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Four German Jewish Families and the Built Environment of Huntsville, Alabama, 1852–2017

by

Leonard Rogoff with Margaret Anne Goldsmith*

A stone building with *I. Schiffman* engraved above its arched doorway stands as a sentinel on the courthouse square of historic downtown Huntsville, Alabama. Built in 1845 as a retail store, it now houses offices of Margaret Anne Goldsmith, the sole remaining local descendant of four antebellum Jewish families. Buildings with Jewish provenance, often repurposed from their original functions, tell narratives of town history, including Jewish community change. Jews left their marks on the “built environment,” as historian Barry Stiefel observes, attesting to the ubiquity and longevity of their southern heritage.¹ Yet if Jewish material culture testifies to Jews’ enduring presence, their buildings were no more permanent in their identities than the people who owned them. The *I. Schiffman* building today stands as a monument to over a century of Jewish adaptation and continuity.

Buildings locate the Jewish place in a community even more than official records or texts documenting histories of entrepreneurs, benefactors, or civic leaders. The vernacular architecture of their homes and stores show the Jews’ willingness to acculturate to the local scene. So, too, their sacred architecture. Shuls and temples – whether neo-Gothic or neo-Romanesque, neoclassical or Queen Anne Victorian – maintained neighborly relations with nearby churches. Cathedral-style edifices blended in, like the congregants worshipping in them. Images of the Ten Commandments or Stars of David on their facades, or perhaps Moorish

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architectural elements, distinguished them as Jewish. The built environment attests to Jewish prosperity and permanence, rebutting stereotypes of carpetbaggers or a wandering people who “merely sojourns” but does not “dwell.”²

Through their landmark buildings the Jews’ presence in the American South has appeared larger than their numbers. The I. Schiffman building traces not just economic but also social and cultural history. The peripatetic peddler did not leave his mark on the material culture. Not until he opened his store did he—and his family—announce that the wandering Jew was here to stay. Their stores, centrally located near train stations or courthouses, gave Jews a visibility and significance beyond what the census recorded. Passersby would see storefronts or commercial buildings proclaiming that Jews were here. The South’s Jewish-owned department stores—Rich’s, Maas Brothers, Godchaux’s, Hecht’s, Thalheimer’s, and Neiman-Marcus among others—served as downtown focal points. In places where Jews moved away, a sign above an empty store, a peeling billboard on a wall, or a memorial plaque at a park or ball field serves as a reminder of their once vibrant place. In rural small towns a cemetery or an abandoned synagogue remains as a monument to a once thriving community.

The I. Schiffman building and other buildings in Huntsville underwent transformations in design and use that symbolize broader cultural and economic changes.³ Simple portrayals of Jewish life in the small-town South and America generally would suggest that Jews often ventured to these places in their founding years and then departed as the localities declined economically or as other locations offered greater promise for success. The story appears as one of rise and decline. Yet a more complex pattern was closer to reality. Often, pioneering Jews of central European origin who settled in a town or small city did depart for economic reasons or to find larger Jewish communities where they could provide their children and themselves with greater religious, cultural, and other benefits. Their children pursued college and professional opportunities elsewhere. A few founding families persisted in these towns, augmented later by a new wave of Jews of eastern European origin. The process repeated itself as arrivals replaced departures from generation to generation. This pattern correlated to changes in the local economy. As one sector of that economy declined—agriculture yielding

to industry, for example – another took its place. Families that remained had to adapt.

The history behind the I. Schiffman building is a case study of four intertwined families who adapted to changing economic conditions in Huntsville, Alabama, from generation to generation. Their story illustrates the diverse reasons why some people departed while others remained. Although their choices were personal and varied, their experiences typified those of numerous Jewish families. The extended Schiffman-Goldsmith family, which preserved an unusual abundance of business and family records over five generations, offers an exceptional opportunity for study among the many families in Huntsville and other cities who followed a similar trajectory.⁴

The Schiffman-Goldsmith family history illuminates other important themes that challenge conventional stereotypes. A simplified narrative tells of peddlers who build dry goods stores that grow into department or chain stores only to have their children depart for university and then professional opportunities. What the I. Schiffman building represents is an alternative but no less common narrative: stores formed the foundation for diverse activities including investments in land, agricultural innovation, real estate development, banking and finance, transportation, and infrastructure. Although the pattern of people departing small towns suggests rootlessness, these investments often tied descendants to communities even if they lived in other locations.

The family store has been immortalized in Jewish folklore but, less nostalgically, Jews who persisted and prospered in the South often did so through real estate.⁵ That indeed has been a pattern in southern and American Jewish history. In the early 1800s, Aaron Lazarus of Wilmington, North Carolina, and Jacob Moses of Charleston, South Carolina, were nominally merchants, but they owned plantations in the hundreds of acres. Resettling in Columbus, Georgia, in the 1830s, Moses built a brick store while also buying lots for homes and businesses for new settlers and obtaining Indian land after the Creek War. Joseph Andrews, an antebellum merchant and cotton broker in Memphis, held \$150,000 in property at his death. Polish immigrant brothers Jacob and Louis Bloomstein, antebellum settlers in Nashville, became successful grocers and storekeepers but then “parlayed into extensive real estate holdings.”⁶

The extended Schiffman-Goldsmith family of Huntsville began as purveyors of clothing, notions, jewelry, and dry goods. However as Huntsville expanded from a market town into an industrial city and then a military center, the family increased and diversified its holdings. Mercantile profits financed the purchase of commercial properties, whether farmland, rental houses, or urban commercial buildings. They took advantage of national investment opportunities by compiling a stock portfolio in railroads, mining, and utilities.

Jews arrived in the New South in ever more significant numbers when the region was experiencing its most rapid urban growth.⁷ Railroad and highway expansion opened new markets and encouraged the building of factories, warehouses, and commercial edifices. In a historically cash-poor region where credit was sorely needed, Jews, with their access to outside sources of capital in Baltimore or New York, were investors. Scarcely a southern town was without its textile mill—not infrequently financed by out-of-state Jewish investors—and certainly the role of families like Elsas of Atlanta, Cone of Greensboro, and Erlanger of Baltimore is well known in manufacturing. Jews also financed the development of commercial agriculture through mortgages and crop liens and applied their business skills to the production and marketing of sugar and cotton. Some Jews became gentlemen farmers, not tilling the soil or herding cattle themselves, but owning dairy, cattle, or breeding operations, managing commercial croplands, or creating distribution networks that linked country to city. Merchant Jacob Lemann of Louisiana “shifted his business interests from commerce to land,” managing sugar plantations and, after the Civil War, interesting northern Jewish investors in his ventures. Nearly a century apart, Raphael J. Moses of Georgia and Morris Richter of North Carolina commercialized peach production and opened new northern markets. Although rarely rooted in the soil like native southern planters and farmers, many Jews felt nostalgic about their landholdings beyond their financial gain.⁸

As downtowns burgeoned with increasing commerce, Jews invested in hotels and retail and office buildings. The Goldsmiths and Schiffmans were hardly alone among Jewish entrepreneurs in recognizing opportunity in New South urbanization moving from mercantilism to unabashed capitalism. In Charlotte, Samuel Wittkowsky, a former retail merchant and wholesaler, earned the sobriquet of “Building

and Loan King of North Carolina" for underwriting new suburbs and spreading homeownership across the city. Jacob Cohen spurred the civic development of Jacksonville, Florida, in 1910 when, after a disastrous city fire, he purchased six acres and rebuilt downtown anchored by a landmark "Big Store." The farmlands that the merchants obtained either through foreclosure or as commercial agricultural investments now had value as sites for housing or enterprise. As real estate developers, Jews were among the entrepreneurs turning pasture and forest into new suburbs. The store may be emblematic of a Jewish presence, but it served as a springboard to more expansive enterprises. When former clothier Oscar Goldsmith of Huntsville died in 1937, his occupation was listed as "Capitalist."⁹

The spirit of the New South creed, as historian Paul Gaston describes it, was civic boosterism that emphasized industrialization and diversified, scientific agriculture. Northern investors would underwrite this commercialization, and African Americans and immigrants, unsupported by unions, would provide cheap labor. Gaston suggested that the dream for a southern transformation imagined by Henry Grady, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, and Henry Watterson, editor of the *Louisville Courier Journal*, as well as others, was more myth than reality.¹⁰ The Jewish families of Huntsville exemplified a New South reality that belies a tidy periodization. Their commercial enterprise began well before a New South creed had been articulated.

Adaptation and the Rise, Decline, and Rebirth of Jewish Communities

The history of the extended Schiffman, Goldsmith, Herstein, and Bernstein families exemplifies how family and enterprise intertwined, a typical Jewish phenomenon seen, too, in other cities. The Kempners of Galveston "constitute a business clan, a family," a historian observes. Their entrepreneurship evolved from peddling and a grocery to an array of investments including banking, ranching, cotton factoring, sugar refining, and streetcars.¹¹ The Weils of Goldsboro, North Carolina, constituting four intramarried antebellum Bavarian families, followed a similar pattern, rising from peddling to mercantilism to diversified ventures in banking, stockholding, manufacturing, commercial agriculture, and real estate development. The H. Weil & Bros. store evolved into Weil Enterprises.¹² Family business was characteristic of Jews, a means to

*Card room workers at Merrimack Mill in Huntsville, Alabama, 1905.
Their job was to "card," or smooth out, the cotton fibers as part of the milling
process. (Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library.)*

preserve wealth within a kinship circle. But more was involved: as siblings, in-laws, and new generations of children joined the business with new interests and educational backgrounds, these enterprises evolved into private conglomerates that responded to changing economic opportunities.

The story behind the I. Schiffman building recounts a similar familial and economic history of mercantilism underwriting an expansive capitalism. Although Isaac "Ike" Schiffman arrived in Huntsville in the New South era, he was linked through ancestry and marriage to the town's antebellum Jewish settlers. In the 1850s Robert Herstein, a clothier, and Morris Bernstein, a watchmaker and jeweler, opened stores, establishing a permanent community. In 1852 Bernstein married Henrietta Newman in Huntsville, and she opened a notions store with the family residing in rooms above his jewelry shop.¹³

Merrimack Mill Village, Huntsville, Alabama, 1923.
(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library.)

In 1855 the railroad arrived, linking Huntsville to the Mississippi River and eastern seaboard. Two years later brothers Daniel and Solomon Schiffman, having first tried Kentucky and Cincinnati, opened dry goods stores. Jewish merchants were welcomed as aspiring towns sought new capital and commerce, and Jews rapidly acculturated. The Bernsteins owned two slaves, likely for household use. The practice was not uncommon among urban southern Jews. When the Civil War came, Herstein cut cloth for some four thousand Confederate uniforms, and Daniel Schiffman joined the Confederate army. When federal troops occupied Huntsville, they found that the town, with its important river port and train depot, had survived the war intact.¹⁴

Huntsville after Reconstruction became a paradigmatic mill and market town of the New South, with a new railroad depot and ten textile factories in the surrounding county. Mill villages sprouted on the

periphery. The family prospered. Robert Herstein was city treasurer during Reconstruction, and Morris Bernstein directed a bank. Daniel Schiffman served on the town council. Jews joined the Masons, which included the town's male leadership. Family stores located these immigrants at the center of the civic, commercial, and Jewish communities not just as merchants, but also as citizens. As commerce expanded and Huntsville urbanized, more Jews were pulled to town, nearly doubling the community. In 1874 the Jewish population, approaching one hundred, was sufficiently large for the city to parcel land for a Hebrew cemetery, and a year later a B'nai B'rith lodge formed. In 1876 Congregation B'nai Sholom was established, and the following year it affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the governing body of the Reform movement. The Schiffman brothers were congregational and Jewish community leaders. Huntsville Jews founded their own Standard Club, taking a name popular in Jewish social circles nationally as well as in the South.¹⁵

Local Jewry moved in step with the city. Huntsville's population grew over 60 percent from 1880 to 1890, totaling nearly eight thousand. Small towns in heartland America received a trickle of the immigrant flow of over two million eastern European Jews who flocked to America after 1881. Huntsville's congregation in 1891 discussed the "Russian Question": whether these poor, Orthodox, Yiddish-speaking immigrants could be assimilated as Americans. The Jewish population nearly doubled from 72 in 1878 to 137 in 1905 as immigrants abandoned the sweatshops and crowded ghettos of the urban North and sought fresher air and economic opportunities as peddlers or storekeepers in southern small towns. In 1898 the congregation's membership was sufficiently numerous and prosperous, with Ike Schiffman as president, to erect a brick neo-Romanesque temple. Church building, synagogues included, was yet another sign of an urbanizing New South. In 1898 *The Huntsville Weekly Democrat* described the town's Jews as "leading merchants and desirable citizens," extolling how swiftly they rose from having "little" to prominence "in any movement for charity or public interest."¹⁶

Isaac Schiffman

The local history of the extended Schiffman family reflects the geographic and economic mobility that has characterized Jewish settlement

in the South and throughout the United States. The arrival of Ike Schiffman in 1875 followed a typical pattern of family chain migration. Solomon and Bertha Schiffman, childless and needing help in their dry goods store, brought Ike, their nineteen-year-old nephew, from Hoppstädten in the Rhineland. Their clothing store was located downtown at 119 North Side Square near the county courthouse. On the east side of the square, at 231, Robert Herstein had operated his dry goods store, Smith and Herstein, at least since 1860. In 1885 Ike Schiffman married Herstein's daughter Betty. The family circle expanded with the arrival in about 1879 of Oscar Goldsmith, the New York-born son of German immigrants, who was traveling on jewelry business. He met and married Morris Bernstein's daughter, also named Betty, who had recently returned from attending school in her parents' native Germany. Goldsmith began with dry goods before opening a men's clothing store. The pull of the family chain brought Goldsmith's parents to Huntsville from New York.¹⁷

As textile mills expanded in the surrounding county, and country folk abandoned farms for the factory, Jewish merchants saw opportunities beyond providing shoes and uniforms for factory workers or jewelry and ready-to-wear clothing for the growing middle class. Jews speculated in real estate, and, at least since antebellum days, merchant Jews owned tenements and timberlands plantations in the latter. After 1880 in New York, "tenement owning flourished as an ethnic enterprise" in Jewish neighborhoods. In Huntsville, Morris Bernstein began purchasing land in 1877 that by the time of his death grew into a "sizable estate."¹⁸

Ike Schiffman had been both his uncle's nephew and apprentice. After Solomon's death in 1894, Ike became the mainstay of the downtown dry goods store and increased the loans to farmers and speculated in corn and cotton. In hard times the business expanded, acquiring significant farm holdings through foreclosures, and Ike added a horse-and-buggy business.¹⁹

Oscar Goldsmith, a successful clothing merchant, saw opportunity, too, as Huntsville grew urban and industrial. According to family folklore, Oscar convinced a New York friend, an Irishman, to move to Huntsville to open the Dallas Mill. Goldsmith purchased stock in the company and served as a director and treasurer for the remainder of his

Isaac Schiffman, 1905.
(Courtesy of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

Betty Herstein Schiffman, 1915.
(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison
County Public Library.)

Oscar Goldsmith, 1895.
(*Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison
County Public Library.*)

Betty Bernstein Goldsmith, c.1885.
(*Courtesy of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.*)

life. He also developed land for the mill village and named it Lawrence after his son. In 1892 he became president of the newly incorporated Huntsville Land Company, which bought land and built houses for the mill workers. Goldsmith continued to develop properties, buying and building rental houses in town. After his Bernstein in-laws passed away, Goldsmith administered their estate, which “involved managing and leasing properties” throughout the town.²⁰ The roots of I. Schiffman & Company Inc. reflect that amalgam of family and business that typified Jewish enterprise. By 1896 Ike Schiffman expanded into farming. Tightening the family circle, Lawrence Goldsmith married Annie Schiffman, Ike’s daughter. In 1905 the firm formally took the name I. Schiffman & Company and diversified its investments; three years later Schiffman formed a partnership with his son Robert and son-in-law Lawrence Goldsmith. Intramarriages among the early Huntsville Jewish families—Bernstein, Herstein, Schiffman, and Goldsmith—consolidated their holdings within an extended family. By 1926, on three blocks near the courthouse square, the company held fifteen lots, all owned by extended family members or their estates, but managed by I. Schiffman & Company.²¹

The growth of the city certainly invited real estate investments, but neither form of expansion would have been possible without new transportation technologies. Streetcars and automobiles also offered investment opportunities. In Huntsville, as in numerous other urban locations, people walked or rode horses, and in 1896 Ike Schiffman added a livery to his holdings. As city limits stretched, the family invested in streetcars, and in 1910, the year of Schiffman’s death, the livery was turned into a Dodge auto dealership. Not only did the firm develop suburbs, but it also financed the means for homeowners to get there. Building infrastructure helped cities thrive. For astute business people, changing with the times, the evolving building environment provided important economic opportunity.²²

Opposite: *Goldsmith-Bernstein-Schiffman-Herstein family tree.*

(Courtesy of the National Museum for American Jewish History, Philadelphia.)

Three generations of Bernsteins and Goldsmiths lived in close proximity. Oscar and Betty Goldsmith first resided with her parents in the affluent Gates Street neighborhood, but after their second child was born the Bernsteins built them a fine Victorian home next door. The Schiffmans lived on West Clinton Street within walking distance. All gathered for card playing and Sunday dinners. Memoirs of Jewish family gatherings often recall the men gathered in a corner talking business while women and children socialized.²³

An Evolving Community

In the early 1900s the local economy stagnated, and the city's population declined during the next two decades. Huntsville's Jewish population fell by half. Southern Jewish communities were wracked by constant disruption as failure or ambition—a bankruptcy, the opening of a new mill, the desire for a larger Jewish community, or greater economic opportunity elsewhere—pushed and pulled at the town's Jews. The congregation struggled with departures. In 1907 B'nai Sholom counted but thirty-eight members. After 1913 the congregation could not support a pulpit rabbi for the next half century, and the religious school expired, a few Jewish children attending the Christian Science Sunday school even as they remained within the Jewish communal fold. The Great Depression further depleted the community as membership dropped to twenty-three in 1940. Huntsville seemed to be going the way of numerous disappearing Jewish communities.²⁴

The story of Jewish communal life in small towns and cities is mixed. A few families typically persisted, forming a core, but many moved to places of greater economic opportunity only to be replaced repeatedly by others who arrived when opportunities improved. Jewish revival followed the city's economic fortunes. Franklin Roosevelt, for reasons of both security and economic development, funneled federal defense spending to the impoverished South, and military installations brought prosperity to towns like Huntsville. To recruit the military to bring a federal munitions complex to the city, the Chamber of Commerce appointed as one of its representatives Lawrence Goldsmith, Oscar's son, who, as a successful real estate investor, knew the local landscape. The opening of the Redstone Arsenal in 1941 on thirty-five thousand acres transformed the city and its Jewish population. In 1949 a

missile research center opened at the arsenal. Under German rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, it evolved into the Marshall Space Flight Center, site of NASA's missile development and space vehicle program.²⁵

Huntsville was typical of industrial towns that succeeded in transitioning into the high-tech economy. The small town of sixteen thousand in 1950 grew into today's metropolis of nearly two hundred thousand. The Jewish population grew correspondingly as opportunities opened for engineers and scientists as well as those who serviced the growing population. From one hundred in 1937 the Jewish community numbered seven hundred in 1968. With the arrival of NASA, military, and contract workers, a Conservative congregation, *Etz Chayim*, organized in 1962. Seven years later its members purchased a former church as a synagogue. In 1963 the Reform Temple *B'nai Sholom* once again had a full-time rabbi, and a year later it added a new educational wing. In 1994 the building was extensively renovated. Community life had revived with the organization of a Sunday school in the 1940s, which eventually encompassed both congregations. *B'nai Sholom* is now the oldest synagogue in Alabama in continuous use.²⁶

The I. Schiffman Building and the Built Environment

Jewish family and community history is written on Huntsville's built environment, emblematically on the I. Schiffman building in the courthouse square. Over the course of nearly 175 years its altered architecture and function attests to the evolution of the city's economy and the responses of a local Jewish family to those changes. In 1905 Ike Schiffman purchased the southern bay of the building at 231 East Side Square. A brick structure constructed in the Federal style around 1845, the building originally consisted of three bays, one of which had housed his father-in-law's clothing store. The last owner had been the Southern Building and Loan Association, which purchased the building to serve as its office headquarters.²⁷ Savings and loan associations, responding to growing home ownership in expanding cities, had grown popular as mortgage brokers. New industries brought new residents. Such growth led to new suburbs. In 1895 Southern Building and Loan remodeled the corner bay, transforming its original Federal style with a limestone neo-Romanesque façade.²⁸

The original Federal-style building on the east side of the courthouse square in Huntsville, Alabama, c. 1860. The southernmost bay (on the right), would eventually become the I. Schiffman building. Robert Herstein, Isaac Schiffman's father-in-law, operated a dry goods business there, indicated by the sign over the door.
(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library.)

The east side of the courthouse square in Huntsville, Alabama, c. 1875. The eventual I. Schiffman building is at the right end of the row. The picture illustrates the economic development of downtown Huntsville in the years after the Civil War.
(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library.)

*Schiffman building (far right) following its 1895 renovation.
(Courtesy of the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library.)*

The remodel embraced the then-fashionable Richardsonian Romanesque aesthetic. This eclectic architectural style was inspired by architect Henry Hobson Richardson, a Louisianan who settled in New York and Boston after studying at the *Ecoles des Beaux Arts* in Paris. Reaching its pinnacle of popularity from 1885 through 1905, the neo-Romanesque style was also seen in landmark buildings like Boston's Trinity Church and the Marshall Field Warehouse Store in Chicago. The style was popular in synagogues, too, like Baltimore's Oheb Sholom and Huntsville's B'nai Sholom. Budding cities in the West and Midwest built schools, residences, and civic buildings in the style as symbols of civic progress. Although drawing on European roots, the Richardsonian Romanesque was regarded as distinctly American. Its eclecticism reflected a particularly American spirit of freedom and innovation. In commercial buildings the style marked the owners as progressive and cosmopolitan, belonging to a world more global than a southern mill town. It embraced the City Beautiful aestheticism popularized by the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.²⁹

Although Ike Schiffman was not the agent of the building's architectural transformation, he certainly chose to identify with the modern, updated neo-Romanesque style in purchasing it and locating his business headquarters there. As president of B'nai Sholom and chair of the temple's building committee, he had engaged a leading southern church architect, B. H. Hunt of Chattanooga, who designed an elaborate edifice for the temple, also in the eclectic Romanesque Revival style.³⁰ Following the Beaux-Arts aesthetic of Richardson's Paris student days, the I. Schiffman building's rich details evoked grace, stability, and modernity. A dramatic keystoned arch doorway framed by pilasters welcomed visitors. A large window with a Romanesque rounded frame opened the interior to passersby on the street, the transparency necessary for a financial enterprise needing public confidence. An immigrant Jew whose credit business relied on trust would see such a structure as a symbol of his moral integrity, civic virtue, and progressive values. Rough-hewn, undressed limestone blocks evoked honesty, security, and stability. The rich surface detailing implied wealth, a proclamation for a Gilded Age: dental molding crowning the cornice; decorative bands wrapping the building; and stylized pilasters rising midway from the corner. A bay window in the second floor apartment overlooked the square.³¹ In a lintel above the entrance archway, the enterprising investor declared his ownership by engraving in a highly stylized ornamental font, *I. Schiffman*. An emphatic period followed his name.

Schiffman purchased the bank building at a time when the city's economic fortunes were declining. The city lost population between 1900 and 1910, and its Jewish numbers fell even more precipitously. Fewer mortgage seekers hurt the prospects of an investment company like Schiffman's. He was taking a risk buying the building while the savings and loan was giving it up. That Schiffman chose to purchase a structure that stood out as a piece of symbolic architecture suggests that he was boldly expressing his faith in the city's future. Townspeople would notice. With its opulent detail, its break with the commonplace, it was a monumental building that suggested large ambitions. I. Schiffman & Co. prospered in a struggling economy by diversifying its holdings, not only in cotton and local real estate, but through investments in national banks, mines, utilities, and railroads. In hard times foreclosures made

Front elevation of the Schiffman building as it exists today, showing the name that Isaac Schiffman had engraved above it. (Photograph by Bryan Alan Bacon.)

more farmland available. Schiffman's rock-solid building inspired confidence.³²

Given Huntsville's New South ambitions, Lawrence Goldsmith, Sr., lamented the lack of a first-class hotel that would communicate to outside investors that the city was sufficiently cosmopolitan to support their enterprises. He rallied local businessmen to the vision and became an investor in the Russel Erskine Hotel, a neoclassical building in the grand tradition of southern residential hotels. When it opened, Goldsmith and his wife established themselves in a twelfth-floor suite for the winter months, summering at the Bernstein home on Gates Street. Later their son and granddaughter Margaret Anne joined them.³³ Typical of small-town Jewries, which lacked the urban critical mass to establish Jewish residential enclaves, Jews lived among peoples of their socio-economic class. Having an address at a residential hotel marked their acculturation into the upper class.

*Postcard of the Hotel Russel Erskine,
Huntsville, 1934.
(Courtesy of the Southern
Jewish Historical Society.)*

Generational Change

In the 1930s business leadership underwent a generational change as the elderly members of the extended family passed away. College-educated children built businesses on principles grounded in academic sciences and economics. Lawrence Goldsmith, Jr., after prep school and study at the University of Alabama, returned home to work first on a family farm at Green Grove, south of Huntsville near the Tennessee River, and then in the cotton shipping business. Finishing this apprenticeship, he joined his father at I. Schiffman & Co. His responsibility was to oversee the farming operations, which he expanded from cotton.³⁴ Following scientific principles of crop rotation, he introduced soy beans to enrich the soil and diversify the yields to hedge against the volatility of cotton prices. The family acquired significant agricultural holdings, including Big Cove Farm in 1926, as well as smaller farms that stretched across the county, limited only by surrounding mountain ranges. Throughout its years of operation, the company rented out farm land and city buildings. In 1940 I. Schiffman & Co. entered the cattle breeding business, which it maintained for more than a quarter of a century. In 1942 the company reported that it "is engaged principally in the business of holding and operating farms. In addition, it operates certain parcels of city property in Huntsville, Alabama, [and] carries some securities and loans."³⁵

As Huntsville's borders expanded, farmland provided opportunities for real estate development. The firm's Green Grove Farm was sold to the federal government to become part of the Redstone Arsenal. During the 1950s and 1960s development began to spread into the mountainous areas surrounding the firm's crop and pasture lands. I. Schiffman & Co. sold lots and carried the mortgages for new housing. Big Cove Farm, the firm's largest rural holding, was developed for residential housing, transforming the region. Diversification allowed the company to prosper during times when crop prices or yields were less profitable.

A Sunbelt City

Huntsville's growth and prosperity was underwritten by its ability to transition into the postindustrial Sunbelt economy as a high-tech research center fueled not just by crop prices and textile manufacture but

by federal funds. More typically, as textile and cotton production succumbed to automation and foreign competition, New South mill and market towns like nearby Athens and Decatur, Alabama, declined. Jews in these places left empty stores. In many southern towns and cities Jewish demography reflected a typical generational declension as the upwardly mobile children of merchants and managers went off to college and from there to new careers, not in retail trades but as professionals in the rising Sunbelt centers. The Jewish ethnic economic niche in dry goods dissipated as discriminatory barriers eroded and Jews pursued education in fields previously closed to them. Rarely were merchants able to maintain their businesses through community changes. In 1962 I. Schiffman & Co. closed its car dealership after nearly half a century, and, through eminent domain, the housing authority took over family rental properties for urban renewal. Senator John Sparkman, a family friend, succeeded in winning federal funding to make Huntsville a Model City, one of 150 areas that the federal government designated for urban development and anti-poverty programs. The town underwent typical street widening, driving out pawn shops and small stores, many owned by Jews. The lack of city planning ruined the commercial viability of downtown as a retail center.³⁶

As both Old and New Souths were leveled into a generic Sunbelt, family stores, factories, and offices gave way to the Bulldozer Revolution. In Atlanta, Lithuanian-born Ben Massell, the city's "preeminent real estate developer," built about a thousand buildings, remaking the city. Box chain outlets and shopping malls displaced downtown retail stores. The extended Goldsmith families were hardly alone among southern Jews in finding opportunity in the growing suburbanization. In Jacksonville, Florida, attorney Lonnie Wurn, in the late 1940s, turned to home construction and with his father and brother-in-law developed subdivisions in the city's Southside, pioneering a concept by adding clubhouses, playgrounds, and swimming pools to the housing tract. Russian immigrant Philip Belz, a builder of low-cost housing, was "one of the most successful real estate" entrepreneurs of Memphis. Belz Enterprises spurred the city's suburbanization, constructing shopping malls and industrial campuses.³⁷

In Huntsville the historic courthouse across from the Schiffman building was demolished, and a massive modernistic structure arose

on its site that made no reference to its environment. Surrounding the square, historic buildings went vacant, their commercial enterprises no longer viable. At 231, two bays were demolished, leaving the Schiffman building a free-standing survivor, its exterior wall weakened.³⁸ Such downtown transformations were a national phenomenon as cities reconfigured themselves to accommodate the automobile and changing economy. As commercial town centers emptied and subdivisions arose on the periphery, economic life prospered in the rim economies of interstate loops and highway spokes heading out of town.

Jewish Mobility in Changing Times

The local history of the extended Schiffman family follows the trajectory of the city's evolution from mill and market town to Sunbelt center. The Alabama Goldsmiths had retained connections to New York, where their children went for schooling and spent summers with relatives. Besides young adults heading to New York, widowed Schiffman women joined family there. Lawrence Goldsmith's sister Theresa moved with her family to Chattanooga. However rooted southern Jews felt in their hometowns, they also maintained business and family links to metropolitan communities and retained cosmopolitan worldviews. They followed a common Jewish demographic course that, by 1980, revealed that about 45 percent of American Jewish wage earners were professionals or semiprofessionals, while an equal number were managers, agents, or sales personnel.³⁹ The Jews who left these towns, bemoaning nostalgically the fading of small-town Jewish life, brought their talents and energies to new centers, often regenerating Jewish community life.

Margaret Anne Goldsmith—descended from the pioneering Herstein, Bernstein, Schiffman, and Goldsmith families—followed the generational career path. Her religious education included Sunday school at Temple B'nai Sholom and Jewish summer camp in Maine. The family tradition was to send their children to boarding schools for their final years. For her last two years of high school, Margaret Anne was sent to Mount Vernon Seminary in Washington, D.C., and then to Newcomb College of Tulane University, where she graduated in 1963. After her marriage at the Huntsville temple and a reception at the Russel

Erskine Hotel, she settled in New Orleans, where her husband's family operated a coffee import business. With her children in school, she took accounting and real estate classes at Tulane and worked as an independent contractor, anticipating the day that she would take responsibility for the family's Huntsville business.⁴⁰

For many southern Jews, New Orleans offered opportunities for higher education and to meet potential Jewish spouses as well as providing greater career choices and a larger Jewish community in which to raise a family. Goldsmith enrolled her children at Temple Sinai and joined the Jewish Community Center, where her children attended day camp and after-school programs. She was invited into the leadership of the Jewish Federation. Yet she remained tied to Huntsville, which she visited frequently. Upon her grandfather's death in 1972, although still resident in New Orleans, she became I. Schiffman & Co.'s vice president, while her father assumed the presidency. When he passed away in 1995, she returned permanently as president of the firm. She observed, "Today I am the only member of the original Goldsmith-Schiffman families to remain in Huntsville."⁴¹

The advent of a daughter into a business leadership role reflected changing gender roles, especially in a South rapidly losing its traditions of female domesticity as it merged into the national culture and economy. In 1975 a company report noted that, "For 38 years . . . the father and son team of Lawrence Sr. and Jr. have been growing the company. Now Lawrence Jr. is the only male left in the family and Margaret Anne Goldsmith Hanaw is the only next generation heir and advisor, but she had her own family life in New Orleans."⁴² The firm began liquidating its assets, selling its fields and pastures. As executive, Margaret Anne Goldsmith continued to transform the family's farm property holdings to residential and commercial development. Symbolic of the changing economy, the firm sold part of the family's farm land for a Walmart.⁴³ Prior to developing the properties, titles were transferred to her children no longer resident in Huntsville, and one large tract was donated in trust to the grandchildren. Thus her property holdings ensure that her descendants will remain attached materially to Huntsville beyond nostalgia or family heritage. This attachment includes not only Goldsmith's daughter who remained in Huntsville, but also her children now living in Jerusalem and Portland, Oregon.⁴⁴

Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Jr., and his daughter, Margaret Anne Goldsmith, c. 1943. (Courtesy of the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.)

Monuments and Memorials

The I. Schiffman building, changing with the times, has undergone its own Sunbelt transformation. After urban renewal in the 1960s, when two bays were demolished, only the limestone Romanesque south bay, about one third of the building's original footprint, still stood. Surrounding it, abandoned buildings provided opportunities for redevelopment. Downtown retail and commercial centers were reinvented as cultural and entertainment spaces. Preservation replaced destruction as a city-planning mantra. Huntsville's transformation is being repeated across the South, indeed nationally, as urban revival has replaced renewal. Districts like Memphis's Beale Street, with the historic Jewish-owned A. Schwab general store at its center, are now cultivated as tourist attractions. Memphis developer Jack Belz's twenty-five-million-dollar renovation of the seedy but once grand Peabody Hotel was a "major stimulus and inspiration for the downtown revitalization that followed."⁴⁵ Like the Goldsmiths, the Weils of Goldsboro invested two generations ago in a landmark downtown hotel, but as the city declined as a retail center, a grandson converted it into a senior citizen residence, restoring its original architectural integrity. In Meridian, Mississippi, the former Marks and Rothenberg department store, stripped of its modern

corrugated front to its original nineteenth-century neo-Romanesque façade, now comprises part of the Riley Center, an arts and cultural emporium operated by Mississippi State University. The building's Jewish provenance is visible to all who visit. Although fewer than forty Jews now live in Meridian, the Institute for Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) town history observes, "The Jewish role in Meridian's history is etched in the city's downtown buildings where the names of the great Jewish leaders who helped build the city are still seen."⁴⁶

Huntsville, Margaret Anne Goldsmith observes, followed the new urbanism theme as a place to live, work and play. Innovative city planners inspired a downtown reinvention. Vacant buildings surrounding the courthouse square were gutted and remodeled into apartments and condominiums. Nouveau southern restaurants and food trucks turned the square into a night-time destination. An architect added an art gallery to his office. Artisanal pizza and imported coffee attest to the local arrival of the global South. A cosmopolitan culture linked to foreign economic markets draws people from everywhere. Bordering the courthouse square are tourist attractions, a park, and historic districts, Old Town and Twickenham, filled with antebellum homes. Blending into the neighborhood, newer buildings replicate a traditional Americana, an invented style without reference to time and place.⁴⁷

In 1980 the I. Schiffman building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a site worthy of preservation. After renovating the building, Goldsmith continued to use the first-floor offices as an investment company as it had been. The rest of the building is put to uses well-suited for the new economy: the second floor was subdivided for a business incubator, and the offices there now house professionals—lawyers and a therapist. The third floor was remodeled into an apartment to provide a downtown residence for Goldsmith and her visiting family, a place where she can live, work, and play. In a front room overlooking the square, Goldsmith hosts salons, inviting local artists, writers, actors, musicians, and storytellers to nosh and perform.⁴⁸

Goldsmith's preservation of the Schiffman building and its designation on the National Register elevate the building's architecture from the vernacular of its commercial origins to monumentality, a memorial to family and community heritage. The building's qualification for the register was an assertion of local identity, of community rootedness, that

contrasted with the generic homogenization that had marked urban renewal and suburbanization.⁴⁹ That sense of attachment to place was true despite Jewish communal mobility, and the I. Schiffman name over the doorway expresses the exceptionalism of the family's multigenerational persistence. Indeed, Goldsmith discovered that her father, uncle, and grandfather had filled the basement and ground floor vaults not just with business records but also with family papers and household artifacts from the Schiffmans and Goldsmiths dating back to their Bernstein and Herstein ancestors. Among the items in the "treasure chest" was a Holocaust archive of her grandmother's German family.⁵⁰ As family businesses, Jewish enterprises represented an emotional investment independent of their commercial value. An ever-growing literature by native southern Jews who live elsewhere draws nostalgic portraits of their parents and grandparents' family store, a keepsake of memories that they wish to pass on.⁵¹

Beyond the courthouse building, the Goldsmith and Schiffman family legacy is also engraved in Huntsville's sacred architecture, notably at Temple B'nai Sholom. During her out-of-town years, Goldsmith had retained her congregational membership, the place that her ancestors had helped found and where she had received her Jewish upbringing. Visiting, she could still see stained-glass windows her great-grandmother Betty Goldsmith had purchased in memory of her parents, Henrietta and Morris Bernstein, and her husband's parents, Henrietta and David Goldsmith. A brass plaque still indicated "donated by Mrs. Oscar Goldsmith" on the Eastlake-style ark gracing the bimah. Her great-great-uncle Solomon Schiffman's widow, Bertha, had honored her late husband with a large stained-glass window and two Eastlake chairs on the bimah. A marble plaque in the temple vestibule listed Oscar Goldsmith as a member of the building committee. In the rabbi's former study, Goldsmith directed the creation of a Huntsville Jewish Heritage Center, which was dedicated in 2017. The historic ark, Torah mantles, and bimah chairs, among the displayed artifacts and documentary material, offer "members of the greater Huntsville community," according to one observer, "especially from churches and schools, [a way] to learn about the city's Jewish history and about Judaism in the historic setting."⁵² B'nai Sholom remains a viable congregation, but its membership of seven hundred now consists largely of Sunbelt émigrés who lack local

Temple B'nai Sholom in Huntsville, 2017. (Photograph by Bryan Alan Bacon.)

historical roots. Some third-generation families remain, but among the founding families, Goldsmith observes, "I'm the last one."⁵³

Sunbelt temples often maintain such memorial display cases or rooms which house archives, Judaica, or graphic and documentary materials preserving and honoring the founding generation, whose families, in many cases, have long since departed. Architectural elements from an old temple—an ark, a stained glass window, a reader's desk—may be incorporated into a new edifice, symbolic of Jewish continuity even when Jews have moved on. In Natchez, where the community has all but expired, the historic B'nai Israel is no longer a functioning congregation but rather a museum under the auspices of the ISJL that includes exhibitions and screenings of the documentary "The Natchez Jewish Experience." As Jews abandon smaller communities, they take not just their activism but their synagogue Judaica to their new places of settlement. Torah scrolls are passed on to thriving congregations. The Chapel Hill Kehillah Synagogue in North Carolina includes a Temple Emanu-El Chapel that replicates a sanctuary in rural Weldon that is now an African

American church. The Chapel Hill congregation, founded in 1996, has Judaica from shuttered temples including stained-glass windows from Suffolk, Virginia, a *Ner Tamid* from Norfolk, a Torah scroll from Goldsboro, and menorahs from Lumberton, North Carolina.⁵⁴ A synagogue stands as a house of worship and as a monument of communal memory.

Cemeteries are another aspect of material culture that speak perpetually of Jewish presence. In rural towns dead Jews frequently outnumber living ones. Overgrown cemeteries haunt rural communities as crumbling monuments of a vanished Jewish presence. The Jewish custom of visiting the graves of parents and grandparents kept distant Jews linked to their ancestral homelands. Like synagogues, cemeteries in extinguished communities may materially connect absent Jews to their southern ancestry. In Huntsville, the Goldsmith family over generations took fiduciary and administrative responsibility for cemetery upkeep. Through the Birmingham Jewish Foundation, the Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr., Cemetery Maintenance Fund now ensures the care of the Jewish sections of the city's historic Maple Hill Cemetery. If not through associated federations or congregations, "friends of" committees or other such institutional efforts often maintain historical Jewish cemeteries. Every summer the ISJL, with the Harry S. Jacobs Camp, sponsors a cemetery restoration, the most recent in Osyka, Mississippi.⁵⁵

The family's philanthropy has also erected monuments attesting to Jewish presence in the larger civic community. In memory of their grandmothers, family members in 1934 donated land for the Goldsmith-Schiffman Field, the city's first night-time athletic field. A state historical marker acknowledging the families now fronts the stone gateway and stadium, built by the Civil Works Administration.⁵⁶ Margaret Anne Goldsmith's father and grandfather contributed land surrounded by the family farm in memory of their mother and wife, Annie Schiffman Goldsmith, to the Big Cove Community for Mountain View Cemetery. The Lawrence Bernstein Goldsmith, Jr., Garden of Meditation and Remembrance is located in the oldest Jewish section of the city-owned Maple Hill Cemetery. Using six family-owned grave plots, Goldsmith created a garden that incorporates the stone that Oscar Goldsmith used to mount his horse, Morris Bernstein's property marker, and a sandstone walkway using stones from the Bernstein house. Later, in memory of her

ancestors, Goldsmith donated land for the Goldsmith Schiffman Wildlife Sanctuary and the Goldsmith Schiffman Elementary School. Jewish philanthropy gives an enlarged sense of Jewish presence. Almost every southern city can claim a Jewish name on a school building or a hospital, an arts center or a ball field, leaving an indelible mark on the built environment.

As families depart and Jewish communities erode, they also leave behind documents and artifacts. In what amounts to southern Jewish folklore, visitors to antiques stores recount finding candlesticks or silver cups, wondering if they once graced a Sabbath table. Custodians of documents or artifacts must choose whether to seek their preservation in local, state, regional, or national archives or museums, secular or Jewish. In some measure such decisions depend not only on the nature of the object itself and the capabilities of the collecting archive or museum, but also on the issue of identity, whether the donor envisions himself or herself in local, regional, or national terms. Judaica from expiring congregations are oftentimes recycled for use in growing Jewish communities.

National depositories, like the American Jewish Archives, American Jewish Historical Society, and the National Museum of American Jewish History, preserve and make accessible personal and community records. The Bernstein, Herstein, Schiffman, and Goldsmith Collections of family artifacts were donated to the National Museum of American Jewish History, where they constitute one of its largest collections and the only one documenting five generations of a German Jewish family in America. There are also regional Jewish collecting institutions like the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta, the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience in Mississippi, and the Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston. Goldsmith decided to place her family's United Jewish Appeal and Holocaust papers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. During the 1980s, 150 boxes of papers documenting the Schiffman business and the family's personal and commercial affairs went locally to the archives of the Huntsville Madison County Public Library as the Margaret Anne Goldsmith Collection, now being relocated to the University of Alabama in Huntsville. More recently, Margaret Anne Goldsmith has donated her personal archives, those of her grandfather Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.,

and additional archives of the temple, four families, and the Huntsville Jewish community archives to the University of Alabama in Huntsville's archival collections. Other artifacts were dispersed to local institutions attesting to the family's Huntsville roots. A dairy keeper from the Bernstein home went to the Burritt on the Mountain folk museum for the restored Bernstein Spring House, and her grandfather's Southern Railway locomotive bell, a collectible souvenir, now graces the Huntsville Depot Museum. Finally, Goldsmith donated five paintings by local artist Howard Weeden, which the artist originally sold to a Goldsmith ancestor, to the Huntsville Museum of Art. These artifacts speak to local, regional, national, and international roots, the complexities of a multifarious Jewish identity.

Goldsmith Schiffman Elementary School. (Courtesy of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

American Jewish memorialization, in contrast to that of Europe with its tragic evocation of vanished persecuted communities, is as much a tribute to endurance as to loss. The I. Schiffman Building, still a viable enterprise after more than a century of Jewish ownership, attests to the constant reinvention that speaks to the specifically American character of American Jewry. It inspires rethinking of the common narrative of Jewish mobility and small-town decline. As historian Elliott Ashkenazi has noted, "The typical southern Jew, pictured as a peddler, then a store-

keeper, and then a merchant prince, has taken his place in history without serious examination of his actual functions and how they altered over time.”⁵⁷ The I. Schiffman building’s evolving functions and its imaginative reuse demonstrate Jewish adaptation to changing times, challenging a conventional paradigm of Jewish mercantilism as representative. The Jewish building environment created a lasting legacy apart from Jewish numbers. That its ownership has persevered for more than a century speaks to Jewish persistence, to the fact that family ties that bind southern Jews to their hometowns encompass more than commerce. That the name I. Schiffman has endured for more than a century in the civic center of an evolving city testifies to southern Jewish continuity in the face of community change. That four intertwined families maintained prosperity in one location for generations attests to their ability to adapt and meet challenges.

NOTES

¹ For a discussion of “built environment” in the Jewish context, see Barry L. Stiefel, “Beyond Synagogues and Cemeteries: The Built Environment as an Aspect of Vernacular Jewish Material Culture in Charleston, South Carolina,” *American Jewish History* 101 (April 2017): 202.

² Zebulon Vance made such a claim in his celebrated philosemitic speech, “The Scattered Nation.” See Maurice Weinstein, ed., *Zebulon B. Vance and “The Scattered Nation”* (Charlotte, NC, 1995), 81–82.

³ *American Jewish History* 101 (April 2017) includes a special section on “Jewish American Material Culture.” This essay provides an additional case study in the use of such physical dimensions to extrapolate and symbolize broader themes.

⁴ For works that draw similar conclusions concerning multiple migrations into and out of communities see, for example, James Lebeau, “Profile of a Southern Jewish Community: Waycross, Georgia,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 58 (June, 1969): 429–44; Louis Schmier, “Jews and Gentiles in a South Georgia Town,” in *Jews in the South*, ed. Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier with Malcolm Stern (Macon, GA, 1984), 1–16; Wendy Lowe Besmann, *A Separate Circle: Jewish Life in Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville, TN, 2001); Leonard Rogoff, *Homelands: Southern Jewish Life in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa, 2001); Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven, CT, 2005); and Ira M. Sheskin, “The Dixie Diaspora: The ‘Loss’ of the Small Southern Jewish Community,” in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark K. Bauman (Tuscaloosa, 2006), 165–88.

⁵ A quixotic indication of the Jewish fascination with landholding is Moses Elias Levy's investment in plantation lands in east Florida in the 1820s, which included a utopian colony for persecuted Jews. See Chris Monaco, "A Sugar Utopia on the Florida Frontier: Moses Elias Levy's Pilgrimage Plantation," *Southern Jewish History* 5 (2002): 103-140.

⁶ Scott M. Langston, "Being Jewish in Columbus, Georgia: The Business, Politics, and Religion of Jacob and Isaac Moses, 1828-1890," *Southern Jewish History* 18 (2015): 2-4; P. Allen Krause, ed. Mark K. Bauman with Stephen Krause, *To Stand Aside or Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement* (Tuscaloosa, 2016), 138, 188; Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 25. Bernard and Michael Gratz of Philadelphia purchased southern timberlands, and the Richmond, Virginia, slave firm of Cohen and Isaacs hired Daniel Boone to survey tracts. Lazarus also owned timberlands.

⁷ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 7, identifies a "classic era" extending from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

⁸ Elliott Ashkenazi, *The Business of Jews in Louisiana, 1840-1875* (Tuscaloosa, 1988), 62-63.

⁹ Rogoff, *Down Home*, 113; Stephen J. Whitfield, "Commerce and Community: A Business History of Jacksonville Jewry," *Southern Jewish History* 12 (2009): 128-29; Krause, *To Stand Aside*, 190; Paul A. Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.: His Life and Endeavors* (West Conshohocken, PA, 2015).

¹⁰ Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York, 1970); see also Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York, 1992).

¹¹ Harold M. Hyman, *Oleander Odyssey: The Kempners of Galveston, Texas, 1854-1980s* (College Station, TX, 1990), xviii.

¹² See Leonard Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil: Southern Jewish Progressive* (Chapel Hill, 2017), 8, 10-11.

¹³ See "Huntsville: Historical Overview," ISJL Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed May 2, 2017, <http://www.isjl.org/alabama-huntsville-encyclopedia.html>. See also Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 17.

¹⁴ "Huntsville: Historical Overview," accessed May 2, 2017.

¹⁵ "Huntsville: Historical Overview," accessed April 18, 2017.

¹⁶ Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "The Bernstein, Herstein, Schiffman, and Goldsmith Collection: A Catalogue," (unpublished paper, October 28, 2011), 60; Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Lawrence B. Goldsmith Sr. and the Huntsville Alabama Jewish Community," in Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 17, 19; Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585-1984* (Lanham, MD, 1990), 12; *Huntsville Weekly Democrat*, May 28, 1898.

¹⁷ Goldsmith, "A Catalogue," 68.

¹⁸ Quoted in Stiefel, "Beyond Synagogues and Cemeteries," 206-207, 222; Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Lawrence B. Goldsmith Sr. and His Family" in Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 29.

¹⁹ Goldsmith, "A Catalogue," 68, 149.

²⁰ Paul A. Hays, *I. Schiffman & Company, Huntsville's Most Diversified Entrepreneurial Business* (West Conshohocken, PA, 2013), 41.

²¹ Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 2.

²² The literature on the intersection of urban and transportation history is extremely extensive. Helpful works include George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815–1860* (New York, 1951); Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870–1900* (Cambridge, MA, 1962); Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985).

²³ See Hays, *I. Schiffman* and Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 30–31.

²⁴ Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 19–23; Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 306–307. Weissbach notes that of the Jewish communities in America that had more than one hundred Jews in 1878, more than half were no longer listed in Jewish census data by 1983.

²⁵ Goldsmith, “Lawrence B. Goldsmith and His Family,” 11–12.

²⁶ “Temple B’nai Sholom,” accessed April 18, 2017, <http://templebnaisholom.com/temple-bnai-sholom/>; “Huntsville: Historical Overview,” accessed April 18, 2017.

²⁷ The building has had a colorful history. In second floor apartments lived attorney William Brockman Bankhead, later a congressman, whose wife Ada gave birth there in 1902 to a daughter, Tallulah, star of stage and screen.

²⁸ Margaret Anne Goldsmith, telephone interview conducted by Leonard Rogoff, May 4, 2017.

²⁹ Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context* (Hanover, NH, 1999), 185.

³⁰ “Temple B’nai Sholom”; Harvie P. Jones, “The Architecture of the 1899 Temple of B’nai Sholom,” *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly* 20 (Winter 1994): 184–97.

³¹ Gelernter, *History of American Architecture*, 184–85.

³² Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 22–23.

³³ Margaret Anne Goldsmith, “Introduction,” in Hays, *Lawrence B. Goldsmith, Sr.*, 9–10.

³⁴ The boll weevil, international competition, and ultimately the introduction of synthetic materials negatively impacted cotton production in the South. See, for example, D. Clayton Brown, *King Cotton in Modern America: A Cultural, Political, and Economic History Since 1945* (Jackson, MS, 2013).

³⁵ Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 47, 97, 122.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 151.

³⁷ Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 125; Whitfield, “Commerce and Community,” 150–51; Krause, *To Stand Aside*, 190.

³⁸ Goldsmith interview.

³⁹ Goldsmith interview; Abraham J. Karp, *Haven and Home: A History of the Jews in America* (New York, 1985), 310.

⁴⁰ Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 168.

⁴¹ Goldsmith, "Lawrence B. Goldsmith and Family," 36; Goldsmith interview.

⁴² Hays, *I Schiffman*, 170.

⁴³ On the impact of Walmart on downtown stores, see, for example, Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA, 2009).

⁴⁴ Hays, *I Schiffman*, 170.

⁴⁵ "The Peabody Hotel," accessed June 18, 2017, <http://www.historic-memphis.com/memphis-historic/peabody/peabody.html>. The Schwab store includes its own in-house museum dedicated to local history. In the tourist mecca of Asheville, North Carolina, folklorists placed a dozen memorial panels at downtown sites—at least one is a parking lot—documenting "The Family Store: A History of Jewish Businesses, 1880–1990." "About the Family Store," accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.history-at-hand.com/about-the-family-store/>.

⁴⁶ "Riley Center: History and Revovation," accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.msurileycenter.com/index.cfm/about-us/history-renovation>; "Meridian: Historical Overview," accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.isjl.org/mississippi-meridian-encyclopedia.html>.

⁴⁷ Goldsmith interview.

⁴⁸ Margaret Anne Goldsmith, e-mail to Leonard Rogoff, May 15, 2017.

⁴⁹ For a discussion of civic identity and the changing urban landscape, see Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 239–41.

⁵⁰ Goldsmith e-mail, May 15, 2017.

⁵¹ See, for example, Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York, 1973); Stella Suberman, *The Jew Store* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); and Edward Cohen, *The Peddler's Grandson: Growing Up Jewish in Mississippi* (Jackson, MS, 1999).

⁵² "Jewish Heritage Center Opens in Huntsville," *The Rambler: Newsletter of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* 21 (Spring 2017): 3, accessed July 25, 2017, <http://www.jewishsouth.org/rambler>.

⁵³ Goldsmith interview.

⁵⁴ "Natchez Sites & Exhibits," accessed May 2, 2017, <http://www.isjl.org/natchez-site--exhibits.html>. See also, Leonard Rogoff, *A History of Temple Emanuel: An Extended Family, Weldon, North Carolina* (Durham, NC, 2007).

⁵⁵ Diana Kogan, "Osyka Cemetery Restoration," accessed May 2, 2017, <http://www.isjl.org/osyka-cemetery-restoration.html>.

⁵⁶ Hays, *I Schiffman*, 41.

⁵⁷ Ashkenazi, *The Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 2.