already knew that Jews were being called niggers elsewhere, so

we clung to our whiteness. It isn't something my family is proud of, but it does make me more aware now as I do my own social justice work. It was a mistake, a big mistake, and one that we have to reckon with."[67]

Ultimately when outside activists and protestors departed, Selma was left to rebuild, shaken to its core on all levels by what had occurred. The Jewish community faced a difficult position as it moved forward. The greater American narrative of civil rights history proudly boasts about the Jewish involvement in the Selma marches, the role of Heschel and other northern rabbis, and the commitment of Jews to civil rights as born out of their understanding of *tikun olam*. Jewish schools, tourists, families, synagogues, and others come to Selma interested in the role of Jews in the movement, expecting to hear about the temple's involvement. Yet, that is not the story that can be truthfully told. Instead, congregation members have been called on to tell the larger American story of Jewish involvement in the civil rights movement while simultaneously holding themselves accountable for truth telling. This type of reckoning is one few of us will experience—one in which they retell the story of their congregation repeatedly, each time telling the truth of their community to a

Temple Mishkan Israel, Selma. (Photograph by and courtesy of Amy Milligan.)

surprised audience. Those who come to Selma are prepared to believe that Temple Mishkan Israel organized the Jews to support voting rights and integration. Rather, the temple carefully presents itself at the crossroads, telling a story of other Jews while also admitting that their congregation remained largely uninvolved, grappling with their temple's civil rights legacy while simultaneously interpreting a story, which is not necessarily their own. Moreover, as the congregation has aged, those left to tell the story were children at the time of the marches. Still, they hold themselves accountable for the truth of their temple's history.

When asked what Selma's Jewish civil rights legacy is, Janet offered a summation that captures the themes across my interviews. She earnestly began, "We live in a city that is defined by its very worst day." She shrugged sadly and offered a gentle smile. "Selma's a wonderful place if you come to know us, but not many people do." When I pressed her, she concluded:

> We live in a divided world. Instead of pointing fingers at Selma, maybe our story can help people learn that there are good and bad people everywhere, in all of our religions and races. Those that are especially good or especially bad are easy to pick out. But all those other people in the middle, the majority, that is who we really need to worry about. I wish my family had done something to help during civil rights, but they didn't. I'm also glad that they didn't do anything bad. That inaction, well, that's their legacy, but it doesn't have to be mine. All I can do now is tell the truth about what happened and hope that it helps other people to take account of their own inaction. Maybe that's the lesson that comes out of Selma's Jewish community: do the right thing, even if you are scared.[68]

NOTES

[1] Leonard (pseudonym), interview conducted by author, June 27, 2018. This narrative as a story has been told with variations in several Jewish communities. Leonard's story is comparable, for example, to the "I sold you those shoes" narratives documented by Leonard Rogoff in his work on Jewish North Carolina. Other folk narratives exist in Birmingham about a Jewish storeowner who had an open relationship with customers who were members of the KKK and sold them sheets, although he was not threatened in his home. See, for example, "Southern Jewish Folklore: How'd Your Family Wind up Here?," Jewish Heritage in

North Carolina, June 27, 2022, accessed March 13, 2023, https://jewishnc.org/southern-jewish-folklore-howd-your-family-wind-up-here.

[2] Leonard's experience in Selma was not unique, but the context of his city would cause his story to take on cultural significance. Selma's Jewish community did not encounter higher levels of Klan violence than other Jews in the state, nor was Selma's temple directly threatened by bombings; yet, Birmingham's April 28, 1958, attempted bombing was particularly impactful in eliciting fear in Selma, and this larger context formed a nexus of awareness for the Jews of Selma like Leonard's father. They became deeply aware of a lived duality in their city, in which they experienced both precariousness as Jews and certain privileges that were influenced in part by the prominence of Jews in the city and their incorporation into organizations like the WCC. For helpful comparisons and context see, for example, Jonathan D. Sarna, "The 'Mythical Jew' and 'The Jew Next Door' in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. David Gerber (Urbana, IL, 1986), 57–78. For more on these parallel experiences, see Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2001); Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights: 1880s to 1990s* (Tuscaloosa, 2007); P. Allen Krause, *To Stand Aside or Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Mark K. Bauman with Stephen Krause (Tuscaloosa, 2016); Jack Nelson, *Terror in the Night: The Klan's Campaign Against the Jews* (Jackson, MS, 1996).

[3] I have struggled with the inclusion of direct quotations that utilize derogatory, racist, and/or anti-Black rhetoric. My choice to include certain direct quotations is not to exploit or cause harm to the Black community, but rather to paint a full and honest picture of the violence, hatred, and racism still faced by Black Americans. I have carefully evaluated these quotations and kept them to a minimum; but it is my belief that eliminating them whitewashes history and fails to hold white individuals or groups accountable for their language and racism.

[4] Glenn Feldman, *Politics, Society, and the Klan in Alabama, 1915–1949* (Tuscaloosa, 1999); Wayne Greenhaw, *Fighting the Devil in Dixie: How Civil Rights Activists Took on the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama* (Chicago, 2011); Shawn Lay, ed., *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Urbana, IL, 2004).

[5] As such, this national renewal was in some ways even more radical in the North and Midwest, where de jure segregation did not exist. See Paul R. Mullins, "Engagement and the Color Line: Race, Renewal and Public Archaeology in the Urban Midwest," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 32 (Summer 2003): 205-29.

[6] Marty, interview conducted by author, August 17, 2019.

[7] Steve Garner, *Whiteness: An Introduction* (Oxfordshire, UK, 2007); Ashley "Woody" Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, eds., *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism* (London, UK, 2003).

[8] For more on this phenomenon in relation to American Jews, see Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1998); Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, 2006); David Schraub, "White Jews: An Intersectional Approach," *AJS Review* 43 (November 2019): 379–407.

[9] The city census data does not classify enslaved individuals or freed people on these documents in 1860 but rather only classifies white, Black, and mulatto as racial categories. Elsewhere the census officials use the label "colored" as a descriptor for household composition, although this still does not include enslaved or free status.

[10] When referring to enslaved individuals, I do not use the word "slaves" unless in a direct quotation. A person is not, as their core identity, a slave, nor is that a choice anyone would make for themselves. By using enslaved individual, I acknowledge an abusive and nonconsensual system, affirming the personhood of the individual, and utilizing their enslavement as an adjective describing their circumstance rather than their identity.

[11] "Kiwanis Laugh at the Ku Klux," *Selma Times-Journal*, January 10, 1923.

[12] "Statement—In Opposition to a Ku Klux Klan in Selma," *Selma Times-Journal*, May 18, 1923.

[13] Hugo Black has a complicated relationship with antisemitism and Alabama's Jews. See, for example, Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton, *Hugo Black: The Alabama Years* (Tuscaloosa, 1982).

[14] Alston Fitts III, *Selma: A Bicentennial History* (Tuscaloosa, 2016), 199–204.

[15] Harriet, interview conducted by author, June 26, 2018.

[16] Claire, interview conducted by author, June 28, 2021.

[17] "Attack Foiled by Young Mother in Bout with Negro: Invader Disarmed and Chased from Home," *Selma Times-Journal,* April 26, 1953.

[18] Sarah, interview conducted by author, October 15, 2019. Throughout their interviews, individuals were unclear on whether Rockwell and the other women were sexually assaulted. Newspaper reports suggest that Rockwell fended off her potential assault and used veiled language to allude to the rape of other women, but the interviewees recalled messaging from the larger white community that white women needed to be careful around Black men, feeding into stereotypes that several interviewees, in reflection, acknowledged were racist. These memories can be categorized among classic racist tropes of lascivious Black men raping innocent white women that were and are used as rhetorical racist tools.

[19] Those who have studied and discussed the case note that his confession matches the police report narratives and the conjecture published in the local newspaper. See, for example, E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr., "The Unconstitutional Conviction of 'Baby,'" *Yearbook: Supreme Court Historical Society* 68 (1978): 68–78; Gary May, *Bending Toward Justice: The Voting Rights Act and the Transformation of American Democracy* (New York, 2013), 9; Fitts, *Selma*, 222–29.

[20] This example demonstrates, again, the use of the lascivious Black male trope as a fearmongering tactic to uphold white systems of power.

[21] Fitts, *Selma*, 262–65.

[22] "Group to Reveal Plan of Defense for Segregation: Economic Pressure to Promote Cause," *Selma Times-Journal*, November 28, 1954.

[23] In response to what they called "the Jewish issue," Selma's WCC announced in a November 29, 1954, meeting that, "there is no place for prejudice [against Jews] in this movement." Fitts, *Selma,* 222.

[24] "Split over Anti-Semitism Widens in Alabama Segregation Groups," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, March 8, 1956. Engelhardt shared the same sentiment about Catholics, who were also contested among Alabama's WCCs.

[25] Henry King, "Anti-Semitism Repudiated," *Selma-Times Journal*, March 9, 1956; Ben Price, "Struggle for Control: Council Chiefs Divided on Anti-Semitism Issue," *Montgomery Advertiser*, March 6, 1956.

[26] This interaction is yet another example of the racist sexual trope previously noted.

[27] Fitts, *Selma*, 260–68. Smitherman eventually sold his grocery store and left Selma.

[28] Alan, interview conducted by author, July 22, 2020.

[29] Helen, interview conducted by author, October 23, 2020.

[30] William O. Bryant, "Boy, 16, Admits Gadsden Bombing," *Alabama Journal*, March 26, 1960; "Gadsden, Alabama," ISJL Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed September 25, 2021, https://www.isjl.org/alabama-gadsden-encyclopedia.html.

[31] S. L. Wisenberg, "What was on the Minds of Selma's Jews?" *Tablet,* March 6, 2015, accessed March 14, 2023, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/what-was-on-the-minds-of-selmas-jews; Larry Brook, "In 1965, Selma's Jews were in a Tough Position," *Southern Jewish Life*, March 25, 2015.

[32] Marshall Bloom, "A Participant Observation Study of the Attitudes of Selma Jews Towards Integration" (master's thesis, Amherst College, 1966), 116–26.

[33] Ibid., 55.

[34] For comparison see, for example, Alfred O. Hero, Jr., "Southern Jews," in *Jews in the South*, ed. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson (Baton Rouge, 1973): 217–50; Leonard Dinnerstein, "Southern Jewry and the Desegregation Crisis, 1954–1970," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 62 (November 1986): 113–22.

[35] Bloom, "Participant Observation Study," 70.

[36] King, "Anti-Semitism Repudiated."

[37] "Misleading Telegram," *Montgomery Advertiser*, October 30, 1960.

[38] Janet, interview conducted by author, June 22, 2018.

[39] Alan interview.

[40] Marty interview.

[41] Sarah interview.

[42] Sol Tepper, "Relocation Move Instigated Here to Aid Negroes," *Selma Times-Journal*, September 27, 1963. Tepper's actions parallel the Reverse Freedom Ride attempts made by segregationists in 1962, during which Black individuals were given free one-way bus tickets and promised free housing and jobs in northern cities, only to arrive and find that they had been deceived.

[43] The Lewis family is not identified with pseudonyms because their story is widely known.

[44] Fliers in private collection of Hermine Gross Cohen, Selma, Alabama.

[45] Lewis writes this in a private letter sent to another member of the congregation.

[46] Bloom, "Participant Observation Study," 116–26.

[47] This type of provisional acceptance was not uncommon. See, for example, Clive Webb, *Rabble Rousers: The American Far Right in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens, GA, 2011).

[48] For comparison, see Rabbi Moses M. Landau interview in Krause, *To Stand Aside or Stand Alone*: 252–64. Other helpful context can be found in Timothy Riggio Quevillon, "Moshe Cahana, Ethical Zionism and the Application of Jewish Nationalism to Civil Struggles in the American South," *Southern Jewish History* 23 (2020): 125–65.

[49] Quoted in Bloom, "Participant Observation Study," 6.

[50] Ibid., 107.

[51] Jacob, interview conducted by author, August 17, 2019.

[52] Nancy, interview conducted by author, November 2, 2018.

[53] Ellen, interview conducted by author, October 12, 2019.

[54] John Dittmer, *The Good Doctors: The Medical Committee for Human Rights and the Struggle for Social Justice in Health Care* (Jackson, MS, 2017), 117–19.

[55] For more on this critical event, see David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven, 1978); Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson, *The House by the Side of the Road: The Selma Civil Rights Movement* (Tuscaloosa, 2011); Robert A. Pratt, *Selma's Bloody Sunday: Protest, Voting Rights, and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Baltimore, 2017); J. Mills Thornton III, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma* (Tuscaloosa, 2002).

[56] Quoted in Fitts, *Selma*, 262–63.

[57] Fitts, *Selma*, 263.

[58] Although significant outside press covered events, Falkenberry's voice, editorial choices, and knowledge of the city catapulted the newspaper into recognition, for which he received the Alabama Press Association's Journalist of the Year award in 1965 in recognition of his unbiased reporting.

[59] Quoted in Fitts, *Selma,* 263.

[60] "Statement of Public Endorsement," *Selma Times-Journal*, April 18, 1965.

[61] "Chamber Reverses Stand on Advertisement Issue," *Selma-Times Journal*, April 18, 1965.

[62] Fitts, *Selma,* 267.

[63] Alan interview; Nancy interview. According to census data, in 1960 Birmingham had a population of approximately 341,000 citizens, Montgomery 134,000, and Selma 28,000.

[64] Marty interview; Leonard interview.

[65] For examples of these commonalities in different southern cities see Webb, *Fight Against Fear*.

[66] Dan J. Puckett, *In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama's Jews, the Second World War, and the Holocaust* (Tuscaloosa, 2008); Dan J. Puckett, "Resettlement of Holocaust Survivors in Alabama," *Southern Jewish History* 16 (2013): 169–214.

[67] Larry, interview conducted by author, June 2, 2019.

[68] Janet interview.

The Jewish Legacy of "Bombingham": Exploring the Causes and Consequences of the Attempted Bombing of Temple Beth-El in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1958

by

Margaret Norman and Melissa Young *

On the morning of April 28, 1958, around 11:30 A.M., eighteen-year-old James Pruitt was walking on the sidewalk beside Temple Beth-El in Birmingham, Alabama, when he spotted what he later described as a "blue Army bag." He approached it for a closer look and noticed the zipper was open a quarter of an inch, so he picked up a stick to explore it carefully. Pruitt used caution with the mysterious package for a reason. He had been working at the Conservative synagogue for only seven months and worried about what he might find and how to report it. As an African American, he was also aware of the bombings and attempted bombings that had targeted the Black community since 1946. The extensive damage done by radical segregationists in Black neighborhoods intensified racial tensions and debates about housing shortages. The bombs, however, were usually well outside of Temple Beth-El's Five Points neighborhood. They often targeted Black residents who moved to the edges of neighborhoods zoned as white, particularly in North Smithfield near Center Street, an area known as "Dynamite Hill."[1]

Pruitt's decision not to touch the bag proved to be correct. After prodding it with the stick, he made out the words "high explosives," which discouraged him from further exploration. Police who arrived on the scene later noted it contained a homemade bomb composed of fifty-four sticks of dynamite. Two black spots and a burned match on the concrete next to the window indicated the place that the bomb's two fuses

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had gone out before they had detonated. Similar to those dots on the sidewalk, the attempted bombing of Temple Beth-El serves as marker of past events for Birmingham's Jewish community, which continues to search for the causes and consequences of Pruitt's discovery. In the immediate aftermath of the event, the city's residents responded to the bomb scare in many ways. Despite the unsuccessful nature of the bombing, the effect of those reactions rippled out, impacting the way that different members of the community felt about Birmingham's growing freedom movement. A "spectrum of response," reflecting the often fluid and nonbinary reactions of individuals who responded to what was occurring around them, helps us conceptualize the impact of the attempted bombing during the civil rights movement.[2]

The absence of collective closure due to the botched police investigation that followed also generated multifaceted concepts of the incident's meaning in the Jewish community and sparked a longstanding desire to record, contextualize, and remember it. Beyond the mid-twentieth century, historians associated with Temple Beth-El have collected stories

Temple Beth-El, Birmingham, Alabama.
(Flickr user Dystopos, Creative Commons.)

about the event, created a public project that explores topics related to it, and called for historical remembrance of the site through a state-sponsored marker. With the help of local scholars during the first few decades of the twenty-first century, congregants have written articles about the event and helped create audio tours, panel discussions, and presentations that connect to the incident and Birmingham's wide-ranging Jewish and civil rights histories. These delayed reactions shed light on the way that local Jewish residents collectively recall and utilize the memory of the attempted bombing and other events related to mid-twentieth-century calls for equality. Additionally, Jewish residents and scholars have repeatedly grappled with where the attempted bombing fits in local and national histories and among similar attacks on southern Jewish institutions in 1957 and 1958. While those contexts should not be neglected, they frequently polarize Jewish reactions to calls for Black rights and fail to see them as dynamic, offering only a partial analysis of the impact of the Beth-El event, which affected Birmingham's public memory and local Jewish calls for action and changed over time.

Birmingham News*, April 28, 1958. (Newspapers.com.)*

Birmingham and Calls for Integration: The Local Context

The attempted bombing of Temple Beth-El was not immediately reported to the police department due to circumstances well beyond the control of the man who found the dynamite. As soon as Pruitt realized the blue bag held an undetonated bomb, he immediately went to Temple Beth-El's office to report it to Harry Horwitz, the synagogue's chief administrator. Horwitz, however, was on a lunch break, and the young custodian did not want to discuss his find with the secretary on duty or call the police department himself. Instead, Pruitt waited patiently for a senior official with whom to speak. Although he did not explain why he made that choice when police questioned him a few hours later, his actions are easy to understand. Domestic terrorism thrived in Birmingham in 1958. Although little federal action supported the Supreme Court's landmark decision on *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954, the judicial position threatened white supremacists as much as it encouraged Black Americans. Retaliation for pushback against debilitating laws and customs resulted in bombs, physical attacks, and other forms of racial violence that became even more common than previously on the city, state, and national levels.[3]

Black activists increased long-standing calls for legislation that would guarantee their civil and social rights. In 1956, when Alabama's attorney general, John Patterson, banned the NAACP, Birmingham's Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and other African American ministers formed the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), an organization that some Black professionals considered too militant or aggressive. Their worries about the hazards of Shuttlesworth's actions were justified when a mob of Klansmen attacked his friend, Lamar Weaver, on March 6, 1957, for greeting him and his wife Ruby as they tried to desegregate the local train depot's "whites-only" waiting room. Undeterred by the dangers his work posed, Shuttlesworth continued to press for integration. In early September, President Dwight D. Eisenhower used federal troops to block Arkansas governor Orval Faubus's attempt to prevent Black students from attending Little Rock High. Six days later on September 9, Shuttlesworth tried to enroll his daughters in Birmingham's all-white Phillips High School, where a white mob carrying bicycle chains and baseball bats viciously beat him. That same day Eisenhower signed

the Civil Rights Act of 1957, new legislation that established a civil rights section of the Justice Department that could intervene in local or state affairs if it saw fit. Large-scale protests in Alabama, including the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 and 1956, added to pressure on Birmingham's segregationists arising from the national government and from grassroots activists. In response, white radicals not only attacked activists like Shuttlesworth but bolstered the networks they had used to resist change for decades.[4]

Added to direct conflicts between these varied groups were tensions among the city's African Americans and Jews. According to scholars like Karen Brodkin, Eric Goldstein, and David Schraub, most American Jews' multifaceted identities include an element that encourages other social actors to recognize them as white, which can simultaneously deflect and magnify antisemitism. Such binary racial categorization is problematic, however, since the challenges local Jewish residents faced as an ethnic and religious minority were undeniable. Still, antisemitism and anti-Black racism weighed on different scales. Jewish residents received the economic, political, and social benefits that came with whiteness, using them to obtain advantageous positions in the city's history and civic-commercial circles even while their position on the color line remained debated and vulnerable. In many ways, they differed little from their counterparts in other American cities in the wake of calls for integration in the 1950s and 1960s, but Birmingham's emotionally packed, racially polarized environment made speaking out dangerous for both groups. For Jews, it also increased prior concerns about antisemitic and anticommunist rhetoric, which became more aggressive as the freedom movement progressed.[5]

Pruitt's hesitation to discuss Temple Beth-El's undetonated bomb with either the city's police department or a female staff member exemplified inherent anxieties in the Black community. White officers frequently accused or attacked young men like him for crimes they did not commit, and personal accounts of the violence that African Americans experienced in custody remained common throughout the South. In 1957, Birmingham's Black community petitioned the city to hire Black police officers through six clergymen who spoke on their behalf, including O. H. Gray, whose son had been severely beaten after failing to pay a fine, and Shuttles-worth, who stated that white policemen "unnecessarily challenged, [shook] down, slapped about, and threatened" their youth. Shuttles-

worth's appeals to the city were not new. In 1955, shortly after the death of Emmett Till, he and other Black ministers had been dismissed for submitting similar concerns. Whether Till's death or the need to circumvent an extensive conversation with a white woman were motivating factors in Pruitt's delay are unclear, but their unconscious power should be recognized. The acquittal of the white men who killed Till was heavily publicized, and his murder served as a cultural trauma for thousands of African Americans coming of age during the 1950s and 1960s since it fulfilled an expectation of legally sanctioned violence for petty or even nonexistent crimes. When Pruitt found the homemade bomb at Temple Beth-El, he, like Till, identified as a Black teenager in what was generally considered a white social environment.[6]

Pruitt may also have been wary of the Jewish community's reaction, unsure of the blame he might receive for the device or where his superiors' loyalties lay in battles for integration. In a discussion about the "interplay between Whiteness and Jewishness," David Schraub states that the internal struggles Jews faced with constructions of race frequently went unnoticed in the eyes of African Americans, a factor particularly true amid the violence Black families experienced during the twentieth-century freedom movement. This does not discount the rampant antisemitism that existed simultaneously, but it would likewise fail to dismiss any misgivings Pruitt might have had about his employers. Like elsewhere in the South, few Birmingham Jews publicly defended Black rights during the 1950s, even if they sympathized privately with calls for desegregation. Their reasoning was wide-ranging but supports historian Clive Webb's theory that many felt the only way to "ensure their own protection was to provide tacit support for the status quo." As Webb notes, however, "a conspicuous minority" willingly risked their physical and economic security. These individuals included progressive lawyers like Birmingham's Abe Berkowitz, who had counted Black laborers among his clients since the 1930s and condemned the Ku Klux Klan's intimidation tactics after World War II, for which he received threatening phone calls. According to Berkowitz, at least an equal number of the city's Jews "had all the habits, prejudices of [racist] white people" and, like them, used derogatory terms when referring to African Americans.[7]

Differing levels of discrimination also added to strains between Jewish and Black residents in the postwar period. Jews remained barred from

exclusive white social spaces such as country clubs, and, like their Catholic counterparts, understood the tenuous nature of their white privileges, especially as challenges to white benefits increased. Author T. K. Thorne points out, for example, that Rabbi Milton Grafman could not buy a home in a prestigious white neighborhood in 1958, the year of Beth-El's attempted bombing. The seller rejected his offer because the rabbi was Jewish, a circumstance documented as far west as California and as far north as Michigan, despite a 1948 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that limited state- or locally sponsored real estate covenants.[8] Unsurprisingly, much stricter conditions existed for the city's African Americans. Between 1944 and 1951, the city's segregation ordinances were revised to ensure de facto segregation. Updates made it explicitly illegal not only for Black and white residents to marry or live in the same neighborhoods but also to eat, drink, engage in sports or other forms of recreation, attend public performances, sit in waiting rooms, or travel together. The police and white vigilantes severely punished violators through physical attacks and the dynamiting of at least nine Black homes and churches from 1949 to 1957. Challenges to white neighborhoods resulted in similar incidents throughout the South, where bombs destroyed recently purchased Black homes in states like Georgia, North Carolina, and Kentucky.[9]

Community Response and Cold-War Antisemitism

The delay that occurred as a result of the timing and context of the attempted bombing at Temple Beth-El did little to sway its leaders' response to the threat. At 12:50 P.M., they called in Pruitt's discovery of the makeshift bomb, although who made the call is unclear from police or synagogue records. Officer W. D. Haynie and Deputy Fire Marshall W. E. Berry arrived to disarm the device, since it was technically active even though it had not detonated. Haynie and Berry carefully removed the caps that had been inserted in the middle of the dynamite and secured to the bomb's two fuses, which had been taped together with cellophane and made with orange wax. The FBI agents who later examined the fuses determined they were made by Clover Leaf and had originally been twenty to twenty-one feet long. Police Chief Jamie Moore, who followed the investigation closely, subsequently noted that one fuse had gone out approximately 4½ to 5½ feet from the first cap while the other had "burned to a closer point," although the exact distance was

indeterminable. Rumors and local legend hold that it went out less than a minute—maybe even seconds—before it was set to explode.[10]

According to Thorne, the attempted bombing "shook" everyone in Birmingham's Jewish community, a small minority within the general population. A wave of dynamitings and attempted dynamitings targeting Jewish institutions was sweeping cities throughout the South, which made Beth-El's bomb scare especially disconcerting. Although smaller incidents were documented earlier in the decade, this particular series began on November 11, 1957, with an undetonated bomb at a synagogue in Charlotte, North Carolina, also named Beth-El. The incident in Charlotte played out much in the same way. Eddie Edwards, an African American employee, found an aluminum cylinder leaning against a rear wall. The homemade bomb it contained was much smaller than the one in Birmingham since it had only six—rather than fifty-four—sticks of dynamite, but its fuses had likewise burned out before they detonated. Before April, when Pruitt found the bomb in Birmingham, another faulty fuse had spared Gastonia's Temple Emanuel, and successful bombs in Miami and Nashville had severely damaged an Orthodox school and a Jewish community center respectively. Other bombings in this wave included a Jewish community center in Jacksonville, Florida, on the same day as the Birmingham threat, and the destruction of part of The Temple in Atlanta six months later.[11]

Historian Melissa Fay Greene observes that Jewish buildings like these accounted for ten percent of the bombs that went off in the United States between 1954 and 1959, but many of them lacked clear motivation. With the exception of Rabbi Jacob Rothschild in Atlanta, most individuals connected to the targets did not publicly support African American calls for desegregation, including Temple Beth-El's leaders in Birmingham. Berkowitz and the Jewish segregationists he described serve as oppositional examples of white allies or enemies, but most Jewish residents' reactions to the freedom movement ranged from silence and ambivalence to gradualism and "quiet activism," positions that historians P. Allen Krause and Mark Bauman identify as common among 75 percent of southern Jews at the time. Reform rabbi Milton Grafman became an important member of the city's interracial coalitions later in his career, but in the 1950s and 1960s, he was still navigating his feelings and position in local Black rights and negotiations. Grafman followed in the footsteps of a long line of southern rabbis including David Marx and Max Heller, who

Rabbi Milton Grafman with Mrs. Frank Wise and her daughter, Susan, at the unveiling of his portrait at Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, AL, March 1965. (Photo by John Farmer, Birmingham News. *Courtesy of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, donated by Alabama Media Group.)*

followed their sense of morality and defended African American causes in the early twentieth century. Like many American Jews who never challenged Jim Crow laws, however, Grafman vacillated between a passionate objection to the injustices he witnessed and his faith in slow-moving courts, interfaith committees, and the federal government. He generally worked "behind the scenes" but was unafraid to take a public stand against discrimination and received just as many harassing phone calls as Berkowitz, even before Birmingham's attempted bombing.[12]

Other rabbis in the city behaved even more cautiously than Grafman. From 1954 to 1958, the four who served the Orthodox community at Knesseth Israel remained silent for undisclosed reasons, as did Temple Beth-El's rabbi, Abraham Mesch. Perhaps they represent the American Jews who believed antisemitism was declining after World War II and feared that speaking out would ensure its increase. Mesch also embodied the group-based identity politics that became popular in the 1970s and beyond. A Polish immigrant originally based in New Orleans, Mesch was a well-respected, recognizable Jewish leader in the city before his premature death in December 1962 and was neither unsympathetic to local African Americans' concerns nor disconnected from the general community. Mesch belonged to the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Birmingham Ministers Council but was less active in both organizations than Grafman. Instead of participating in other forms of community building, Mesch focused more on Zionism and Jewish education, supporting his congregants' cultural connections through local and national Jewish organizations, traditions, and charities.[13]

Mesch's avoidance of civil rights issues and Grafman's limited comments about racial discrimination reinforced local Jews' anxieties. Some people feared that Temple Emanu-El, the city's Reform synagogue, would be next. They became even jumpier when police officers making a

Rabbi Abraham Mesch.
(Courtesy of Temple Beth-El, Birmingham.)

routine check on the synagogue found one of Beth-El's rear doors ajar in the middle of the night in early May, a little over two weeks after the bomb had been left in the window. Working together, police and synagogue officials concluded that the incident had likely occurred because someone had left the door unlocked accidentally, but the event unraveled many community members' already frayed nerves.[14]

Congregants and other Jewish residents also wondered why the synagogue was targeted. According to Greene, Webb, and other scholars, the answer to their question lies in a particular form of American antisemitism that was tailored to resist multiculturalism and integration during the 1950s and beyond. White supremacists' blending of anti-Black, anti-Jewish, and anticommunist tropes had a long history, predating *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Cold War, but an amalgamation of hate created a shift in American antisemitism that increased its postwar appeal. Spawned from worries over progressive liberalism and the first Red Scare in the 1910s, the language attached to this rhetoric gradually increased among segregationists as the twentieth century progressed. During the Great Depression, conservative white Democrats and Republicans used it to resist the Popular Front's calls for economic and racial equality and the inclusion of Jewish intellectuals in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal administration. According to historian Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, the blended prejudice obtained even more power between 1940 and 1953, when the America First Committee and Daughters of the American Revolution used it to battle what they perceived as the "invisible" threat that internationalism posed to Christianity and "American" society. Despite the equally noticeable merging of Judeo-Christian culture during World War II, both the Double V campaign and the United States' participation in the United Nations strengthened white radicals' link between "Communist Jews" and calls for Black equality. As global support for human rights and decolonization rose, so too did white segregationists' inability to demean, control, or attack people of color, intensifying this Cold War brand of antisemitism. White nationalism also provided an impetus for its spread during Harry Truman's presidency since the "new" ideology allegedly safeguarded the democracy that American soldiers (conceived solely as white) had died to protect during the 1940s.[15]

American Jewish leaders perceived the postwar change on national and local levels, but with mixed responses. Many desired to support an

international fight against genocide in the wake of the Holocaust but concurrently sought to navigate what emerged as a highly charged anticommunist environment. Consequently, they often downplayed the proliferation of anti-Black and anti-Jewish sentiment in the name of loyalty and patriotism. In 1948, for example, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency highlighted the rampant spread of American antisemitism with a headline that noted an *increase* in "anti-Jewish prejudice." Citing a national survey sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League, the report began with an emphasis on Americans' tendency to "overwhelmingly" reject "professional anti-Semites" and "organized antisemitic activities." The rest of the article seemed to contradict this bright news, however, since other forms of religious discrimination remained and "the public [also] exhibited a disturbing lack of insight into and unthinking acceptance of the activities of less overt bigots who, under cloaks of respectability, spread hatred of Jews."[16]

According to George Kellman, director of the investigative division of the American Jewish Committee (AJComm), negative literature also increased in volume. Paramilitary organizations like the Ku Klux Klan experienced a growth in membership, and the Christian Anti-Jewish Party, established in 1945, soon morphed into the National States Rights Party. In a study he conducted between 1953 and 1954, Kellman declared that "bigots" continued to brand Jews "as conspiratorial agents for the Soviet Union" and claimed that the "Soviet Union was merely the instrumentality of a 'Zionist' clique." Atlanta FBI agents confirmed Kellman's conclusions with pamphlets they collected from 1953 to 1956. According to the Christian Anti-Jewish Party, there would be no "Negro problem" without the Jews, who promoted the "mongrelizing" of American life. One newsletter claimed Jews founded and ran the Communist Party and controlled "all three of the major TV networks" so they could induce "race-mixing." In a nation that continued to reel from McCarthyism and the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, these were dangerous accusations. Minor offenses against Jews increased, involving dynamite scares in states like Florida as early as 1951. Local and national Jewish leaders blamed them on extremists, avoiding the publicity that drew attention to the perpetrators or the communities they targeted.[17]

Birmingham's Jewish professionals became wary of this Cold War brand of antisemitism long before the Jewish Telegraphic Agency article

or Kellman's study. In 1936, the Klan viciously attacked Jewish labor leader Joe Gelders for his defense of political prisoners and his suspected membership in the Communist Party, which he and the Jewish community tried to hide from the public. The attacks did not stop Gelders from supporting controversial causes. Two years later, as a member of the Southern Conference on Human Welfare, Gelders participated in an interracial meeting that hosted First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who—with the power of her husband's administration behind her—refused to submit to Eugene "Bull" Connor and other city officials' attempt to enforce segregated seating.[18]

Although many Birmingham Jews recall experiencing little to no antisemitism during the 1950s, they frequently noted microaggressions that sought to marginalize Jews as a group. Scholars and student interns in the Beth-El Civil Rights Experience, a community-driven project designed to record and learn from events like the attempted bombing, have researched the response of Jewish residents to calls for Black civil and social rights between 1954 and 1968, including oral testimony that noted this "mild" form of antisemitism. Several of the men and women interviewed felt they were accepted and well-liked by their non-Jewish neighbors in the 1950s and 1960s. For the most part, they—like their counterparts across the country—enjoyed what historian Marc Dollinger calls "the privileges of inclusion in the white middle class." Regardless, they also remembered that a latent antisemitism lay under the surface, as it did elsewhere. The observations of Faye Kimerling, who was twelve when Beth-El's attempted bombing occurred, typifies their impressions. In 2021, she recalled, "I thought antisemitism was part of life where I was living, even if it didn't hit me all the time."[19]

In 1957, after *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, some of the city's Jewish leaders were sympathetic to calls for Black civil rights, but others declined to publicly support them or the civil rights work of national organizations like the AJComm. After attending a two-day meeting held at Birmingham's Temple Emanu-El in early February, Atlanta's AJComm field agent, Sam Lubin, reported that the large turnout encouraged him, and he believed that many local leaders would cooperate with an "intensive membership drive." He and Bob Hughes, the executive director of the Alabama Council on Human Relations, noted that several Jews were "dues paying members" of the organization, which

openly campaigned for interracial dialogue and activities. They discussed a prominent theme among "reputable [white] businessmen" who felt "violence and tension around the race situation . . . seriously hampered the South's economic development." The men concluded, however, that progress "would be difficult" since it would be identified as coming from the "Northern press" and was usually vehemently denied by southern leadership. Lubin also recorded Jewish leaders' anxieties about the volatile environment in the city and state, which were related to bombings that had occurred in Montgomery even though buses were no longer segregated and temperamental KKK leader Asa Carter, they hoped, would soon "move on to another community to carry on his work."[20]

Many Jewish residents had mixed feelings about the possibility of change due to local politics and the justice system. Some felt Carter would be discredited for shooting another Klansmen but had little faith that the seven men accused of committing the Montgomery bombings would be convicted. Others saw reform in the work of public safety commissioner Robert Lindbergh, a moderate politician who occupied the position from 1954 to 1957. Even though he was a segregationist, Lindbergh assured the cochair of Birmingham's AJComm chapter, Robert Loeb, that he would "crack down strongly on all acts of violence," since he believed "Hooded Sheet Wearers" were "a bunch of cowards." According to Lubin, Loeb expressed skepticism about local calls for desegregation, however, stating that he believed the bus lines would "probably fold up financially" and that he could not foresee the city's grammar schools integrating within the next thirty to forty years. A year later, when segregationist Bull Connor regained the position he had lost to Lindbergh, change seemed even less probable.[21]

Since fears of antisemitic outbreaks had been prevalent for years, Temple Beth-El's board members put additional safety measures in place to protect congregants almost immediately after they heard about the undetonated bomb in 1958. President Max Kimerling called an emergency meeting for 8:00 P.M. the evening it was discovered for "the express purpose of discussing and analyzing the problems growing out of the [situation]." According to the notes of secretary Karl Friedman, the group explored "many phases" of the topic. They quickly passed motions to provide additional lighting and an armed guard for the main and education buildings but decided against interrupting the activities of the synagogue

Max Kimerling,
president, Temple Beth-El.
(Courtesy of Temple Beth-El,
Birmingham.)

and its schools to send a visible message of strength and solidarity to the rest of Birmingham's population. Faye Kimerling, Max's niece, remembered that the congregation and other Birmingham Jews were committed to what she called "our way of life," so they continued to practice their faith as they always had—"nobody stopped going to services."[22]

The board also established a reward committee under the supervision of Max Kimerling, Dr. Arnold Royal, and Barney Copeland. It was charged with publicizing any money gathered from the congregation that might generate "information leading to the apprehension and conviction of the party or parties responsible." Board members then turned their attention to establishing a unified front among Birmingham's Jews and instructed President Kimerling to consult with "all other [local] Jewish organizations" to coordinate "publicity, press releases, and public relations." They gave him the ability to appoint another committee, which would "take immediate measures to constitute or reactivate the Jewish Community Council (JCC) in Birmingham," something they wished "to remain vibrant and active at all times and not just in a moment of crisis." Motivated by the attempted bombing and the city's instability during the twentieth-century freedom movement, the revived JCC became an

important community relations tool in the years to come. Four years later, its 1962 constitution formally declared its intention "to preserve and promote good relations" between the general community and the Jewish population. It followed a pattern seen in cities across the South, becoming a vital institutional mechanism for addressing issues that ranged from civil rights and antisemitism to the state of Israel. [23]

Other actions included a directive to reevaluate and update the synagogue's insurance policies, indicating that the board took the bomb threat seriously despite the calm demeanor they and Rabbi Mesch presented to city officials, their non-Jewish neighbors, and fellow congregants. In Beth-El's next bulletin, Mesch openly thanked those who sent letters and offered not just "expressions of sympathy, understanding, and concern" but also donations to add to the growing reward. He called local law enforcement's dedication to solving the crime "most heartening" and labeled the attempted bombing "a cowardly and reprehensible act of intimidation [that] stirred every right-thinking and fair-minded person everywhere."[24]

In the bulletin, Mesch also captured the general non-Jewish public's response to the attempted bombing: "[It] elicited a sense [of] indignation throughout Birmingham." According to the *Birmingham News*, white residents and law enforcement agents were "shocked and incensed" when they heard of the synagogue's narrow escape from destruction. Newspaper editorials labeled it "barbaric madness" that shook the "peace of the entire community" and stated that such acts would "simply not be tolerated." Commissioner Connor, who had loose personal and professional ties to some Jewish community leaders, began the non-Jewish reward movement that Mesch mentioned in the bulletin, pledging its first one hundred dollars via the newspapers. By May 13, that reward had risen to fifteen thousand dollars, boosted by donations from the Young Men's Business Club, the State of Alabama, and the Birmingham Ministerial Association. Labor and religious organizations with strong connections to local Jews also took pains to condemn the act in local papers. Mine and steel workers and the dean of Birmingham's ministers, Dr. John Buchanan, publicly expressed their support for Temple Beth-El. Unitarian Reverend Albert Hobart contacted Mesch personally, pledging a "better understanding between Christians and Jews" and hoping for an "end to religious, social and racial enmities."[25]

The Failure of Police Investigation: Truth, Conspiracy, or Entrapment?

The population's response to Temple Beth-El's attempted bombing stood in stark contrast to attacks on the city's African Americans, who rarely received such sympathy and support even for the actual destruction of their homes and churches. As Mesch noted, Birmingham's police department also spent a great deal of time focusing on the synagogue's bomb scare, a marked difference from the way they investigated comparable incidents in the Black community. Connor gave the search for the perpetrator special weight. Confident in his position in Birmingham's government despite political setbacks, the public safety commissioner had no problem with racial extremists committing violence that he knew about or sanctioned. He felt indignantly offended, however, by what he perceived as an unapproved attack on a white religious institution. The targeting of an inhabited building already carried a possible death penalty in Alabama during the 1950s, but after the Beth-El incident, Connor told reporters that he intended to ask state legislators to impose the same punishment on anyone convicted of dynamiting unoccupied structures like homes, churches, or schools.[26]

Police Chief Moore was also concerned about the attack but arguably for different reasons. Moore may be viewed as someone who felt caught in the middle of a situation out of his control. Certainly not an outspoken advocate of Black rights, he was still known to be on friendly terms with Fred Shuttlesworth and, like Connor, was unhappy that local domestic terror not only continued but increased under his watch.[27] Moore's actions suggest that he may have been among the minority of local professionals who questioned the agendas of the stubborn three-man commission running the city. Regardless of how they personally felt about integration, their response to the freedom movement was to reject an uncompromising approach to segregation because they believed it hurt Birmingham's image, population, and financial prospects.[28]

Moore did not take part in unsuccessful attempts to impeach Connor for police misconduct and brutality, but he refused to become one of Connor's minions, unlike many other officers on the payroll. After twenty years on the force, he had received his promotion not from Connor but from Robert Lindbergh, the public safety commissioner whom Jewish civic leaders praised in 1957. Determined to combat the heavily publicized

*Birmingham Police Chief Jamie Moore and Police Commissioner Robert Lindbergh (*Birmingham News*, November 29, 1956. Newspapers.com.)*

corruption in a police department Connor had controlled for decades, Lindbergh appointed Moore just before he vacated the position. Since the new chief could not be easily controlled, Connor tried to fire him as soon as he regained office. Accusations of Moore's impropriety fell flat, however, so Connor had to settle for keeping tabs on him through a network of faithful officers. Detective Tom Cook fell into that category, serving Connor with frequent updates on investigations and information about white supremacists. Simultaneously, Connor also reputedly directed Cook to encourage Klansmen to intimidate integrationists and note their movements.[29]

Moore assigned the Temple Beth-El case to a team of officers that investigated Birmingham's bombings before and after the attempt to destroy the synagogue. Captain G. L. Pattie, who had previously served as chief and worked closely with Lindbergh to hold officers accountable for beating Black suspects in 1955, led the team. Tom Cook—Connor's "eyes and ears" at the station—Sergeant Joe Lindsey, and Detective V. T. Hart assisted him. Their cases included the bombs that went off at Shuttlesworth's Bethel Baptist Church in December 1956 and June 1958 and the tragic destruction of 16th Street Baptist Church in 1963. Unlike other bombings against Black residents, these incidents were high-profile cases that attracted substantial attention in the local and national press, and the leads the team uncovered while investigating Temple Beth-El and Bethel Baptist's second bombing soon generated a common suspect.[30]

The search began with the composition of the homemade bomb left at the synagogue and the contents of the blue duffle bag in which it was found. According to historian Michael Belknap, the Kennedy-Ervin "bombing bill"—making it a federal crime to import or transport explosives for illegal use—did not pass until the following year, but regional and national pressures for federal legislation and cooperation were already increasing. Like many southern politicians and investigators, Connor believed the Temple Beth-El bomb threat was the work of interstate conspirators and appealed to the FBI for assistance. When he was refused due to lack of federal jurisdiction (the Eisenhower administration's favorite excuse), more than one congressman proposed removing the constraint, easing access to the FBI's labs and the sharing of information. Moore gave the two pieces of cardboard discovered at the scene to federal agents and, within a few days, he received a report that the bottom piece contained six "latent fingerprints" that were "readable." Meanwhile, Lindsey and Cook identified the dynamite brand used in the bomb as an "an Atlas product" that was 60 percent Giant Gelatin.[31]

The detectives' attempts to trace the dynamite's source to someone who might have purchased or stolen it resulted in dozens of letters and phone calls to dealers throughout the South. They discovered how easy dynamite was to sell, steal, or carry across state lines but became frustrated when they failed to identify a clear link to any construction site or distributor in Alabama. This reinforced city officials' claim—widely believed and repeated by many white southerners, including some local Jews—that outside agitators shouldered responsibility for what they saw as Birmingham's "troubles," a euphemism for violence against Black Americans and white integrationists. Acting on similar assumptions, Moore's team spent three days checking the rosters of airlines and car rental agencies for additional clues. Although they searched dozens of lists for out-of-state suspects in other prominent cases, none of the information they collected resulted in significant new information.[32]

The detectives' work with federal agents neither supported nor countered any of their suppositions. The FBI returned the physical evidence and confirmed information Birmingham detectives had already gathered: the dynamite was made in Connecticut, "widely used," and available "from many explosive dealers." One foot of the two fuses took

approximately forty-four seconds to burn, but the FBI had no idea what caused them to stop when they did. Additional debris in the canvas bag included a piece of brown yarn, a clump of green cotton fibers, small wood chips to pack the dynamite, and fragments of brown hair from a "member of the Caucasian race." Unfortunately, none of this material proved helpful. The fingerprints on the cardboard remained unidentified, and the hairs did not contain "sufficient individual characteristics" to provide additional leads.[33]

On May 5, four days after Moore received the FBI report, he got an encouraging phone call from W. V. Collins, the manager of the Atlas Powder Company in Knoxville, Tennessee. Responding to a letter Birmingham police sent regarding his company's dynamite, Collins said that a state investigator had already contacted him about the same topic and noted the similarities between Beth-El's case and a bomb threat at Temple Emanuel in Gastonia, North Carolina. At the latter, thirty sticks of dynamite were found in a suitcase on February 9, and the fuse attached to that homemade bomb had burnt out within 1½ inches of detonation. Collins affirmed doubts that the dynamite could be traced. Atlas did not have a distributor in Alabama, but construction companies and second-hand dealers purchased and transported dynamite throughout the South. Although fifty-four sticks represented almost half a case, even a carload of Atlas dynamite could be easily stolen from a building site. Given the circumstances, Collins did not want Moore to make his information public, but he suggested that the police look for someone "seeking publicity." Unlike the defective fuse in Gastonia, which had just been wrapped around the dynamite, the fuses in Birmingham's bomb were attached to caps, making "it a rare occasion" for them to fail.[34]

The revelation of stolen dynamite was new but something Birmingham's investigating officers already suspected, and this was not the first—nor the last—time that Moore would hear someone link his city's attempted bombing to those at other Jewish institutions. In this way, radical segregationists' connection between Jews, communism, and integration worked against them. According to Clive Webb, national Jewish organizations called for a federally sponsored, interstate investigation, which several non-Jewish politicians and religious groups supported, including the AJComm, Alabama governor "Big Jim" Folsom, and Connor. On April 29, only one day after the dynamite was reported at Beth-El, Connor

informed journalists of his "interstate conspiracy" theory, one shared by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.[35]

By the time Moore spoke to Collins, the FBI had joined southern officials in a collective effort to stamp out the targeting of Jewish institutions, which included the formation of the Southern Conference on Bombing (SCB). Birmingham's detectives were already working with their Jacksonville counterparts to extend their cases' connections and evidence, collaborating with a network of individuals investigating Jewish buildings targeted in the previous six months. Through their SCB colleagues, including Gastonia Detective Roy Smith and Jacksonville Mayor Hayden Burns, they learned that two of the six bombs placed at other Jewish buildings had also failed to explode and that the undetonated bomb placed at North Carolina's Beth-El was composed of the same type of dynamite with similar caps and connecting fuses. Despite the "few scraps of dynamite wrappings" left at the Florida site, investigators "felt certain" that the Beth-El and Jacksonville bombs were supposed to go off simultaneously since it appeared the bombs in Nashville and Miami had been set that way on March 16.[36]

Connor also repeatedly drew attention away from the possibility of local suspects, blaming the incidents on "the work of some outside group." He was hardly alone in his assumptions. In addition to southern journalists and other law enforcement officers, several national Jewish leaders believed a few "crackpots" or members of the "lunatic fringe" bore responsibility for the threat to Beth-El and other southern Jewish institutions, including AJComm president Dr. Joachim Prinz and the Anti-Defamation League's civil rights director, Arnold Foster. Birmingham reporter Clancy Lake's article, published three days after Beth-El's attempted dynamiting, reinforced these sentiments and encouraged the popular belief that the bomb's fuses "burned out just short of the blasting point," an oft-cited item in modern recollections of the incident. Despite the lack of concrete evidence for his statement, the theory helps community storytellers make sense of a violent event that did not occur and helps them ponder why their synagogue escaped the fate of other congregations.[37]

The police soon received a key lead in the case, one that seemed more promising than anything Collins, the FBI, or their colleagues in the SCB could tell them. Behind closed doors it bound the synagogue's case to the

Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth.
(Library of Congress.)

devastation caused during the second dynamiting of Shuttlesworth's Bethel Baptist Church on the city's north side. Bethel Baptist's first bomb destroyed the parsonage and threatened Shuttlesworth's life and family. Like the vicious beating he received in 1956, however, it did little to stop the reverend's activism. On June 29, 1958, within months of the Temple Beth-El incident, Will Hail (one of the church's volunteer guards) found sixteen sticks of dynamite in a white paint bucket next to the sanctuary. Hail quickly moved the bucket away from the building, but the bomb went off anyway, shattering some of the church's windows.[38]

Detectives soon became convinced that Jesse Benjamin (J. B.) Stoner had ordered the bombs at the synagogue and church. Stoner was an unstable individual whom the police and FBI already followed closely. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, he helped found the Christian Anti-Jewish Party, which had connections to individuals who happily supported their beliefs through acts of domestic terrorism. Stoner pronounced Jewish men and women "enemies of the white race" and charged mysterious Jews with running the NAACP and instigating *Brown v. Board of Education*.[39]

The lead that caused Birmingham detectives to take a closer look at Stoner came on May 8, a little over a week after the synagogue's attempted bombing and three days after W. V. Collins's phone call. The tip

came from one of Connor's regular informants, William Hugh Morris, a man often known as "Mr. X" in official police reports. An experienced member of the Klan who helped expose its "Dixiecrat phase" in the late 1940s, Morris named Stoner as the mastermind behind the dynamite found at Beth-El and at Jewish institutions in Florida and North Carolina. Morris expressed fear that he would be killed if anyone found out that he was talking to the police but implied he would come forward because he disagreed with Stoner's form of bigotry. Preferring to direct his animosity solely towards Black Americans, Morris was unmoved by Stoner's ravings about Jews or their synagogues, which Stoner referred to as "pigpens."[40]

Morris's tip piqued Connor and his officers' interest. They began to focus on his claim that the fuses attached to Beth-El's undetonated dynamite had been purposely "doctored." The next day Connor sent Cook to Atlanta to check the informant's information and dig up what he could about Stoner and any men working with him.[41] On May 12, the Monday after Morris spoke to Connor, Lindsey met with local explosives expert Dennis Plan to test his statements. The detective asked Plan to determine what might have caused the fuses to falter. They then began a series of tests on fuses like those found in the blue satchel. Plan started by making pinpoints in their powder channels and adding water, which caused the fuses to burn out at the first puncture mark. He then bent some fuses and loosened their external fabric, which also caused them to fail. When the same tests were repeated on several fuses with the same results, the two

Jesse Benjamin (J. B.) Stoner, c. 1965. (Courtesy of the Alabama Department of Archives and History.)

men concluded that the fuses must have been "tampered with" before being lit. Many residents still speculate that they went out because of the previous night's rain, but Plan's tests on the replicas suggest that someone would have had to compromise them first regardless of the rain.[42]

Unfortunately, little remained to corroborate Plan's conclusions due to the damage the actual fuses sustained through the bomb's official disarming and the inconclusive FBI tests. That did not seem to matter to Lindsey and his fellow detectives, who became convinced that the dynamite was placed at the synagogue to frighten people rather than destroy the building. Inspiration for the tests was connected to Morris, the informant who was an opinionated bigot and their primary suspect's acquaintance, but no one ever found another logical explanation for the fuses' failure, and the evidence seemed to match his testimony.[43]

The Confederate Underground, a clandestine society that declared responsibility for dynamiting Black and Jewish institutions in Miami and Jacksonville, soon provided an additional link. Lindsey and Cook interviewed several employees of the Exchange Security Bank on May 5, three days before Connor first met with Morris. More than one interviewee noted that a white man came into the bank acting oddly only four days before the Temple Beth-El incident. Wearing a plaid shirt and carrying a brown leather briefcase, the man asked whether Orman Summerville, a local attorney, was "Jewish or Gentile." Stating that he "wanted to talk confidential," he introduced himself as "Chapman or Chadwick" to C. J. Waldrop, the bank's assistant vice president, and informed Waldrop that he was "working with the Confederate Underground" and was "checking on Jews and Niggers," implying he either thought of them as equal threats or believed they worked together.[44]

In a follow-up meeting with Connor on June 16, Morris connected Stoner to the same group, which he referred to as the "Confederate Union." He portrayed Stoner as the interstate organization's leader and stated its members were committed to dynamiting or physically harming anyone who stood in the way of segregation, including federal judges and jurors. He then helped Connor and his detectives carry out a sting operation that introduced Stoner to Captain Pattie and Detective Cook. Posing as local steelworkers "Ted Cook" and "G. L. Edwards," they told Stoner that they could introduce him to wealthy segregationists willing to pay a lot of money for intimidation. During one of their

meetings, Stoner assured the undercover officers that he had "a small group of men who were dedicated to the cause" whom he identified as the Confederate Underground. He stated they were willing to "bomb a house or church" or commit other acts of violence—something the detectives took to mean murder—and implied they had already done so on his orders.[45]

Despite Stoner's bravado or Morris's beliefs, the Confederate Underground was much less organized or powerful than either of them suggested. Sometimes described as a "catch all" term for an imagined alliance, the group connected radical segregationists who loosely linked their actions through a commitment to their southern identities and myths of the Lost Cause. Still, some unity within the loose association existed, and its threat cannot be easily dismissed. Like many Cold War hate groups, people who related themselves to the Confederate Underground frequently blended anticommunism with racism and antisemitism. They generated publicity through specific acts of terrorism, gave outrageous aliases, and read from prepared statements. On April 28, individuals claiming to be members called at least three people in Jacksonville to take credit for bombs at the Jewish center and an African American school. One caller stated, "All integration must stop. Jews will not be allowed in Florida, except at Miami Beach," and "Jews outside of Miami will die." Roughly a month later, a man called the St. Louis Jewish Community Center and claimed to be part of the group as well. He warned "the same thing could happen [there] that happened in Nashville," connecting the threat to a bomb on March 16 that destroyed the entrance to another Jewish building and blew out the windows of nearby houses.[46]

Stoner and the group were further linked in June, when the Confederate Underground resurfaced in Birmingham after the second bombing of Bethel Baptist Church. A man declaring that he was "General Forrest of the Confederate Underground" called the police shortly after dynamite went off. (Nathan Bedford Forrest had led the first Ku Klux Klan established after the Civil War.) According to Juanita Parker, the complaint clerk on duty, the man took responsibility for the bombing in the name of the group and identified the church as "the Center for Communist integration in the South." That theme was repeated in October, when fifty sticks of dynamite exploded at The Temple in Atlanta at 3:37 A.M. There, the Confederate Underground again announced its responsibility for the

destruction, which blew apart the Temple's side wall, shattered the windows in a neighboring apartment building, and shook people out of their beds. A call placed in the Atlanta bombing's aftermath included additional threats that suggested future targets would be any nightclub that failed to fire its Black employees and "all Communist organizations."[47]

When undercover agents Pattie and Cook accompanied Morris to one of several meetings with Stoner, they attempted to bait him with antisemitic comments and stated they did not want any "duds" like those that had been found at Temple Beth-El. Stoner replied that the "duds" might have been the result of the Jews' attempt to raise money to build a new "church." The statement simultaneously puzzled detectives and demonstrated that Stoner—who trusted few people—impulsively fell back on a common defense of segregationist terrorists, blaming victims who sought to gain sympathy for inciting or committing the threats or violence that white supremacists performed. Simultaneously, Stoner could not resist hinting that he was indeed responsible for the attack. According to Pattie's report, Stoner mentioned that the undetonated synagogue bomb had consisted of fifty-four sticks of dynamite, which he noted would have done considerable damage had it exploded. Stoner also repeated long-standing antisemitic tropes related to Jewish social and economic exploitation. He told detectives that "the Negroes wouldn't steal if the Jew pawnbrokers did not buy the stolen goods" and blamed Black activism not only on African American leaders like Shuttlesworth but also on Jewish funding and encouragement, noting that this had caused "a great deal of trouble" in Birmingham.[48]

Cook and Pattie felt confident that Stoner acted as the "kingpin" behind Jewish attacks throughout the South as Morris claimed, but neither Stoner nor anyone else was ever charged with Temple Beth-El's attempted bombing. It may seem surprising that such an unapologetically violent individual was able to avoid prosecution for the incidents, especially given his damning testimony and his connection to other acts of domestic terrorism. In 1958, Stoner had been a lawyer for six years and was well skilled at his craft, which he employed when he became the attorney of James Earl Ray, Martin Luther King's assassin, eleven years later. He combined his knowledge of the law with his paranoia and was able to escape punishment for decades. He also took extensive precautions before he spoke

to anyone and knew the FBI and several state police departments watched him and recorded his calls. Stoner carefully constructed alibis for the times when segregationist protests, bombings, and physical attacks were scheduled and frequently recruited younger and more aggressive individuals to commit the crimes he sponsored.[49] When The Temple was bombed in Atlanta, Stoner made sure he was seen in Chattanooga, for example, and when he met with Cook and Pattie, he refused to enter the hotel room where they had previously met and talked, preferring Morris's Studebaker, which he considered less likely to be wiretapped.[50]

Moreover, Connor and his detectives' sting operation was poorly planned and operated. Because they underestimated Stoner's greed and capacity for violence, they failed to recognize that offering him money to bomb a high-profile target like Shuttlesworth's church would result in him committing the crime before they could arrange their first "down payment" and a subsequent arrest. Officers' highly flawed interactions with Stoner could be labeled "spontaneously creative" at best and "irresponsible" or "extralegal" at worst, which resulted in a botched investigation of both crimes that was covered up for decades. This caused local prosecutors to view police actions as entrapment and Connor to back away from making their findings public. Although ultimately unsuccessful, Stoner even tried to use the circumstances to claim he had been coerced when he was finally indicted in 1977 for the 1958 Bethel Baptist Church bombing. Convicted in 1980, he ultimately served less than half of his ten-year sentence.[51]

The Aftermath

Birmingham's inclusion in the series of attacks on southern Jewish institutions in the late 1950s exerted a strong impact on the Jewish men and women who live there. Its reach has extended from the immediate aftermath of the attempted bombing of Temple Beth-El to pivotal years in the freedom movement and beyond. In the 1950s and 1960s, Jewish community members reacted in a variety of ways to the attempted bombing and to calls for Black equality, creating a spectrum of response: no involvement and silence on one end, aggressive advocacy on the other, and gradualism in between. Drawing from the work of scholars like Mary Dudziak, Glenn Eskew, Clive Webb, Jeanne Theoharis, and Marc Dollinger, the spectrum enables current researchers and community members

to frame discussions about the period, analyze how local Jews felt about the attempted bombing, and explore how it impacted Birmingham's Jewish residents, leaders, and negotiators as calls for civil and human rights increased. The spectrum approach provides an effective tool of historical analysis since it leaves room for diverse actions and change over time, recognizing that people do not always operate in binary, static, or clearly defined spaces. Residents' actions and motivations can thus be related not only to their fears and complex identities as Jews but also to their perceptions of the mid-twentieth century civil rights movement and external events including, but not limited to, the attempted bombing of Temple Beth-El. Current community members also fall on this spectrum, responding to information about the past and contemporary calls for civil and social justice in a variety of ways.

The legacy of Beth-El's bomb threat began shortly after it occurred, a period crucial to the local and national civil rights movement. Between 1960 and 1965, Black students led Birmingham's first sit-ins, and a group of white professionals attempted to reform the city's segregationist government and oust Bull Connor. Jewish department store owners faced boycotts and protests for failing to integrate. When they tried to relax the city's segregation laws, these business leaders received threatening phone calls from white customers and reprimands from Connor, who fined them thousands of dollars for "building-code violations." In 1963, Fred Shuttlesworth finally convinced the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to join local activists, resulting in the Birmingham campaign and Martin Luther King's arrest. Temple Beth-El's attempted

bombing was just one of many events that sparked various responses. Some Jewish residents, scared by the synagogue's brush with destruction, retreated into complete silence as civil rights activities and violent forms of resistance rose. Others felt resentment toward Black activists, believing their work had amplified white supremacists' focus on the Jewish community. Fear or bitterness moved these individuals further toward silence in 1960, when *New York Times* reporter Harrison Salisbury claimed that two teenagers were arrested for parking a hearse filled with dynamite behind Temple Beth-El. While Birmingham journalists denied the presence of the explosives, local authorities did not refute the antisemitic literature that the teenagers carried nor the words of Beth-El's Black security guard, who stated the boys told him that they intended to blow up the synagogue.[52]

These events only reinforced the feelings of Jewish residents who were already segregationists, but many moved back and forth along a dynamic spectrum of action and inaction as they reacted to incidents in the city and the nation. Like Jewish men and women in other southern cities, some began to empathize with African Americans and quietly signed petitions, worked to keep public schools open, and performed other small acts of support. Lawyers like Abe Berkowitz and clergy members like Milton Grafman, who were already working with African American leaders, became more convinced of the need for change. A handful of previously inactive residents gained inspiration to become active for the very first time. A few were pushed toward more visible forms of advocacy by the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in September 1963, which particularly affected women like Gertrude Goldstein, who attended interracial meetings and spoke publicly about social inequalities.[53]

As the twentieth century progressed, Jewish responses to Temple Beth-El's attempted bombing continued. A small group of congregants and grassroots historians gathered and extended stories of the threat to their community, drawing their conclusions and perceptions from newspaper and archival records, first-hand experiences, and the words of people they knew. They kept the incident sacred through their recollections and added a Jewish lens to the recording of its history, generating an initial context for the city's collective memory. Their efforts have resulted in extensive documentation, including the work of local authors and historians like T. K. Thorne and Sol Kimerling. In 2013, publications

edited and sponsored by Birmingham residents, including *Weld* magazine's series "No More Bull" and *Southern Jewish Life*'s "Not Just Black and White: Civil Rights and the Jewish Community," featured the incident.[54]

Interest in the topic reaches into the present, building on existing narratives with the work of professional scholars and newly recorded perceptions of Jewish and African American residents. In 2022, the attempted bombing was permanently commemorated through a historical marker, serving as the foundation of the community-based Beth-El Civil Rights Experience (BCRE). Working with trained historians and non-Jewish community partners, Jewish residents utilize this project as a vehicle to examine and reflect upon overlaps in Birmingham's Jewish and civil rights histories. Through private and state-sponsored grants and their fundraising efforts, they have supported workshops and presentations, an audio tour, public and university courses, and a ten-minute documentary film about the 1958 bomb threat. The remembrance of Birmingham's Jewish past, whether flattering or unflattering, has thus become a way to inspire and inform tolerance and cooperation in the future. Suzanne Bearman, a college student during the 1960s and a member of the BCRE's advisory committee, "got involved" because she wanted "to make sure [the project] was telling the truth about what we did in the sixties, because I don't think we did enough." She represents Jewish residents who see the project as part of their ongoing commitment to principles of *tikkun olam* and the pursuit of justice in the city.[55]

Local Jews do not recall or ascribe meaning to the civil rights movement monolithically, however, so the research that drives the project has also faced challenges. Previous accounts of the attempted bombing and other important events in the city tend to focus on the minority of individuals who built reputations as allies, excluding those who fell on other points of the spectrum. Reliable evidence for Jewish men and women who failed to act or whose actions were "quiet" is scarce, and current residents who remember the era were often children or teenagers sheltered from the violence and hatred that accompanied white resistance. Project historians have sought to balance their respect for individual contributions with an acknowledgment that the intersection of Jewish and civil rights histories, similar to the history of the twentieth-century freedom movement as a whole, is complex. Rarely composed of heroes and villains, it is a story of

Temple Beth-El Historical Marker.
(Courtesy of Temple Beth-El, Birmingham.)

complex actors attempting to make sense of their world during a time of immense change.[56]

Moreover, the attempted bombing was not a successful attack, making it an antisemitic threat that was not fully realized. This lack of closure is one of the factors that drives the story forward, providing opportunities for the local community to repeatedly reexamine and question the incident and its meaning. Although the dynamite failed to explode in 1958, its discovery is wedged into the Jewish community's collective memory. Moreover, the unresolved nature of the botched police investigation, which failed to prosecute J. B. Stoner or anyone else for the act, led the community to contemplate how to memorialize something that did not happen, creating space for expanding interpretations of the event's significance and the definition of domestic terrorism. During a volatile era in a city known as "Bombingham," when physical assault and destruction were very real possibilities, Beth-El's undetonated bomb sent a message, highlighting the precarious position of the city's Jews in a racially

polarized and unforgiving environment. It intensified residents' awareness of the latent prejudice that existed in the city while simultaneously assuring them that non-Jewish civic leaders and police officers would support them when they were targeted. The bomb's placement and the connection that white supremacists drew between Jews, communists, and calls for Black equality demonstrated that Birmingham's Jews, like their counterparts in other southern cities, experienced many of the privileges of whiteness while still possessing a contested and fragile racial identity.

The Temple Beth-El incident is only one piece of the puzzle and not the only event necessary to understand how Jewish men and women responded to the freedom movement, but it illuminates the complex dynamics that motivated individuals to advocate for others. Studies of the incident and its processing continue to serve as an example of how a single community's memory of a difficult history can create an ever-changing form of sacred memory that motivate Jewish community members to cooperate, learn, and grow.

NOTES

[1] Birmingham Police Department Surveillance Files, 1947–1980, File #1125.1.47, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library (hereafter cited as BPL Surveillance Files); "Connor Asks Death Penalty in Church, School Bombings," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, April 29, 1958; Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill, 1997), 53.

[2] BPL Surveillance Files; Eskew, *But for Birmingham*, 53; "Connor Asks Death Penalty."

[3] "Connor Asks Death Penalty"; BPL Surveillance Files; Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (Oxford, UK, 2018), 179–81.

[4] Marjorie L. White and Andrew M. Manis, eds., *Birmingham Revolutionaries*: *The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights* (Macon, GA, 2000), 34–40, 60; "Leaders Hit Injustices On Montgomery City Bus Lines," *Alabama Tribune*, December 16, 1955.

[5] David Schraub, "White Jews: An Intersectional Approach," *AJS Review: The Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies* 43 (November 2019): 407; Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1998), 1–2; Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, 2006); 17–18; McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance*, 179–89.

[6] BPL Surveillance Files; "Stop 'Police Brutality' Negroes Ask Lindbergh," Birmingham *Post-Herald*, February 7, 1957; Fred Shuttlesworth quoted in Andrew M. Manis, *A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth* (Tuscaloosa,

1999), 177; Angela Onwuachi-Willig, "The Trauma of the Routine: Lessons on Cultural Trauma from the Emmett Till Verdict," *Sociological Theory* 34 (2016): 337–38.

[7] Schraub, "White Jews," 406; Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews & Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2003), 219; Abe Berkowitz, interview conducted by Ed Goldberg, Memory Bank Project, Birmingham Jewish Federation, April 14, 1985, 27, Alabama Holocaust Education Center Archives and Special Collections, Birmingham.

[8] *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) limited "racial discrimination" in state or locally supported real estate covenants, but exclusionary practices against people of color, Catholics, Jews, and other minority groups remained prevalent throughout the country in the mid- to late 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, ghettos in inner cities continued to flourish throughout the nation. Fights became most intense after the passage of civil rights laws and were often enforced through carefully worded advertisements, agents' unwritten agreements, ambiguous "board approvals," or last-minute requirements for large down payments and would only increase with white flight into various suburbs during these and the decades that followed. Mary Ellen Stratthaus, "Flaw in the Jewel: Housing Discrimination in La Jolla, California," *American Jewish History* 84 (September 1996): 189–99; Reynolds Farley, Sheldon Danziger, and Harry J. Holzer, *Detroit Divided: A Volume in the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality* (New York, 2000), 159; Jeffrey D. Gonda, *Unjust Deeds: The Restrictive Covenant Cases and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill, 2015), 1–3.

[9] T.K. Thorne, *Behind the Magic Curtain: Secrets, Spies, and Unsung White Allies of Birmingham's Civil Rights Days* (New York, 2021), 76, 145; Birmingham's Racial Segregation Ordinances, May 1951, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Birmingham; Eskew, *But for Birmingham*, 60–61, 79, 82; "New Interest Aroused in Louisville Bombing," *Alabama Tribune*, April 13, 1956; "Four Men Held in Connection with Home Bombings," *Alabama Tribune*, October, 16, 1953; "Scare Bombings and Klan Floggings Go Unsolved," *Alabama Tribune*, January 25, 1952.

[10] BPL Surveillance Files.

[11] Thorne, *Behind the Magic Curtain,* 55-56; Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 56–57.

[12] Melissa Faye Greene, *The Temple Bombing* (Boston, 1996), 6; Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s* (Tuscaloosa, 1997), 4–5, 171; P. Allen Krause, *To Stand Aside or To Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Mark K. Bauman with Stephen Krause (Tuscaloosa, 2016), 236–37.

[13] "Rabbi A.J. Mesch Dies Unexpectedly," *Birmingham Post Herald,* December 19, 1962; Memorial Service Program, Temple Beth-El, Birmingham, January 23, 1963, 5. For more on how the growth of identity politics led to "more defined ethno-racial factions," see Marc Dollinger, *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s* (Waltham, MA, 2018).

[14] "Temple Beth-El door found open by officers," *Birmingham News,* May 14, 1958.

[15] Greene, *Temple Bombing,* 4–7; Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 56–58; McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance*, 138–39, 153, 155–63.

[16] "Decrease in Anti-Jewish Prejudice in the United States Reported in Nation-Wide Survey" and "Jewish Organizations Urge United Nations Parley to Outlaw Racial Propaganda," Jewish Telegraph Agency, March 28, 1948.

[17] George Kellman, "Anti-Jewish Agitation," *American Jewish Year Book* 56 (New York, 1955), 221; Ernie Lazar FOIA Collection, FBI-Atlanta, 100-4976, Internet Archive, accessed June 15, 2023, https://archive.org/details/ChristianAntiJewishPartyJ.B.StonerAtlanta1004976/page/n23/mode/2up; Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 58.

[18] "Police Here Join State Patrol in Probe of Beating," *Birmingham News*, September 25, 1938; "Housing Experts to Gather Here: Southern Problems To Come Before Parley Nov 20–23," *Birmingham News,* Sept 27, 1938; "Lifting of City's Race Bar Asked at Conference," *Birmingham News,* November 22, 1938.

[19] Dollinger, *Black Power, Jewish Politics*, 30–31; Faye Kimerling, Temple Beth-El interview for TravelStorys walking tour, May 29, 2021, Temple Beth-El Papers, Birmingham.

[20] Sam Lubin to A. Harold Murray, February 7, 1957, Report of Field Trip to Birmingham and Montgomery, AJComm, Research of Kaye Nail/Personal Papers, Birmingham.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Temple Beth-El Board Minutes, April 28, 1958, Temple Beth El Papers, Birmingham; Faye Kimerling interview.

[23] Temple Beth-El Board Minutes, April 28, 1958; Mark H. Elovitz, Research Material on Birmingham Jewish History and Constitution of Jewish Community Council of Birmingham, May 1962, AR1758, Milton Grafman Papers 1907–1995, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham.

[24] Bulletin, May 2–3, 1958, Temple Beth-El Papers, Temple Beth-El, Birmingham.

[25] Bulletin, May 2–3, 1958, Temple Beth-El Papers; "Public is urged to raise big reward in bomb try," *Birmingham News*, April 29, 1958; "Bomb Try at Temple is Deep Shock," *Birmingham News*, April 29, 1958; "Gifts by Christians urged in bombing," *Birmingham News*, May 3, 1958; "YMBC opposes tax cut as 'cure' for business dip," *Birmingham News*, May 6, 1958; "Eloquent Denunciation of Bombings," *Birmingham News*, May 6, 1958; "Catholic layman fire blast at bombing attack," *Birmingham News*, May 8, 1958.

[26] "Connor Asks Death Penalty," *Birmingham Post-Herald,* April 29, 1958.

[27] Although Moore's first concern was always protecting and improving the image of the police department, he frequently sought to deescalate racial tensions instead of heightening them, as Connor did. He also served as a negotiator, trying to balance the safety of Rev. Shuttlesworth and other activists and his role as a defender of the social order of his era. He refused to back Connor during the Freedom Rider controversy, for example, and arrested the students involved for their own protection, allowing Shuttlesworth to go with them to jail when the pastor insisted that he do so. Jane Aldridge, "Reversal Sought By Shuttlesworth," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, January 9, 1962.

[28] Thorne, *Behind the Magic Curtain*, 68–69.

[29] Ibid.; "Warrants sworn out for Connor, woman companion," *Birmingham News*, December 26, 1951; William A. Nunnelley, *Bull Connor* (Tuscaloosa, 1991), 63–64; "Charges Filed Against 5 Detectives By Personnel Board," *Birmingham Post-Herald,* January 10, 1953; Clancy Lake, "Lindbergh outlines sweeping police reshuffle," *Birmingham News*, November 2, 1953; "Review of '55—Blasts, fire, takes lives," *Birmingham News,* January 12, 1956.

[30] Detective L.J. Wilson assisted early in the Beth-El case as well, but he does not appear as much in the reports related to it or the other cases mentioned here. Wilson did, however,

investigate the airline and car rental rosters mentioned in the next paragraphs. BPL Surveillance Files.

[31] BPL Surveillance Files; Michael R. Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order: Racial Violence and Constitutional Conflict in the Post*-Brown *South* (Athens, GA, 1995), 53–58; "Aid of FBI Is Sought In Dynamitings Probe," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, May 1, 1958.

[32] BPL Surveillance Files.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.; Hearings before Subcommittee No. 3 of the U.S. Congress, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, 86th Congress, First Session Serial No. 2, on HR 6742, 4958, 3216, 2269 (May 8–11, 1959), 84.

[35] Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 57–59; "Bomb Case May Have Florida Link," *Birmingham News*, April 29, 1958; Clancy Lake, "Phantom Callers Claim Big Organization—Segregation terrorist group believed to be planting bombs," *Birmingham News*, May 1, 1958; Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order*, 55.

[36] Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 57; BPL Surveillance Files; Lake, "Phantom Callers"; "Police have fingerprints in temple bomb case," *Birmingham News,* May 3, 1958; "Jacksonville policemen confer here on bombing," *Birmingham News*, May 29, 1958,

[37] Lake, "Phantom Callers"; Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 59.

[38] Susan Cianci Salvatore, National Historic Landmarks Survey (Bethel Baptist Church), U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, July 27, 2006; "Birmingham Negro Church Bombed Again," *Montgomery Advertiser*, June 30, 1958.

[39] Michael Newton, *The National States Rights Party: A History* (Jefferson, NC, 2017), 28–31.

[40] Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York, 2001), 132; BPL Surveillance Files.

[41] Although at least one woman was named in relation to Stoner's inner circle, detectives tended to ignore her or any other woman's role in their investigations of the bombings noted in this paper.

[42] McWhorter, *Carry Me Home*, 132; BPL Surveillance Files.

[43] McWhorter, *Carry Me Home*, 132; BPL Surveillance Files. The overnight rain theory is presented by Thorne in *Behind the Magic Curtain*, 75, and is frequently repeated in verbal accounts of the Beth-El bombing. However, the FBI's tests on the fuses that were gathered from the scene could neither prove nor disprove Plan's theory.

[44] BPL Surveillance Files.

[45] Ibid.

[46] John M. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), 142; BPL Surveillance Files; Lake, "Segregation terror group believed to be planting bombs," *Birmingham News*, May 1, 1958.

[47] Coski, *Confederate Battle Flag,* 142; BPL Surveillance Files; Greene, *Temple Bombing,* 1–11.

[48] BPL Surveillance Files.

[49] The NRSP, for example, organized and trained Birmingham teenagers to harass African Americans who attempted to desegregate schools and department stores.

[50] Stuart Wexler and Larry Hancock, *The Awful Grace of God: Religious Terrorism, White Supremacy, and the Unsolved Murder of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Berkeley, CA, 2012); Clive Webb,

Rabble Rousers: The American Far Right in the Civil Rights Era (Athens, GA, 2011), 181; Newton, *National States Rights Party*, 53–56.

[51] Jon Bixby, "Stoner convicted in bomb case," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 15, 1980; Nick Patterson, "Bomber J.B. Stoner leaving prison after 3½ years," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, November 5, 1986.

[52] Eskew, *But for Birmingham,* 148–49, 166–67, 194–96, 210–12, 291; "An editorial—The Salisbury case," *Birmingham News*, May 8, 1960.

[53] Kaye Nail, "Birmingham's Jewish Women and Social Reform, 1880–1980," (master's thesis, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 2010), 33–35. For more information about Jewish forms of advocacy in other southern cities, see Webb, *Fight Against Fear* and Raymond A. Mohl, *South of the South: Jewish Activists and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, 1945–1960* (Gainesville, FL, 2004).

[54] Solomon P. Kimerling's article "54 Sticks of Dynamite: The Bomb at Temple Beth-El" was published in *Weld* magazine's 2013 series "No More Bull." *Weld* is no longer an active journal, but the series is digitally archived on Temple Beth-El's website, accessed February 23, 2023, https://templebeth-el.net/education/no-more-bull. "'Our Mockingbird' screening marks civil rights anniversaries," Not Just Black and White: Civil Rights and the Jewish Community, *Southern Jewish Life,* April 2013, accessed May 24, 2023, https://sjlmag.com/2013/01/01/not-just-black-and-white-civil-rights-and-the-jewish-community-special-series; Thorne, *Behind the Magic Curtain,* 73-79.

[55] "Beth-El Civil Rights Experience," last modified September 2022, https://templebeth-el.net/education/beth-el-civil-rights-experience, accessed May 8, 2023; Suzanne Bearman, *In Solidarity: The Beth-El Civil Rights Experience,* dir. Tyler Jones, 1504 Productions, 2023. A review of the Beth-El Civil Rights Experience appears in this volume.

[56] For more on local Jewish memory and the civil rights movement see Margaret Norman, "Convergences: Remembering and Recounting the Civil Rights Movement Through the Story of Nineteen Rabbis in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2022), accessed May 8, 2023, https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/concern/dissertations/ff365g164.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Black Newspapers and Jewish Advertising: Jim Crow on the South's Western Periphery

by

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Advertisements in the *Dallas Express* for Lewin's Market, Fred Bruss Tailor, and Walden H. Cohn, 1920–21[1]

The commercial relationship between Jewish business owners and Black customers in the American South has received substantial scholarly attention over the years. While it may seem odd to see Jewish businesses within the pages of the South's countless Black-operated newspapers, it was common and exemplifies one of the crucial pieces of southern Jewish and African American histories.[2]

The amorphous racial definition of American Jews and their role as middleman minorities often transcended the rigid Black-white segregation of Jim Crow during the early twentieth century, allowing for otherwise rare interracial economic relationships. In older southern states with long-established Jewish communities such as South Carolina or Georgia, Jews' social acceptance as white typically strained commercial relationships between Jewish shop owners and Black consumers. However, in the western peripheries of the American South, steady streams of in-migration and immigration to newly burgeoning cities blurred racial boundaries and allowed Jews to operate on both sides of the Black-white boundaries of Jim Crow.

Since Black newspapers only ran advertisements for integrated establishments, the existence of regular advertisements for multiple Jewish-owned businesses speaks to a unique economic relationship that existed

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in the American South under Jim Crow. In early twentieth-century Texas, Jews were classified as neither Black nor white, which placed them in a complicated position within a society rigidly sorted along a racial binary. Because of this, Jewish merchants regularly transcended segregated spaces to engage in commerce with Black and white populations alike, giving the merchants a unique economic status throughout the first half of the 1900s. Three Jewish businesses that regularly appeared in Texas's largest Black-owned newspaper, the *Dallas Express,* between 1919 and 1923 illustrate how Jewish commerce transcended racial boundaries in Texas and Oklahoma.

Understanding Advertising Patterns

Studying advertisements and marketing in newspapers is fundamental to understanding the construction of social boundaries in the United States. While on its surface advertising's purpose is to push a simple cognizance of products or services, newspapers not only serve an effective role in informing the public but can also be used to change the way that people think and shape their attitudes. Therefore, once consumers develop a purchasing behavior, the average individual faces difficulty in controlling or altering consumer patterns. Newspapers traditionally acted particularly effectively at reaching and impacting the public because at its height, print media could be found anywhere and provided the fastest flow of consumer information to readers.[3]

Because of this impact on shaping public attitudes, establishing social boundaries served as a core function of newspaper advertising.[4] On an individual level, this results in brand loyalties, consumer habits, and, in its extreme, compulsive shopping. On a macro level, overlapping routines in consumer patterns set community boundaries and limits. In the Jim Crow South, newspaper advertisements delineated segregated spaces from one another. For example, businesses that refused to serve a Black clientele did not spend money on advertising in Black-owned newspapers, as this was a consumer base from which they would not make money. As such, it can be assumed that businesses advertising in Black newspapers served an integrated clientele.

By advertising in Black and white newspapers alike, Jewish businesses indicated their commitment to serving an integrated customer base. In a segregated city like Dallas, Jewish merchants' role as a middle-

minority that was neither Black nor fully accepted as white granted them an opportunity to simultaneously serve customers on both sides of the racial divide. In the *Dallas Express* during the early 1920s, advertisements for Jewish-owned businesses appeared regularly, always alongside Black-owned and businesses that targeted Black customers, such as Nile Queen Hair Straightening and Whitaker's Café, both run by the owner of a local Negro League baseball team. Ad placement alongside these speaks to the importance and availability of Jewish businesses to Black patrons.[5]

Jewish Ads as a Window to the Jewish Experience

To understand the placement of Jewish advertisements in Black newspapers and what it says about Jewish history and the history of segregation in the western South, three advertisements in the Black newspaper the *Dallas Express* are particularly noteworthy: those for Lewin's Market, Fred Bruss Tailoring, and Walden H. Cohn's mail-order elixirs. Each of these advertisements is unique, yet they have themes seen across Jewish advertising in Black newspapers. Trends common across Jewish communities in Texas and Oklahoma during the early twentieth century draw them together: they represent mercantile occupations, willingness to transgress the growing racial boundaries of the urban South, and, at least on the surface, a cultural assimilation with other ethnic groups in the region.

To understand the wider implications of the Jewish advertisements, we begin by dissecting their content. The first example, for Lewin's Market on Elm Street in Dallas, appeared in every issue of the *Express* during the late 1910s and early 1920s. As a butcher, Ludwig Lewin advertised various cuts and varieties of meat including beef, veal, lamb, mutton, turkey, and sausages.[6] Within this advertisement appears an initial sign of a necessary assimilation into the wider culture of Texas: Lewin's was not kosher. In fact, the meats and cuts at the top of its listed menu were all pork-based. This represented a conciliation on the part of Lewin's to abandon traditions in an effort to serve the wider community around it, the bulk of whom were not Jewish.

Particularly noteworthy in Lewin's services was its "Automobile Delivery." For Jews on the western peripheries in the early twentieth century, the emergence of automobiles allowed a transition from peddling and small-trade enterprises to sustainable retail businesses. It facilitated the

expansion of a customer base to areas outside of their immediate neighborhoods.[7] A delivery service let the Lewins sell meat and groceries throughout Dallas to Black and white neighborhoods alike. Deliveries allowed the company to skirt around segregated spaces and regularly cross Jim Crow divides in the city. Although their storefront sat in the heart of the Black neighborhood, they still reached white customers in other parts of the city. Thus, automobiles offered a crucial element to local Jews' position as a middleman minority.

Another Jewish establishment, Fred Bruss's tailoring business, also regularly advertised in the *Dallas Express*. Located a block from Lewin's, Bruss advertised for a penny laundry, sanitary pressing machines, and cleaning and renovating services for furs.[8] Working in the retail garment industry, Bruss exemplified a common experience in American Jewish history. Born in Germany in 1878 and immigrating to the U.S. in 1902, Bruss lived in one of Dallas's historically Black neighborhoods in the Ninth Ward. While the majority of this community was Black and had been the site of freedmen's towns in the nineteenth century, a number of Jewish immigrants resided in the neighborhood.[9]

As a tailor, Bruss also worked in an industry dominated by Jewish workers. Even before their arrival in the United States, many Jews already carved out a niche in *shmatte* (literally "rag") peddling across central Europe. When arriving in the United States, Jewish enclaves in New York's Lower East Side and Chicago's West Side became centers of a burgeoning garment industry. As the American frontier pushed west in the mid- to late nineteenth century, Jewish peddlers moved with pioneers, providing them with crucial clothing and tailoring services.[10] As expansion into Texas and Oklahoma began in earnest in the late antebellum years, opportunities opened for Jews to migrate south and west with Anglo planters and provide much-needed tailoring services. Jewish tailors played a crucial role in manufacturing clothing for Union and Confederate soldiers during the Civil War, further establishing themselves in the South and on the western peripheries. As a German-Jewish immigrant and tailor in Dallas, Bruss's success exemplified a story that was commonplace at the time and provides yet another in the myriad of examples of Jews succeeding in the "rag race."

Finally, advertisements for Walden Cohn, an elixir salesman in Tulsa, regularly appeared in the wider regional news section of the

Dallas Express. Jews have a long history with peddling as a profession, and this profession particularly provided the opportunity to Jewish immigrants to the South to rise into the middle class in just a generation or two. While peddlers primarily worked as travelers upon their initial arrival, they often saved money with the hope of becoming shopkeepers.[11]

Cohn's advertisements also speak to a broader phenomenon of elixir salesmen on the frontiers of the South. Traveling medicine shows were wildly popular throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s as isolated settlers on the frontier hoped for miracle cures that could provide the same security in health as the urban hospitals from which they were too far to patronize. Traveling "doctors" would move from town to town whipping up a marketing frenzy and promising a long life of fitness, health, and vitality. Since medical regulation did not yet exist in the United States, peddlers could promise any number of fictitious claims and often outright lied to the audience about the effectiveness of their "cures."[12] Cohn fit this bill, often describing himself as either a "physician" or a "metaphysicist," and his advertisements regularly promised vague and supposedly provable measures of success.[13]

Cohn's advertisements are especially amusing in their guarantees. The ads promised that Cohn's elixirs would grant the user "wisdom, knowledge, mysteries, and secrets," and that the user's "business will increase so rapidly until it will rush [them] to fill [their] orders." Cohn's elixir sold for ten dollars (worth roughly 180 dollars today) and promised users a tenfold return in health and success.[14] This speaks to the vague metrics commonplace among medicine peddlers in the rural South and West. By promising an amorphous metric of granting wisdom, the success or failure of Cohn's products could never be measured or quantified.

The names of Cohn's elixirs highlight the same trend of assimilation and acculturation to non-Jewish clienteles as Lewin's advertisements. "Keys to the Kingdom" is a Christian phrase rooted in the New Testament and a phrase that Cohn's non-Jewish clientele recognized and to which they ascribed meaning. Like Lewin's selling of nonkosher meats, the inclusion of this wording indicates an understanding and acceptance on the part of Jewish shop owners that their clientele would largely not be Jewish.

Jewish Ads and the Black Newspaper

The existence of these three advertisers in a Black newspaper indicates a lot about Jim Crow segregation in the South. Their appearance speaks to an integration of Jewish immigrants into primarily Black neighborhoods. In a South firmly entrenched along racial lines, the existence of large immigrant communities in non-white neighborhoods exemplifies one of many ways in which the immigrant experience transcended Jim Crow.

Understanding Black newspapers is critical to understanding media representations of Jim Crow. During the first half of the twentieth century, the *Dallas Express* was North Texas's largest Black-owned newspaper. Founded by W. E. King in 1892, the paper reported on lynching and incidents of violence against Black Texans that other papers often ignored. It also attacked segregation and voting restrictions. The paper outlived King's death in 1919 and continued through multiple owners before ceasing publication in 1970. King often grandiosely referred to his paper as "The South's Oldest and Largest Negro Newspaper."[15]

Front-page banner from the Dallas Express*, March 5, 1921. (Newspapers.com.)*

At the newspaper's height, it covered Dallas and North Texas and had a regional distribution that included large parts of Oklahoma. It filled a void because Oklahoma lacked a long-running Black-owned newspaper during the early twentieth century. Oklahoma's longest-running Black newspapers—Tulsa's *Oklahoma Eagle* and Oklahoma City's the *Black Dispatch*—did not begin publication until the 1920s. Other existing Black newspapers in Oklahoma struggled to survive more than ten years, leaving a regional publication hole for the *Dallas Express* to fill.

In the 1920s, typical issues of the *Dallas Express* ran eight pages in length. National and regional news covered the front half of the paper and Dallas and Fort Worth local news dominated the rear pages. No

Page of ads from the Dallas Express*, February 28, 1920. The ad for Fred Bruss Tailor is at right-center. (Newspapers.com.)*

dedicated sections within issues existed for classifieds or advertisements. Instead, the *Dallas Express* peppered them throughout, placing national and regional businesses toward the front and local businesses alongside localized news stories.

Whereas an overwhelming majority of the advertisements in the *Dallas Express* were for Black-owned businesses, advertisements for Jewish-owned businesses across North Texas and Oklahoma regularly appeared. The advertisements for Jewish-owned businesses did not overtly identify as such and in many ways appear no different from non-Jewish advertisements in the paper. Because these advertisements were aimed at a non-Jewish customer base, indications of kashrut status or discussion of Jewish holidays that would have appeared in a Jewish newspaper are absent in the *Express*. Of note is Lewin's advertisement in the April 3, 1920, issue of

the *Dallas Express*. Running at the beginning of Passover, Lewin's advertised "Special prices for One Week." Although the sale ran for the duration of Passover, no mention of the holiday or anything else within the advertisement set it apart from those around it.[16]

What This Says About Jews and Segregation in Texas and Oklahoma

The presence of Jewish advertisers such as Lewin's Market, Fred Bruss Tailoring, and Walden Cohn speaks to the unique economic position occupied by Texas's Jewish community during the first half of the twentieth century. These advertisements represent two major aspects to Jewish life in that time and place. First, the advertisements represent three of the most prominent industries in which newly arrived Jewish Texans partook during the early twentieth century: grocery and dry goods; tailoring and the rag trade; and traveling merchantry. Their presence in a Black newspaper also speaks to the community's ability to operate on either side of the Black-white racial divide.

As a borderland and western frontier for much of the nineteenth century, the majority of Texas's population history centers around migration and immigration. On the eve of the nineteenth century, the region housed only 1,300 non-Indigenous inhabitants, but by 1900 this number ballooned to over three million.[17] The seizure of land and forced expulsion of Indigenous Americans from the territory opened lands in the western South to American expansion. An ensuing population boom resulted from the migration of Anglo Americans from the northern and eastern United States, forced migration of slaves from the lower South, voluntary migration of newly freed Black Americans in search of looser social restrictions on the western frontier, and the immigration of west and central European immigrants to the growing cities. The constant in-migration created social hierarchies that were often more fluid than in older, established regions in the American South.

In the late nineteenth century, social hierarchies in Texas hardened around growing Jim Crow segregation, drawing a firm social distinction between white and Black. In Texas, Jim Crow included full separation of physical and social space, from proscribing which parts of town people could live in to requiring Black and white pedestrians to walk on opposite sides of the street. While on the hinterlands and western frontiers Jim Crow was slow to take over, Texas's cities quickly adopted laws firmly

segregating public space. By 1900, a majority of white-owned stores in North Texas refused to serve Black clientele. Integrated stores were a minority.[18] Jewish merchants entered this firm system of Black-white separation during the early twentieth century.

Aside from malleable social dynamics, Texas also acted as a frontier for most migrating Jews. In *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas*, Bryan Edward Stone notes that Jews migrating to Texas were simultaneously part of two frontiers, the movement of Americans into the North American West and the further "scattering of Jews across the globe."[19] Their life in Texas constituted a constant negotiation between being removed from traditional population centers in search of economic opportunity and attempting to maintain ties to a Jewish tradition and identity which often set them apart from their new neighbors. The sense of frontier and periphery within the Texan-Jewish mind primarily manifested in the interaction between Jews and other ethnic groups in Texas. Texas's Jews often defined themselves in relation to non-Jewish groups in the state.

The location of Lewin's and Bruss's shops along Elm Street in Dallas represented the growth of Jewish communities within Black neighborhoods in the South. Organized Jewish populations developed in North Texas in the postbellum years, but large populations did not exist until the end of the nineteenth century when immigrating eastern European Jews arrived in Dallas, primarily settling along Elm Street in the heart of the traditionally African American neighborhood known as "Deep Ellum." "Deep" referred to the neighborhood's distance from the city center, and "Ellum" was the phonetic spelling for the colloquial pronunciation of Elm used by both African Americans and Jewish immigrants. Pawn shops, clothing outlets, brothels, and bars littered the neighborhood, and as a musical district it attracted regional blues legends such as Blind Lemon Jefferson and Leadbelly.[20]

Although a small community existed before the Civil War, the majority of Jews arrived in Dallas in the late nineteenth century primarily from central and eastern Europe and largely settled along Elm Street, often living in apartments above the stores they operated. Many Jewish businesses popped up along Elm Street in the late century, including Wasserman's and Bradford's Grocery Store. Engelberg's Market, a competitor to Lewin's, similarly set up shop along Elm Street, but only once

Dysterbach's department store, Elm and Pearl Streets, Dallas, c. 1915.
(Courtesy of the Dallas Jewish Historical Society.)

Deep Ellum streetcar line under construction,
date unknown. Engelberg's Market is on the left.
(Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.)

advertised in the pages of the *Dallas Express*. The local community also frequently used these stores as temporary religious sites in the absence of formal synagogues. Before establishing a dedicated space, the Orthodox congregation Shaareth Israel met in of some of these Jewish retail spaces, an indication of the booming Jewish community and commercial district growing in the heart of Black Dallas.[21]

Dallas historian Robert Prince described Deep Ellum as a convergence of three growing populations: Mexican immigrants fleeing the revolution, immigrant Jews, and Black Texans migrating to the city in search of economic opportunity. What resulted was a cultural crossroads and nexus where these three distinct populations could interact and craft the interracial social and economic relationships that built the neighborhood. It was not rare to see Black patrons leaving Itzhack Abramson's dry goods store and purchasing tamales from a Mexican man cooking them over a charcoal-fire bucket on the street corner. In Prince's words, "Deep Ellum was a Babel."[22]

Lewin's Market and Fred Bruss Tailoring demonstrate the growth of Jewish businesses in Deep Ellum. Both shops operated along Elm Street, with Lewin's near the corner of Hawkins and Fred Bruss on the corner of Preston. Both were along Dallas's segregated streetcar line which crossed through the city's Black neighborhoods, providing easy access for Black customers.[23]

Walden Cohn's business on Greenwood Avenue in Tulsa shared many of the same cultural hallmarks as Lewin's and Bruss's. Tulsa's Greenwood District was one of America's most famous and successful Black neighborhoods during the first decades of the twentieth century. Ironically, the economic isolation of Black Tulsa from the rest of the city prompted a reactionary economic independence that allowed Greenwood to overcome the struggles of Jim Crow and flourish. Migrating African Americans encountered a city strictly divided along racial lines necessitating the creation of retail and service businesses, schools, and entertainment open to Black clientele. This gave rise to a vibrant, self-contained economy that quickly became the talk of Black America.[24]

Jewish settlement into Oklahoma was slower than in any other part of the American South. Migration of Jews into the territory began only after the Land Run of 1889 and statehood in 1907. Even with small Jewish communities arising during the early twentieth century, larger

communities only cropped up after the Great Depression and Dust Bowl. Jewish immigrants first arrived in Tulsa as the population exploded from the oil industry. What had been a town of 1,390 people in 1900 grew to 131,000 by 1930. This larger migration brought Jewish merchants with it. Several Jewish businesses opened in Tulsa in the mid-1900s, with Simon Jankowsky's Palace Clothiers and Sig Werner's dry goods stores being the most notable.[25]

Most famously remembered for its main thoroughfare, Greenwood Avenue—locally known as "Black Wall Street"—the neighborhood also offered haven to numerous Jewish immigrants, most of whom owned businesses alongside their Black neighbors. Socially cast into a not-quite-white status, immigrating Jews found themselves shut out of Tulsa's white neighborhoods, forcing them into the city's non-white enclaves. Like Deep Ellum, Greenwood was a multiracial Babel that allowed for immense economic, social, and cultural exchange between Black and Jewish residents.

Greenwood's fate was forever changed in the spring of 1921 when a white supremacist mob sacked Black homes and businesses, destroying a thirty-five-square-block area and killing as many as three hundred residents. Property damage totaled in the millions of dollars, and the entire Black community of Tulsa lay in ruin after two days of destruction. Destroyed businesses were almost entirely Black-owned, but given the sheer level of destruction, collateral damage to neighboring Jewish businesses was unavoidable. Despite appearing regularly between January and April, advertisements for Walden Cohn's business do not appear in the *Dallas Express* or local newspapers in Oklahoma after May 1921. This suggests that his business may have succumbed to the same violence that destroyed so many Black businesses.[26]

Black residents fled their homes, seeking asylum anywhere they could, often finding sanctuary among their Jewish neighbors. Countless stories exist of Tulsa's Jews shielding their Black neighbors. Sam and Rose Zarrow hid Black friends in large, empty pickle vats; Abraham Solomon gathered all his Black neighbors into his house and stood in the front door with a shotgun ready to shoot anyone attempting to attack those inside; and Nathan Livingston and his family hid eight Black families in their basement for the duration of the riot.[27] These stories highlight the rich and deep social relationships that developed between the Black and

"Black Wall Street," the Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma, c. 1920. (Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of the Families of Anita Williams Christopher and David Owen Williams.)

Blocks of destroyed homes in the Greenwood District following the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. (Courtesy of the Tulsa Historical Society & Museum.)

Jewish residents of Greenwood and Jewish immigrants' ability to transcend the traditional Black-white binary of Jim Crow in Oklahoma.

Not-Quite-White in Texas and Oklahoma

Although they were not the first Jews in the region, the direct immigration of eastern European Jews, often from the Russian Empire, into Texas and Oklahoma complicated the existing racial hierarchies in the region's larger cities. While Jewish immigrants arrived from Europe and typically held definitions of legal whiteness, their non-Christian identity and popular designation as "Asiatic" often meant that attaining social whiteness was a bit trickier.[28] Immigrating Jews regularly faced threats from conservative fringes of society including Dallas's Ku Klux Klan leaders who accused Jews of having "alien blood" and grouped them with African Americans as racially inferior.[29]

Similarly, conservatives among the region's upper class often attempted to define immigrating Jews as non-white in the same way they did immigrating Latinos. While many white leaders often pushed back against the overt antisemitism of groups like the Ku Klux Klan, they also regularly chided Jews for "crowd[ing] Americans from jobs."[30] This worked part and parcel with the anti-immigrant nativism running rampant in the years after World War I. Anglo leaders also fretted over new immigrants' uncertain attachment to existing social orders. They argued the influx of Jews into cities like Dallas and Tulsa could upend the firm Black-white color line, as they did not fit neatly into either racial definition. As such, city leaders often attempted to force immigrants into a non-white social status to quell concerns among the Anglo population.[31]

The pushback against immigrating Jews often forced them into non-white neighborhoods like Deep Ellum in Dallas and Greenwood in Tulsa. As a result, Jews in Texas and Oklahoma often transgressed the Black-white binary present in larger cities. They formed social and economic relationships with both Black and Latino communities, which further fueled their association with non-white populations. In particular, the cultural relationships between Jewish immigrants and Black and Latino communities provided a common source of consternation for the Klan-affiliated newspaper *Colonel Mayfield's Weekly*, which believed such relationships caused the social ills that plagued Texas's cities in the twentieth century. Similar sentiments pervaded Oklahoma as well where white

residents often scapegoated Jews as corrupting local culture and despoiling communities. The most publicized case of this occurred when the editor of the *Guthrie Leader* blamed Oklahoma's Jews for turning Oklahoma City into a cesspool unfit to house the state capital. An inflammatory November 1912 headline read "Shylocks of Oklahoma City Have State by the Throat," and the article alleged a Jewish conspiracy to "loot the state for twenty-five years."[32] The Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups regularly targeted Tulsa's Jewish businesses with economic boycotts, although outright violence was rare.[33] Events such as these pushed Jews in Texas and Oklahoma into a not-quite-white status, even while the economic opportunities of whiteness remained available. This middle-minority status allowed Jews to simultaneously operate across Black and white communities.

The immigrant Jewish populations in these neighborhoods also rarely shared the same racial sentiments as the Anglo majority. Because they often lived alongside their Black customers, Jews in these mixed neighborhoods did not expect signs of deference from their Black neighbors, such as averting eye contact or saying "yes ma'am" or "no ma'am" regularly in conversations. Jews in mixed neighborhoods in Texas also rarely held the same racial animosity toward Mexican immigrants as the Anglo population. Whereas white Texans often derided Mexicans because of lingering feelings from the 1836 war for Texas independence, as new immigrants "San Jacinto didn't mean a damn thing" to Jews.[34] Similar hostilities were often missing toward Black residents, as immigrants did not share a memory of antebellum racial orders. Thus, the same barriers to economic and social integration seldom appeared.

Unfortunately, this social mobility across both sides of Jim Crow did not last forever. As immigrating Jews increasingly assimilated into the dominant white racial hierarchy during the 1940s and 1950s, business owners increasingly acquiesced to the prevailing racial order. Larger Jewish-owned department stores in Dallas such as Sanger Brothers, Titche-Goetinger's, and Neiman Marcus either excluded Black customers or had discriminatory policies toward them, such as prohibiting them from trying on clothing in the store.[35] Unlike the examples advertised in the *Dallas Express*, these were larger, more financially successful stores. Sustained financial growth in Texas and Oklahoma required a reliance on white customers, many of whom expected adherence to the Jim Crow standards

of the region. For the region's Jews, growing acceptance as a white population resulted in growing attachment to white-dominated social hierarchies. The era of Black and Jewish economic cohesion did not last beyond the interwar years.

Ultimately the existence of these regular advertisements tells us a lot about the economic status of Jews under the oppressive system of Jim Crow in Texas and Oklahoma. It illuminates the vibrant multiracial character of neighborhoods such as Deep Ellum and Greenwood and speaks to a rich tradition of Black and Jewish commercial relationships that existed in the early twentieth century. These neighborhoods flourished because of the cultural integration of multiple immigrating populations and the blurring of Jim Crow color lines within them. One hundred years later, the existence of advertisements for Lewin's, Bruss Tailoring, and Walden Cohn speak to this rich history.

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Advertisements in the *Dallas Express* for Lewin's Market, Fred Bruss Tailor, and Walden H. Cohn, 1920–21

Dallas Express*, February 28, 1920. (Newspapers.com.)*

Dallas Express*, January 17, 1920. (Newspapers.com.)*

Dallas Express*, March 12, 1921. (Newspapers.com.)*

NOTES

[1] Each of these businesses ran recurring advertising, but see, for example, Lewin's Market, February 28, 1920, Fred Bruss Tailor, January 17, 1920, and Walden H. Cohn, March 12, 1921, *Dallas Express*.

[2] The commercial relationship between Black and Jewish communities in the American South features a wide array of different books including studies of southern Jewish communities such as Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978); Marcie Cohen Ferris and Mark I. Greenberg, eds., *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil: A New History* (Hanover, NH, 2006); in overviews of Black-Jewish relations such as

Maurianne Adams and John Bracey, eds., *Strangers & Neighbors: Relations between Blacks & Jews in the United States* (Amherst, MA, 2000) and Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2003); as well as in examinations of Black migration to the urban South such as Bernadette Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900–1941* (College Station, TX, 2013) and Luther Adams, *Way Up North in Louisville: African American Migration in the Urban South, 1930–1970* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

[3] Yushan Lin, et al., "Impact of Facebook and Newspaper Advertising on Sales: A Comparative Study of Online and Print Media," *Computational Intelligence and Informational Science*, August 24, 2021, 1–13.

[4] Thomas C. O'Guinn and Ronald J. Faber, "Compulsive Buying: A Phenomenological Exploration," *Journal of Consumer Research* 16 (September 1989): 147–57.

[5] *Dallas Express*, January 17, 1920.

[6] Lewin's Market advertisement, *Dallas Express*, February 28, 1920.

[7] William Toll, "Mobility, Fraternalism, and Jewish Cultural Change: Portland, 1910–1930," *American Jewish History* 68 (June 1979), 471.

[8] Fred Bruss Tailor advertisement, *Dallas Express*, January 17, 1920.

[9] Information on residents of the Ninth Ward comes from the Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Dallas County, Texas.

[10] For a full examination of Jewish garment peddling during nineteenth-century expansion, see Adam D. Mendelsohn, *The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (New York, 2014).

[11] See Hasia R. Diner, *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migrations to the New World and the Peddlers Who Forged the Way* (New Haven, 2015).

[12] See James Harvey Young, *The Toadstool Millionaires: A Social History of Patent Medicines in America Before Federal Regulation* (Princeton, 1961); Eric W. Boyle, *Quack Medicine: A History of Combating Health Fraud in Twentieth-Century America* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2013).

[13] City Directory, Oklahoma City, OK, 1930, U.S. City Directories, 1822–1995, Ancestry.com; World War I Draft Cards (4th Registration) for the State of Oklahoma, Record Group 147, National Archives, St. Louis, MO.

[14] Walden E. Cohn advertisement, *Dallas Express*, March 12, 1921.

[15] Louis Margot III, "*The Dallas Express*: A Negro Newspaper, Its History, 1892–1971, and Its Point of View" (master's thesis, East Texas State University, 1971). See also, Diana J. Kleiner, "Dallas Express," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed May 10, 2023, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/dallas-express.

[16] Advertisement for Lewin's Market, *The Dallas Express*, April 3, 1920.

[17] Alwyn Barr, "Late Nineteenth-Century Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed May 10, 2023, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/late-nineteenth-century-texas.

[18] Merline Pitre, *In Struggle Against Jim Crow: Lulu B. White and the NAACP, 1900–1957* (College Station, TX, 1999), 3–5.

[19] Bryan Edward Stone, *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (Austin, 2010), 2.

[20] Alan B. Govenar and Jay F. Brakefield, *Deep Ellum and Central Track: Where the Black and White Worlds of Dallas Converged* (Denton, TX, 1998).

[21] See Rose G. Biderman, *They Came to Stay: The Story of the Jews of Dallas, 1870–1997* (Austin, 2002).

[22] Robert Prince, *A History of Dallas: From a Different Perspective* (Austin, 1993), 68.

[23] Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Dallas, Dallas County, Texas, 1921, vol. 1, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, DC.

[24] See Hannibal B. Johnson, *Black Wall Street: From Riot to Renaissance in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District* (Austin, 2007).

[25] Henry J. Tobias, *The Jews in Oklahoma* (Norman, OK, 1980), 8–29.

[26] Neither Walden Cohn nor his business appear in the 1930 U.S. Census for Tulsa.

[27] Phil Goldfarb, "Jews and the Tulsa Race Massacre," *Tulsa Jewish Review* 92 (May 2021): 12–13.

[28] See Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, 2008).

[29] Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841–2001* (Austin, 2006), 93.

[30] Ibid, 90.

[31] Tyina L. Steptoe, *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City* (Berkeley, CA, 2016), 104–109.

[32] "Shylocks of Oklahoma City Have State by the Throat," *Guthrie Daily Leader*, November 1, 1912.

[33] Tobias, *Jews in Oklahoma*, 60–61.

[34] Steptoe, *Houston Bound*, 108.

[35] Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 142–48.

MEMOIR

From *Goldene Medina* to Gold Star Father: The Georgia "Jew Store"

by

Lance J. Sussman *

Memoirs of Oscar Dreizin of Butler and Macon, Georgia, c. 1948, ed. Lance J. Sussman and Karen Franklin[1]

Osher Drazenstock, later known in America as Oscar Dreizin, was born on July 17, 1890, in the village of Kublitz in the Vitebsk Province of the Russian Empire (today Kublichi, Belarus).[2] Family members lived in nearby villages as well as in Vilna (today Vilnius, Lithuania) to work and go to school.[3] Fleeing Russia after a brush with the law for distributing contraband political literature, Oscar travelled alone over land to Berlin and then to Antwerp with the belief that the streets in America were paved with gold. Shortly after his fourteenth birthday on July 19, 1904, Osher, as he was still called, arrived at Ellis Island where he was met at the docks by an older brother, Loui, who had previously immigrated to the United States. Smart and adaptable, Oscar quickly learned to speak English and Americanized. Typical of the period, Loui would introduce Oscar as his "green" brother.

Although initially unable to speak English and without any industrial skills, Dreizin found a variety of jobs in several locations to support himself. In search of opportunity, he moved to New Haven, Connecticut, back to New York, then to Sheboygan, Wisconsin, repeatedly relying on extended family for work connections and a place to stay before returning to the Big Apple a third time. Still skeptical of his prospects in New York, he decided to move to Hazlehurst, a small town in southeast Georgia, just

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prior to the outbreak of World War I to live with his bride-to-be, Rebecca (Becky) Coolik, a distant relative.[4] The Dreizins were married in Hazlehurst on January 30, 1916, by two rabbis from Atlanta.[5]

After he was excused from army service to fight in Europe against the Axis Powers in World War I, the Dreizins moved to Reynolds, Georgia, where other members of the Coolik family lived and operated a business.[6] Subsequently Dreizin, a naturally gifted salesman and astute businessman, opened his own "Jew Store" in Butler, Georgia, in 1920, where he remained for over twenty years and developed an extensive national network of suppliers.[7] By any measure, he exemplified an American—and Jewish—success story.

In Butler, a small town without a synagogue, the Dreizins raised their four children, Bessie, Miriam, Isaac (Ike), and Aaron, who was killed during an Army Air Force combat mission over Germany in January 1945.[8] Aaron's body was quickly recovered and interred in a community cemetery near Lübeck, Germany. Unable to recover from the loss of his son and with a worsening heart condition, Dreizin retired after the war, sold his business, and moved to Macon, Georgia, which had a larger Jewish community and a business school where he was determined to learn to write and type in English.

Taylor County,
Georgia.

At the suggestion of friends, Dreizin agreed to write his "Memoirs" to improve his new English language and writing skills, document his success "against all odds" in the *Goldene Medina*, as well as to share his battle with grief over the loss of Aaron. The memoirs do not cover the last twenty years of his life.

Oscar Dreizin died on June 27, 1968. His wife, Becky, followed him in death on May 14, 1977. They are buried in the Sherah Israel section of the Rose Hill Cemetery in Macon. Subsequently, a copy of the "Memoirs of Oscar Dreizin of Butler and Macon, Georgia," as well as a small collection of other family documents and photographs, were donated by members of his family to the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Bremen Museum in Atlanta. The complete Dreizin memoir is nearly 150 typed pages long. Because of space limitations and to sharpen the story line, the redacted version presented here has been reduced from fifty-one thousand to approximately eighteen thousand words.

Although a modest work by comparison, the Dreizin memoir is, in part, reminiscent of Abraham Cahan's classic 1917 immigrant novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* and of Stella Suberman's 1998 novel-like memoir, *The Jew Store,* which recounts her childhood and her family's business in Concordia, Tennessee. In the full memoir, Dreizin concentrates on the details of his business activity, select family memories, and occasionally includes some humor. He generally pays more attention to the names of places than to the dates of events and often provides extensive detail about his personal health challenges. Expressing no personal animosity toward his Black clientele or the Black community, Dreizin, nonetheless, is unfiltered in many of his racial comments, which reflect the racism of the American South during the first half of the twentieth century. Although much of his work concentrates on small-town life in Georgia during the 1920s, he only sparingly reports on antisemitism and does so mostly as a tactical problem more than as an existential threat. In general, he conveys the sense that he was accepted by his white, non-Jewish neighbors as a worthy but exotic member of the community and an honest businessman. His limited and sometimes veiled comments on Jewish life mostly focus on life cycle events.

From a historical perspective, several themes in the Dreizin memoir stand out. First, scattered across the manuscript are reports about chain migration and immigrant family networks. Beyond his natural business

acumen and luck, these sociological factors are essential in understanding Dreizin's success in America as well as that of many other Jews. Second, Dreizin was geographically mobile. As a child in Russia, he moved from village to village and then in America he followed the trail to success until, finally, at the age of thirty, he settled in the tiny town of Butler, where he found a niche to conduct business and raise his family.

Perhaps the biggest surprise in the memoir is Dreizin's limited discussion of antisemitism. Although he moves to Georgia at the end of the Leo Frank saga, he does not report on it at all, which, in a way, confirms the notion that the Frank lynching may have been of greater concern to the established German Jewish community than to the new eastern European immigrants. In reporting on the Ku Klux Klan in Butler during the 1920s, he seems more wary than afraid. Dreizin does not report on the infamous 1946 lynching of Maceo Snipes in Butler. As the memoir ends before 1950, he also does not report on the KKK in Georgia during the civil rights movement.[9]

Finally, his son Aaron's death during World War II dominates the end of the memoir. Earlier, Dreizin reports on his own willingness to serve during World War I. Despite both his sons' eagerness to serve in World War II, Dreizin does not link Aaron's willingness to fight to the Holocaust or a need to defeat Hitler and Nazism. Indeed, it was only around the time of Dreizin's death in 1968 that the Shoah emerged as a major theme in American Jewish life. Nonetheless, the Jews in Georgia and throughout the country were aware of Hitler's antisemitic policies from their beginning in 1933.

For Dreizin, Jewishness and Judaism served as facts, not fascinations. He never hid his Jewishness nor did he seek to amplify or nurture it. In that regard, he typified first-generation American Jews who mainly focused on adaptation, survival, and creating a base for their family's future. He does not blame anyone for the death of his son, but one must question if he did not wonder why his sacrifices were insufficient to justify his path to and success in America. Unsurprisingly and tragically, neither of the fallen airman's parents fully rebounded from the loss of their son over the skies of Germany toward the end of the war. In his humble way, Dreizin provides posterity with the moving testimony of grief-struck Gold Star parents, a stark reminder that even beyond "the last full measure of devotion," the pain of a family's loss endures.

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Memoirs of Oscar Dreizin of Butler and Macon, Georgia, c. 1948, ed. Lance J. Sussman and Karen Franklin

CHAPTER I

I was born July 17, 1890, in the small town of Kublitz, Vitebsk Gubernia. This is in the [western] part of Russia. I am one of [many] brothers and was reared in a home of moderate means. My father was a teacher of Hebrew—not Yiddish. The charge for teaching at that time was $2.00 per month for a student. He had about twenty-five students, so you can see the "great" sum of money he earned each month. With that amount he was trying to rear his family and was giving us as good an education as he could afford at that time.

Most of my brothers were reared at home. As soon as they were old enough to understand a profession, they migrated somewhere else. For instance, my brother, Alter, had gone to the city of Vilna, where he started his education at the Yeshiva named Rahmiless Schul.[a] He took up bookkeeping and later on made a career of it. He had a very good knowledge of Hebrew, Russian, and some of the English language.

As I remember, when I was nothing but a kid of six years, my brother Alter came home. At that time, he was engaged to be married to a cousin of ours; she was my paternal uncle's daughter, Freda Leah Drazenstock. I remember it as though it were yesterday. I went to their wedding in Glubocka, fifty miles from our town. They took me with them as their chaperone. In those days, they had a funny idea that a bride and groom should not be allowed to go by themselves; therefore, I went as their chaperone! The wedding was a very nice affair. I remained in Cheder (school) in the town of Glubocka for one term.[b] I was staying with my grandparents. . . .

In the meantime, my brother, Loui, left for the United States. He was the pioneer of our brothers coming to America. Loui, as a boy, was powerfully strong. What he was doing in America for a living then, we did not know. He was a fellow to dream of big things all his life. The letters he wrote home pictured America very beautifully. Money was just lying on the streets, and you needed somebody to pick it up. I was young then and

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[a] The Ramailes Yeshiva was an Orthodox Jewish yeshiva in Šnipiškės, Vilnius, Lithuania. It was established in the early nineteenth century, most likely in 1815.

[b] Glubokoye, now Hlybokaye, Belarus.

didn't have much to worry about. I decided that I wanted to go to America. That was where my troubles began. My brother Alter tried his best to convince me that things were not shining with gold as Loui had written home. "Do not believe every word that Loui writes," he said. "If he is doing so well, then why doesn't he send something to Papa and Mama to help them out, so they would not have to suffer trying to make a living?" . . .

At that time everybody in the city of Vilna was connected with some organization, [a] Socialistic organization. He was either a member of the bund of the Russian Revolutionary Force, which they called S. R., a terroristic organization.[c] If a higher official was not treating them right, they would kill him. Some member of the organization would go ahead and sacrifice his own life to carry out the order of the organization. They used to have demonstrations on the streets. They printed illegal leaflets and literature and distributed them among the masses of the people, which was not allowed by the Government. Whenever the police caught one with [this] kind of literature, they would arrest him, try him, and sometimes send him off for several years to Siberia, to a very hard jail. They used to punish them severely.

One morning an elderly salesman in the store where I worked asked me if I would like to make a couple of rubles (dollars). With no thought of becoming a lawbreaker, I said, "Oh, yes!" He said, "I will give you some leaflets and you distribute them among the working people on the street." I didn't know what they were. In fact, I couldn't read them and didn't realize the danger in the undertaking. I distributed the leaflets, and the secret police caught me in the act and threw me in jail. For four days and four nights they kept on questioning me. "Who is the one who gave you the literature?" I told them I did not know. I had sense enough to know that if I gave the names there would be more arrested, so I made up my mind I would stay there before I would tell them, and I didn't tell them a thing.

It was a political prison and they used to keep very hard criminals there. Everybody in Vilna knew that jail was a tough one. It was on Lukesskie Street and got its name from the street. They kept me there six months. They found out the name of my father and where I came from. Naturally, they sent a secret service man to investigate my family. That

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[c] The Socialist Revolutionary Party, also Party of Socialist Revolutionaries or Social Revolutionary Party (the SRs, CP, or Esers, эсеры, *esery*; Russian: Партія соціалистовъ-революціонеровъ, ПСР), was a major political party in late Imperial Russia, both phases of the Russian Revolution, and early Soviet Russia. The SRs were agrarian socialists.

was about seventy-five miles from the town in which I was born, the town of Kublitz.

When they took my father on a cross examination, he did not know what was happening. He told them he didn't know a thing about it. "I know that I have a son in Vilna, but he is nothing but a kid. How can he be a revolutionary or belong to that organization? I can hardly believe it," he said. Mother and father were scared as the police threatened that if they didn't tell them the truth about me, they would send me to Siberia for the balance of my life. However, they could not help it.

One morning the keeper of the prison knocked on my door and said, "Get your clothes ready!" I didn't know what he was up to. They took me downstairs to the office and told me to go home and they would let me out on probation; that I would have to come twice a week to report to the police that my conduct was good. This was to prove that I was in town. I also was not allowed to leave Vilna without consent of the police.

The reason they let me go free was that the police had made a mistake in my name. My name was Drazenstock and there was another fellow whose name was Winestock. When they freed me, I went straight to my brother Alter's house. When I walked in, Alter got frightened. He said, "Why, I have just come from the police station, and they told me they were going to ship you out somewhere else. What are you doing here, and how did you get out of the jail?" He said there must be something wrong. Maybe this was a trick of the police.

"I will not let you stay here," he said. "You go to a neighbor's house to spend the night. I don't trust the police around here. Maybe they are playing a trick on you, and you had better hide out a while. Then we will see what we can do." That I did, and sure enough, about a couple hours later, here came the police to Alter's house, searching for me. They discovered their mistake. They had turned out the wrong fellow.

So, the next morning, my brother Alter went to a contraband (that means one engaged in smuggling emigrants over the Russian border to a different country) and traded with him for 100 rubles to take me out from Vilna and over the German border. Alter gave me 100 rubles in a tobacco bag and told me to buy a ticket for America after I crossed the border. . . .

I stayed for a couple of days, sleeping one night in one house and the next night in another. My father insisted I must stay at home until I got bar mitzvah (confirmed). I will never forget the day of my confirmation. After the confirmation we hired a peasant with an old wagon to take us to the railroad station, which was sixteen miles to ride. My mother baked me some good biscuits. She said to me, "Promise me you are going to be a good boy." I promised her that I would do the best that I knew how.

CHAPTER II

The next day Alter traded with the agent for 100 rubles to smuggle me out from Vilna and take me across the Russian border to Germany. There were 35 men in the crowd to steal across the border, and believe me, it was some job to do it. However, we made it. The first village we hit was on the German border. I can't remember the name of that town, but the man told us, "You are out of danger now; you are in German territory. From here on you are free. I am through with you." So, we hired another man to take us to Berlin. We stayed in Berlin 24 hours, and I will never forget the beautiful sights in that city. From there, we bought tickets to Antwerp. When we got there, they took us to a Turkish bath, gave us a real scrubbing and sterilized our clothes before they allowed us to stop in the boarding house.

We missed the boat, so I had to wait in Antwerp and get organized to buy a ticket for America. The price of that ticket was a little better than $100, and that was third class, down below, next to where cattle and freight were shipped. The name of the boat was the "Mississippi," and I will never forget the trip I had.[d] I do not exaggerate when I say we had a little over a thousand passengers, from every part of the world you can mention. There were Polish, Hungarians, Russians, some of them had escaped from the Russian Army and were seeking refuge in America, and some of them were just going to America like I was. We had a very nice trip. It took me thirty days to cross the ocean from Antwerp. A lot of the passengers were seasick. I was the only one that the trip had not affected, and I ate all the food I could get. I was strong and healthy, and my appetite was pretty sharp.

Baggage, I did not have. All I had was a suit of underwear and the clothes that I wore. Oh yes, I had two stiff collars. I was considered a city slicker. The passengers on the boat looked comical to me as they cried and prayed to the Lord to reach the shore safely. I didn't care much if I got drowned or got to America. I imagine I was too young to realize the danger of the trip. When the boat came in Friday morning, July 19, 1904, it was a very hot day. When I left Vilna, Alter wrote to my brother Loui to be sure to meet me at Ellis Island, and when he met me there I did not recognize him. His face looked familiar, but when he left Europe for America, I was about seven years old and the only thing I had was a picture of him that I had memorized in my mind, but I didn't know him.

When a man on Ellis Island asked me if I had a family in America, I said, "Yes." He said, "Who are they?" I replied "I have a brother in New York and uncles in New Haven, Connecticut, but I don't know them. I

[d] The *S. S. Mississippi* left Antwerp in July, 1906, for New York.

have my brother's address with me." He said, "Let's see it." I showed it to him. He asked me, "Would you recognize him if you saw him?" "I think so," I replied.

My brother was standing in the office waiting for me. The man in the room said, "Follow me and I will see if you recognize your brother. " When I got in the office, I saw a handsome looking fellow in a straw hat and a nice suit of clothes and the thing that attracted me was that he had a gold front tooth. He looked aristocratic and I thought, "He must have gotten rich in America. Look how he is dressed up." I pointed and said, "I think that is he." My brother Loui came up, grabbed me and said, "This is Osher! What a big boy you have grown up to be! Let's go!" I left Ellis Island with my brother. The first thing he did was to buy me a couple bananas and said, "Eat that and it will do you good." I had never seen a banana before in my life. I started eating the peel. He laughed and said, "Wait a minute," and he showed me how to peel it. . . .

The second attraction that came to my mind was when he put me on a boot black stand to get a shoeshine. I had never seen a Negro before in my life. This one was so black he shone. His teeth were white and his eyes were brown, and his face was so black he looked like a looking glass to me. I kept looking and I asked my brother in Jewish, "How come he is so black?" My brother smiled and said, "Well, if you stay in America as long as he has, you may be blacker than he is." I said, "Does everybody turn black in America?" He said, "No, that is a race they call Negroes. I will explain to you when you get home."

He took me to the ferry boat to get to New York. He looked at me and said, "Osher, how do you like these little boats to cross this ocean?" I answered, "Well, I think I had enough boat as far as I am concerned crossing the ocean." When the ferry boat stopped in New York we took a hack and drove to the elevator station, and he told me, "This is something different from what you have seen in Vilna." I said, "Oh, no, I have seen those kind of trains in Berlin that run in the air." He said, "That is right."

Then we came to the boarding house where he was staying. We climbed up five floors and I was wondering how high those people had to climb to get to their houses. The first thing my brother Loui did when he stepped into the kitchen was to holler out, "Here is the green I have. This is my green brother." I was a little bit embarrassed over the remark he made to everybody, "Meet my green brother who has just come from Europe." I was wondering why they used that word "green," as my face was really rose, and my cheeks were filled out. I looked ''green"? But I thought that must be the English language for a newcomer that they call green. I figured, "Well, I have learned one word in English!" . . .

The next morning when I woke up, Loui was gone. . . . I remembered the previous night Loui paid twenty-five cents for my supper. I did not have twenty-five cents with me to pay [for breakfast], so I decided I had better wait until Loui came home to ask him for twenty-five cents and then I would go and eat. [The landlady] said, "Oh, don't be a fool, go on and sit down and have a glass of coffee and a bagel (roll). Never mind about the twenty-five cents. I will charge you for it and when you go to work and make your own money, then you can pay me." I was very much obliged to her as I was hungry, and I could have eaten more than one bagel. I could have eaten a dozen if she'd had them. There were only two and one-half bagels on the kitchen table and I ate them.

Then she told her son, "Take him downstairs and show him the park." (They called it at that time Hester Park.)[e] That was the main park for the oldest immigrants who came to America and stopped in New York. Their hangout was there. You could hear people speaking all kinds of languages there, Jewish, Polish, Italian, and others were spoken.

While I was sitting on the bench in the park, I saw a young man who looked shabby. His feet were sticking out from his shoes. He needed a shave, and I don't believe he had bathed his hands for a long time. He walked up and began asking me something. I looked at him and I told him, "I don't speak English. I don't understand English. Can you speak Polish, Jewish, German, or Russian?" He said, "Yes. You are a Jewish boy, aren't you?" He started talking to me in Jewish and asked me for a dime or a nickel. I told him, "I am sorry, my friend, and, believe me, I surely would give it to you, but I have been in America only one day, and I didn't bring any money with me. I am waiting for my brother to come back from work and [will] ask him to give me a few cents." He turned and looked at me and said, "I hope you will have better luck here in America than I have had." He then walked away. That left me with a very bad impression. I was sitting and thinking, "Is that the land where gold is lying on the streets? My, my! I have never seen people in that condition in Vilna where I was reared." I was a little disappointed with the wonderful country. It wasn't what I had pictured before I came over here.

CHAPTER III

In 1908 things picked up a little and I went to the shop where I had worked at making suitcases. I was working and making $25 a week. I was

[e] Hester Park may be a reference to the current Hester Street Playground in the center of New York City's Lower East Side, the site of the largest Jewish settlement of eastern European immigrants in the United States beginning in the late 1880s. Hester Street was named after Hester Leisler, the daughter of Jacob Leisler, an insurrectionist executed by the English colony of New York in 1691, and is one of the area's most famous roads.

a boy who had not saved any money. I was spending every dime I made. I believed in nice clothes and as soon as I saved up $25 or $30, I put it on my back, for something new all the time. I never figured that someday I would need the money for bread in place of clothes.

Sure enough, in 1910 the shop started organizing into a union and went out on strike. I was out, too. We stayed out about three or four months, and I really was up against it. I didn't have money enough to buy my breakfast and I became despondent. One morning I decided I had enough of that foolishness of striking and went back to work. Mr. Jacklowitz, the fellow who owned that shop, took me back to work very gladly. He traded with me for $25 a week working steadily the whole year around.

At that time the strikers called me a strike-breaker and they became pretty rough with us. The pickets used to come with knives and pistols, and it was really dangerous to go to work. My boss got police protection and gave us a policeman to take us to the factory, and at night the same policeman used to take us home. Loui didn't like it very much that I should be an exception to the other workers. He tried to persuade me to quit the job. I said, "Loui, who is going to buy my dinner?" I said, "I have 'striked' enough. I have enough of it. I don't care what you or anyone else says. I am not going to quit. If the other workers want to, they can go back like I did. It is foolish to stay out when they know it is a sure loss."

Well, the strike was lost, and all the workers returned to their jobs. It looked to me as if they ignored me in the shop. They didn't speak to me and didn't have much to do with me. I didn't care much about it for a while, but later, I became worried, and I made up my mind that I was going to quit New York and go to look in some other town to see what I could do. . . .

From there I went to Sheboygan, Wisconsin. There I had some relatives whom I had remembered from Europe. I will never forget as long as I live when I came to Sheboygan. I stopped in one of the finest hotels there. It was the Hotel Foster, and the cheapest room there was $5.00 a night. I didn't have five cents. I checked in and stayed there two nights and the third morning a slip was in my room under the door, "Rent Due." I left my suitcase in the hotel and my little clothes and never went back for them. . . .

There was a man by the name of Mr. Stein who was making brooms. He had a small factory and was making brooms for the creamery and the farmers. So I went to him and asked if he would trust me with about fifty or seventy-five dozen brooms to sell for him on commission. The commission was 25 cents a dozen. The brooms were really heavy. I rented a horse that I paid $2.00 a day for, and I was to feed the horse. I started on Monday

morning with a load of brooms. The State of Wisconsin was making cream and the natives were Bohemians and German people. I could speak their language and they understood me. I became a businessman.

I will never forget one day I was driving from Sheboygan Falls to Sheboygan and a heavy cloud came up. The farmers in Wisconsin live a mile and a half apart. It was about dark, and I decided I would have to spend the night somewhere or sleep in my wagon. There I had no feed for my horse, so I drove up to a farmer's house and hollered, "Hello, hello!" Here came out a barefooted woman who looked at me and asked, "What do you want?" I said, "Well, can I sleep with you tonight?" Instead of asking "Can I sleep here?" I said, "Can I sleep with you?" She got hysterical and ran into the house. The first thing I knew, a big fellow came out with a shotgun and hollered at me. "What do you want?" I motioned to him, trying to make him understand. He asked me, "Do you speak Danish?" I heard the word Danish but that was all. "Do you speak German?" I said, "Yes."

My German was all kinds of a mixture of all kinds of German and Yiddish, but I made him understand what I had said, and he started laughing. It tickled him and he went in the house and explained to his wife that I was a foreigner, that I was absolutely innocent and I didn't mean to hurt her feelings. This quieted her, and they invited me into the house and gave me supper, a night's lodging, and hay and oats for my horse. I slept in the barn that night.

The next morning at daybreak, the farmer was up, and I was up, too. I had breakfast and tried to pay them, but the wife would not take the money. She did agree to buy two dozen brooms from me, though. I sold her the brooms and made 50 cents profit. After that, my stopping place was with them. They were Mr. and Mrs. John Peterson. We have been friends since then and I sent them a Christmas card for years.

CHAPTER IV

I will never forget the time when I reached New York. Loui was in business on Hudson Street. He was running a cigar, candy, stationery, and newspaper business. He and his family lived in the back of the store. A son, Nat, was about 4 or 5 years old, and they had another son whose name was Benny.

When I reached New York, I stopped in a cheap hotel on Hudson Street. In those days it was a fine hotel—a dollar a night! The next morning, I went out to look for Loui's place. When I walked into his store my sister-in-law, Janie, was so swell and so good that she grabbed me and kissed me and started crying. "I am surely glad to see you back in New York. Before anything else I want you to sit down and have breakfast with

From "The Memoirs of Oscar Dreizin of Butler and Macon, Georgia."
(Courtesy of the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History
at the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)

us." In a laughing way, she said, "How do you like our living quarters? Don't you think they are as good as Mr. Rockefeller has?" I sized up the situation and I saw for myself that there was no room for me to stay there. But we had breakfast and she kept on questioning me, insisting upon me telling her what I had done while I was away from New York. She did not know the trouble I had gone through out west. I never wrote them anything about it. Tears came into my eyes and she knew that I was choking and could not talk much. She became frightened and she looked at me and said, "Please tell me the trouble."

I said "Oh, Janie!" And then I told her all about the experiences that I had gone through. She started encouraging me and said, "Oh, what is the matter with you? You are young and there are plenty girls in New York. You can find a nice girl and go ahead and forget all about it. . . .

One day I went downstairs to Izzie Coolik, [who was married to my cousin, Hannah]. He was running a tailor shop on Henry Street, right across the street from where my brother Herman and I were living. While visiting with him I noticed a nice young lady there. I asked, "Izzie, who is that girl?" He said, "That is my sister. Becky, come here. I want you to meet our cousin." She kind of snubbed me; I didn't say anything but went on.

I started coming more often, thinking that I may see her again. Sure enough, I met her again. I kept on talking to my cousin and said, "Hannah, try to make a match; I like your sister-in-law." "Oh," she said, "You are nothing but a tramp. You don't mean it. Before I know it, you will go back somewhere. You don't stay in one place." I said, "No I'm in earnest." She said, "All right. " Then I found out that Becky had left New York for the South. She had an uncle who lived in Hazlehurst, Georgia, and who was in New York on a buying trip. I met him in Izzie Coolik's store. Izzie introduced us, saying "That is Uncle S. B. Freedman. This is my wife's cousin."

That man sized me up from head to foot and asked me, "What are you doing?" I said, "I am working in a shop, making suitcases." He said, "By the way, how would you like to go South? I am running a department store and I need help. I could teach you the business of running a department store." I hardly knew what to say, but finally, "Where are you living?" He said, "South." I said, "Where all the Negroes live?" He said, "There are plenty of white people, too." I said, "Well, I will see you about it." He asked me to meet him the next day in Izzie's store. I did and we went out for a walk. He talked to me at length and explained what was what in the South. He said, "After you learn the business, I am going to open a store for you. You will have an opportunity to work up some day

to be a rich man." I could hardly believe a word he said, but I thought, ''Maybe I might."

During his stay, my cousin Coolik and I talked to Mr. Freedman and told him I was very much interested in Izzie's sister, Becky, and for him to see if he could talk matters over with her when he went back to Georgia and if it would be agreeable for me to write her. Izzie said to Mr. Freedman to see if he could make a match between me and the girl I had fallen in love with and whom I finally married. Later, I had a letter from her uncle, S. B. Freedman, for me to get ready to come to Georgia. Well, I studied and talked the matter over with my brother Loui and his wife Janie, and they tried their best to talked me out of it.

"Why are you going to that crazy country where there is nothing but Negroes? We can't see any opportunity for you. Oscar, please study that matter over. It looks to us that you ought to have learned a lesson. You have been out West and you have suffered a whole lot and have not accomplished a thing. You came back to New York disheartened and broken and now you have that kind of wild wandering blood in you; you want to go again and try your luck. All right, you don't want to listen to us. We are giving you good advice, but go ahead and just remember, you will write us and ask for your train fare to come back. However, when you get to that stage, don't hesitate. We will try to send you a ticket to come back to the North."

I was somewhat angered over that remark, and I told them, "What in the world do I have in the North? Nothing but worry and aggravation, working and trying to keep up Herman and his wife and children. That is all right. I will take care of myself and [you] don't have to worry about me."

I was determined to try my luck in the South. So I went in to tell my cousin, Izzie Coolik. I told him I had decided to go to Georgia. He looked at me and said, "Listen, do you want to take a little tip from me? Why don't you buy a little ring to carry along with you? Maybe you will need it over there." I told him I did not have much money—maybe about $300. So Izzie Coolik spoke up and said, "Oscar, do you know what I will do for you? I have a friend in the jewelry business. How about you and me going to see him and he will pick out a nice ring? Maybe you will need it later to give to Becky." I said, "Well, I will tell you, you are trying to fry two eggs before the hen lays them. I don't know if it is wise for me to do it." "You can always sell it," he said. I said, "All right, let's do it."

We called on the friend who was running a jewelry store. I don't know what Izzie whispered to him, but I know I had that ring in a box and I paid $185. I went home and told my brother Herman and his wife that I was going tomorrow for the South.

CHAPTER V

I picked up my trunk and the little belongings I had, took a cab, went to Grand Central Station, and bought me a ticket to Hazlehurst, Georgia. It was a very monotonous trip, and I had to change trains from Atlanta to Hazlehurst. The trains were dusty; in fact, they were filthy. When I got to Hazlehurst it was about nine o'clock at night. I was stunned when I saw the town. There were no lights; cows and mules were out on the streets. It was a very disappointing moment for me. When I stepped off the train, who came to meet me—Mr. S. B. Freedman. He said, "Hello, how are you feeling? How was the trip?" I told him I thought it was pretty good. I had better trips previously. He noticed I was very much disappointed. He took me to his house, which was only about two blocks from the depot.

When I walked into the house, an old dilapidated wooden structure, a kerosene lamp was burning. I can hardly describe how that house looked to me that night. I looked to see if they had a place to wash up, but I could find none, so I asked, "Where is your bathroom?" They told me, "It is outside on the back porch. There is a pan, water, and soap." Well, that was something I had not seen since I came from my birth town in Russia. In America that was the first house I had seen with so many inconveniences. I bathed my face and hands. I was too timid to ask where Becky was, but I found out afterwards that she was sick in bed.

They gave me a little supper and after supper all went to bed. The next morning about six o'clock, they all got up. They had about four boys working in the store, all related to Mr. Freedman. Two were Mr. Freedman's nephews. One fellow's name was Louis Perling. He lives now in Sandersville, Georgia, and has a very nice business. The other was a fellow by the name of Charlie Rutstien. He was a New York fellow. Another boy was there by the name of Abe Cantor. They were all working for him in the store and they boarded at his house.[f] Afterwards I learned the pay was very little and the work was very hard, because Mr. Freedman fed his clerks with the idea that later on, when they had learned the business, he would open a store apiece for them.

Well, I went to the store and looked the situation over. The store was crowded with sweaty farmers, and also Negroes, and their language was pretty hard for me to understand. I sized up the situation and thought to myself, "I believe I have made a big mistake by coming to Georgia. I ought to have listened to my brother Loui and my sister-in-law Janie, and I think

[f] Variant spellings for Rutstien might be Rutstein or Rothstein. Jews typically employed other Jews from far and wide and the position of clerk, like peddling, often served as a stepping stone to business ownership.

I would be better off."[g] However, I made up my mind regardless of what should happen, "I shall not go back to New York; I will try to tough it out."

About twelve o'clock I went with Mr. Freedman for dinner. I, being a guest, they had a little finer dinner than they usually had. As I recall, they had hamburgers and herring and old pumpernickel bread. They used to order once a week from Atlanta, and the bread would become pretty stale. I tried to eat it, however, and made them believe I enjoyed that dinner very much.[h]

In the meantime, Becky managed to get up and talk with me for a while. She asked the news in New York and how her brother Izzie and her sister-in-law were getting along and about other kinsfolk and friends in the North. I remained there the whole afternoon, just sitting and talking to her. Then about seven o'clock, all the clerks came home from the store. We all had supper and went out for a walk. It was pitch dark, but they were accustomed to that. They knew where they were going but I had to feel my way about. I was very amused at that town of Hazlehurst, Georgia.

Saturday morning, Mr. Freedman rapped at my door and asked, "Don't you want to go to the store with the boys?" I got up, dressed, and went to the store. He told me not to do anything that day. "Just keep an eye on the Negroes and see that they don't steal anything. And watch how the clerks sell, take notice of how they do it in the store. Of course, you will have to learn it sooner or later."[i]

I stayed all day long and was wondering if I would ever learn that kind of business. I got pretty tired during the day, just hanging around in the store. It was very congested and overcrowded with merchandise, and there were lots of customers, it being the fall of the year in South Georgia, when the farmers did most of their trading.

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[g] Somewhat typical of Jewish immigrant storekeepers, Freedman's clientele including Black and White farmers who came into town to shop. Tragically, both a Jew, Samuel Bierfield, and a Black man, Lawrence Bowman, were murdered together during the first lynching conducted by the Ku Klux Klan on August 15, 1868, in Pulaski, Tennessee. See Paul Berger, "Midnight in Tennessee—The Untold Story of the First Jewish Lynching in America," *Forward,* December 8, 2014.

[h] Ordering food from Atlanta on a regular basis suggests that the family kept kosher. Such use of Jewish services from a larger city was somewhat typical of those who desired to remain religiously observant in peripheral towns.

[i] Freedman's practice reflected adaptation of tradition. The clerks were expected to go into the store on the Sabbath—the major shopping day—but, by not formally working, theoretically they were not breaking the Sabbath.

Mr. Freedman was building a new store across the street, and he told me, "We are going to move sometime next week. That will give you an opportunity to learn where every item is." I said, "All right."

One day his relatives from McRae, Lumber City, and Cochran, Georgia, came to Hazlehurst, I presume to look me over, but they pretended they came to visit the Freedmans and their family and to look over the new store that was just completed.[j]

Mr. and Mrs. Freedman really put on the "dog" that Sunday. They had a big dinner, and the visitors were entertained all day. They asked me a lot of questions but knew better than to ask why I'd come to Hazlehurst.

Monday morning, I started to work in the store like one of the boys. You talk about working, Oscar really put it out! I was determined to learn the business no matter how tough it was. In the meantime, I started taking Becky out for a walk every night, and I proposed to her one night which I will always remember.

It was a moonlight night. There was a circus in town, and we went to it and had a wonderful time. I spent, I believe, that night about 75 cents. In those days in the country towns in Georgia, that was a lot of money.

Coming on back about eleven o'clock, I asked her if she was tired and wanted to retire, or if she would mind sitting a while on the porch. She said, "No, I am not tired." I imagine she was smelling a rat; that she felt this was the climax of our courtship. I asked her how she would like to accept that little present I had. She looked at it, started crying, and said, "I will."

She woke up her aunt and told her that I had proposed, and she had accepted me. The next morning. Mrs. Freedman arose sooner than usual and fixed breakfast, and when I was up, she congratulated me and wished me happiness. The same for Mr. Freedman and the rest of the family. The next Sunday morning, we visited Becky's uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Canter, who were in business in Cochran, and we told them the news, too. The same thing was repeated over and over again.

After we moved to the new store I learned the business very quickly, which was a surprise to Mr. and Mrs. Freedman. The customers liked me and wanted me to wait on them. It didn't take long for me to catch on the art of selling to those natives in Hazlehurst. I got acquainted with the young set there and also with the old set. It looked as if they took a liking to me and my girlfriend, Becky. We were invited to all the parties and functions in Hazlehurst. We were among the crowd.

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[j] These passages exemplify how extended Jewish families spread to local towns so as not to compete directly with each other in retail sales but, nevertheless, to remain in sufficient proximity to socialize with each other.

Thanksgiving came along and we were dressing up the windows for the Christmas business. I worked until two o'clock that night because it was a hard store to work, a two-story building. The clothing department was upstairs, with a gallery, and the piece goods and the shoes were downstairs. The reserve stock was in a room in the back of the store. Four large windows were to be decorated. Naturally, we all worked hard that night. We fixed up everything and were ready for the next morning's business.[k]

When I got home, I was very tired. I didn't eat much supper but went to bed, and next morning I overslept. Usually I was up at six o'clock. Mr. Freedman always had the store open between six-thirty and seven. Some way or another, they did not wake me up this morning. When I got up it was about eight o'clock. Mr. Freedman came home for his breakfast, and I sat down at the table with him. He looked at me a few minutes and said, "Oscar, do you know what I have decided? To set a date for your wedding." I said, "Well, all right. How about January 30, as that comes on Sunday?" He said, "You know it takes a little time to prepare for a wedding in a small town. I want to give Becky away and give her a nice wedding." I told him, "Well, it suits me. I am ready any time." So we agreed on the date of January 30, 1916.

I went back to the store and worked all day long and then I started taking stock of myself. "Why should I be in a hurry to get married when I haven't the first dime to get married on?" I was bothered and worried. Until now I had given little thought to the responsibilities the step would entail, or to my qualifications for meeting them.

When I went home, I asked Becky, "Do you know that your uncle and aunt have set January 30 as the date for us to be married?" She said, "Yes, we talked about its last night." I said, "Why didn't you tell me that?" She said, "I knew they were going to talk to you. There was no use of my telling you anything." So, she went ahead and wrote to her brothers in New York, and I wrote my family the news and the date of our wedding.

The happy day arrived, and Mr. and Mrs. Freedman really put on a big wedding, one to be remembered for a lifetime. It was solemnized in the Masonic Hall. There were over 500 guests. Everyone in Jeff Davis County was invited. The natives had never witnessed a Jewish wedding and were glad to come. The wedding, even at that time, cost a little over a thousand dollars. Freedman really "spread himself" this time.

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[k] Jewish businesses aware of marketing opportunities frequently emphasized Christian holiday sales. By catering in this and other ways to their clientele, they nurtured a consumer culture.

As far as I was concerned, it was not necessary. Afterwards, I learned that he did it to profit his business and not for my benefit personally. They ordered about fifty cases of beer. Georgia was dry then and you were not allowed more than two quarts of liquor per person a month, but friends in town offered to order it in their names to have at our wedding. They had more liquor than they could drink in one night and it looked like everybody in Hazlehurst was drunk at my wedding. They were not confined, but I thought some of the guests should have been locked up.[1]

I was married by two Jewish rabbis from Atlanta. None of my own close kin attended the wedding, but Becky's family was well represented. There were uncles, aunts, cousins, and. so on. My best man was Morris Levy, now a prominent merchant of Savannah. We left on our honeymoon that night at 12:45 A.M. We went to Cochran, where my wife's aunt, Mrs. Canter, was living. We spent three or four days there and then went back to Hazlehurst, where Mr. Freedman had fixed us a room upstairs in the new store building.[m] The only furniture we had, which was given us as a wedding present, was one bedroom suite. That was all we needed. We were taking our meals with Mr. and Mrs. Freedman.

We worked pretty hard at that time to move the stock from the old store across the street to the new building, putting in 16 to 18 hours a day for a solid month. I began to like the business and determined to learn it as quickly as possible and then go into business for myself. I had been promised that Mr. Freedman would open a store for me, but that was nothing but a promise.

One night Mr. Freedman became very generous and said, "Oscar, you are a married man now. I am going to raise you $10," which was $25 for both my wife and me. I didn't have enough money to buy cigarettes, not to speak of buying a shirt, tie, or a collar. A shirt that sold for forty-nine cents cost me a dollar whenever I took one out of the stock, Mr. Freedman said. I did not have the money to pay for it and it had to be charged. But I did not care much about the money since I was laboring under the impression that pretty soon he would open a store for me, and I could pay what I owed him later on.

CHAPTER VI

I had written to Dave Coolik in New York what had happened to me and that I was contemplating going into business for myself. . . . Dave had

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[1] Inviting everyone from the county was good for business, but it also demonstrated the acceptance of Jews in the community.

[m] Having two Atlanta rabbis perform the ceremony provides another example of center/periphery community interaction that enabled Jews in small towns to maintain tradition.

married in New York. He decided to come to Georgia and go in business again. . . .

To add to our worries, I was drafted for the Army. . . . In the meantime, my wife went to Cochran to visit her aunt, Mrs. Canter. I told Dave, "I'm going to Hazlehurst for my examination, and I know I will pass. There is one thing I want to ask of you, no matter what happens to me, promise you will take care of your sister. Forget she is my wife, but remember Becky is your sister." He said, "Oh, you will come back. There is no use to worry about it." I said, "Dave, I am not worried. I have a feeling something will happen for the best and that I will come back."

I left for Hazlehurst. When I got into Macon, to change trains for Hazlehurst, whom did I meet but my wife, Becky, going to Reynolds? She looked astonished and said, "What are you doing here, Oscar?" I said, "Oh, I have been called to Hazlehurst for examination. Now don't worry. I will be back." She was frightened and tears were in her eyes, but I told her, "I told you not to worry. I will be back. Go home and take care of yourself."

I took the train for Hazlehurst. When I got there, I went straight to the sheriff, an old friend, and he was glad to see me. I spent the night in the sheriff's house and next morning I was examined by Dr. Hall. He had operated on my wife for appendicitis when I was living in Hazlehurst. He was a good fellow and kind of a good friend of mine. He told me, "I don't believe you will pass the physical because you have flat feet. I doubt that you will ever see service. However, I am compelled to pass you on, for the military doctor to reexamine you."

I was with a crowd of boys that left for Camp Wheeler in Macon. It was terribly hot day—the second day of July. I will never forget that date as long as I live. They marched us from the depot of Macon to the camp just like a bunch of cattle. A sergeant was riding on a motorcycle, and we were walking with our little packages with us. When we got to camp, I was tired out, and the only thing I had on my mind was the condition in which I left my wife. It worried me very much.

There were no barracks at Camp Wheeler then. Only tents. I won't forget how they issued me a tin pan, a fork, a spoon, and a tin cup. We had to stay in line for supper. I had never seen that kind of food and I was nauseated when I saw how they were serving it. I couldn't eat it and went to bed supperless.

The bugle blew at six o'clock next morning and we all got up, dressed and went out for the examination. They had me worried for two days. Then they gave me a white card and told me that I could go home and stay there until they called me again. I was neither rejected nor accepted. But in case they would need me they would call me again.

Was I happy when they told me I could go back home! I called Reynolds, and I was greatly excited when I talked to Dave Coolik and told him that I was coming home. He said, "Where are you?" I said, "I am here," and he couldn't make out heads or tails whether I was in Reynolds, Hazlehurst, or Macon. And I was so wrought up I couldn't tell him. Anyhow, I got to the train, and I was in Reynolds at 3:30 in the morning. Was my wife happy when she saw me! Oh, oh, oh! I said, "I will stay home now."

They did not call me before the Armistice was signed, November 11, 1918. In the meantime, while I was at home, my wife gave birth, on November 2, to my daughter, Bessie. I presume she is the one who stopped the war, and that is one reason I have always loved her. Kaiser Wilhelm got scared when my daughter was born and quit the war!

When Armistice was declared, I went upstairs and told my wife, "Becky, don't get excited and nervous. They are going to celebrate here in town, and they are going to start shooting and cutting up because the war has ended." Sure enough, about nine o'clock that night, Jamie Barrow got happy and set his automobile on fire in front of our store! They started shooting firecrackers and pistols, and a jolly time was had by all. We were all happy. After the news came that the war was over and the boys started coming back from overseas, merchandise was very scarce, and prices were very high. We were doing a landslide business, but we worked hard.

In 1918 after Dave moved from our apartment over the store, I started looking for a house and succeeded in finding one. We moved into that house and were happy there. I started liking Reynolds very much, and I know the people in Reynolds and the surrounding territory liked us, too. They traded with us, and we gained their confidence and friendship.

One day Dave Coolik remarked that we ought to open a store in Butler, a town eight miles from Reynolds. He said that would give us a chance to get the trade from the other side of Taylor County. I said, "I think it is a good idea, Dave. We'll open a store in Butler." We went down to Butler and found a location across from the courthouse, a building belonging to Mr. R. S. West. I made him a proposition and he accepted it and rented me the store at $40 a month.

There were, at that time, more merchants in Butler than customers. The leading merchant was Mr. M. R. Cameron, better known as Murray Cameron. He ran a nice store, with a high-priced line of merchandise, including Hart Schaffner Marx suits and Manhattan shirts for men. He handled Edwin Clap shoes and carried a high-priced line of ladies ready-to-wear. In other words, he was the "King-Fish" of that town. When he learned I was going into business there, his comment was, "Well I would not give that Jew six months to stay in Butler."

Reynolds, Georgia, 1918.
(Courtesy of the Georgia Archives,
Vanishing Georgia Collection,
tay013.)

The town had three banks, the Farmers and Merchants Bank, the Butler Banking Company, and the Taylor County Bank. Mr. G. C. Smith was president of the Butler Banking Company at that time. I made a deposit in that bank of $5,000 before we opened our store. When we moved into Butler, we had a nice stock of goods which was priced at around $20,000, and $5,000 in the bank. The truth of the matter is, I didn't like Butler very much at first. I hated to move into that town.

Mr. Coolik matched me with a silver coin to see who should go to Butler, me or him. I lost. We could not rent a livable house in Butler for love nor money. Bessie, at that time, was a baby. She was about 16 months old. We moved to a house on top of a gulley. We had no water, no lights, nor anything convenient. I was thoroughly dissatisfied. "The indifference of the Butler merchants astonished me. I recall that when I walked into a store to buy a water bucket and a rope, the proprietor said, "I haven't got it." And that was that. I walked into another store, that of Mr. A. B. Chapman, trying to buy some little knickknacks and I won't forget how he was sitting outside. He and the sheriff were playing checkers. I said, "Mr., have you got some tacks, thumbtacks, for sale?" He didn't raise his head but moved the checker man and said, "I reckon so." I said, "Have you got some for sale"? He was so interested in his checker game that he paid me very little mind. He said, "I reckon so. Hasn't anybody in town got anything for sale?" I said, "Excuse me. I am sorry I interrupted your checker game."

I went back to our store and was I mad! I could not figure out what kind of people they were. Later, I found out they were kind and friendly, but that was the way they were doing business at that time. They had all they wanted and didn't care for anything else. To the merchants in Butler at that time, a game of checkers was more important than a customer spending a few dollars. I suppose that is why they were all out of business by the time I got started well.

I worked hard getting ready to open the store, which was opened on March 1, 1920, with a big sale. It was so cold that day that I was depressed. I had a spring line of merchandise, and I made the remark to myself, "Butler, is unlucky for me." I was disheartened. Friday and Saturday we took in a little over three hundred dollars, not a very happy beginning.

A few days later, Morris Coolik, a cousin to my wife, came from New York. He was not quite 16 years old. As I remember, I had a little trouble with the Board of Education in New York City, and I had to sign an affidavit and tell a lie—that he was going to school in Butler—because the law in New York was that a boy cannot go to work under 16 years of age unless they have working papers from the school. So I signed the affidavit and mailed it to New York and told them that he stayed with me and attended school. Morris stayed with me and worked with me very faithfully until 1938. He worked for me in Butler until 1927 and then I opened a store in Newnan and went in as partners with him. We were partners in the store there until 1938, when Morris bought me out. He remained in Newnan until he made a nice success for himself.[n]

The year 1920, or part of that year, was pretty good. Prices kept advancing and business was good. We bought a lot of merchandise from different sources and, the fact is, we had both stores jammed with merchandise in both Butler and Reynolds. On top of this, my partner, Dave Coolik, went to New York on a big buying trip and bought himself very rich—he thought. He bought a lot of stuff, but while he was in New York, Wannamaker's Department Store put on a reduction sale with 33-1/3 percent off. That scared Dave Coolik. He tried to cancel some of the orders he had placed in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and elsewhere, but the houses refused to accept cancellations.[o] When he came back, he called me and told me, "Oscar, refuse any shipment of merchandise when it comes to Butler because I am afraid the market is going to drop."

Then our troubles began. We owed better than $30,000 for merchandise. We had a stock in both stores valued a little better than $70,000, but when prices dropped, we could not have paid off if we had sold the entire stock of the two stores. We simply could not pay what we owed. In fact,

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[n] Here Dreizin is continuing Freedman's tradition of hiring young Jews—often relatives—from elsewhere as clerks to be trained and then set them up in business in surrounding towns.

[o] Buying trips to big cities in the North were typical for small town Jewish store owners. They brought national merchandise and styles to their rural customers. In this case, a national economic decline after World War I demonstrated the precarious nature of small businesses relying on credit to purchase goods.

Oscar Dreizin, left, and Rebecca Dreizin, right, with an unidentified man in Dreizin's store in Butler, Georgia, 1930s. (Regina Satlof Block Family Papers, 014-010 V/F B. Courtesy of the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)

we were broke, but we had more nerve than brains. I especially was very stubborn, and I said, "I will fight to the last ditch not to bankrupt and try to sell and pay off." . . .

In the meantime, Dave Coolik used to put on a sale in Reynolds, and when it was over, I'd open one in Butler. We struggled pretty hard. I remember it as if it were today. A piece of goods that cost me 37-1/2 cents a yard, like Cheviots, or a piece of gingham, or a yard of sheeting, I advertised for sale at 16 cents a yard and I was tickled to death to sell it at that price. A suit of clothes I paid $27.50 for wholesale, I was glad to get $10 for it. Or anything in the house, we were glad to get thirty cents on the dollar when we could get it.

The only thing that saved us from going bankrupt was that we were very cool and did not pay one fellow at one time, but whenever we took in a hundred dollars, we'd give all our creditors the same amount, 10 percent of whatever we owed. We kept on that way until January 1, 1921, and

paid everybody every dime we owed. We were left with a capital of absolutely nothing and an old, depreciated stock of odds and ends. That was our reward for five years of hard work.

In the meantime, my wife gave birth to another little girl, Miriam. So we had two little children, and we could not live in that house on top of the gulley. We moved into Mrs. Benn's house, Charlie Benn's mother, let her rest in peace. She was a good woman. She was very good to my children and to my wife. She rented us one-half of the house.

During this time business was quiet, but I did the best I could, and we sent after my wife's mother, her sister, and her brother. They were in Europe, but we brought them over to America. We had a lot of trouble doing it, but by hard effort we managed some way or another to get them to the United States and then to bring them to Butler.[P] Louis, my wife's brother, remained in Reynolds, and I kept my wife's mother and her sister, Gussie.

CHAPTER VII

In 1922, [I] contracted typhoid fever. I was sick for 12 weeks. They thought I was on my dying bed. Doctors gave me up. We had nurses from Macon to stay with me day and night. Dr. Turk, of Reynolds, attended me and he told Dave Coolik, "if he pulls through today, I believe I will be able to save him."

I was delirious and once my wife's mother walked in my room where I was lying in bed and asked, "How do you feel?" I looked at her and said, "Mama, why don't you get married? What are you doing in here? Who sent for you?" She was alarmed and hurried to tell my wife and the rest of the family who were there at the time. "I am afraid he is crazy. He has lost his mind. He talked to me very funny."

Of course, I don't remember this, but later on my wife was telling me what I said to her mother. That night was the climax of my sickness and the crisis passed. When they changed my clothes, my bed clothes and everything I had on looked as if I had been lying in a tub of water. They were that wet with perspiration. They burned the bed sheets and everything that was on the bed. They changed my night clothes, packed me with ice, and I fell asleep.

My nurse named me "Iceberg" because I used about fifty pounds of ice a day to keep my fever off. I was burning up. My temperature used to run 104 and 105. It kept that up for about two weeks in succession. I remember the morning of July 20, Doctor Turk came into my room. He

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[P] This offers another example of family chain migration.

looked at me and asked, "How are you feeling?" I said, "Doctor, do you know today is my birthday? Do you believe I will ever see another birthday?" He said, "Huh! I have been practicing medicine for over 20 years and I have never seen a dead gray mule or a dead Jew." The way he said it kind of tickled me. I burst out in a big laugh and laughed so hard that I became hysterical. The doctor had to give me a shot to quiet me down. I fell asleep and from that day on I started improving, slowly but surely.

The nurse I had used to stay with me and encourage me and played cards with me. And Morris used to come in from the store and tell me that business was good. "In fact, it is getting better every day," he would say. They all tried to hearten me and tell me that everything was going on fine in the store. They did this because when I was delirious that was all I talked about—the store. They figured, or rather Dr. Turk told them, that I must have the store on my mind. And I did, for I hated for Dave Coolik to work hard and keep up my wife and children. Naturally, he used to humor me and tell me about the wonderful business they were carrying on in the store without me, that I should not worry about anything because everything would be all right.

While I was in bed, I swore that if I ever get back on my feet, I was going to dissolve partnership with Dave Coolik, [which required arbitration]. . . . I picked for my [advocate], R. A. Hinton, the president of the Reynolds Banking Company at that time; Dave Coolik picked for his man, C. H. Neisler. . . . We all sat down in the bank of the Reynolds Banking Company and read through the contract. I explained why I didn't want to sign it that way, and Dave Coolik gave his reasons why he wanted it his way. The arbitrators decided in my favor. They told Dave, "Mr. Coolik, we believe Mr. Dreizin is right in refusing to sign. You know the towns do not belong to you as individuals. We are living in a free country. Why are you afraid of Mr. Dreizin being your competitor if he were to come to Reynolds? Mr. Dreizin said he didn't care if you came to Butler and opened a store next door to him."

Dave dropped his head and said, "No, I am not afraid of competition, but I think it would be best for both of us. That is the reason I have stipulated this in the contract, but if you gentlemen say he is right, I will abide by it." And that ended it. I signed it. Dave signed it, and the committee witnessed it. I shook hands with Dave and wished him good luck while he said the same thing to me and then I went to Butler.

CHAPTER VIII

At the time I dissolved the partnership, Reynolds was a far better business town than Butler. Reynolds used to take in three dollars to every one dollar in Butler. In fact, Reynolds had a large Negro population and the big farms from Panhandle and Garden Valley employed laborers and they made big crops. And Dave did business with cheap merchandise. But luck was with me when we dissolved partnership. Butler began to look like a boom town. Whittle & Slade, an immense lumber concern, moved in. They employed several hundred men in their planing mill, beside many in sawmills which they placed in the country to cut the timber. Also, small farmers in that section quit their farms to haul the timber to the planing mill. The concern had a payroll of from $75,000 to $100,000 a week.[q] . . .

1923 and 1924 were two of the best years I had. I made lots of money. Unfortunately, the banks started breaking on me and I lost a lot of money that way. I became so disillusioned that I didn't trust anybody. As soon as I deposited in one bank and did business there for a while, that bank would bankrupt and catch me for several thousand dollars. It was discouraging. In 1923 and 1924 I had to fight unfair competition, especially by one merchant in Butler. He and his clerks used to knock me on every occasion possible. They put out rumors to the trade that I handled nothing but shoddy merchandise, seconds, and stories of that kind. This was disturbing and made the going hard.

During that year they organized a Ku Klux Klan in Butler, and several merchants joined it, not because they believed in it, but as a business proposition. They thought that "Now is the time to get rid of the Jew store." I believe I used my head at that time. I hired every Ku Klux Klan member's daughter that I could to work in my store. Not that I needed them so much and was doing that much business, but merely as a means of self-defense. Whenever I found out that in a certain district a man was taking an active part in the Ku Klux organization, I immediately hired his daughter as a clerk and paid her well. I had trade from all the Klansmen in that country! . . .

The Panhandle Community was thickly settled and all the farmers in that section were prosperous.[r] They had a lot of Negroes on their plantations. They were called "sharecroppers." The entire community seemed

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[q] Georgia underwent a gradual transition from being an overwhelmingly farming state to lumber and other industries during this era. See James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877–1984* (Lexington, KY, 1984).

[r] The Georgia Panhandle is a landlocked peninsula on the state's southern border northwest of Jacksonville, Florida.

to be kinspeople and they stuck together. When you fell out with one, you almost fell out with the whole community. In the fall of the year, when they completed the harvest, they would settle with their tenants and the Negroes naturally would do their trading where their landlord did his. If the merchant had treated the white farmer well, he would bring his hands to do their trading with him too. I wanted a share of their business, of course, and I did my best to please them. It took a little time, but finally I succeeded in gaining their confidence. . . .

My business started to grow by leaps and bounds. In the meantime, my wife gave birth to a baby boy whom we named Aaron. We really had a very nice party in the house for his circumcision. The natives in Butler had never witnessed a ceremony like that, and they enjoyed the party very much.[s] . . .

On December 23, 1929, my store burned to the ground. That was the day I lost practically everything I had. I had cancelled one $10,000 insurance policy on the store one month previous to the fire. At the time I canceled it, I figured that the stock was getting smaller and there was no use carrying the full amount of insurance. But when the store burned and I lost everything, I didn't feel very comfortable about it.

I collected $23,000 insurance and I owed a little better than $18,000, so I was left with practically nothing. I owned one other store building, half of which was rented to Mr. Fred Peed for an insurance office. I used the other half as a storage house for reserve stock. This building was damaged by the fire, too, and Mr. Peed moved out. I didn't know what to do.

I went to Newnan, where I did business with the Manufacturer's National Bank. The president of the bank, Mr. Harvey North, took a liking to me. We were very good friends. He had heard about the fire and the loss I had and was sorry for me. When I walked into the Bank, Mr. North came up to me, shook hands and said, "Mr. Dreizin, cheer up. The world is not at an end. Why don't you go back in business?" I told him, "Mr. North, the truth is. I am broke. By the time I pay off my creditors I don't think I will have enough to start over again." "Oh," he said, "never mind. I'll tell you what you do. You deposit all the insurance checks right in here and I will write your creditors to leave you alone for a while and our bank will be responsible for your indebtedness. Mr. Dreizin, I have the utmost confidence in your ability. Take the money you have, build you a nice store and do business again. I know you will do well and that you will pay off what you owe. If you need additional capital, don't hesitate to call on me."

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[s] This provides another example of maintaining Jewish tradition while also including the general community, the latter perhaps to help overcome the antisemitism noted in the previous paragraphs.

That made me feel very good, and I started getting confidence in myself again feeling I could swing it over. I said, "I surely do thank you, Mr. North. I will take your advice."

CHAPTER IX

[It was when] my store burned to the ground, and I had it in my mind to move to Newnan. I figured, "Well, I think now I will have a good chance to move there." However, I finally decided to rebuild the store in Butler. I rebuilt and was doing business--better than ever. . . .

Then the crash came on—part of 1931 and 1932. Things became tough. Business was at a standstill at Butler and Newnan. I sweated blood to make enough to make ends meet. We didn't owe too much money, but what we did owe, we couldn't pay. The banks shut down on making loans. The houses demanded money. The stocks in the stores were enormous and believe me, I lost many nights of sleep worrying about what the next morning would bring. Fifty dollars' worth of business on Saturday was considered good.

In Butler, things didn't bother me much, because I didn't have to meet store rent every month. As for myself, I pinched and economized as much as I could to live. But the Newnan store got on my nerves. . . .

I went back to Butler and started working on a circular, to put on a sale. I had advertised that I would accept cotton in trade, one cent above the market price. I knew as much about cotton as a Negro knows about the Jewish Bible. I opened up that sale with a bang. Talking about cotton, I bought ninety-six bales, with prices ranging to 7-1/4 to 10¢. I didn't know the grade of cotton, but I took the farmer's word. Whatever he told me he was offered at the warehouse, I gave him a cent more. The farmers really took advantage of me. They bought nothing but the staple merchandise, like work clothes, work shoes, sheeting, items that I advertised to sell without a profit. When the sale was over, I was in worse shape than I was before. I had to replenish the merchandise and didn't have the money to pay for it.

I hated to sell the cotton at a loss, and the best I could get for it all around was 7¢ a pound, which would make a loss of over $1,776 on the cotton alone. I felt blue—didn't know what to do. The only luck I had was, I had a clerk, Miss Nellie Turner, who was very honest and sincere. She looked after my business a whole lot better than she would look after her own. She did all the correspondence for me. She kept my books and knew all my inside troubles. . . .

In the year 1933, Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President. The first thing he did was to declare a moratorium to close all banks in the

United States, so that they could be checked to see if they were safe. I was very happy about his proclamation. I had a good excuse for not paying my bills for a while. That gave me a little breathing spell. I accumulated a few dollars and kept it in the bank. My creditors did not send me any statements and if they did, I could tell them my bank was closed and they would have to wait until it opened. The President closed the banks for ten days and I took ten days additional time. . . .

The year 1934 was the best in my business career. I made a net profit of a little over $16,000, which put me on my feet. Business started to climb. Merchandise went up as Mr. Cook had predicted. The farmers made good crops, and everything had a different attitude toward life. We had the CCC camps in Butler and the PWA.[t] Everything was on the upward trend, and I was doing a good business. My daughters, Bessie and Miriam, graduated from high school and then entered at the University of Georgia at Athens. Bessie graduated from high school in 1935 and Miriam graduated in 1936. Aaron and Isaac were going to school in Butler at that time. Aaron graduated from high school in 1939 and Isaac graduated in 1942.

We were living a very happy life. We used to look forward to the days when the children would come from school and bring their friends with them. We had a little orchestra in the house, one would play the piano and one the violin. Aaron played the harmonica; all kinds of musical instruments were being played. I don't believe there was a happier family in Butler, or anywhere else for that matter.

In 1938, I dissolved partnership with Morris Coolik at Newnan. I didn't see any profit from that store at that time. I made up my mind that I had better dispose of it—either sell my interest to Morris or, if he didn't want that, to sell out and divide with him. . . .

I went back home and made up my mind to build a new store next to the one I had. It would be a nice store, handling a better line of men's and ladies' ready-to-wear. I had in mind that some day, when my son Aaron graduated from school and then went to St. Louis and took a six-months' course of window displaying and card writing, that I would have it fixed up and later on turn the store over to him.

Aaron graduated from Butler High School in 1938 and went for one term to Cochran, which is a branch of the University of Georgia in Athens. He did a good job there. The next year he told me, "Daddy, I don't care much about going back to school in Cochran. I don't want to waste your money and time on something I am not interested in. I think I will just stay

[t] The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Public Works Administration (PWA, later the Works Progress Administration, WPA) were New Deal employment programs. See Jason Scott Smith, *Building New Deal Liberalism: The Political Economy of Public Works, 1933–1956* (New York, 2005).

at home and take care of the store." I said, "Well, son, I had rather for you to go on to school and finish up—graduate from college. After that, you can look after the store. I know what it means trying to be in business without an education. I would give anything I have if I could sit down and write a letter in good English, to be able to attend to my correspondence myself and not have to depend upon somebody else to do it for me. However, it is too late now" (or rather, I thought it was too late to get a little education to satisfy the commercial world and to take care of me). He said, "I think I can take care of that all right."

I said, "All right, do as you please. I cannot criticize you. I can only advise you, based on my past experience. I wish you would listen to me, and do like I say, because I see what I am missing today myself. My father, let him rest in peace, and my oldest brother used to argue with me, 'Oscar, you had better go to school and get an education while you are young. Some day you will be sorry for not doing it.' I didn't listen to them, but believe me, son, I am feeling it today, and I am plenty sorry that I did not do as they advised me at that time. To tell you the truth, Aaron, it took nerve to go into business with a very limited capital and education. It just happened that I have been lucky to have the kind of help that could do all the correspondence for me. Otherwise, I think it would have been pretty tough for me to have done anything." . . .

He said, "Well, I don't think I would be handicapped as much as you, Daddy. I have met college graduates who don't have sense enough to stay out of the rain. I am not talking about their making a living. It is not always the bookworm that counts." I said, "Well, all right, son, I am with you 100 percent. I have always said, and always will say, that I will never object to my children's choice in their lives."

We went on that way. Aaron had a good time and everybody in the community was crazy about him—black and white. They all loved to trade with him. He did a very good business—himself very nicely and neatly. We used to have a lot of fun together. He never had any secrets from me. He would confide all his petty troubles in me. We played cards together and it tickled him when he beat me and made me pay him off. He would tease me on top of it. "I thought you wrote the rules for the game, but you don't even know how to play. You had better buy a small deck of cards, or I will get one for you and you sit down in the back of the store and practice up a little bit, then come and play a good man."

I realize now that I did not know then what a clever, good-natured boy he was. I have never seen him mad or ill-tempered. He used to tell me things that happened in town or out of town, things that some of the men and boys did, and I would ask him if he were guilty of the same charge. "Well," he'd say, "Yes, and no."

CHAPTER X

In the meantime, the air was filled with rumors that the United States was going into war. The President issued an order that all males between the ages of 18 and 60 must register. Aaron became very restless after he registered. He kept on saying, "I would like to volunteer in the Air Corps." He became so excited that he put in his application and insisted that I sign the necessary papers. It was necessary for me to sign because he was a minor. He explained that he wanted to join and not wait to be drafted because he would have a better opportunity to get in the branch he wanted and learn a trade. He wanted to become a pilot. He went to Mr. Rustin, the County School Superintendent, and got a record of his schooling and filled out the papers and signed them.

On November 7, 1943, he went to the induction center in Atlanta and passed like a top. They gave him ten days to get ready for the army. He left Butler the seventeenth day of November with 12 more boys for Atlanta. I had a feeling that would be the last of him—that he would not come back. Of the 13 boys who left for the army together, three were killed and four wounded. I am not of the superstitious type, but I cannot help but think that 13 is really tough luck.

Two days after he left, I received a letter from him saying that he was stationed in Miami, Florida, for his training. He wrote very cheerful letters—that he was having a good time enjoying the army life very much, and for us not to worry about him. He said he was doing all right. We used to hear from him about twice a week.

From Miami he was sent to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and then to Las Vegas, Nevada. The climate was very cold there. He stayed there until some time in July when he flew over to Butler to see us. He had a furlough for a few days, and we really enjoyed the short time he was with us. He surely looked nice in uniform. I learned later that he told Walter Jarrell in the store, "Walter, I think I am going to be shipped out overseas. Don't tell Daddy about it. I will wait until I get overseas and then let him know. I will write him a letter. I don't want him to be worried about it."

He received a wire from his Commanding Officer to report immediately to his station in Las Vegas. I had a "hunch" that I would never see him anymore. He left us on Sunday afternoon, going to Atlanta to catch a plane for his station. Words cannot describe how we felt the day of his departure. Aaron tried his best to brace himself up and to brace us up, but you could tell by the look on his face that he was worried and bothered. He told me, "Daddy, don't worry. I will be back in a couple of months. It is only a matter of a couple of months and the war will be over."

Aaron Dreizin in uniform, c. 1943. (Aaron Dreizin Family Papers, ADF 611.001. Courtesy of the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)

He went to see Mrs. Harley Riley and got Harley Junior's address and said, "I am going to try to look him up." When the news reached Butler that Harley Junior was missing in action over Germany, he promised Mrs. Riley that when he had a chance he would try to locate the fellows who were in Harley's outfit. He said he would try to find out more about it and write her. He was sure, or rather he pretended to be sure, that the war was not so serious, and that nothing would happen to him; he seemed sure everything would be all right and that he would come home.

I will never forget the Sunday morning when he said, "Pop, how about loaning Uncle Sam's boy about $100? I think I will need some money until Uncle Sam pays me back what he owes me for my traveling expenses." "Well," I said, "son, here is $200 and take a few blank checks along with you. You can always write a check on me. But don't try to lose all the money in a crap game at one time." We were laughing about it. He said, "Oh, that is the army life!"

A couple of weeks later we received a letter from him in which he said, in confidence, that his crew would take a cross-country flight before they were shipped out, that they would be in Gulfport, Mississippi, about three or four days and he would like for us to drive up to see him. I went into the O. P.A. rationing board. At that time, Mr. Charlie Stone was head of the O. P.A. Office, and I told him, "Charlie, I want to ask a favor of you, if you can do it for me. I received a letter from Aaron, and he writes me that he is going to be in Gulfport, Mississippi, for a few days and if we can make it, he would like very much for us to drive over to see him. I haven't

enough tickets to buy gas. I wonder if you could give me some gasoline stamps, enough for me to make the trip."[u]

Charlie asked me, "Mr. Dreizin, about how many miles is from here to Gulfport and back?" I said, "I think it is about 1,600 miles, going and coming." He said, "When do you want to make the trip?" I said, "I would like to start tomorrow morning, Sunday." The board did not meet on Saturday, so he said, "Well, I will tell you what I will do. Go back to the store and I will see what I can do for you."

In the meantime, the news got out in town that I wanted to go to Gulfport to see Aaron before he went overseas and that I didn't have enough gas coupons to make the trip. Talk about the people of Butler being nice to us—they were really swell. They brought me enough coupons to make a trip to Europe and back. That is one time I really appreciated my friends and Aaron's friends.

The next morning, Sunday morning, Miriam, my wife, and I started out for Gulfport. I wired for reservations at some hotel there. I can't recall the name now. We made the trip very nicely and met Aaron at the camp. We drove out to the airfield to see him. Talk about a manipulator, Aaron was one of them. How he got by with it, I really don't know, but he had a wonderful and winning personality. The next day Aaron came out to see us. We spent three days together and we had a good time. That was the last time we saw him. I gave him $100, and he and his crew checked out for London.

We used to get very encouraging letters from him from overseas about the missions he made and the damage they had done to the German country. He used to write that it wouldn't be long before he'd made a few more sessions and would be back in the states.

In the meantime, Miriam left us and went to Macon and worked at Robins Field as a secretary in the Finance Department. Ike graduated from Butler High School and entered college at Emory University in Atlanta. With the children gone, we were very lonesome but full of hope that the war would soon be over, and Aaron and the others would be back, and everything would be as happy as before.

Ike kept on worrying me about wanting to sign up in the V-12 Navy in school. He kept asking, "Daddy, why wait until they draft me? Then I

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[u] The Office of Price Administration rationed items for civilians so that the military would have priority for supplies. See Andrew H. Bartels, "The Politics of Price Control: The Office of Price Administration and the Dilemmas of Economic Stabilization, 1940–1946," (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1980).

won't have a choice of which branch of the army I would like, but if I volunteer, I do have a chance."[v] Ike was a minor (he wasn't seventeen years old at that time), and I didn't want to sign the paper for him, but the trouble was that my children were very determined and I hated to be against them. So, I went to the Recruiting Station in Atlanta and asked the officer there to explain to me the meaning of the V-12 Navy and what it was all about. He told me that as long as Ike was in Medical School, he didn't think they would send him overseas. They would let him finish his course. I said, "All right," so I signed for him. Before I knew it, Ike was sent to New York to Columbia University for his boot training. He graduated as an Ensign in the United States Navy. After sixteen weeks' training, he was sent out to the Pacific, where the war with Japan was going on.

On Saturday, January 30, 1944, we received a wire from the War Department stating, "Sorry to inform you, but your son, Staff Sergeant Aaron Dreizin, was lost in action. Letter will follow." And the wire was officially signed. When I received the telegram and read it, I lost my speech. I could not say a word. I was waiting on a customer, but I sat about ten minutes without moving from the chair. My wife fainted. I insisted that Miriam take her home and put her to bed until she could get over the shock. I stayed in the store all day without knowing a thing I was doing. I was completely blank—like a machine waiting on customers, oblivious to all that was going on. Thirty days later, we received another wire from the War Department stating, "Sorry to inform you that your son, Staff Sgt. Aaron Dreizin, was killed in action instead of missing in action. Letter will follow."

That put the finishing touch to me. I cannot describe how we felt. My wife did not believe the second wire and letter, and she was hoping and praying that the first wire was correct—that Aaron was a prisoner of war. It just seemed that it couldn't be that he was killed. We kept on corresponding with all of the other nine boys' families of his crew. We had their names and addresses and wrote, asking if they had heard anything from their boys. We kept on like that for about a year until one day I told my wife, "Becky, please forget about it. Try to give up the idea that Aaron is still alive."

Some time later I received a letter from the Captain of the plane. He was taken prisoner of war. When the war was over, and he returned to the States, he wrote me a long letter explaining all the details of their missions

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[v] Begun in 1942, V-12 Navy was a college training program designed to prepare officers for service in the navy. See V.R. Cardozier, *Colleges and Universities in World War II* (New York, 1993).

to Germany.[w] . . . That convinced my wife that Aaron was dead, and she gave up hope of ever seeing him again.

CHAPTER XI

I had been a very healthy man, but this tragedy caused me to lose my strength. The trouble with me was I didn't complain to anybody but kept it on my chest. I used to worry about the loss of my son Aaron, and then my son Ike was in training in New York in the Navy and we expected him at any time to be shipped overseas. Miriam's husband, Izzie Chanin, was stationed in New York, and we didn't know when he would be called for overseas duty. Bessie's husband, Dave Satlof, was in training in Aberdeen, Maryland, and Bessie was there with him. She was working as a dietician in a hospital.

They broke up their beautiful home which they built in Columbus, Georgia, and all that, with the other troubles that were on [my] mind, worried me almost to distraction. I tried to forget my worries by hard work. I would work in the store from early in the morning until late at night straightening the stock, dusting the clothing, just anything to pass the time away. The harder I worked, the stouter I got. I started gaining a lot of weight.

CHAPTER XII

After Christmas, my wife and I took a trip to Springfield, Illinois, to visit Dr. Rosen. He put me in a hospital there for two weeks, to recheck me, because he wanted to be satisfied that I was doing well. I was checked by the best doctors in the state of Illinois, and they found the same thing as my little country doctor in Butler, Georgia.

After my discharge from the Springfield hospital, I asked my brother, "Nathan, tell me the truth. What is the matter with me?" He said, "The trouble is, you have an enlarged heart. You must take care of yourself. The main thing is to rest and not work too hard. If you will take care of yourself, you will die of rusty old age." I asked him, "Do you think it would be well for me to sell out my business in Butler, since I am not able to attend to it myself? You know, Nathan, I never did believe in somebody else running my business for me."

He said, "No, I would not advise you to do that. That would be going from one extreme to another. You must have something to do to occupy your mind. You could go to the store once or twice a day and see what

[w] The complete text of the letter, written by Lt. Frank E. Upson, Oakland City, Indiana, August 19, 1945, is embedded in the Dreizin memoir but is peripheral to southern Jewish history and too long to reprint here.

your clerks are doing. Check up on the cash register and see that everything is all right. It is not necessary for you to wait on the customers or lift boxes of merchandise or do any of the other hard work you have been doing." So, I told him, "All right, Nathan, I will do as you say." . . .

On my way back to Butler from Atlanta, I had thoroughly made up my mind to go out of business until after the war and things became normal again. Then I would see what I could do. I realized that I was a sick man and not physically able to run around searching for merchandise. At that time, it required a man with a lot of strength to hustle and do business, and I knew that would kill me if I undertook to do it.

When I came home, I told my wife, "Becky, you know what I have decided? I am going to sell out and quit. I am tired of the store, anyway." She said, "Do as you like." So, the next morning, I sat down and wrote out a circular and announced in the paper to the trade that I was going out of business and was offering my stock of merchandise at cost. My stock then was invoiced at a little over $40,000.

In the meantime, I wrote to the family in Sandersville, and Talbotton, Georgia, and elsewhere, that I had decided to sell out and for them to come

Dreizin store liquidation notice, 1945.
(Regina Satlof Block Family Papers, 014-010
V/F B. Courtesy of the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)

and pick out any kind of merchandise and I would sell it at invoice price. I had a very nice, selected stock of merchandise at a cheap price.

In ten days of the sale, I took in over $19,000. People came from Macon, Ellaville, Talbotton, and surrounding territories, to do their trading with me. They were buying good merchandise at a very low price. As I was retiring from business, I did not care much to make any profit, being satisfied to get cost out of it. . . .

After selling the store, I decided to move from Butler. I knew that I could not stand living there and seeing the boys who used to play with Aaron and who were always so close to him, coming back from the service and Aaron not coming. In August 1945, I bought a house in Macon and sold our home in Butler to Doc Brinkley for $5,250. I bought a nice home in Macon and paid $12,500 for it.

Unless you have had an experience of having worked hard for a long period of years and then found yourself suddenly without anything to do, or any goal, you can have no idea how heavily time hung on my hands. I arose in the morning with nothing to do, no plans for the day, nothing to think of but my troubles, and no particular reason for making the day. This is enough to break the mind of the strongest.

I became very nervous and restless. I tried to take up working in the yard, planting flowers, and trying to find a hobby to keep me busy, but it seemed nothing I tried would fill my need. I could not work in the hot sun in the yard. My doctor had advised against that. I became melancholy and almost despondent. I could not eat nor sleep, and I was becoming more run down.

My daughter, Miriam Chanin, suggested that I go to the doctor for a checkup. I called on Doctor Ross, my doctor in Macon, and he asked me why I looked so troubled. I told him I was not particularly troubled, and I was only worried because I was about to go crazy for the lack of something to do. He asked me why I did not find me a hobby that would keep me busy. He suggested raising flowers in the yard so long as I would not be out in the hot sun. He said that would take up enough of my time to keep me from worrying. He thought that I could find it interesting to learn flower culture. "I think it is a worthy hobby," he said. I had tried it, though, and didn't like it. I asked about my going to school. He looked at me as if he thought I had already lost my mind and it was too late to do anything for me. He asked if I wanted to go to Hebrew school to become a Rabbi. I told him it didn't matter to me what school I went to so long as I found something to take my time and occupy my mind. I had always felt the need of more education and had always wanted to get more learning, and it didn't matter too much just what I learned. He told me,

evidently just to satisfy me, to go ahead and try it, but not to take it too seriously. . . .

Time rocked along and I was a pretty steady scholar. I started liking my work very much. I went to school from October 7, 1946, until February 21, 1947, when I took sick and had to go to the hospital. I stayed there about a couple weeks. There I went through a minor operation, and it took me a long time to recuperate. On October 1, 1947, I started back to school with Mr. Rustin. I worked pretty hard, but I give a great deal of credit to my teacher, Miss Mildred Freeman, who took a special interest in my work and who helped me a great deal. I picked up my spelling and typing pretty well. I was able to compose my own letters and keep up with my correspondence to my children.

One day Mr. Rustin noticed the improvement I had made in my typing and spelling. He was very much enthused over the good work I had done in such a short length of time. He said, "Mr. Dreizin, do you know what I would suggest? I would like for you to write your memoirs. Your life has been rather eventful, and it would be interesting for your friends and family to read." I said, "Well, I don't know that my life history would be so interesting, and then my spelling and typing is not so good." He said, "Never mind. I think you could spell and type pretty fair for the length of time you have been studying, and it will help you to learn both by doing this, and then it will keep your mind occupied and time will not drag so for you."

I took his advice, and I started this book. Of course, I was writing it for the pastime, and it never occurred to me that I was writing something to be read by the public. But my friends learned about my efforts and many began inquiring about this book, and many, including my very good friend Mr. John D. Spencer, to whom I owe great gratitude, suggested that I have it published, and that it would be a real inspiration to many struggling young people to know just how the poor immigrant boy won success after many trials and disappointments and, when it seemed much of the time, that all odds were against him.

THE END

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From "The Memoirs of Oscar Dreizin of Butler and Macon, Georgia."
(Courtesy of the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)

NOTES

[1] A complete unedited typescript copy of "The Memoirs of Oscar Dreizin of Butler and Macon, Georgia" (n.d.) can be found at the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum, Atlanta.

[2] The Vitebsk Region is currently located in the northeast corner of Belarus. It had a large, thriving Jewish population before World War II. The capital city, also Vitebsk, was the hometown of Marc Chagall and several other leading Jewish artists.

[3] Vilna (or Vilnius), the current capital of Lithuania, served as a major center of Jewish culture and learning when it was part of czarist Russia. Best known for its Mitnagdic or anti-Hasidic yeshivot, it had scores of synagogues and served as the home of numerous Hebrew and Yiddish scholars. More broadly, see Masha Greenbaum, *The Jews of Lithuania: A History of a Remarkable Community, 1316–1945* (New York, 1995).

[4] A possible variant spelling of Coolik is Kulik. The exact familial relationship between Oscar and Rebecca is unclear.

[5] Hazlehurst is the county seat of Jeff Davis County in the southeastern part of Georgia. Its 2010 population was 4,226.

[6] Reynolds, in Taylor County, Georgia, had a population of 1,086 in 2010.

[7] Butler serves as the county seat of Taylor County. Its 2010 population was 1,972. Taylor County has a long history of racism including the 1946 lynching of Black army veteran Maceo Snipes, the first Black man to vote in the county. The incident inspired the seventeen-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr., to write a letter of protest to the *Atlanta Constitution*. The lynching remains a controversial cold case. See Dan Barry, "Killing and Segregated Plaque Divide Town," *New York Times*, March 18, 2007.

[8] Approximately 550,000 American Jews served in the United States military during World War II out of a total Jewish population of 4,770,000. The total number of awards, citations and medals came to 49,315. Of the total number of 38,338 casualties, 11,000 were killed, of which 7,000 occurred in combat. Some 320,000 people from Georgia served. According to the National Archives, seventeen servicemen from Taylor County were killed in action or from combat wounds. "WWII Army and Army Air Force Casualties," National Archives, accessed June 21, 2023, https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/army-casualties.

[9] Historians and other writers have produced an extensive literature on the history of the Ku Klux Klan. For a history of the KKK in Georgia, see Edward Proxamus Akin IV, "The KKK in Georgia: Social Change and Conflict, 1915–1930 (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1994). More broadly, see David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Durham, NC, 1987) and Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York, 1998).

Book Reviews

A Brief Moment in the Sun: Francis Cardozo and Reconstruction in South Carolina. By Neil Kinghan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2023. 255 pages.

Francis L. Cardozo was one of the most prominent and influential figures in the history of Reconstruction in South Carolina. Historian Neil Kinghan skillfully brings Cardozo's public career to light in this informative and engaging biography that also provides an illuminating history of South Carolina after the Civil War.

Cardozo was truly a child of the biracial South. He was born in 1837 to Lydia Weston, a formerly enslaved Black woman, and Isaac N. Cardozo, a prominent Jewish citizen of Charleston. The demographic contours of South Carolina society shaped Cardozo's upbringing and became an important factor in the politics of Reconstruction. South Carolina had what historians have called a "Black majority"—African Americans comprised 58 percent of its population. As a biracial person, Cardozo benefitted from the small group of free Blacks in Charleston who were able to attend school. His parents later sent him to study for the ministry at Glasgow University in Scotland. Returning to the United States in 1864, Cardozo accepted a pulpit at Temple Street Congregational Church in New Haven, Connecticut. At the end of the Civil War, he joined the educational efforts of the American Missionary Association and returned to his native state to help teach the newly emancipated freed people. This was a common way northern Blacks entered the Reconstruction South.

Cardozo's career in post–Civil War South Carolina, which forms the main substance of the book, was interwoven with the political history of the state from 1865 to 1877. He served as a delegate to the South Carolina constitutional convention of 1867, which wrote a new state constitution that mandated public education. Never losing interest in education, he founded the Avery Normal School in the hopes of showing the whites of the state that Black students could achieve a similar level of success. In 1868, Cardozo won election as South Carolina's secretary of state—the first Black official elected to statewide office in the United States. He served as state treasurer from 1872 to 1877.

During this time, Cardozo led the South Carolina land commission to help provide land to the freed people. Besides education and land reform, Cardozo and other Republicans advocated for civil rights. In June 1871, he was ejected from a Pullman train in Georgia because of his race. By the early 1870s, signs indicated that Republican Reconstruction in the state was on the wane. Financial problems plagued the Republican regime. In the intense partisanship of the era, Democrats tried to link financial fraud with Republicans. Cardozo was charged with fraud but ultimately pardoned in 1879. Throughout these chapters, Kinghan argues persuasively that Francis Cardozo was "the most important African American in the government of South Carolina during Reconstruction" (179). After Reconstruction, Cardozo moved to Washington, D.C., where he participated fully in the political and cultural life of the Black community. He became the principal of three African American schools and was active in the elitist Cosmos Club and Bethel Association. Cardozo died in 1903 but his educational legacy lived on. Today, there is a Francis L. Cardozo Education Campus in Washington, D.C.

A Brief Moment in the Sun offers a welcome addition to Reconstruction historiography, which is surprisingly thin on biographies of Black political leaders. Historians who choose this path of scholarship face several challenges, such as the paucity of significant manuscript collections and the problematic nature of the southern Reconstruction press. Yet Kinghan successfully surmounts such obstacles. He found letters from Cardozo in the American Missionary Association Archives and remained attentive to the partisan bias of newspapers. Kinghan is highly favorable to his subject—perhaps even to the point of hagiography. For instance, Kinghan finds Cardozo to be highly principled, talented, and hardworking, an "outstanding symbol of incorruptibility" (7). He emerged from the 1867 constitutional convention as "the most influential African American in the state" (3). Under Cardozo's leadership, the South Carolina land commission "became both more honest and significantly more successful" (83). In a few gestures towards more objectivity, Kinghan admits that it is "not possible to be certain" (151) that Cardozo was innocent of corruption charges.

Kinghan's biography of Francis Cardozo also provides a sure-footed history of Reconstruction in South Carolina, a familiar narrative firmly grounded in the Post-Revisionist scholarship that has been dominant since the 1960s and 1970s. This historiography centers the Black experience of emancipation, the achievements of Republican Reconstruction governments, and the irrepressible power of white supremacist opposition. Adhering to this interpretation, Kinghan highlights Cardozo's contribution to education, civil rights, and land reform. The author fully describes and explains the power of white supremacist violence, evident at riots such as at Ellenton and Hamburg, that led to the demise of Radical Reconstruction in the state.

Two interpretive questions, however, merit mention. The first is the split between Cardozo and fellow Black Republican Robert Brown Elliott during the early 1870s. Kinghan is correct to present it as a debate over the cooperationist strategy of Governor Daniel Chamberlain. Cardozo supported the efforts of the Republican governor to woo disaffected Democrats in South Carolina. Yet that quarrel can also be interpreted as reflecting a deeper, essentially class conflict between antebellum free Blacks in Charleston and the larger mass of former plantation slaves of the state who focused on more material issues. Even as Kinghan recognizes

this division within the Black community, he credits Cardozo with genuine Radicalism: "It is clear from his record that, on land reform, education, and voting rights, and on the importance of resisting any prospect of a return to white supremacy, Cardozo was regularly on the radical side of major arguments" (64). Other participants of South Carolina Reconstruction and other historians have seen otherwise.

The second question of interpretation centers around Kinghan's heavy reliance on "failure," which shapes his narrative of Reconstruction. He explicitly challenges the myth of Reconstruction as a tragic era: "The word 'failure' does not do justice to what was achieved during Reconstruction in South Carolina" (179). Historians are now questioning the value of failure as an interpretive paradigm. Does the word implicitly suggest that a truly democratic and biracial Reconstruction was possible? Does the term inherently minimize the potency of white opposition? Is it more accurate to say that Reconstruction was defeated rather than that it failed?

These questions continue to haunt us as many of the issues of Reconstruction have resurfaced in American political life. Once again, we hear of the suppression of African American voters by redrawing electoral boundaries and reducing the number of polling places in heavily Black areas. Once again are we subjected to partisan attempts to steal elections. The example of Francis L. Cardozo then should inspire us to transform what W. E. B. DuBois called "a brief moment in the sun" into an enduring experiment in biracial democracy.

Readers of this journal should know that this book contains very little discussion of the Jewish community in Charleston, nor does Kinghan claim that Judaism or Jewish society played any significant role in Cardozo's Reconstruction career. However, they should be aware of other material that can help place Francis L. Cardozo in the context of American and southern Jewish history. For instance, other Jewish men in the South engaged in interracial relationships with African-American or mixed-race women: Isaac Nunes Cardozo and Lydia Weston, Judah P. Touro and an enslaved woman in New Orleans, and David Isaacs with a free woman of color in Virginia. Historian Benjamin Ginsburg, in *Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag Governor of South Carolina*, further describes political alliances between Jews and Blacks in Reconstruction South Carolina. The two examples of Franklin Moses, Jr., and Francis Cardozo suggest that

future historians of nineteenth-century southern Jewish history should be alert to the nuances of constructing Jewish identity in the past.

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Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War: The Union Army. By Adam D. Mendelsohn. New York: New York University Press, 2022. 322 pages.

Adam D. Mendelsohn, associate professor of history at the University of Cape Town, has performed an essential and important service for American Jewish history in his new book, *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War*. Until his book, there has been no scholarly work on Jewish Union soldiers, an omission both bizarre and unfortunate. The Civil War has attracted too few scholars of American Jewish history.

In 2010, Mendelsohn and Jonathan D. Sarna published *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*. What is remarkable about that book is that, while there is a chapter on Jewish Confederates, there is no chapter on "Jewish Yankees." This reflected the lack of scholarship on Jewish men in the Union Army. Even the pioneering scholar Bertram W. Korn addressed only superficially the subject of the Jews who served in the Union Army in his seminal work, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (1951).

Mendelsohn's new book is largely based on the Shapell Roster Project (www.shapell.org), which seeks the accurate identification of all Jewish participants in the Union and Confederate armies. The story of a prominent Jewish lawyer, Simon Wolf, has often been told. In 1895 he defended Jewish participation in the Civil War by publishing his groundbreaking (if not exactly accurate) *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen*. It has now been continued with a diligent team of researchers who have worked for thirteen years to create an accurate database. Yet the exact number of Union Jewish soldiers will never be known. The Shapell database identifies 7,243 possibilities, but most of them are unconfirmed. Only 1,807 results have been confirmed to date. Perhaps the greatest service of Mendelsohn's book is therefore to publicize and introduce its readers to the Shapell Roster Project of the Shapell Manuscript Foundation, which is remarkable in its scope and detail.

Mendelsohn's work is lengthy enough to provide all sorts of fresh and interesting information and insights. The book consists of six chapters. "Mustering In" and "The Jewish Recruit" describe the Jewish soldiers who enlisted or were drafted and why, their reluctance to volunteer, who they were, and where they came from. "In the Company of Jews" depicts how Jews coped in units without Jews who did not organize their own units and the camaraderie of Jews in units with substantial numbers of Jews. "Fighting Together" traces how Jews used aliases and hid their identities or made common cause with other Jews. "Sacred Duties" recounts the religious activities of Jewish soldiers, including the celebration of Jewish holidays. "Lost and Found" tracks the aftermath of the War and how Jewish soldiers fared and were celebrated. This volume contains an impressive number of photographs and illustrations of Union Jewish soldiers, antisemitic cartoons, letters, Civil War military records, weapons, medals, lists of units and soldiers, and maps. The heroism of Edward Salomon, Leopold Karpeles, Marcus Seigel, and Medal of Honor winners are all treated as well.

Mendelsohn does an excellent job of confronting much of the filiopietistic exaggeration about Jewish units. He points out that no majority Jewish companies or regiments existed -- not even Company C of the 82nd Illinois (in which Salomon served as lieutenant colonel), nor Company A of the 149th New York, which are "still routinely identified as Jewish" (77). The flag of the 149th bears the words "Presented to the 149th Reg't. N.Y.S.V. by the Jewish Ladies of Syracuse, N.Y. Sept. 1862." But only twenty Jews served in that company (76). No Jewish company was formed from Chicago, although Company C (the Concordia Guards) included Jewish members, and funds were raised by the Jewish community (75). Mendelsohn also debunks many myths about Jews in the Union Army, including the imbroglio over the appointment of a Jewish chaplain in 1861.

The central thesis of *Jewish Soldiers* is that antisemitism kept Jews from supporting the Union war effort in proportion to other ethnic groups. The author is careful to note that northern Jewish enlistment was far below that of other ethnic groups such as the Irish or Germans (26–27). Mendelsohn's explanation is widespread northern hostility to Jews, who were accused of the selfishness of capitalists in producing shoddy goods. Communal leaders like Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise and Isaac Leeser showed

little enthusiasm for the war, and a strong current of nativism ran through the Republican Party. The great majority of northern Jews were immigrants, and four out of five Jews in the Union Army were born abroad (51).

What Mendelsohn omits, however, is the substantial Jewish animosity toward abolitionists and their leaders. This adversarial relationship does not mean northern Jews supported slavery. As coeditor of *Jews and the Civil War*, he is well aware that Rabbi Wise detested abolitionism. Sefton D. Temkin's chapter on "Isaac Mayer Wise and the Civil War" in that volume makes it clear that Wise and other Jewish community leaders were very much aware that "fanatics" in the abolitionist branch of the Republican Party were virulent antisemites and "disturbers of the peace." Mendelsohn alludes to but does not explore the likelihood that many northern Jews were Democrats who saw the war as a Republican adventure and abolitionists as antagonists.

For example, William Lloyd Garrison, the editor of the *Liberator*, once described Judge Mordecai Manuel Noah of New York as "the miscreant Jew," "Shylock," "the enemy of Christ," and a descendent "of the monsters who nailed Jesus to the Cross." Similar sentiments came from Edmund Quincy, Lydia Maria Child, William Ellery Channing, and Senator Henry Wilson—all leading abolitionists. John Quincy Adams called Senator David Levy Yulee, the father of Florida statehood, "the alien Jew delegate from Florida" and wrote that the Jews of Amsterdam "would steal your eyes out of your head if they possibly could." Such sentiments surely repelled many northern Jews and may have deterred their involvement in a war against slavery. The well-documented and virulent antisemitism of many abolitionist leaders goes unmentioned, even though it mattered to Jews in the 1860s.

Indeed, the entire issue of slavery in the Northern Jewish community is not addressed in any depth. Mendelsohn acknowledges that Jews were to be found on both sides of the issue and that some northern Jews were indeed abolitionists, notably August Bondi, who rode with John Brown. Rabbi David Einhorn also vehemently opposed slavery. Moritz Pinner served as a delegate to the 1860 Republican Party convention (58), which opposed the expansion of "the peculiar institution." But the full explanation of why Jewish community leaders like Wise and Leeser refrained from supporting the Union war effort is not presented. Certainly, it was not due to any enthusiasm for slavery.

Mendelsohn observes, for example, that a border state like Maryland had five thousand Jews, but only sixteen enlisted in the Union Army (26). One typical Maryland Jew fulminated against "debauched black Republicanism." Clearly more was at work in the northern Jewish community than objections to Judeophobia, which was—after all—a part of American culture and life and also common in the South. A sizeable proportion of Jews in the North were apparently Peace Democrats.

Of course thousands of Jews enlisted in the Union army and many Jews supported Lincoln and the Republican Party, some others the abolition of slavery. The *Jewish Messenger* in New York City exhorted Jews to "STAND BY THE FLAG," and printed prowar sermons and articles that the Jews had a duty to fight for the Union, which sheltered them "beneath its protecting wings" (36). Some, like Marcus Seigel, had initial misgivings about ending slavery, but their wartime experience changed their minds. The son of New York rabbi Morris J. Raphall, who once gave an infamous sermon defending slavery as sanctioned by the Bible, enlisted and lost an arm at Gettysburg. His father's view of slavery evidently did not deter him from military service. Jewish soldiers and their supporters on the home front were proud of their patriotic participation in the war. The Hebrew Union Veterans Association was formed in 1896 to recognize and celebrate their service.

Adam Mendelsohn has now brought Jewish Union soldiers back to life. *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War* is essential reading for anyone interested in American Jewish history.

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The Sugar King. Leon Godchaux: A New Orleans Legend, His Creole Slave, and His Jewish Roots. By Peter M. Wolf. New York: Bayou Editions, 2022. 478 pages.

In October 1910, the *New Orleans Item* dedicated its entire front page to a businessman once widely called the "Sugar King of Louisiana." "Poor French Boy's Ambitions Have Fruited into Great Enterprises" is how the lead headline described Leon Godchaux. Although the southern Jewish business titan had been dead for eleven years, the newspaper recalled Godchaux's lucrative career in clothing retail, shipping, and sugar production, noting that at the time of his death, "the dramatic incidents of his career were telegraphed to the East and West and the far Pacific slopes." Perhaps without knowing it, the *Item* provided a harbinger of what was to come. Over the following century, the Godchaux name would be imprinted into the architectural and folkloric fabric of Louisiana, and the sugar company he built would soon become the largest producer of cane in the nation. Yet until now, no full portrait of his life existed.

Enter Peter M. Wolf, the great-great-grandson of Godchaux and the author of a recent biography. Wolf's newest book joins a lengthy corpus of his other publications, both popular and academic, largely in the field of urbanism and development. The book comes blurbed by an impressive cadre of scholars and journalists and offers a mix of business, architectural, and southern history. Wolf relies largely on business, newspaper, and government records, as Godchaux kept no diary and sat for no interviews. Godchaux's family maintains that he could neither read nor write. Consequently, Wolf has produced a narrative reimagination of a turn-of-the-century American Jewish rags-to-riches story. *The Sugar King* also includes some eighty images, which range from Godchaux's earliest clothing storefront in the 1840s to the preservation of his legacy 180 years later. Wolf has also added a useful family genealogy and timeline.

Lion Godchot was born in the northeast French town of Herbéviller in 1824. Like many Jews in early nineteenth-century Alsace-Lorraine—whose emancipation triggered a wave of heightened antisemitism and economic exclusion—Godchot emigrated to the United States, arriving

alone at the age of thirteen in the diverse French-speaking port of New Orleans. After peddling petty items around Louisiana for some seven years, Godchot (who by then had creolized his name to Leon Godchaux) joined the milieu of Jewish merchants in New Orleans, opening his first store, "Leon Godchaux, French and American Clothing Store," in 1844. The store, located on Old Levee Street in the French Quarter, quickly achieved economic success. Godchaux also found personal prosperity in the meeting of his wife-to-be, Justine Lamm. In a touching invocation of the episode of their meeting, Wolf writes: "Their blue eyes met in a dazzle. To Leon, Justine must have seemed born, like Shakespeare's Beatrice, under a star that danced" (50). Before the war, the couple enslaved at least four Black people—three domestic slaves and Joachim Tassin, whom the press routinely called Godchaux's "first employee" at the clothing store. Throughout *The Sugar King,* Wolf routinely spotlights Tassin's life alongside Godchaux's, offering a parallel look at how two men's intertwined histories were incongruously shaped by the fall of slavery and then the turbulent rise of legalized racism.

Indeed, in writing this book, Wolf not only set out to "rediscover" Godchaux for the popular reader, but also—he admits—to correct the historical record about his great-great-grandfather. Contemporary and family sources maintained that Godchaux never owned slaves. The legend compromised his engagement in a strategic and benevolent business partnership with a "young mulatto boy" named Joachim Tassin. Drawing on political and business records, Wolf unequivocally disproves this claim. Godchaux purchased Tassin in 1849 in a private sale in St. John the Baptist Parish. Soon the enslaved (and later manumitted) Tassin "rose to become a master tailor, a star salesman, and a surrogate manager" (76).

Godchaux achieved a fair measure of economic success in retail before 1861, but the Civil War catalyzed his future sugar empire. As the war wiped out antebellum wealth and the federal government confiscated millions of dollars of enslaved private property, the old nucleus of slave-owning planters desperately needed credit influxes to sustain their faltering agricultural operations. With his thriving clothing business in New Orleans and many of his liquid assets preserved in banks in New York, Godchaux became part of what the historian Michael R. Cohen has called "the lifeblood" of postbellum southern capitalism. As Cohen shows in *Cotton Capitalists* (2017), Gulf South immigrant Jews like Godchaux entangled

themselves in a world of postwar credit and debt cycles, capitalizing on the defaults of the former planter aristocracy. When a deeply indebted sugar planter forfeited her Reserve sugar plantation to Godchaux in 1869, the Alsatian Jewish immigrant joined a group of postwar Jewish plantation owners who became lavishly wealthy in the new "free labor" southern economy.

Yet as white Jews like Godchaux found fortunes in the postwar years, recently emancipated Black people like Tassin saw their freedoms dashed by new legalized structures of racist repression. Wolf adroitly uses Tassin as a lens to contextualize the changing situation for southern Blacks. He offers overviews of the eradication of Louisiana's manumission process in the late 1850s, the successes and failures of Reconstruction in the 1870s, and the eventual dramatic loss of citizenship rights for Tassin in the waning decades of the nineteenth century. Occasionally, Wolf surrenders to an unfortunate dose of apologetics in his treatment of Godchaux's relationship to slavery and racism. For example, the author continuously makes the baffling—and seemingly unsupported—proposition that Godchaux was in fact repulsed by slavery, even though he owned slaves throughout his antebellum career. Likewise, at times, Wolf imparts a "benevolent master" narrative onto his great-great-grandfather. In Godchaux's original purchase of Tassin in 1849, the author surmises that the French Jewish immigrant "likely turned around to face Joachim and presumably explained that he had no money to rescue the boy's mother, but that he would make every effort to help Joachim find a way to visit her. . . . Leon likely said something like 'You are safe'" (42). At times, Wolf attributes this antislavery ideology to Godchaux's Jewish heritage, an ascription that bears little factual historical reality in the American South.

Where the author is at his best, then, is in documenting Godchaux's vast postwar business empire and economic profitability. Godchaux's operation at Reserve quickly boomed into a massive sugar growing and refining operation. He became the first to widely commercialize the "Rillieux evaporator" and other modern refining and packaging technologies. He hired top experts in sugar production and transformed the former slave plantation into a complete company town where his employees lived, worked, and recreated on Godchaux property. To export his sugar into the global market, Godchaux also ventured into the railroad industry, becoming what Wolf calls "something of a regional railroad baron" at the end of the nineteenth century (192). Simultaneously, his clothing business continued to expand, and in 1894 he opened his flagship store in the grand new Godchaux Building at the "desirable corner" of Canal and Chartres Streets. The building is displayed as *The Sugar King*'s cover art.

Godchaux died in 1899, but the book finishes more than a century later. Wolf details the ensuing nine decades of Godchaux's clothing business, which his family ran. They expanded the company well beyond the New Orleans French Quarter. Likewise, Wolf recounts the ebb and flow of Godchaux Sugars, which Leon's descendants ran until its sale in 1956. *The Sugar King* concludes with the more recent work of the restoration of Godchaux's legacy, including the historical preservation of the Godchaux-Reserve House at his former sugar estate. By thoroughly documenting the life of Leon Godchaux, Wolf has successfully "rediscovered" the monumental career of an immigrant Jew whose name still bears important distinction in New Orleans and across Louisiana. Readers of *The Sugar King* will find an illuminating portrait that is an important source for future studies of capitalism, slavery, and Jewish life in the American South.

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Exhibit Review

Beth-El Civil Rights Experience. Curated by Melissa Young and Margaret Norman. Temple Beth-El, Birmingham, Alabama.

"Take a second to look, really look, at the second storefront from the corner of 20th [Street] and up to 2nd Avenue North. Can you imagine this space as a bustling department store?" So begins one of the virtual displays of the Beth-El Civil Rights Experience, a multimedia digital exhibit that tells the story of the civil rights movement through the perspective of the Jewish community in Birmingham, Alabama. The storefront in question is the Parisian, an apparel store intermittently owned by members of the Hess, Abroms, Litchenstein, Salit, and Holiner families from 1920 to 1996. The story of the Parisian is a familiar one to southern Jews, who more often than not earned their livelihoods as merchants. As the civil rights movement gained momentum during the early 1960s in cities across the South, Jewish store owners frequently found themselves in unenviable positions.

Although Jewish merchants were more likely than non-Jewish white southerners to do business with Black customers and, in some cases, employ Black workers in their stores, their businesses were frequently the target of desegregation efforts. In 1962, when African American student activists in Birmingham embarked on a selective buying campaign, the Parisian became one of the stores targeted by the boycott. The Hess family, owners of the Parisian at the time, found themselves under an enormous amount of economic pressure to desegregate their store and would have liked to do so, yet local city officials, like public safety

commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor refused to entertain even the most moderate gestures toward integration. In an oral history featured on the website, Donald Hess recalls, "Even as a teenager, I was aware of the tension that my parents were experiencing and was certainly aware of the fear that came from threatening phone calls to our house. Dad, who had been the president of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, was a convener, bringing the various groups together. These were extremely difficult times."

The story of the Parisian and Birmingham's Hess family is one of a dozen points of interest that comprise the Beth-El Civil Rights Experience multimedia digital exhibit. The exhibit features images and archival materials, including clips of oral histories, with the goal of putting voices of those who lived through the civil rights movement into conversation with one another. Each marker on the map leads to a series of related images and a short narrative about a particular person, place, or incident that is significant to Jewish Birmingham's civil rights history. Increasing the exhibit's accessibility, each page's narrative is available in print and as a recording—the stories are read by exhibit producers and interns, in addition to longstanding members of the local Jewish community.

At the heart of this exhibit is a desire to acknowledge the co-existence of many truths" during this momentous period, whether it be the experiences of the Jewish community members who marched in the streets, those who negotiated quietly in the background, or those who remained silent. From an overview of the history of Jewish life in Birmingham, to efforts by Joseph Gelders, a Jewish intellectual and Birmingham native who worked to desegregate the city as early as the 1930s and was kidnapped and beaten by the Ku Klux Klan for his efforts, to the mixed response of Birmingham Jews toward the arrival of civil rights workers from the North, the exhibit presents and accounts for a variety of perspectives. Non-Jewish residents of Birmingham occasionally make an appearance. For example, the story of Birmingham resident Karl Friedman and the American National Bank incorporates a testimony from J. Mason Davis, the Black president of the Birmingham Bar Association, about Friedman's legal work on behalf of the Black community. By bringing to life stories from stakeholders with different social, economic, and moral interests in Birmingham, the viewer gains a better understanding of what life was like for Jews during this time.

Visitors to the Beth-El Civil Rights Experience
during the exhibition's opening event, May 2023.
(Courtesy of Margaret Norman, Temple Beth-El, Birmingham.)

The Beth-El Civil Rights Experience would make an excellent teaching tool in college classrooms, especially given how narrative overviews of the general history are interwoven with oral testimonies and images. The inclusion of a variety of Jewish perspectives would also encourage generative conversations about how this pivotal moment in American history was experienced differently by members of the same Jewish community. The exhibit is not comprehensive in its scope, nor does it aspire to be. In fact, a perusal of the exhibit will leave the viewer desiring to know more—more about the history of the Jewish community in Birmingham, their lived experiences as Jews in the South, and the various responses and activities of Jews during the civil rights movement in Birmingham and beyond. Instead, the creators aim to foster reflection, a love of learning, and a desire to know more about this history, as well as a commitment to having important conversations about our present moment. In this sense, this historical exhibit is rather forward-facing and underscores the mission so many educators carry into the classroom each day.

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Film Reviews

A Crime on the Bayou. Directed and written by Nancy Buirski. Augusta Films, 2020. 1 hour, 31 minutes.

This documentary could as accurately be titled *Three Crimes on the Bayou*, with the first of the two nouns in quotation marks. From the flick of a wrist in the fall of 1966 came three cases that the federal judiciary needed to resolve: *Duncan v. Louisiana*, *Sobol v. Perez*, and then *Duncan v. Perez*. The three protagonists (or rather antagonists) were a young target of racial injustice, a Jewish attorney who fought for him, and an antisemitic segregationist who wanted to throttle them both. This trio makes Nancy Buirski's film a riveting study of conflict and collaboration. To tell an intriguing tale of victimization and vindication, she skillfully evokes the singular setting of Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, during the civil rights crisis in the 1960s. In that era, a crime could be virtually any act or gesture that undermined the stability and continuity of "the southern way of life."

The incident that started the constitutional cases occurred during the first stage of the desegregation of public education in the parish. Gary Duncan, a Black teenager, tried to protect his younger cousin and a nephew whom four white adolescents were hassling. The white bully, whom Duncan deflected from attacking his relatives, was not even slightly injured, and not even the deputy sheriff could find a bruise. White control had to be maintained, however, and Duncan was therefore charged with simple battery, a misdemeanor. Judge Eugene Leon sentenced him to sixty days in jail and a $150 fine. Duncan and his mother

asked for help in New Orleans, where Richard B. Sobol, a New York–born civil rights attorney, was working for the Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee (LCDC). Sobol challenged the unfairness of the proceedings and ran up against Leander Perez, Sr.

This swaggering political boss dominated the gas, oil, and sulfur-rich parish located about fifty miles below New Orleans. In 1948 he had split from the Democratic Party to back the Dixiecrats and positioned himself so far to the right that he condemned even the National Urban League as communist. Perez regarded "Zionist Jews" as the most immediate threat to his rule over the parish and considered both the NAACP and the Supreme Court merely "front[s] for clever Jews." A clip in *A Crime on the Bayou* shows him denouncing "the Zionist advisors" to President Eisenhower: Maxwell Rabb (whom Perez calls "Rabinowitz") and Bernard Goldfine. Rabb, which had been his name from birth, handled minority affairs within the Republican White House. Goldfine was a New England manufacturer who had tried to bribe Ike's chief of staff—and was never a presidential advisor.

"I do resent any goddamn Jew trying to destroy our country and our rights," Perez fulminated. Sobol might well have incarnated this conspiracy theory. He challenged the Louisiana law by which a judge or a five-person jury handled misdemeanors. Duncan had been denied a jury trial, which might have given him more chance of an acquittal than a single judge subjected to Perez's dominion. Sobol appealed Duncan's conviction all the way to the Supreme Court, which overturned the verdict in 1968. Henceforth, the court declared, the right to a trial by jury could be invoked in state courts for "serious crimes." *Duncan*

v. *Louisiana* was consequential (more so than this documentary explains). Citing the Fourteenth Amendment, the Supreme Court extended in principle the protection of the Sixth Amendment to the millions of defendants who find themselves tried in state courts. Until Sobol took up Duncan's case, no attorney had ever raised the constitutional possibility of a federal right to a jury trial in state courts. He was only twenty-nine years old.

Among those arrested in Plaquemines Parish in February 1967 was Sobol himself. The district attorney who charged him with practicing law without a valid state license happened to be Leander Perez, Jr. Taking on dozens of desegregation cases, Sobol was associated with Collins, Douglas & Elie, a Black law firm in New Orleans. The last-named partner was Lolis Elie, whose son Lolis Eric Elie is interviewed at length in Buirski's film. He provides valuable historical context. Upon arrest, Sobol was thrown into a group cell for white prisoners, one of whom was disturbed to have known of another white lawyer—a troublemaker who had been defending Blacks in Alabama. Sobol dryly noted: "I kept my mouth shut." Although he was soon released after posting bail, he challenged his arrest in *Sobol* v. *Perez* (1968). In federal court in New Orleans, his attorneys for the LCDC argued that barring northern civil rights attorneys from state courts constituted intimidation and harassment. The court agreed and blocked Plaquemines Parish from harassing Sobol from practicing law there.

After the state legislature reduced the maximum penalty for simple battery, the Perez family arrested Duncan again. Sobol again sprang to his defense and charged that the prosecution of his client was malicious, conducted in bad faith. In *Duncan v. Perez* (1970), Sobol succeeded in stopping the retrial. In the film Sobol recalls the pleasure of telling his client that he need not fear any further legal problems stemming from that flick of the wrist. Perez, who died in 1969, lived long enough to see federal observers storm into his bailiwick to ensure that its elections would henceforth be conducted without racial discrimination. Sobol, who had moved to California, remained a friend of the shrimp fisherman whom he had so energetically and effectively defended. Sobol died in March 2021, and this film is a touching tribute to him and Duncan.

The interviews are crisp and cogent—not only with Duncan, Sobol, and Elie, but also with another Jewish civil rights attorney, Armand Derf-

ner, whose family escaped the Holocaust by fleeing France in 1940. Derfner remained in the South, residing in Charleston. Stock footage of the clashes of the 1960s suggests some padding that does not illuminate the particulars of the three cases that embroiled the parish. But the musical excerpts that Buirski selected are apt: Virgil Thomson's score for Robert Flaherty's *The Louisiana Story* (1948), Bob Dylan's "Chimes of Freedom" (1964), and Randy Newman's "Louisiana 1927" (1974). *A Crime on the Bayou* adds luster to the unending story of the quest for racial justice in the South—and of the Jews who contributed to that struggle.

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The Levys of Monticello. Directed by Steven Pressman. Menemsha Films, 2022. 109 minutes.

About twenty years ago, while still a graduate student, I spent a lovely day visiting Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's legendary home located just outside Charlottesville, Virginia. My companion and I were squired around by a passionate and well-schooled docent, who held forth about the estate's neoclassical architecture, the expert resuscitation of Colonial-era seeds in its greenhouses, and, of course, the prodigious intellect of its founder, our nation's third president. Given our guide's command of all things Monticello, I asked her to show us the gravesite of Rachel Machado Levy, mother of the man who had rescued the estate in its leanest years. "Who?" was the answer, which the guide quickly amended by saying that she had heard something about a family that owned Monticello during the murky period between Jefferson's era and the current stewardship of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

These obscure owners, in fact, were part of the Levy family, American Jews who owned Monticello for eighty-nine of its 250 years, or more than a third of its existence. Two Levys, in particular, shared responsibility for preserving the plantation until its purchase a century ago by the foundation. The man who rescued Monticello from its sharp decline only eight years after the former president's death was a prominent figure in his own right, the highest-ranking Jew in the U.S. Navy, Commodore Uriah Phillips Levy. But Levy—and his nephew who succeeded him as owner of the

plantation—have earned well-deserved recognition in this fine historical documentary, *The Levys of Monticello*, by filmmaker Steven Pressman. As he did in his 2013 Holocaust documentary *50 Children: The Rescue Mission of Mr. and Mrs. Kraus*, Pressman trains his laser focus on one Jewish family, then expands their story in ever-larger circles to draw in more and more historical context, reaching a climax that exposes the perilous nature of Jewishness in the modern world.

Commodore Levy was fervently patriotic, a fifth-generation descendant of a prominent early American Jewish family. He distinguished himself in the War of 1812, rising through the ranks of the Navy despite facing vicious antisemitism, and served the Union in the Civil War until his death in 1862. For Levy, not only did Jefferson represent leadership and scholarly excellence, but the author of the Declaration of Independence also embodied religious tolerance, describing a "wall of separation" between church and state that ensured Levy's right to practice his religion. In deference to his hero's memory, when the commodore discovered that Monticello had deteriorated dramatically only a few years after its founder's death, he purchased the property and set about restoring it—and adding to its glory.

These two facets of his ownership—the veneration of a founding father who we now see as flawed in significant ways, and the actions that Levy took in making his own imprint on the house—encapsulate the balance maintained by Monticello's Jewish owners. On one hand, Uriah P. Levy and his nephew Jefferson Monroe Levy (named for two former presidents) both used slave labor to run the plantation. One of the more engaging commentators in the film, Niya Bates, senior fellow of African American history at the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, repeatedly emphasizes the irony of the Levys' reverence for Jefferson as a proponent of equality given the fact that

all of Monticello's owners up to the Civil War trafficked in human beings. On the other hand, the renovations undertaken by both Uriah P. Levy and Jefferson Monroe Levy, who owned the property far longer than his uncle, aroused the ire of nativist, antisemitic social elites who saw the Jewish family as upstarts, assuming ownership of a founding father's treasured creation. Maude Littleton, wife of Congressman Martin Littleton of New York, was appalled at the presence of Levy family portraits and other additions when she visited the home in 1909, despite the fact that under their care it had been lovingly restored to its Jeffersonian glory. During Littleton's campaign to wrest control of the property from the family and cede it to the government, she and her followers employed thinly veiled antisemitic slurs to describe Jefferson Monroe Levy, referring to the sixth-generation American as an "Oriental potentate," an "alien," and a "rank outsider."

Pressman deftly weaves three related narratives throughout the film. He highlights the vicissitudes of the Levy family saga, from their hosting of relatives and U.S. presidents to their financial downturn; he contrasts the injustice of chattel slavery with rhetoric from Jefferson and the Levys about freedom and tolerance (we are told that the younger Levy held annual Fourth of July gatherings at which he offered dramatic readings of the Declaration of Independence); and he tells the story of mass immigration to America from the 1880s to the 1920s. In the latter storyline, he underscores the role of nativism in shutting the country's gates and hastening the ascendancy of the Ku Klux Klan and other xenophobic groups.

The arc of the film descends, finally, into the present day, leading to horrific footage from the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally at another Jeffersonian idyll, the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. The film's commentators discuss the layers of complexity inherent in the scene: neo-Nazis and White supremacists gathering around a statue of a man who fought for religious tolerance—yet who himself enslaved people. Moreover, they point out, the statue of Jefferson at UVA was sculpted by artist Moses Jacob Ezekiel—a southern Confederate and a Jew. History is best served when its rough edges and inconsistencies are revealed, and Pressman's film succeeds here, telling a compelling story while not romanticizing its main characters.

In the end, the film's message remains sadly inconclusive. Jonathan Sarna, who serves as a commentator throughout the film, notes here that

his students think of antisemitism as a thing of the past, important to acknowledge yet irrelevant to their daily lives. In the short time since the film's release, it has grown exceedingly unlikely that any serious student would consign antisemitism or racism to the dustbin of history. All the more reason, then, to engage with tangled narratives about complex people like the Levys, who brought their hopes, their failings, and their vision to a place that represents both America's promise and the long journey we still face in achieving it.

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Glossary

Ashkenazi (*plural*: **Ashkenazim)** ~ a Jew associated with central and eastern Europe; **Ashkenazic** ~ having to do with Ashkenazim and their practices

Bar mitzvah (*plural*: ***b'nai mitzvah***) ~ traditional coming-of-age ritual for Jewish males reaching the age of thirteen

Cheder (*also* **heder**) ~ small school, traditionally the first step in the education of a Jewish boy; in modern usage often any Hebrew school affiliated with a synagogue

Goldene Medina ~ literally *Golden Land*; America

Halacha (*also* **halaka)** ~ Jewish law; **Halachic** ~ pertaining to Jewish law

Hasidism ~ a Jewish mystical sect founded in Poland in the mid-eighteenth century; **Hasidim** ~ followers of Hasidism; **Hasidic** ~ of or relating to Hasidism

Heymishe (*also* **hamish**) ~ familiar, homey, ordinary

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

Kashrut/kosher/kashres ~ Jewish laws governing food; the system of Jewish dietary laws

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

Landsman (*plural*: **landsleit** or **landsmen**) ~ a fellow countryman; someone from the same area in Europe

Mitnagdim (adjective: **mitnagdik**) ~ Orthodox Jews in Europe who were opposed to the Hasidic movement, favoring disciplined study and rationalism

Passover ~ spring holiday commemorating the deliverance of the ancient Hebrews from Egyptian bondage

Seder ~ ceremonial meal, usually held on the first and second evenings of Passover, commemorating the exodus from Egypt

Shmatte ~ literally: *rag*; old clothing, often a reference to the garment trade

Shoah ~ the Holocaust, from the modern Hebrew word for catastrophic destruction

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

Yarmulke ~ skull cap

Yeshiva (*plural*: **yeshivot** or **yeshivas**) ~ schools for Jewish learning, rabbinical seminaries

Yom Kippur ~ Day of Atonement; holiest day of the Jewish year

Note on Authors

After completing a bachelor's degree in government at the University of Texas at Austin, **Claudia Wilson Anderson** joined the staff of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library. After serving as a staff archivist, she became the library's supervisory archivist. She retired in March 2017, although she continues to work at the LBJ Library through a contract with the Lyndon Baines Johnson Foundation. While working at the library, Anderson developed expertise in Johnson's prepresidential papers, collections related to Lady Bird Johnson, and White House materials on domestic legislation. She codirected the processing of the recordings and transcripts of Johnson's telephone conversations. In 2012, *Southern Jewish History* published Anderson's article, "Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson, 'Operation Texas,' and Jewish Immigration." Her "Seeking Solace: Lyndon B. Johnson Turned to the Catholic Church," appeared in *Catholic Southwest: A Journal of History and Culture* (2019). In 2013, the National Archives and Records Administration honored her with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her extraordinary contributions to the National Archives during her years at the library. In May 2022, she received the Biblio Award from the Biographers International Organization for contributions as an archivist to the craft of biography.

Marni Davis, associate professor of history at Georgia State University, is the author of *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* (2012). She is currently writing a book about the history of immigration, race, and urban development in Atlanta, with a focus on the social geography of Black-Jewish relations. She coedits *American Jewish History*.

Hasia Diner is professor emerita at New York University and director of the Goldstein-Goren Center for American Jewish History. She is the author of numerous books in American Jewish history and taught in the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic studies and the history department.

Karen S. Franklin is director of family research at the Leo Baeck Institute and consulting director of the Peter and Mary Kalikow Jewish Genealogy Center at the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. She has served as chair of the Council of American Jewish

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Amy K. Milligan serves as Batten Endowed Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and women's studies director, Institute for Jewish Studies and Interfaith Understanding at Old Dominion University.

Jacob Morrow-Spitzer is a Ph.D. candidate at Yale University, where he is writing a dissertation on American Jewish citizenship between the Civil War and the New Deal. His most recent article examined Black perceptions of Jewish whiteness in the nineteenth-century American South (*American Jewish History*, January 2022). He has held fellowships with the American Academy for Jewish Research, the American Jewish Archives, the American Jewish Historical Society, the Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry, and the MacMillan Center at Yale. He currently serves on the board of directors of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. He received his M.A. from Yale in 2022.

Margaret Norman received her M.A. in American studies from UNC–Chapel Hill, where her thesis focused on memory and storytelling within the Birmingham Jewish community pertaining to the traditional civil rights movement. She is the director of programming and engagement at Temple Beth El in Birmingham, where she oversees development of the Beth El Civil Rights Experience. She recently completed a research fellowship with the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston, exploring Charleston's Jewish community in relation to struggles for civil and human rights during the 1950s and 1960s. Additional projects include a forthcoming article on Jewish agrarianism in North America and an upcoming oral history series on Jewish and kosher barbecue traditions with the Southern Foodways Alliance.

Timothy Riggio Quevillon is a visiting professor of history and Jewish studies at Western Kentucky University. His forthcoming first book, *Moshe & Meir*, examines the conflicting civil rights legacies of activist cousins Moshe Cahana and Meir Kahane. He edits the Southern Jewish Mapping Project, a digital history project that maps historical Jewish communities in the American South by data-mining southern newspapers. His other research examines political activism of southern Jewish newspapers during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

Robert N. Rosen is an attorney and independent researcher. He holds an M.A. in history from Harvard and a J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law. He is the author of *A Short History of Charleston* (rev. ed. 2022), *Confederate Charleston* (1994), *The Jewish Confederates* (2002), and *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust* (2006). A former president of the South Carolina Jewish Historical Society, his *The Jewish Confederates* won the 2001 Independent Publishers Book Award in History. He has been listed in Best Lawyers in America since 1991 and Super Lawyers since 2008.

Mitchell Snay is emeritus professor of history at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, where he taught the Civil War and Reconstruction for over thirty years. He is the author of *Fenians, Freedman, and Southern Whites: Race and Nationality in the Era of Reconstruction* (2007) and has also published three articles on Reconstruction history: "Freedom and Progress: The Dilemma of Southern Republican Thought during Radical Reconstruction," *American Nineteenth Century History* 5 (Spring 2004), "Democracy and Race in the Late Reconstruction South: The White Leagues of Louisiana," in Kevin Adams and Leonne M. Hudson, eds., *Democracy and the American Civil War* (2016), and "Transatlantic Liberalism: Radical Republicans and the British Reform Act of 1867," in David Prior, ed., *Reconstruction in a Globalizing World* (2018).

Lauren B. Strauss teaches in the Jewish studies program and the Center for Israel Studies at American University in Washington, D.C. Her courses cover a range of topics in modern Jewish history and literature. In her scholarship, Strauss specializes in American Jewish political and cultural history. She has published on Jewish artists, the Jewish left, and women's history. Her forthcoming book is titled *Painting the Town Red: Jewish Visual Artists, Radical Politics, and Yiddish Culture in Interwar New York*, and she is also researching a future book on the political and social history of the Jewish community of Washington, D.C.

Lance J. Sussman is professor of Jewish history and immediate past chair of the board of governors of Gratz College. Rabbi Emeritus of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel (Elkins Park, PA), Sussman recently published a book of his sermons, *Portrait of an American Rabbi: In His Own Words*

(2023) and is coauthoring a book on Jews, religious liberty, and the American Revolution (forthcoming). Sussman previously wrote *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (1995), among other works.

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Stephen J. Whitfield is professor emeritus of American studies at Brandeis University. His most recent book is *Learning on the Left: Political Profiles of Brandeis University* (2020). Since 2009 he has served as book review editor of *Southern Jewish History* and is also a member of the board of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

Melissa Young received her Ph.D. from the University of Alabama in 2020. She is a public historian specializing in southern Jewish history, Civil War and Reconstruction, civic development, and public memory. She splits her time between teaching for the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and working with the public to explore Birmingham and its Jewish community's role in the mid-twentieth century U.S. freedom movement. She is currently the project historian for the Beth El Civil Rights Experience and is writing a book that explores Jewish settlers' role in the founding of Birmingham and its early history, to be published in 2024.

Research Grants Available

The Southern Jewish Historical Society awards annual grants to support research in southern Jewish history. Information is available at www.jewishsouth.org/sjhs-grants-applications.

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