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SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

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Cover picture: Half of a stereographic image of Columbus, Georgia, c. 1860. The view looks east across Broad Street between St. Clair and Randolph Streets (now 11th and 12th Streets). The Hall & Moses store – whose owners, Jacob and Isaac Moses, are the subjects of the article by Scott M. Langston on pages 1–61 of this issue – is in the center. (Courtesy of the Columbus State University Archives, Columbus State University, Columbus, GA.)

From the Editor . . .

Three decades ago, when I started reading about Jews and Jewish communities outside of the South, I began to find the same family names appearing across the country. This was especially true of Jews from Charleston and to a lesser extent from Baltimore. Why more for the South Carolina port city than its Maryland counterpart? Charleston declined economically after about 1830, whereas Baltimore continued to prosper, thus encouraging upwardly mobile Jews to migrate from one city at a higher rate than the other. As studies of Charleston's Reformed Society of Israelites expanded with the work of James Hagy, Allen Tarshish, Gary P. Zola, and others, the family names of its members, who built Jewish and secular communities nationwide, took on new meaning in their association with the cradle of Reform Judaism in the United States. The two major articles in this issue explore this internal migration phenomenon and provide insights into its significance.

Here historian of religion Scott M. Langston revises his 2013 Birmingham conference presentation as part of his continuing research into a specific family. Concentrating on brothers Jacob and Isaac Moses, Langston demonstrates how these men, separated in age almost by a generation, adjusted to life in Columbus, Georgia, and Girard and Phenix City, Alabama, and contributed to the business and civic development of these sister areas. In the most thorough analysis undertaken thus far of Jews and political parties and policies in the South, Langston emphasizes the importance of practical business concerns and ultimately of ethnic politics, with "Jewish seats" reserved for public offices similar to those found in cities across the country. Whereas Charleston remains the center for religious purposes during the older Jacob's life, the Jewish population and institutions of Columbus reach the stage of relative self-sufficiency by the time Isaac rises to promi-

nence. In this article, for the first time, Langston places the nineteenth-century hardware business within the typical Jewish family and landsman nexus and relates it to national and international trade networks.

Joel William Friedman unearths almost identical patterns in the legal profession by tracing an extended family from the Iberian Peninsula to the Caribbean and Charleston, and from Charleston back and forth across the United States. We typically associate the progression of Jews into professions with the twentieth century, but Friedman, a Tulane law professor, finds a nineteenth-century tradition of Jewish attorneys and judges who were also deeply involved in politics and business.

Both articles trace geographic mobility and Jews' consequent consciousness of and involvement in issues that are particular to the South but also transcend region. Implicitly, they emphasize rootlessness: people moved from place to place for economic opportunity. Internal chains of family and landsmen proved equally as important as they did for immigration from overseas. Families, institutions, and business ties linked Jewish communities and individuals across the country and the Atlantic. These articles also illustrate how micro-level family history enlightens the macro-level themes of American and world history.

Jay Silverberg's primary source article, expanding on his presentation at the 2014 SJHS conference in Austin, features letters that again highlight the potential for family history. Here the links become visible between Germany, Louisiana, and Texas. The extended Meyer and Levy family story sheds light on economics and business, civic affairs, the complex and ambiguous issue of identity, gender norms, and acculturation, among other issues, while reinforcing many of the patterns observed by Langston and Friedman. Like these articles, Silverberg's work shows the choices individuals made in achieving varying degrees of acculturation.

The six books reviewed in this issue, as with the entire journal, reflect the variety and quality of the field, as does the website review evaluating a database on materials relating to the Atlantic World. This issue also includes two exhibit reviews, one of which examines an older exhibit that presages the Southern Jewish His-

torical Society's visit to Natchez for its upcoming 2016 conference. The second is somewhat of a hybrid in that it evaluates an online exhibit, the Judaica collection of the late William Rosenthal, rabbi at Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim.

This issue marks the end of outstanding service performed by Dianne Ashton, Hasia Diner, Kirsten Fermaglich, and Daniel Puckett during their five-year tenure as editorial board members. Their sound counsel and assistance has been greatly appreciated. Thanks also to outside peer reviewers Jack Bass, Alfred Brophy, Anton Hieke, Ava Kahn, Catherine Kahn, and Hollace Weiner. Section editors Jeremy Katz, Scott Langston, Adam Mendelsohn, and Stephen Whitfield (who holds the section editor record for longevity) oversaw their sections with the necessary mixture of grace and zeal. Karen Franklin, Scott Langston, Bernie Wax, Hollace Weiner, Dan Weinfeld, Beverly Weinfeld, and Austin Bauman provided invaluable assistance as proof readers. In her nominal retirement, Rachel Heimovics Braun continues to oversee the business aspects of the journal and provides ever-needed and appreciated guidance. It is a pleasure working with Bryan E. Stone as managing editor in a totally seamless fashion. Among his creative additions is the new layout for the book review section.

Mark K. Bauman

Being Jewish in Columbus, Georgia: The Business, Politics, and Religion of Jacob and Isaac Moses, 1828–1890

By

Scott M. Langston*

In 1828 seventeen-year-old Jacob I. Moses moved from Charleston, South Carolina, to Columbus, Georgia, a frontier town located on the state's western border. About twenty years later, his younger brother, Isaac I. Moses, then twenty-eight, joined him. Together they built a successful business and made significant contributions to the city's development.¹ Their experiences provide insight into some of the motivations, challenges, and long-term impact of antebellum Jews who relocated to new places in the South. For six decades, they developed a multidimensional Jewish identity rooted in business and entrepreneurial pursuits and unlimited by regional or political concerns.

Jacob's arrival in Columbus coincided with its founding. The town began when the United States dispossessed the Creek Nation of its lands in Georgia and part of Alabama through the highly disputed treaty of Indian Springs. After gaining possession in 1825, the Georgia General Assembly moved quickly to consolidate its hold.² It divided the Creek land cession into five sections, redesignated in December 1826 as Lee, Muscogee, Troup, Coweta, and Carroll Counties. By December 1827, the assembly created Columbus as a "trading town" to be located in Muscogee County at the fall line of the Chattahoochee River. Early in 1828, surveyors platted the new town, with lots sold at public auction in July.

* The author may be contacted at s.langston@tcu.edu.

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Already by spring, approximately nine hundred people lived there.³

Jacob seems to have been drawn to Columbus more for economic opportunities than land prospects, initially establishing a business under the name Jacob I. Moses & Co. Unfortunately, the exact nature of this business is unknown.⁴ Despite his father, Isaiah, being a successful Charleston grocer and merchant and owning a 794-acre plantation, Jacob, like many others, faced diminishing prospects for prosperity in his home state. Declining economic opportunities and the opening of new lands prompted many people to leave the state beginning in the 1820s, with most heading for Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.⁵ Jacob followed this pattern.

Building a Business and Town, 1828–1839

Jacob quickly grew his business and developed connections among some of the new town's more prominent citizens. For most of the next two decades, he participated in Columbus's public life,

Columbus Enquirer, June 2, 1832.

*Advertisement announcing the formation of the
copartnership between Jacob Moses and Hervey Hall.*

(Courtesy of the Digital Library of Georgia.)

holding a variety of positions and contributing to its economic growth. His connection with Hervey Hall, a native of Vermont who had also come to Columbus in 1828, proved to be the most significant and long-lasting. These men entered into a partnership to establish the hardware company Hall & Moses, which continued in business, although under different names and owners, from 1832 until well into the twentieth century.⁶ Despite his New England upbringing, Hall, an early member of Trinity Episcopal Church, became an ardent southerner. His partnership with Jacob Moses was so strong that Hall's obituary noted: "These two men so long connected in business were like brothers, although their temperaments were directly the opposite, Mr. Hall being impulsive, positive and energetic; Mr. Moses cool, suave, deliberate."⁷ Jacob even named one of his children Hervey Hall Moses.⁸

In the April 21, 1832, edition of the *Columbus Enquirer*, Jacob posted a notice that during his absence Hall would act as his agent. In that issue, and since at least January 7, Hall had advertised that he had just received a steamboat shipment of products made from tin, copper, iron, lead, zinc, and brass, offered both at

Columbus Enquirer,
 December 15, 1832.
 Hall & Moses advertisement.
 (Courtesy of the Digital Library
 of Georgia.)

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wholesale and retail.⁹ In June the pair announced their copartnership under the name Hall & Moses. They offered for sale “a general assortment [of] tin-ware” and appealed especially to the “country merchants,” promising they could be “supplied low and on liberal terms” that could be obtained “at the old stand.” By the end of the year, their hardware store advertised “a large assortment of Tinware offered at wholesale Northern Manufactory prices.” Their extended line of merchandise included various locks, hinges, screws, saws, irons, vices, axes, knives, spoons, pans, kettles, plates, urns, castings, molds, guns, paints, oils, glass, Japan ware, a variety of sheet metals (including sheet iron, copper, brass, zinc, and lead), and more. They provided customers with basic and essential items for building their lives and communities in a city that prided itself as a “builder’s paradise.”¹⁰

As these ads suggest, the company functioned within a broader national and international network of production and distribution at a time when the commercial system was undergoing dramatic change. The early decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a transition from all-purpose urban merchants responsible for importing, exporting, wholesaling, retailing, insuring, shipping, and distributing a wide variety of goods into a system characterized by business people who specialized in one line of products such as hardware or dry goods. The westward expansion of the country, along with its growing population, improving transportation system, and increasing manufacturing capacity, encouraged and even required the new system, including the rise of specialized wholesalers. Industries such as hardware that produced large quantities of generic goods (like locks, hinges, screws, etc.) required a means to get goods to a growing, extended, and diverse market. The hardware trade came to depend on a variety of middlemen known by diverse terms such as wholesalers, commission merchants, factors, and jobbers to buy and distribute goods to stores in smaller communities. The middlemen, in turn, sold to individuals.¹¹ The Hall & Moses ads reflect that the partners acted not only as retail hardware merchants, selling goods directly to individuals living in the Columbus area, but also as wholesalers, passing goods on to the country merchants in smaller

communities. Located on a major waterway on the edge of land only recently opened to white settlement and designed as a "trading town," Columbus functioned as a regional distribution center in this evolving marketing system. Hall & Moses took its place in this system intending to capitalize on the opportunities. The partners' success required numerous skills, including establishing connections with northern manufacturers and importers, since New England acted as the center of domestic tinware production, and most other antebellum hardware was imported.¹²

Hall & Moses continued to grow along with the town. As 1834 came to a close, a *Columbus Enquirer* columnist reflected that a stranger visiting the town at the beginning of the year would hardly recognize it at its end.¹³ Hall & Moses participated in this expansion, moving during fall 1835 into a "new brick store" located on the east side of Broad Street in the central business district, adjoining the lot on which Trinity Episcopal Church was built a few years later. This site served for decades as the business's main location, easily identified by a "sign of the Padlock" outside the store.¹⁴

The same factors that had drawn Hall and Moses to Columbus now drew them across the river to the newly established settlement of Girard, Alabama.¹⁵ Hoping to capitalize on the surge of settlers spilling across the Chattahoochee, they purchased lots in Girard on at least two occasions and subsequently improved them, probably by erecting buildings for housing or commerce. This marked the beginning of the Moses family's contribution to Girard's and the surrounding area's development, an undertaking that extended well into the twentieth century.¹⁶

In 1835, as American schemes to defraud the Creeks of their Alabama lands increased, the War Department halted sales and opened a land-fraud investigation. The speculators, of course, resisted, and they successfully thwarted an investigation in early 1836. Circumstances, however, continued to deteriorate, and war with the Creeks broke out. The Columbus Guards, formed the previous year to patrol the town's streets at night, were mustered into the United States military in January 1836. Jacob Moses served as a private. By year's end the war had ended, and

thousands of Creeks were forcibly removed to lands west of the Mississippi River, a trek known as the Creek Trail of Tears.¹⁷ Hall's and Moses's business aspirations contributed to this removal. Recognizing an economic opportunity, they joined other Americans who clamored for Creek land. If slave ownership, as some historians contend, "marked Jews as part of the dominant group" in the South, then so did ownership of Native American land.¹⁸ This particular marker, however, was not confined to the South, but extended throughout the United States.

As the 1830s came to a close, Hall and Moses were poised to expand further. In 1840 their business owned three slaves, \$2,500 in real estate, and \$10,500 in stock. Furthermore, by the late 1830s or early 1840s, the partners had expanded to Montgomery, Alabama, under the name of Hall, Moses & Roberts. The latter partner, Israel W. Roberts, was a Presbyterian from Maine who came to Columbus around 1832 before moving to Montgomery around 1839. At least as early as 1836, Roberts served as their agent while the partners were outside Georgia. In the new business venture, Hall & Moses furnished thirty thousand dollars in capital, and Roberts moved to Montgomery to run the hardware store.¹⁹

Beyond business pursuits, Jacob formed connections by participating in political activities. In 1834 he attended a Fourth of July celebration hosted by the local State Rights Party, a new organization created in response to Andrew Jackson's expansion of executive power, especially as it related to nullification.²⁰ The nullification crisis arose in 1832 over South Carolina's effort to abrogate the federal government's raising of import tariffs, dubbed by its opponents as the Tariff of Abominations. By November 1833, many former Democrats took steps to organize the State Rights Party throughout Georgia, and on March 26, 1834, people living in and around Columbus formed the State Rights Association of Muscogee County. The meeting adopted a constitution composed by a committee that included Mirabeau B. Lamar, the founder and editor of the *Columbus Enquirer* and future president of the Republic of Texas from 1838 to 1841. The constitution's preamble decried growing federal power, especially "a bill com-

monly known as the ‘force bill,’ having for its object the forcing into submission a sovereign and free state of this confederacy.”²¹ Congress had passed the Force Bill in 1833, authorizing the president to use force against South Carolina if it refused to pay the new tariffs. For state rights advocates, this bill symbolized the dangers of a powerful federal government.²²

The celebration began at the Methodist Church, where the crowd heard a reading of the Declaration of Independence and an oration delivered by a local judge. Following a barbeque, formal toasts praised the American Revolution and its heroes, the nullification doctrine, and free trade, while denouncing federal efforts to initiate internal improvements, the Bank of the United States as a monopoly, Jackson’s so-called proclamation speech against nullification given in 1832, and the Force Bill. All of these reflected support for John C. Calhoun, Jackson’s one-time vice president and now a senator from South Carolina, in opposition to the president. Next, individuals in the audience spontaneously offered toasts. Jacob Moses extolled “the Senators who vetoed Andrew Jackson’s abuse of Executive power. The people are with them.”²³ He likely had in mind at least two recent actions taken by the U.S. Senate. The new Senate seated in December 1833 had censured the president—the only time in U.S. history—and, for the first time, rejected a cabinet nominee, Roger Taney as Secretary of the Treasury. Both actions were in response to Jackson’s attack on the Second Bank of the United States, an action that many believed reflected an unconstitutional assumption of executive powers. Southerners in particular viewed the issue more in terms of presidential overreach than economic policy.

Jacob’s attendance at an event sponsored by the State Rights Party, as well as his negative evaluation of Jackson’s actions, clearly align him with those who opposed a strong federal government. As Daniel Feller has observed, “Jackson’s strident nationalism affronted southern-rights extremists in and out of South Carolina.”²⁴ Across the nation, Democrats had already begun departing their party and adopted the term *Whig* to describe their opposition to Jackson and his growing presidential power. By the end of the decade, most of Georgia’s state righters joined

“King Andrew the First.”

Following the nullification crisis and his veto of the bank bill, this 1832 cartoon depicted Andrew Jackson as a tyrannical king, trampling on the Constitution.

(Library of Congress.)

the Whig Party, but for the moment, this gathering represented a first step away from the Democrats. In a broader sense, Moses had participated in the initial stages leading to the Civil War. The theory of nullification developed by Calhoun and others became one of the two key constitutional principles next to the right of secession that to southerners justified their departure from the Union. The radical positions taken by Moses, furthermore, are typically associated with the planter class. This essay thus provides a somewhat unusual case study of how the views and needs of merchants converged with the planter elite.²⁵

Whether or not Jacob ever fully embraced Whig ideas remains unclear, but he had taken a step toward his future election as Columbus's mayor largely with Whig support. Jacob's initial foray into elected office, however, did not go well. In 1838, in the city's first municipal election after subdividing the town into six wards, Jacob received the nomination as alderman for Ward Three (also known as the St. Clair Ward) but lost.²⁶ Undaunted, the following year he and John L. Lewis, a future mayor with whom Jacob would come into conflict, were elected Third Ward aldermen, with Jacob appointed to standing committees on contracts and the hospital.

Jacob's work on the council, not surprisingly, reflected local issues. His most significant contribution may have been his influence in organizing and structuring the city's preparedness and response to firefighting. Fires, a scourge to antebellum cities, started easily and spread quickly, wiping out businesses and residences. Responding to a citizens' petition requesting that the council take action to protect the city against fire, Jacob offered a resolution asking that an ad hoc committee study and report back on the best means of protection. He and two other aldermen were appointed, and soon thereafter he presented the committee's report to the city council. It concluded that the citizens exhibited "very great indifference" toward fire prevention and protection, while the city itself was unprepared to deal effectively with a fire. Complicating matters was the city's inability to afford water works and two or more fire engines with hoses. The committee recommended prohibiting more than two kegs of powder in any

building, constructing a powder-storage magazine, and establishing a board of fire wardens composed of the mayor, aldermen, and a representative from each ward who would be responsible for preventing and fighting fires in their home districts. The council adopted the committee's recommendations.²⁷

By the end of the decade, Jacob had made important local business and political connections that served him well in coming years. Yet he still lacked a strong local group through which he could express his Jewish heritage. There was no Jewish congregation in Columbus until 1854, and few Jews lived in the town during its early years. Thus he retained his connection to the Charleston Jewish community. On December 4, 1839, he married Rinah J. Ottolengui of Charleston, the daughter of Abraham and Sarah Jacobs Ottolengui. Although Jacob grew up in a traditional Jewish household, this is the first appearance in the historical record of a connection to his Jewish heritage. His father, Isaiah, was one of five board members who held lifetime appointments at Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE). His father-in-law, Abraham Ottolengui, also served on KKBE's board and was president of the congregation from 1840 to 1850. Jacob's father ardently opposed efforts to implement reforms at KKBE (although his father-in-law did not) and eventually joined the new congregation, Shearit Israel, after traditionalists lost control in the 1840s. Whether or not Jacob shared his father's views is unclear.²⁸ Nonetheless, his return to Charleston to marry a Jewish woman demonstrates how important it was to him to marry within the faith and how he remained connected with people and events in his hometown. Rinah gave birth during their first year of marriage to a daughter who later died and was buried in the KKBE Coming Street Cemetery. Only members of KKBE could be interred in its cemetery, but Jacob's father-in-law asked the congregation board for an exception.²⁹ While the absence of Jewish institutions and community in Columbus challenged his ability to participate in a fully Jewish life, a decade on Georgia's frontier had not erased Jacob's Jewish identity. Rather than intermarrying and acculturating, he looked back to his childhood community for help in maintaining his heritage, thereby demonstrating how an estab-

lished Jewish community helped sustain his Jewish identity on the frontier.

National Issues on a Local Level, 1837–1848

The 1840s brought tremendous change for Jacob Moses. During these years, he played an increasingly prominent role in Columbus, dealing with local, state, and national issues that affected the city as well as his hardware business. Whereas he had come to the city as an unmarried seventeen-year-old, by 1840 he was an established businessman living with his wife, three slaves (one female adult and two children), and an unidentified adult male in his twenties.³⁰

He clearly had prospered during the 1830s, but between 1837 and 1844 the country endured a severe cycle of recession, recovery, and depression. The demand for cotton and consequently its price had been high since 1834, but beginning in 1837 the demand plummeted, helping usher in extreme economic hardship for Columbus, whose economy revolved around the crop. In addition, Andrew Jackson's veto of a bill to recharter the Second Bank of the United States, coupled with his Specie Circular of 1836, helped drain gold and silver coins from the American economy and created widespread distrust of paper currency. As people increasingly sought to exchange paper notes for specie (minted coins), New York banks suspended specie payments in May 1837. The effects rippled across the nation as other banks instituted the same policy. Merchants and individuals increasingly refused bank notes or checks as payment for goods, services, or debts, thereby reducing the amount of available credit. By fall 1838, however, the economy had begun to recover, only to be hit a year later with another panic, another suspension of specie payments, and even more severe economic contraction that lasted through 1844.³¹

During these years, Whigs, Democrats, and other political parties vigorously debated economic policies and the federal government's role. Georgia's State Rights Party had routinely refused to associate nationally with any party. Its stance began to change with the 1840 presidential election, which pitted Democratic incumbent Martin Van Buren against the Whig candidate,

*Democrat Martin Van Buren,
c. 1855. Photograph by
Matthew Brady.
(Wikimedia Commons.)*

*Whig William Henry Harrison, 1840.
Daguerreotype by
Albert Sands Southworth.
(Wikimedia Commons.)*

William Henry Harrison. Many State Rights leaders argued that their organization had to associate with a national party in order to exercise greater influence. Yet few party members found either candidate to their liking. Most objected to Van Buren because of his association with Andrew Jackson—he had been Jackson’s Vice President—and his support of high protective tariffs. Harrison and the Whigs, on the other hand, represented strong federal power, abolitionism, the Bank of the United States, and a high protective tariff. Most ultimately joined forces with the Whigs, although a small contingent led by Georgia congressmen Edward J. Black, Mark Anthony Cooper, and Walter T. Colquitt (from Columbus) refused to follow. When State Rights members held an anti-Van Buren convention in Milledgeville, Georgia, on June 1–2, 1840, and endorsed Harrison while excluding Black, Cooper, and Colquitt from its slate of candidates, its “extreme particularist wing” followed the shunned congressmen into the Democratic Party.³² Jacob Moses was among that group.

Within two weeks of the anti-Van Buren convention, twenty-eight citizens from Columbus, including Moses, published “A

CALL!!!” in the *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, a Democratic newspaper, with a request that all papers throughout the state republish it. They expressed alarm at the “daring attempt” made at the most recent convention “to transfer the State Rights party to the support of their old opponents the Northern Federalists.” Furthermore, the anti-Van Buren convention’s decision not to place Black, Cooper, and Colquitt on its slate of candidates angered them. The citizens deemed the trio to be “the most [republican] portion of our Delegation” and charged that they “have been indignantly proscribed, and dismissed from the confidence of the Convention on account of their POLITICAL PRINCIPLES.” They believed that the convention dismissed the congressmen because they insisted on adhering to the principles of the State Rights Party and “because they would not permit themselves to be drilled into the support of Gen. Harrison, with a full knowledge that he is a candidate of the enemies of the Constitution, and of the enemies of the South.” They charged the anti-Van Buren convention with invoking the name of the State Rights Party in order to deceive State Rights adherents into supporting “Federal men and Federal measures.” According to them, the convention had been commandeered by those representing the

“A Call!!!,” as printed in the
 Federal Union,
 Milledgeville, GA,
 June 16, 1840.
 (Courtesy of the Digital
 Library of Georgia.)

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“Opposition party,” coalescing with “that portion of the Union party who were Federalists” and advocates of the Bank of the United States, the tariff, internal improvements, abolition, and strong federal power. The twenty-eight Columbus citizens, therefore, urged the State Rights Party not to “capriciously jeopardize their own principles in the immolation of those three statesmen, who are *now*, and *ever have been*, true to the Republican cause.” They invited all those opposed to the Bank and “amalgamating with Northern Federalists” to meet at Milledgeville on July 3 to adopt measures to preserve the party’s principles and save “these three honest and able statesmen.”³³

Sixty-one representatives from twenty-three Georgia counties attended the State Rights Party Convention. Muscogee County sent nine delegates, second only in number to Putnam County, and Muscogee’s Seaborn Jones acted as convention president. Jacob Moses, however, was not among the delegates. The delegates reaffirmed all the issues and principles outlined in “A Call!!!” and expressed support for Van Buren (despite having opposed him in the 1836 election), while recognizing that some good State Rights men would not be able to support either presidential candidate. The following day the Democratic Republicans (that is, the Democrats) held their state convention in Milledgeville, with several of the Muscogee County State Rights delegates participating as Democratic delegates. This convention also endorsed Van Buren and placed Black, Cooper, and Colquitt on its slate of congressional candidates.³⁴

A few weeks later, the Democratic Republicans held a meeting in Columbus in support of Black, Cooper, and Colquitt. About fifteen hundred to two thousand people attended, including Jacob Moses, who served as one of twelve vice presidents for the assembly. Colquitt and others gave speeches followed by several toasts.³⁵ Similar rallies took place across the state. The Democratic Republicans, however, were unable to stop the Whigs, who won a significant victory both nationally and in Georgia. Colquitt managed to retain his seat in Congress, but Black and Cooper did not.

Despite being on the losing side in the election of 1840, Jacob began to take on a more public role, sometimes through Hall & Moses and sometimes under his own name. He had clearly identified with the most conservative political faction in his state, but its small size led him and those who shared his views to reluctantly partner with larger parties. Thus he was at odds politically with most in his state, at least in terms of the principles that defined party identities. Yet in the upcoming years, he worked with or opposed both Whigs and Democrats, as well as his fellow State Rights cohorts, on the basis of more practical matters. Local issues, more than mere party associations, drove Jacob, who appears not to have entertained political aspirations beyond Columbus. Therefore, while he indeed deserves the label of a State Rights Democrat, his political profile is more complicated. Any characterization of his political principles must be tempered with his concern for local business and economics.

In the year following the 1840 presidential election, the Columbus city council elected Jacob to serve as a port warden, charged with overseeing activities related to the city's river traffic.³⁶ In the ensuing months, as the economic situation worsened, Hall & Moses headed a list of eighty-eight businesses and individuals declaring that they would no longer receive or pay out any change bills other than those issued by the Columbus city council. Change bills were part of a complicated antebellum currency system consisting of a mix of specie, paper bills, and notes issued by banks, governments, businesses, and individuals in varying denominations. As Lynn Willoughby explains: "In the absence of a uniform currency provided by the federal government, every local economy had a distinctive currency which originated from scores of businessmen who held disparate assets—and consciences." To further complicate matters, businesses that required small change as part of their transactions often had to buy coins from a broker at high prices. To compensate, "individuals, municipalities, businesses, and banks issued 'change bills' in the amount of one dollar and less."³⁷ Change bills, also known as shinplasters, amounted to promises to pay the

Columbus Enquirer,
November 24, 1841.
Hall & Moses heads
the list of Columbus
businesses refusing to
accept change bills
other than those issued
by their own city.
(*Courtesy of the Digital*
Library of Georgia.)

bearer the bill's face value either in specie or bank notes upon presentation to the issuer. To say this fostered a complicated and chaotic commercial system is an understatement. Willoughby observes:

Merchants or bankers offered [change bills] as change to their customers who tendered them to other storekeepers in payment of their debts. The latter had little choice but to accept them and pass them along as change to their customers. Therefore, by trading his pieces of paper for something of actual value the man who initiated the change bill had the use of another's money free of charge. Furthermore, the originator would never have to repay a certain percentage of this amount since few people bothered to redeem a bill for six and a quarter cents or the like, and many were lost or destroyed in the process of circulating.³⁸

The need for change bills increased during financial panics like that of 1837, when the number of coins in circulation decreased. When coins were more readily available, the number of change bills in circulation declined. People, however, generally preferred bank notes over change bills because they were backed by specie, although variations in the supply of such coinage created problems.³⁹

For Columbus's merchants struggling to remain solvent during economic depression, the "great amount and variety" of change bills represented "a great and growing evil." Responding to the merchants' announcement, the *Columbus Enquirer's* editor asserted that the proliferation of change bills threatened "to do a good deal of mischief" to the country's business. He called for immediate action, especially since these "shinplaster establishments" were proliferating yet remained unregulated.⁴⁰ Columbus's merchants had acted to address the untenable situation. Jacob Moses's participation in these actions placed him in opposition to Democrats, despite having sided with them in the 1840 presidential election. Economic realities and implications for his business proved more influential than party associations. This opposition to Democrats began his involvement in a series of economic issues that culminated in his election as Columbus's mayor. However complex, the issues are important for understanding his election, as well as the influence of local business and economic concerns on his actions.

In addition to the exchange bill problem, Hall & Moses attempted to address the related exchange rate issue. The multiple forms of currency in circulation were not interchangeable at equal values. Businessmen like Hall and Moses who traded outside of their economic region had to exchange their local currency for that used in the area where they were transacting business. Attempting to exchange depreciated currency put them at a disadvantage. Before New York's banks suspended specie payments in 1837, the exchange rates, that is the price or rate at which one type of currency was converted to another, were nominal, often being set at 2 or 3 percent. After suspension, however, they soared, commonly reaching 15 to 20 percent or higher. Columbus merchants, therefore, struggled to make a profit and pay their creditors, often located in the Northeast. In spring 1841, the *Columbus Enquirer* called the exchange rates "intolerable" and "insufferable," and as 1842 began, it deemed the currency situation "truly deplorable." The newspaper pointed out that the only money circulating in the area were notes from the Central Bank of Georgia and Columbus's Planters' and Mechanics' Bank, with the exchange rate for the

former being 12.5 percent, while the latter went at 25 percent. Half of the farmers and most of the merchants possessed these bills, and many had no choice but to transact business with them.⁴¹

By the summer, Hall & Moses and forty-nine other merchants took more drastic steps to overcome the devastating impact of depreciated currency. In another announcement published in the *Columbus Enquirer*, they gave notice of their intention "to receive no Bank or individual Bill in any contract whatever, made after that date [September 15, 1842], except at the specie value." In order to offset the "enormous Tax imposed upon us in the high rate of Exchange, which all are compelled to pay who contract debts from home," as well as to compel the state's specie-paying banks "to give us a share of their circulation," the group pledged "to take a determined stand." Merchants in other Georgia towns such as Macon, Talbotton, and Greeneville took similar actions. When the *Jeffersonian* reprinted the Columbus merchants' announcement, it commented, "If the people will keep the ball rolling, we shall have a sound currency in this section in time for the coming Cotton season."⁴² A few months later, Columbus merchants appointed Hall & Moses and six others to a board of trade that would "report weekly a corrected Exchange table, as a guide to Merchants and those trading to Columbus."⁴³ Designed as a tool to help businesses make informed decisions, this table reflected the current value of notes and bills issued by various banks and businesses, whether they were trading at a premium, discount, face value, or were worthless. Hall & Moses's appointment to this board reflects its influence and standing in Columbus's business community. Despite these efforts, the economic crisis worsened, while political maneuvering between the city's Whigs and Democrats increased.

The situation came to a head when on November 16, Columbus's Democratic representative, Jacob M. Guerry, introduced a bill in the Georgia House of Representatives expanding the authority of Columbus's mayor and city council to tax individuals and property. It also imposed a large additional tax on brokers and banks. Many in Columbus suspected this was an attempt to drive out the city's specie-paying banks and protect Georgia's

Central Bank. Whigs believed that Democrats' efforts to protect the Central Bank contributed to higher rates of currency exchange that in turn further depreciated the local currency. Guerry's new bill, therefore, aroused Whig suspicions.⁴⁴

By November 23, the House had passed Guerry's bill, causing concern and agitation to grow, especially among Columbus merchants. Six days later, a petition protesting the bill and reportedly signed by several hundred people, including four-fifths of the city's businessmen, was sent to the state legislature. The next day, however, Columbus's mayor, John L. Lewis, with whom Jacob Moses had served on the city council in 1839, assembled the aldermen and sent the legislature a message asking it to ignore the petition and pass Guerry's bill. Citizens called a public meeting that evening in response to the council's action.⁴⁵

With "a very respectable portion" of the city's businessmen in attendance, the meeting began with the election of Jacob Moses as secretary. Five resolutions passed nearly unanimously and were sent to all the local representatives in the state legislature, instructing them to use every effort "to arrest the Legislation, which seeks to rob us of our ONLY sound circulating medium, the bills of specie paying banks whose agencies are located among us." The following night, the mayor called another public meeting in which he pushed for a resolution praising and supporting Guerry. Once again, Jacob served as secretary. The crowd debated the mayor's counterresolution until "a late hour," overwhelmingly rejected the mayor's resolution, and reaffirmed their original statement.⁴⁶

Yet any sense of accomplishment was short-lived, because Muscogee County's state senator refused to present the resolutions to the legislature. Undaunted, the resolution's supporters turned to Whig legislators for help. Despite two long speeches given by Guerry in the senate in which he denounced the Columbus petitioners, the senate ultimately rejected the bill on December 23.⁴⁷ Jacob's opposition to Guerry's bill demonstrated again his concern for the local business and economic environment over party politics. It further reflected his willingness to work with

Whigs, a group that would play an important role in the upcoming mayoral race.⁴⁸

As the struggle over Guerry's bill came to a resolution, Columbus prepared to elect a new mayor. Given the city's economic distress, the *Columbus Enquirer* considered the election to be "one of the most important that has ever taken place since our incorporation in 1828." Several possible mayoral candidates had surfaced including many Whigs. The *Enquirer's* editors, R. T. Marks and T. Ragland, urged the Whigs to nominate "their strongest and best men." They also pointed to the recent events surrounding the Guerry bill as proof that the current Democratic officeholders would "for the sake of perpetuating political power" trample "every interest of the merchant, mechanic and artisan."⁴⁹

By December 28, Marks and Ragland feared that the "friends of a good currency" had been circumvented and inadvertently had given the city's Democrats an opportunity to remain in power. Thus they now called upon their "friends" to show their devotion to "Whig doctrines, principles and measures" by repudiating their enemies' claims and uniting to nominate "such a candidate as can secure the strength of their party, and gain the day."⁵⁰ It is unclear where exactly Jacob Moses was positioned in the middle of this political maneuvering, including at what point he became a mayoral candidate, but his name appeared on the ballot, and he won the election. The *Enquirer's* editors, however, were not entirely happy, noting that they "did all we could do, with propriety" to sway their Whig friends to vote for another candidate. They attributed Jacob's victory to the mayoral election not being "a party question, so far as the Whigs were concerned" and to a large number of Whigs having voted for him.⁵¹ The editors explained:

In reference to the Mayor elect, as we have taken some pains to prevent his election, justice requires us to say that we have done so without the slightest disposition to detract from his character, or to lessen the high reputation which our fellow citizens have awarded him. Under other circumstances than those which we conceived to exist, there is scarcely any man in the city to whom we would have given a more cordial support. But believing, as

we honestly did, that his nomination (we should rather say the vote given for his nomination) was secured by the interposition of those who were alike opposed to our party and to the best interests of the city, and who had not the slightest disposition towards a compromise, we could not countenance his election. It remains to be seen whether our fears are groundless or well sustained.⁵²

The *Enquirer's* assessment of Moses, combined with the events since 1840, provide insight into his relationships, motivations, and political associations. Clearly by the time of the election, Jacob had gained the trust and respect of many in Columbus. The editors opposed his candidacy because of his support from Democrats rather than from any personal objections. His identity as a Jew apparently played no role in this opposition. His economic views, principles, reputation, and contacts, however, were critical to his election. His early political activities seem to be rooted primarily in political principles, especially belief in state power over federal. Before joining Georgia's State Rights Party, he likely embraced either the Clark or Crawford/Troup parties, two state factions that loosely identified with the Democrats on a national level.⁵³ He then moved into the Democratic fold in 1840 rather than embrace the Whigs. Yet as the economic crisis deepened, his concern with economic policies, especially their impact at the local level, caused him to blur political boundaries. In short, he had no problem allying with Whigs against his Democratic compatriots and even depended on Whig support to get elected. While he may have objected to the Whigs on a national level, he found them important allies in taking economic actions he believed beneficial for Georgia and Columbus, although he was not sufficiently aligned with the Whigs to garner the *Enquirer's* support. His ambivalent political identity suggests that the practical realities of running a business ultimately shaped his politics. His actions as mayor continued to follow this pattern.

As mayor, Moses continued to deal largely with local issues. After taking the oath of office on January 9, 1843, he and the city council, with its Whig majority, got to work.⁵⁴ The city's population had grown to almost seven thousand, but the current

economic situation made it more difficult to meet its needs. Among the issues to contend with were a smallpox outbreak, the city's lack of protection against arson and robbery especially at night, the theft of at least fifty thousand dollars from the Western Insurance and Trust Company office, and the murder of Burton Hepburn by Daniel McDougald, both prominent city leaders from whom Hall and Moses had bought land in Girard, Alabama, in the 1830s. The city's indebtedness, however, proscribed much of what the council could accomplish. When an alderman made a motion at an early council meeting to install seven water pumps at a cost of up to three hundred dollars, the council vote resulted in a tie. The alderman reasoned that since the city's income totaled about twenty-five thousand dollars, citizens should receive some benefit from the large amount of taxes they paid. The tie among the aldermen gave Jacob an opportunity to cast a vote. He decided the issue by voting against it.⁵⁵

A very significant issue during Jacob's time as mayor concerned the "water lots," an area fronting the river and divided into thirty-seven lots stretching four blocks between Franklin and Crawford Streets (now Tenth and Fourteenth Streets). This controversy again illustrates the prioritization of economic concerns over political principles in guiding Jacob's actions. In the events leading to his election as mayor, he worked with and depended on Whigs, even though he had previously aligned with Democrats. Now he would both oppose and then partner with one of his old State Rights' cronies, John H. Howard. Howard helped form the State Rights Party in 1833 and served on its central committee responsible for statewide organizing. He had joined Jacob in issuing the 1840 call denouncing State Rights members who endorsed Whig presidential candidate William Henry Harrison. Yet when Howard and his business partner, Josephus Echols, sought to purchase the water lots, controversy ensued.⁵⁶

The river location made the lots' economic potential great, prompting the *Columbus Enquirer* to assert that "the future weal or woe of our whole community" may depend on how the city council disposed of them. If handled properly, it could, in the newspaper editors' opinion, propel Columbus to become the

Surveyor's sketch of 1842.

Jacob Moses resigned as mayor of Columbus after a dispute over selling city property known as the water lots. This surveyor's sketch shows the location of the lots and their proximity to the Chattahoochee River, which accounted for their value.

(Courtesy of the City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA.)

region's business and trading center, enhance property values, bring jobs, and replenish the city's treasury. If handled poorly, it "may produce disasters to the city, and to the people, from which years of toil and [enterprise] may not relieve them."⁵⁷ In 1841 the council had sold all even-numbered water lots to Howard and Echols with the provisos that within five years they erect a dam across the Chattahoochee River and a canal running from the dam through all the lots "for the purpose of propelling machinery."⁵⁸ This, in turn, was supposed to make the lots prime locations for manufacturing projects that required access to water power. The following year, the council voted to sell the remaining lots. In May 1843, during Moses's term as mayor, the council adopted a report by the Committee on City Improvements that recommended accepting John H. Howard & Company's offer to buy the remaining lots. The council, however, was divided on the issue, with some believing that Howard's offer was a paltry amount in comparison to the lots' value.⁵⁹

After several weeks of debate, the council met again on July 8 to address the water lots. After discussing the propriety of taking up the resolution, Mayor Moses asked "if the motion would be pushed at the present meeting." Being told that it would, he thanked the council "for the courtesy uniformly extended to him," expressed "his regret that any question should have arisen which made it necessary for him to dissolve the official relations" between himself and the council, and then resigned.⁶⁰

The council split primarily over how best to deal with the city's indebtedness, either by taking significantly less money at that moment for the lots or waiting and hoping that in the near future their price would approach more closely their supposed value. Moses resigned in order to stop the sale to Howard, siding with those who felt it was short-sighted. He succeeded at least temporarily, because after he left the council meeting, the aldermen decided to postpone further action on the water lots until election of a new mayor. Nine days later a group of citizens opposing the sale met to nominate a candidate. They first passed a resolution indicating that they "heartily approve the conduct

of the late Mayor" and other council members seeking to stop the sale.⁶¹ A second resolution stated:

Resolved, That the late Mayor, Jacob I. Moses, in resigning his station to prevent the consummation of said contract, manifested the highest regard for the general good of the City, and is entitled to the unqualified thanks and approbation of its citizens.⁶²

Those present at the meeting offered to nominate Moses for reelection, but he declined "for reasons exclusively private." They then nominated Henry T. Hall, a Whig businessman, to replace Moses.⁶³ In the long run, however, Moses's actions failed. His opponents ultimately prevailed, and the sale eventually passed.

Moses's agreement with Howard on political principles did not prevent him from opposing his friend on economic lines, and his opposition did not preclude him partnering with Howard in future ventures. Howard made good on his commitments regarding the water lots' development. Within two years, he had completed most of the required construction related to them and had begun attracting manufacturing businesses to Columbus. Things went so well that in 1845 the *Columbus Enquirer* noted in regard to the lots' development, "We are greatly indebted to the energy and forecast of Maj. John H. Howard for the favorable circumstances around us."⁶⁴ That same year, the Georgia General Assembly granted Howard and his partners permission to incorporate the Water Lot Company of the City of Columbus, the instrument he would use to further develop the area into what would eventually become the town's manufacturing center for decades. Two years later, he formed the Howard Manufacturing Company, purchased one of the lots, and began building a cotton factory. Hervey Hall, Jacob Moses's business partner, was one of the new company's directors, and Jacob even became a stockholder.⁶⁵

In keeping with the larger national revolution in transportation and internal improvements, Howard and Moses also worked together to help establish the Muscogee Railroad Company beginning in 1845. Steam locomotives came into use elsewhere in the United States during the late 1820s, while Georgia did not issue charters for railroad companies until 1833. Although the state's

first lines were completed during the early 1840s, no railroad extended into southwestern Georgia to service its lucrative cotton fields. To fill this gap, the state legislature chartered two railroads in 1845, the Southwestern, which began constructing a line from Macon to Albany, and the Muscogee Railroad, designed to connect Columbus and Macon.⁶⁶

Connecting with the state's railroad network was crucial for Columbus's development and prosperity. The *Savannah News* aptly stated its importance: "It will open to us [Savannah] an extensive new trade, while it will give to Columbus an immense advantage, by affording her speedy access, at all times to one of the largest and best cotton markets in the Union."⁶⁷ Initially, the Muscogee Railroad's leaders raised funds to finance construction. When its incorporators met in late August 1846, with John G. Winter as chairman, they announced that the company would have seven hundred thousand dollars in capital stock, divided into seven thousand shares of one hundred dollars apiece. They named Jacob Moses, John H. Howard, and three others as commissioners who would receive stock subscriptions in Columbus. Commissioners also were appointed for Talbotton, Thomaston, Macon, and Savannah, Georgia, who subsequently forwarded the collected sums to the Columbus commissioners for deposit in a bank. Having raised the necessary startup funds, the stockholders met in late October and elected seven directors, one of whom was Jacob. Financial needs nonetheless continued to delay construction. In 1848 the directors solicited "one hand subscriptions," a campaign in which subscribers contributed the money necessary to support one worker during the year. By November, the company published a list of nearly one hundred subscribers, proclaiming that the list "warrants us in assuring the public that the long delayed enterprise will be steadily and successfully prosecuted." Jacob Moses and Hervey Hall were among the subscribers. Also that year, the Columbus City Council appointed a committee to canvass local taxpayers to determine if they would support a special tax to help finance the railroad. Hall and Moses joined 339 other citizens in supporting the tax, while only twenty-seven opposed it. Jacob strongly supported the railroad, undoubtedly

because of its potential economic impact on the city and his business as well as potential profit from the stock.⁶⁸

Moses's interactions with Howard demonstrate how business concerns, more than party politics, usually shaped his actions. He did indeed reflect one of the leading characteristics of antebellum southern identity—ardent support of state rights—but his evaluation of an issue's local business and economic impact exercised greater influence. In fact, his political identity as a member of the most conservative element of Georgia's State Rights Party provides less insight into his actions than do his local business and economic decisions. The latter concerns led to his most lasting impact—building Columbus's economy and infrastructure.

Local but Cosmopolitan, 1847–1854

The firm of Hall & Moses weathered the economic crisis of 1837–1844 in reasonably good shape and in succeeding years did quite well. Whereas in 1840 the business had thirteen thousand dollars in stock and real estate, by 1847 the commercial credit reporting agency R. G. Dun estimated its value at forty to fifty thousand dollars, and over the next seven years it ranged as high as one hundred thousand dollars. At the time of Jacob's death in 1854, his interest in Hall & Moses was valued at over one hundred thousand dollars.⁶⁹ The business even rebounded from a fire on March 3, 1847, that destroyed its Broad Street building and stock. The fire started in a nearby building and spread quickly, burning for two to three hours and partially damaging or completely destroying numerous businesses. Within a couple of days, however, Hall & Moses advertised in the *Columbus Enquirer* that it already had a fresh stock of hardware "on the way from England and the North," and it had secured the building next door where it would resume business as soon as the new stock arrived. In the meantime, its customers could purchase items from its second store, J. I. Moses & Co, located in "the new block of buildings up town."⁷⁰ Two weeks later the new stock, consisting of a wide variety of hardware goods, had arrived and was ready for sale. Within three more weeks, the partners advertised that since the fire they had received over twenty thousand dollars' worth of hardware,

“which makes their stock as complete as any ever offered in Columbus.” By mid-October they moved into their new store, rebuilt in its original location, and boasted that they offered “the best stocks of hardware ever brought to Georgia,” with fresh goods arriving weekly from New York and Europe.⁷¹

Hall & Moses’s ability to receive goods consistently and quickly from as far away as Europe was further enhanced when Jacob moved to New York City sometime between 1845 and June 1847. Advertisements touting the business noted that with Jacob “being constantly in New York,” it now had “an advantage not possessed by any other House in the State.” The partners assured customers that this move allowed them to keep in stock a complete line of hardware purchased at the best terms.⁷² Jacob’s relocation to New York demonstrates that while he may have focused on local issues during his two decades in Columbus, he certainly was not an isolated, parochial southern storekeeper. He illustrates, in fact, the point made by Mark K. Bauman that Jews in the South were “anything but provincials” but instead “migrated from place to place and were strongly linked by ties of family, business, religious institutions, and ethnic identity.”⁷³ Jacob lived out his life within an urban triangle demarcated by Charleston, Columbus, and New York. Given that almost all antebellum hardware was imported from England and Germany, and that

Columbus Enquirer,

October 12, 1847.

Hall & Moses advertisement

indicating that a partner,

Jacob Moses, will be

“constantly in New York.”

(Courtesy of the Digital

Library of Georgia.)

New York City was the nation's commercial center, Jacob likely had been making buying trips there and dealing with international dealers since the 1830s. In the late 1840s, he apparently began to devote all his energy to purchasing, financing, importing, and shipping the hardware to Columbus, while his business partner, Hervey Hall, dealt with local sales and direct management of the stores. While not an unusual business arrangement for the era, this division of responsibilities reflected the firm's growing strength.⁷⁴

Jacob returned to Columbus from time to time, but New York City was now his home.⁷⁵ A stipulation placed in his will reflects how thoroughly he seems to have embraced his northern home. Jacob drew up his will in 1851 in New York City, although it was probated in Muscogee County. He specified that twenty thousand dollars be placed in trust for his three sons, Montefiore, Moultrie, and Rynear, and be invested by three "respectable & responsible gentlemen" of New York. As each son turned twenty-one, he would receive a third of the money. Jacob instructed that each son be "raised and educated" in New York until they turned seventeen, "when if considered more advantageous to the completion of their education they may be placed elsewhere at College." He wanted them to remain under his wife's care "as long as she continues in New York" or until she remarried, at which time they would be placed under the direction of the three "respectable & responsible gentlemen."⁷⁶

Jacob's last will and testament reflects his belief that New York City offered better opportunities for his sons than did Columbus or even Charleston. Despite having spent most of his life in the South, he preferred to raise his family in the North. Four of his eight children were born in New York. Not bounded by geographic region, he moved out of the South in order to better his business, but he then took steps to insure that his sons would remain in the North even if that meant being separated from their mother. In much the same way that his business and economic concerns caused him to cross political boundaries, partnering with Democrats, Whigs, and State Rights members in order to advance local priorities, they also led him to cross regional

boundaries. His business actually was only partially located in the South. While he sold merchandise to southerners, he had to engage and negotiate with northerners and Europeans. Relocating to the North, therefore, brought advantages that living in the South did not.

Before and after moving to New York, Jacob drew on connections outside of his immediate locale to support his Jewish identity. The Charleston Jewish community remained an important conduit to his Jewish heritage. When his wife, Rinah, died in 1845 while in Charleston, she was buried in the same KKBE Coming Street Cemetery in which their infant daughter had been buried five years before.⁷⁷ Three years later, Jacob married his deceased wife's sister, Sarah. The ceremony apparently was held at KKBE, but as nonmembers the couple had to get permission from the congregation's board. Abraham Ottolengui, who was the congregation's president, explained that his daughter would soon marry Jacob, but "it might occur, that circumstances beyond his control would render it necessary or expedient to deprive him of the pleasure to have the ceremony performed" by the congregation's rabbi, Gustavus Poznanski. He had notified Poznanski, who "kindly [yielded] to the proposal." The board then "unanimously granted the permission specified" in article six of KKBE's constitution.⁷⁸

By this time KKBE had embraced reforms. Both Ottolengui and Poznanski supported the reform efforts, while Jacob's father did not, choosing to leave and join Shearit Israel. Perhaps these potentially awkward circumstances explain Ottolengui's comments. It is not known who officiated at the wedding, but one possibility is Jacob's brother-in-law, Jacob Rosenfeld, hazan at Shearit Israel and an advocate of tradition.⁷⁹ After the ceremony, Jacob returned with his new wife to New York. Just over a year later, the couple had their first child, Hervey Hall Moses. The child, however, died in 1850, and once again Jacob used KKBE's Coming Street Cemetery for the burial. Finally, when Jacob died in 1854 at the age of forty-three, his funeral was held at his brother Abraham's house in Charleston, with burial in the Coming Street Cemetery.⁸⁰

Jacob appears to have maintained not only his Jewish identity throughout his life, but also his connection to traditional Judaism. It is not known if he joined a congregation in New York, but he apparently was well-acquainted with Isaac Leeser, the leader of the traditionalist faction within the American Jewish community. He was a charter subscriber in 1843 to Leeser's *The Occident and Jewish American*.⁸¹ In an 1866 article in *The Occident*, Leeser mentioned a conversation he had with Jacob sometime around 1851. That article addressed the lack of trained men to lead America's Jewish congregations and the need for American Jews to take steps to educate leaders. According to Leeser:

We need Rabbis, preachers, Hazanim or readers, school-masters, editors of religious journals, secretaries of congregations and religious societies, Shochatim, and, more than all, an intelligent and pious laity. . . . Indeed, it is now about fifteen years ago that the late Jacob I. Moses, at one time Mayor of Columbus, Georgia, had a conversation with us about establishing a college, and he wanted to enlist the co-operation of Solomon Cohen, Esq., of Savannah, and of other men of mind and means, in the task; but his death, which soon after occurred, delayed, but we trust frustrated not, the good work. Had our friend lived, we have no doubt that his energy and pious zeal would have accomplished much, at least he could have awakened in others a kindred desire to see the work firmly established.⁸²

Leeser had been thinking about establishing a rabbinic school for several years, and in 1867 his efforts led to the opening of Maimonides College. Years before, though, Jacob had aspired to develop a similar institution. He also contributed to the founding of the Jews' Hospital in New York, later renamed Mount Sinai Hospital. In January 1854 he served on a committee that organized a banquet and ball to raise money for the hospital's construction. In addition, he designated in his 1851 will that one hundred dollars be given to the hospital should it be founded within five years of his death. It was, with construction begun in early 1854 and completed the next year.⁸³ His commitment to Judaism, therefore, led him to exert significant effort to follow traditions and to build Jewish institutions.

Columbus Enquirer, April 10, 1855.

Hall & Moses announcement of the dissolution of the original partnership following the death of Jacob Moses and the firm's reformation with Isaac Moses in his brother's place. (Courtesy of the Digital Library of Georgia.)

Isaac I. Moses Builds on His Brother's Work, 1850–1890

Jacob's death did not mean the end of the Hall & Moses hardware business. His younger brother, Isaac I. Moses, helped continue it under the name Hall, Moses & Company. Isaac had been in Columbus since at least 1850 when, at the age of twenty-eight, Hall & Moses announced that he would be "our authorized attorney" while the founding partners were absent from the state.⁸⁴ Isaac continued as a business partner for almost two decades, nearly as long as Jacob. Other family members also worked in the business. At the time of Jacob's death, another brother, Ezra I. Moses, worked in Savannah as a commission and forwarding merchant. By 1859 he was in Columbus working for Hall, Moses & Company, along with Jacob's son Moultrie. After the Civil War, Ezra returned to Savannah and partnered with sister Adeline Moses's husband, Adolph J. Brady, as commission merchants before moving to Philadelphia in the 1870s.⁸⁵

Brady, who served as one of the executors of Jacob's will, had partnered in the 1850s with Solomon Solomon in a pioneer hardware business in Atlanta and eventually moved to New York, performing much the same role that Jacob had for Hall & Moses.⁸⁶ Finally, in 1859, another brother, Abraham, and two other partners purchased the Montgomery hardware store Hall, Moses & Roberts. Isaac played a significant role in financing the reorganized Montgomery firm, now named Wyman, Moses, and Company.⁸⁷

Without giving a detailed analysis of Isaac's actions, a brief consideration of his business, political, and religious ventures provides greater context for understanding Jacob's activities, their larger impact, and their web of connections. The hardware store constituted the center of Isaac's business activities. When Hall & Moses was reconstituted as Hall, Moses & Company, the partnership consisted of Isaac, Hervey Hall, Jacob P. Hendricks (also spelled Henricks), and William A. Beach.⁸⁸ Isaac and Hendricks were first cousins, their mothers being sisters.⁸⁹ Beach, a non-Jew, was from Connecticut, but his family had long been friends with the Isaac Clifton Moses family, as well as Raphael J. Moses.⁹⁰ He and Hendricks began as clerks in Hall & Moses before becoming partners. The business apparently carried on much as it had prior to Jacob's death. It maintained an office in New York, although none of the partners moved there permanently.⁹¹ Isaac Moses and Beach primarily oversaw the business following Hendricks's death in a duel near Savannah in 1857.⁹² Hervey Hall then moved to Brazil after the Civil War, reportedly because he felt it better to leave the country rather than live in a defeated South under northern rule.⁹³ This partnership lasted until 1871, when it was dissolved by mutual consent, with Beach continuing the business under the name of Wm. Beach.⁹⁴

Among his significant accomplishments, Isaac helped Hall, Moses & Company expand into the foundry business. In late 1855, the firm began advertising that it now made a large variety of castings, including mill and gin gearing, plates, balls, sugar and bark mills, and iron railing, with the promise that "we will sell cheaper than Railing made at the North."⁹⁵ This likely reflects a

*Chattahoochee River steamboats at Columbus Wharf.
A portion of the of Columbus Iron Works plant is in the background.
(Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress.)*

relationship established between Hall, Moses & Company and Brown's Foundry, an operation owned by William R. Brown. Earlier in the year, the two companies had advertised that orders for various iron products placed at Hall, Moses & Company would receive "prompt attention."⁹⁶ The company's involvement in the foundry business actually began in 1853 when Brown, who had begun working in Columbus's fledgling foundry industry during the 1840s, met with Hall, Moses, and Beach and founded the Columbus Iron Works. Three years later, Hendricks joined them in incorporating the works, and by 1858 advertisements appeared indicating that the Columbus Iron Works Company – formerly Brown's Foundry – continued to be fully operational.⁹⁷

Development of the foundry before the war reflected southern attempts at industrial independence from the North. When the Civil War came, the Columbus Iron Works played an important

role in supporting the Confederate war effort. It manufactured a few artillery pieces before being leased by the Confederacy in 1862 as a naval iron works facility. It then produced several types of steam engines, iron fittings, boilers, and other types of machinery, becoming the Confederacy's largest manufacturer of naval machinery. According to John S. Lupold, the engines and boilers of the C. S. (Columbus) Naval Iron Works "drove at least half of the steam-powered vessels built by the Confederacy, including the gunboat *Chattahoochee* and the ironclad *Muscogee*." Despite being destroyed in 1865 by fire set by United States troops, the company, under Brown's leadership, quickly resumed operations after the war on a larger scale. It remained in existence until 1965 and played an important role in Columbus's economy.⁹⁸

Isaac Moses contributed in other ways to the Confederacy's manufacturing needs. Georgia Governor Joseph E. Brown took note of Isaac's efforts in an address to the state General Assembly on November 6, 1861:

So great are our necessities for arms and such the difficulties attending their importation, that I again call the attention of the General Assembly to this important subject, and suggest the propriety of either establishing a State Foundry for their manufacture, or of guaranteeing to such Company as will engage to manufacture them, such an amount of patronage as will secure success. I am informed that Col. Isaac I. Moses, a citizen of Columbus, of sufficient capital and great energy of character, acting in conjunction with Mr. John D. Gray, of Catoosa county, whose reputation for energy and enterprise is well known to our people, is perfecting preparations to manufacture at Columbus, excellent Rifles in large numbers, within the next two or three months. It is said they have already made considerable progress in their enterprise and that Mr. Gray can furnish stocks quite rapidly, and that with his aid Col. Moses will soon be able to turn out the guns complete. Should it be found on a thorough investigation of this subject by the military committee, that the enterprise of Col. Moses and Mr. Gray will be successful, I recommend that a contract be entered into with these gentlemen, or with any others who may be prepared to furnish the arms, for such supply as the future necessities of the State may require.⁹⁹

The governor's statement not only reflects Isaac's industrial support for the Confederacy but his connections with those in the highest levels of Georgia's government.¹⁰⁰

By all appearances, Isaac reflected and supported the southern cause. In addition to his efforts to provide much-needed manufacturing facilities, he also owned slaves.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, he and his brother Ezra, as well as Hall, Moses & Company, joined with other individuals and businesses to form the Georgia Importing and Exporting Company in order to trade directly with foreign countries. This demanded running the federal blockade.¹⁰² The picture, however, is not completely clear. In October 1864 John G. Winter, a wealthy and prominent Columbus businessman who supported the Union, wrote from London to Andrew Johnson, who at the time was Abraham Lincoln's vice-presidential running mate. Winter was also a friend and business partner with Raphael J. Moses, even having sold Raphael his Columbus plantation home, Esquiline. Winter was happy that federal troops had finally reached "the heart of my beloved state." Lamenting "the sufferings of the friends of our Country, residing in Davis' Dominions," Winter hoped to save from "annihilation" those he could by giving Johnson "the names of those who have never given any more aid & Comfort to the Enemy than they were compelled to do by the tyranny of their neighbors." He appended to his letter a list of all those in Columbus and Montgomery he remembered "as being faithful among the faithless & as I learn from authentic sources have never in heart *surrendered*. Some have been very quiet, but still true & only are awaiting an opportunity of folding the old Flag to their hearts." Isaac and his brother Ezra were among those identified by Winter as Union sympathizers.¹⁰³

Isaac's application for a federal pardon in August 1865 appears to confirm Winter's assertion. He explained that after Georgia seceded he "took no active part in the war but his sympathies were with the South." Nonetheless, he opposed secession but "fell into the tide of popular opinion." Furthermore, even though he was eligible for conscription, he "never entered the service actively" and instead employed a substitute, a claim supported by a newspaper ad run in 1862 by Hall, Moses & Company for "an able

and reliable man to serve in the army."¹⁰⁴ While Isaac could have simply been telling the federal official what he needed to obtain a pardon, the combination of his explanation with Winter's letter suggests he was not. In some ways, his embrace of the Confederate cause reflects more of a survival strategy than wholehearted support. Openly opposing secession would have made it difficult to remain in Columbus and carry on a successful business. Rather than leave Columbus, as Winter did, and despite having reservations about the path his fellow southerners had chosen, he acquiesced.

For some historians, slave ownership and commitment to state rights and the Confederacy reflect "distinctly Southern cultural forms" that caused Jews living in the South to differ "markedly from their counterparts elsewhere in the United States." They argue that while the institutional, economic, and business activities and patterns of southern Jews differed little from other American Jews, their acceptance of southern cultural forms set them apart.¹⁰⁵ The experiences of Jacob and Isaac Moses, however, reflect a more complicated situation. Both embraced these "distinctly Southern cultural forms." Both supported the South. Yet, they also acted in ways that subordinated these so-called distinctive actions to other concerns. Jacob's economic, business, and family priorities eventually led him to leave the South, while Isaac used support for the Confederacy to maintain and enhance his business and family circumstances. Thus the mere presence of these characteristics does not indicate a distinctively southern Jewish identity. As Anton Hieke has demonstrated, many Jews living in the region during Reconstruction had "an ambivalent Southern identity" that reflected southern cultural forms but was not fixed and unchanging. Hieke emphasizes the geographic mobility of Reconstruction-era Jews, arguing that they possessed a "somewhat trans-regional identity as they moved freely between the individual regions of the United States."¹⁰⁶ Jacob Moses illustrates an antebellum example of this transregional identity, while Isaac Moses demonstrates how a Jew living his entire life in the South could also possess an ambiguous southern identity.

As the South emerged from the Civil War, some of the region's leaders called for developing a New South based especially on business, manufacturing, and industrialization. Jacob and Isaac Moses represent forerunners of this movement. They engaged in national and international commerce while constantly seeking new business opportunities that also helped build the region's economic and physical infrastructure. Like his brother, Isaac participated in activities that benefitted Columbus and the surrounding region, investing in and helping organize ventures related to railroads, manufacturing, financial institutions, and real estate development.¹⁰⁷ By combining entrepreneurial endeavors with infrastructure development, the Moses brothers acted similarly to other Jewish businessmen, such as Moses Elias Levy, who helped develop the Florida community of Micanopy in conjunction with his nearby sugarcane plantation, and his son, David Levy Yulee, who helped facilitate construction of the state's railroad system.¹⁰⁸

Isaac also followed his brother's pattern by helping to grow the area in and around Girard, Alabama. Jacob's activities, however, consisted primarily in expanding his hardware business into the developing town, whereas Isaac diversified his local commercial pursuits. He built one of the first homes in nearby Browneville, Alabama (modern day Phenix City), by about 1860.¹⁰⁹ After Columbus's Eagle Manufacturing Company began building houses in Browneville for its workers, Isaac too built several tenements, with one area dubbed Moses Row. Several years later, in 1882, the *Columbus Sunday Enquirer* described Isaac as "highly esteemed as a landlord," noting that "his houses always find tenants at reasonable rates."¹¹⁰ In addition, he participated in the founding of a building and loan association in Girard, as well as starting a newspaper in Browneville.¹¹¹ He personally benefited from these endeavors, but so too did these Alabama communities.

Beyond Isaac's postwar business efforts, he played an important role in public education, helping establish public schools in both Girard and Columbus. After Georgia's General Assembly passed a bill in late 1866 allowing Columbus to establish a public

school, the city council appointed Isaac among the school's first trustees. He remained in this position until his death in 1890, the only original board member still serving. During those years, he exerted tremendous influence on Columbus's public school system. One of his first actions came when he was appointed to a committee charged with raising money to purchase the old Presbyterian Church building, which was to be converted into a school. The committee successfully raised the funds, with Isaac contributing one hundred dollars. Also during the school's first year, the trustees debated the type of devotional exercises to open and close the school day. Some wanted to require daily Bible readings, but this proved controversial. Years later, Isaac explained that "as an Israelite," he proposed the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4) in place of Bible readings. The majority of the board found this acceptable and approved it. Isaac did not explain his rationale for suggesting the Lord's Prayer. Although the Lord's Prayer is thoroughly Christian in its use and origin, its text contains no Christological language. Its title does, but it is not part of the biblical text, having arisen in later Christian usage. The prayer's sentiments are theologically neutral, at least in terms of reflecting distinctions between Judaism and Christianity. Plus, certain elements contained in the prayer also appear in Jewish liturgy. It was perhaps not an ideal selection for Isaac and the Jews of Columbus, but it was better than a steady diet of New Testament readings with more pronounced Christological sentiments.¹¹² Whatever the reason, as the only non-Christian board member, Isaac cleverly managed to lessen Jewish students' exposure to more objectionable elements of Christianity. He essentially used Christian scripture to blunt Christian teachings.

In 1876 questions arose over Isaac's eligibility to serve on the board given that he had a home outside the state. He contended that his Alabama house was merely a summer home and that he remained a citizen of Columbus. His explanation satisfied most because he continued to serve on the board with widespread support. The issue flared up again in 1888 when an individual wrote a letter to the *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun* charging that the school board was "a self-perpetuating body" because it had the power to

fill its own vacancies. In a clear reference to Isaac Moses, the writer asked, "Can a citizen of one state, with his interests entirely in a foreign state, enact laws for another state?"¹¹³ A few days later, another letter appeared, pointing out that three of the city's wards had no board representation, while Isaac did not even live in Columbus.¹¹⁴ At the next city council meeting, one alderman proposed that the council fill all future school board vacancies, while another suggested that a committee be appointed to determine whether Isaac lived in Georgia or Alabama.¹¹⁵ John Peabody, the board's chair, responded with a letter to the newspaper in which he explained that when the city council made its original appointments in 1867, it paid "great attention to the religious opinions of the trustees, and so made their selections as not only to give every religion a representative, but also, as far as practicable, to equalize the influence of each sect." The original board was comprised of three Baptists, three Methodists, two Presbyterians, and one Jewish, one Catholic, and one Episcopalian representative. Subsequent boards had tried to follow a similar policy in order to ensure harmony in the city. Peabody also defended Isaac's eligibility by asserting that his permanent residence was in Columbus.¹¹⁶ Despite this support, Isaac resigned. He explained, "After more than twenty-one years' service in the board of trustees as Jewish representative of my fellow-citizens of Columbus without a murmur of disapprobation, and without a single religious complaint, but with an established and increasing moral respect and brotherhood among pupils of different faiths in the public schools, I now resign my position as member of the board, leaving you to select, from the earnest educators among my co-religionists, my successor." He also expressed "grave apprehensions" over the proposed change to the board's power to fill vacancies.¹¹⁷

Isaac used a technique that his brother had employed forty-five years earlier in the dispute over the water lots—resignation. By resigning he removed himself from the controversy but subtly put pressure on the board to select another Jew to replace him. The city council seemingly addressed both issues when it made Isaac a lifetime honorary member of the school board, thereby

making his residency irrelevant in terms of representation and restoring Jewish representation on the board. The school board subsequently affirmed the council's action, although it stipulated that Isaac could perform all functions of a regular trustee with the exception of voting. Two months later, it elected L. H. Chappell, an Episcopalian and future six-term mayor of Columbus, to

Passage from the Columbus Board of Aldermen minutes for September 5, 1888, stating that Isaac Moses shall be, "during the term of his natural life, an honorary member of the Board of Trustees of the Public Schools of this city."

(Courtesy of the City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA.)

replace him. While Isaac still represented the Jewish community on the board, he now served only in an advisory capacity. This situation, however, was not permanent, because when another vacancy arose in October 1891, the school board elected Louis Buhler, a prominent Jewish businessman. Columbus's Jews rou-

tinely held a place on the board well into the twentieth century, and, on more than one occasion this expectation was explicitly expressed.¹¹⁸ For example, after the death of Sol Loeb, another prominent Jewish businessman, in 1917, the *Columbus Ledger* noted that “[it] has been the custom for a number of years to have the different religious denominations represented on the board, and it is very probable that some member of the Jewish faith will be selected to succeed Mr. Loeb.”¹¹⁹ Similar to the way David Mayer helped carve out a “Jewish seat” on Atlanta’s school board during the exact same period, so did Isaac Moses help establish and maintain one in Columbus, ensuring Jewish influence on the city’s public education for decades to come. Mayer, however, was not selected because he was Jewish, and Jewish representation in Atlanta was implied rather than formally stated.¹²⁰

Isaac’s role as the Jewish community’s representative on the school board is just one indicator of the value he placed on his Jewish heritage, as well as the maturation of Columbus’s Jewish community. By the 1850s, the community had grown large enough to begin forming institutions. Organizing a synagogue, Temple Israel, in 1854, Columbus’s Jews purchased and converted a house into a synagogue five years later. By that time approximately twenty Jewish families resided in the city. In upcoming years, they created other organizations including a chapter of B’nai B’rith (1866), a social organization named Columbus Concordia (1870), and a charitable society called the Daughters of Israel (1874).¹²¹ Isaac took his place within this community. In 1856 he married within the faith, wedding Columbus’s Hannah Maria Moses, the daughter of Raphael J. Moses. She died in 1860, and nine years later he married his former wife’s maternal cousin, Mary Alice Moses, Charles Brown Moses’s daughter. When Isaac drew up his will in 1881, he included the proviso that should any of his children “marry out of the Jewish race and faith,” they would forfeit their interest in his estate. Like his older brother, Isaac subscribed to Leeser’s *Occident*, as well as the *Jewish Messenger*, a traditionalist newspaper produced weekly in New York.¹²²

*Marriage license of Isaac and Hannah Moses, June 25, 1856.
(Courtesy of the Muscogee County Probate Court, Columbus, GA.)*

Isaac, though, had one advantage that Jacob lacked – the presence of an established Jewish community. Unlike Jacob, he was not dependent on the Charleston community but instead interacted with other local Jews, especially through their organizations. Both his weddings, for instance, took place in Columbus, and he was buried in the Jewish section of the city’s Linwood cemetery. The development of a Jewish community, however, meant that he maintained a higher public profile as a Jew than did his brother and contributed not only to Columbus’s overall development but also to its Jewish life. He therefore elevated the visibility of

the Jewish community in Columbus in ways that Jacob could not.¹²³

Conclusion

Today few people know of Jacob and Isaac Moses. In 2014 the Columbus Museum staged an exhibit about the Jewish community in the Chattahoochee Valley. While the exhibit mentioned that Jacob served as mayor, it gave no other details about his life or contributions. The situation with Isaac is similar. In 1933 Phenix City began constructing the Moses Memorial Bridge, named after Isaac, across Holland Creek on Broad Street. Completed in 1935, the bridge's name likely arose from the efforts of his son, also named Isaac I. Moses, who was president of the Russell County, Alabama, Board of Roads and Revenue and a former mayor of Girard, Alabama. Other than acknowledging that Isaac was an "outstanding citizen," accounts of the bridge's dedication did not explain what made him outstanding. In short, the Moses brothers are significant because, despite their relative anonymity among historians and most locals, they helped to create Columbus and the surrounding area. In doing so, they demonstrated the complexities and sophistication of nineteenth-century Jewish life rooted in, but extending beyond, the South.¹²⁴

This essay illustrates several important themes and breaks new ground in others. By providing a case study of the movement of Jews across the country, it demonstrates that mobility did not necessarily break ties with places of origin. In fact, as Mark K. Bauman, Leonard Rogoff, and others have argued, Jewish communities in Baltimore, Charleston, New York, and similar enclaves served as centers for peripheral Jewish life.¹²⁵ Beyond religion, intra- and cross-regional Jewish/family networks facilitated the success of business ventures especially in difficult times like Reconstruction. The move of Jacob Moses to New York as the agent for his southern business reinforces the pattern delineated by Elliott Ashkenazi.¹²⁶ In terms of business and economic history, the extended Moses family involvement in the hardware business offers for future exploration a new economic niche into which Jews entered. Extension of the business to other communities and

further investments in internal improvements and land development reflect typical growth patterns for Jewish economic mobility.

Historians often list Jewish office holders but fail to explain their specific policies and activities. Jacob Moses's experience in the public sphere sheds new light on the role of Jews in political parties and offices. Specifically it elucidates a Jewish merchant's position in relation to the tariff, monetary policy, state rights, and a factious political party system while placing these in the context of his financial priorities. Isaac Moses's experiences demonstrate a transition into a greater local Jewish consciousness on the parts of Jews and non-Jews. He and those Jews who followed him on the school board held office as Jewish representatives and pursued policies as such. This essay thus goes beyond Bauman's findings, since in Atlanta ethnic politics was not specifically defined in contrast to the situation in Columbus.

In a broader sense, the story of the Moses family demonstrates that Jews in the South were cosmopolitan, economically and geographically mobile, and willing to take controversial positions. They fit into and contributed to southern communities even as they retained their distinctiveness. Their identity with the South, therefore, was conditional in relation to religious, economic, and familial priorities.

NOTES

Many people have helped me in researching and writing this essay. I especially want to thank the many archivists who assisted in finding important information. I also am grateful to Jean Kiralfy Kent, Kay Broda, Gina Satlof Block, and Linda Kennedy, all of Columbus, Georgia, who gave valuable and hospitable assistance. As always, Mark Bauman has provided indispensable guidance.

¹ There were actually three unrelated Moses families from Charleston, South Carolina, that resided in Columbus, Georgia, at about the same time and eventually intermarried with each other. Jacob and Isaac represented the first of these families. Their father, Isaiah Moses, was a native of Hanover, Germany, and immigrated to England during the 1790s, where he lived for a few years before immigrating to Charleston sometime just before 1800. See Judith Alexander Weil Shanks, *Old Family Things: An Affectionate Look Back* (Washing-

ton, DC, 2011), 6–9; Henry Aaron Alexander, *Notes on the Alexander Family of South Carolina and Georgia and Connections* (Atlanta, 1954), 51. Raphael J. Moses represented the second family. He was the son of Israel Moses and grandson of Philip Moses. See Malcolm Stern, *First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies, 1654–1988* (Cincinnati, 1978), 212; Stern's genealogies are searchable online, and individual pages can be downloaded from The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (hereafter cited as AJA), <http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/fajf/>, accessed January 13, 2015. The third Moses family consisted of various descendants of Isaac Clifton Moses, who was the son of Myer Moses. This group included Isaac Clifton's daughter, Eliza Matilda, who married Raphael J. Moses. James William Hagy indicates that Myer Moses, who was born in 1735, came from England in 1767 and that Isaac Clifton Moses, born in 1781, was a member of Charleston's Reformed Society of Israelites. See James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 50, 62, 137, 160; Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 205, 207, accessed January 13, 2015. Stanford S. Moses, grandson of both Jacob I. and Raphael J. Moses, wrote in an unpublished work about a visit that his grandparents, Raphael and Eliza Moses, made in 1844 to Stamford, Connecticut. Eliza's father, Isaac Clifton Moses, had died and was buried there ten years earlier while visiting friends, the Beach family. Stanford observes: "This incident appears to mark the beginning of the long friendship of the Beach family with three separate, unrelated Moses families, except as related by marriage: the Isaac C. Moses family, the Raphael J. Moses family and the family of Jacob I. Moses." Stanford S. Moses, "Raphael J. Moses. His Life and Letters, with Notes and Comment," 49–50, Historic Columbus Foundation Collection, Columbus, Georgia. See also Raphael Jacob Moses, *Last Order of the Lost Cause: The True Story of a Jewish Family in the "Old South,"* ed. Mel Young (Lanham, Md., 1995), 61–62. The September 25, 1834, editions of both the *Southern Patriot* of Charleston, SC, and *Charleston Courier* indicate that on September 3, 1834, Isaac C. Moses died near New Haven. He is buried in the Branford Center Cemetery, Branford, New Haven County, Connecticut.

² Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln, NE, 1982), 69–125.

³ John S. Lupold, *Columbus, Georgia, 1828–1978* (Columbus, GA, 1978), 3–6; Gerald L. Holder, "State Planned Trading Centers in Pioneer Georgia," *Pioneer America* 14 (September 1982): 120–22. Beginning in March 1827, a land lottery was held in order to distribute the Creek lands. Regarding the city's population, the *Macon Telegraph* reported on March 17, 1828, that there already were eight to nine hundred people living in Columbus.

⁴ John H. Martin, *Columbus, Geo., from its Selection as a "Trading Town" in 1827, to Its Partial Destruction by Wilson's Raid, in 1865, v. 1, Part 1. 1827 to 1846* (Columbus, GA, 1874), 16. While neither county nor city records reflect Jacob's purchase of lots in 1828, mentions of his business in various issues of the 1828 *Columbus Enquirer* indicate his presence in the town.

⁵ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 94–95, 176–177; Theodore Rosengarten and Dale Rosengarten, eds., *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life* (Columbia, SC, 2002), 102–103.

⁶ Whenever the term *Hall & Moses* appears in this essay, it refers to the business. The phrase *Hall and Moses* refers to the individual owners, Hervey Hall and Jacob Moses.

⁷ "Hervey Hall," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, January 24, 1878; See also, "The Georgia Press," *Macon Weekly Telegraph*, October 28, 1873; "Trinity Episcopal Church," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, September 3, 1882; Lynn Willoughby, *A Power for Good: The History of Trinity Parish Columbus, Georgia* (Macon, GA, 1999), 8. Note that in older sources Hall's first name often is misspelled as Harvey. The same applies for the middle initial in Jacob I. Moses's name, as well as his brother, Isaac I. Moses: the *I* often appears as a *J*.

⁸ Barnett A. Elzas, *The Old Jewish Cemeteries at Charleston, S.C.* (Charleston, 1903), 54; Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 211, accessed January 13, 2015. Hervey Hall Moses lived only a short while, being born on August 22, 1849, and dying on June 10, 1850. Stern indicates that the child was born in New York City, where Jacob and his family were living at the time, although the child does not appear in the 1850 New York City federal census, as it was conducted after his death.

⁹ *Columbus Enquirer*, April 21, 1832.

¹⁰ *Columbus Enquirer*, June 2, 1832, and December 15, 1832.

¹¹ Glenn Porter and Harold C. Livesay, *Merchants and Manufacturers: Studies in the Changing Structure of Nineteenth-Century Marketing* (Chicago, 1971), 3-7, 34-35, 220-222; Howell J. Harris, "Inventing the U.S. Stove Industry, c.1815-1875: Making and Selling the First Universal Consumer Durable," *Business History Review* 82 (Winter 2008): 703. For brief discussions of the various terms used for middlemen, see Porter and Livesay, *Merchants and Manufacturers*, 5 n. 5. Fred Mitchell Jones and Ernest L. Bogart, *Middlemen in the Domestic Trade of the United States, 1800-1860* (Urbana, IL, 1937), 9-12.

¹² An exceedingly large number of products made up the hardware industry as a whole, so it is difficult to delineate precisely when American-made hardware collectively exceeded foreign imports. Nonetheless, this likely did not occur until after the Civil War. See William H. Becker, "Wholesale Hardware Trade Associations, 1870-1900," *Business History Review* 45 (Summer 1971): 181; Lewis E. Atherton, "Itinerant Merchandising in the Ante-Bellum South," *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society* 19 (April 1945): 49. Much of the imported hardware came from England and Germany and, according to Edward C. Simmons, in 1850 as much as four-fifths of the country's hardware was imported. See Edward C. Simmons, "The Hardware Trade" in *One Hundred Years of American Commerce, 1795-1895*, ed. Chauncey M. Depew, vol. 2 (New York, 1895), 633-634.

¹³ "Our Town," *Columbus Enquirer*, December 27, 1834. See also, John S. Lupold and Thomas L. French, Jr., *Bridging Deep South Rivers: The Life and Legend of Horace King* (Athens, GA, 2004), 9; "Prosperity of Columbus," *Columbus Enquirer*, August 4, 1832.

¹⁴ "Removal," *Columbus Enquirer*, November 20, 1835. By 1836 Hall & Moses routinely identified their store's location in advertisements as "Broad Street, sign of the Padlock"; see, for instance, the advertisement in the *Columbus Enquirer*, April 15, 1836. Hall & Moses bought one-sixth of lot 170 on February 20, 1835; see James C. Sullivan to Hall & Moses, February 20, 1835, Deeds vol. A, 226, Office of the Muscogee County Clerk of Superior and State Courts, Columbus, GA. Lot 170 was later redesignated as 96 Broad Street. Hall &

Moses had since at least 1865 been identified with 96 Broad, although businesses on Broad Street had been using street numbers since at least 1853. See Hall & Moses's advertisement in the September 16, 1865, *Columbus Enquirer*, where their location is identified as "No. 96, Old Stand, Broad Street." In 1886, 96 Broad Street became 1120 Broad Street when Columbus renumbered its streets, and Broad Street's name was later changed to Broadway. "The City Fathers," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, March 4, 1886. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1885 and 1889 also reflect this change. I am grateful to David Owings and the staff at the Columbus State University archives in Columbus, GA, for helping confirm that lot 170 on Broad Street, 96 Broad Street, and 1120 Broadway are all the same location.

¹⁵ Lupold and French, *Bridging Deep South Rivers*, 57. The founding of Girard grew out of the 1832 Treaty of Cusseta, which required Creek Indians to relinquish claims to all of their Alabama lands but included the promise from the United States that it would survey all the land and open it to white settlement, with the exception of certain parcels allotted to particular Creek chiefs and heads of households. According to John T. Ellis, of all the dangers confronting the Creeks, "the greatest danger came out of Columbus, Georgia" in what amounted to "one of the dirtiest land grabs in U.S. history." See John T. Ellis, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Lincoln, NE, 2010), 47–59, 63, 98. See also, Green, *Politics of Indian Removal*, 181.

¹⁶ Jacob I. Moses to [Hervey] Hall, March 4, 1838, Deeds, Book C, 408–409, Russell County Office of Probate, Phenix City, AL; James C. Watson, Daniel McDougald, Robert Collins, and Burton Hepburn to Hervey Hall and Jacob I. Moses, December 19, 1839, Deeds, Book C, 410, Russell County Office of Probate, Phenix City, AL.

¹⁷ Ellis, *Second Creek War*, 109–125; Green, *Politics of Indian Removal*, 184–186; Lupold, *Columbus, Georgia*, 10–11; Martin, *Columbus, Geo.*, 1:52–55; "Public Meeting," *Columbus Enquirer*, May 1, 1835; "Probably First Muster Roll Columbus Guards," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, May 4, 1913; Nancy Telfair, *A History of Columbus, Georgia, 1828–1928* (Columbus, 1929), 50–55.

¹⁸ Mark I. Greenberg, "Becoming Southern: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia, 1830–70," *American Jewish History* 86 (1998): 60–61. Greenberg discusses Jews using slave ownership to mark their status as insiders. Eric L. Goldstein writes that white Americans routinely "contrasted themselves to African Americans, Native Americans, and other peoples of color." Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, 2006), 16.

¹⁹ "Notice," *Columbus Enquirer*, September 29, 1836; Tax book, 1840, City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA; Moultrie Moses et al., plaintiffs in error, vs. Isaac I. Moses, executor, defendant in error, 50 Ga. 9, 16 (1873). According to his obituary, Roberts came to Columbus in 1832 and then moved to Montgomery in 1839, where he organized the first hardware store in Montgomery, which was Hall, Moses & Roberts. "Death of Mr. Roberts," *Montgomery Advertiser*, July 17, 1901. Hall, Moses & Roberts was dissolved in 1859, and its public announcement stated that they had been in business for eighteen years. This suggests that they began business in 1841. "Dissolution," *Daily Confed-*

eration (Montgomery, AL), April 18, 1859. Roberts also appears as a witness on the 1838 and 1839 transactions involving the purchase of lots in Girard.

²⁰ The term *state rights* reflects antebellum terminology for both the issue and the formal name of the political party. This stands in contrast to modern usage, which prefers *states' rights*. The *Columbus Sentinel & Herald* asserted in a column from March 7, 1839, that the Union Party marched under "the banner of Union and State Rights. . . . We believe in the Union of States, so long as that Union can be preserved without infringing at all upon the rights of the individual states." Formerly known as the Clark Party, the Union group was "friends of the present administration [Martin Van Buren's]; the opponents of Henry Clay, Gen. Harrison, a United States Bank," and an advocate of the "Subtreasury system." The paper explained a year later that both the Union and State Rights parties embraced Republican principles, especially as laid down in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798–1799, but that the State Rights Party was "more ultra in their Republican doctrines." "Parties!" *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, May 30, 1840.

²¹ "State Rights Meeting," *Columbus Enquirer*, March 29, 1834. See also, "Great Meeting of the State Rights Party," *Georgia Journal* (Milledgeville), November 16, 1833; "Political," *Georgia Journal* (Milledgeville), January 1, 1834. The Muscogee County group's constitution also laid out its organizational structure, including stipulating quarterly meetings in January, April, October, and on the Fourth of July. Thus when Jacob Moses attended the Independence Day celebration in 1834, he was also participating in a quarterly meeting of the new party.

²² See Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (New York, 1999), 35; Anthony Gene Carey, "'E Pluribus Unum': Georgia Politics and the Dynamics of the Jacksonian Party System, 1840–1844," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Winter 1995): 811; Lynda Worley Skelton, "The States Rights Movement in Georgia, 1825–1850," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 50 (December 1966): 399–400.

²³ "Fourth of July at Columbus," *Columbus Enquirer*, July 12, 1834.

²⁴ Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815–1840* (Baltimore, 1995), 186.

²⁵ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York, 2007), 367–410; Holt, *American Whig Party*, 23–28. For an example of how Georgia's State Rights Party rejected associations with northern Whigs, see "The Elections," *Columbus Enquirer*, October 18, 1834.

²⁶ *Columbus Enquirer*, January 4, 1838, and January 11, 1838. On December 25, 1837, the Georgia General Assembly amended Columbus's charter to provide for its division into six wards. Ward Three was located south of Randolph Street and north of St. Clair Street and encompassed the area in which Hall & Moses's main store was located (at the time designated as lot 170 on Broad Street). See "An Act to amend the several Acts of the Legislature of this State incorporating the city of Columbus, in the county of Muscogee, and to lay off the said city into Wards, and to point out the mode of electing the Mayor and Aldermen thereof," *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, Passed in Milledgeville at an annual session in November and December, 1837*, vol. 1 (Milledgeville, GA, 1838), 55–58,

<http://metis.galib.uga.edu/ssp/cgi-bin/legis-idx.pl?sessionid=29cec5f8-043f8a4673-0870&type=law&byte=16872931&lawcnt=40&filt=doc>, accessed June 2, 2015.

²⁷ "Council Chamber," *Columbus Enquirer*, October 30, 1839. See also, "Council Chamber," *Columbus Enquirer*, October 23, 1839; *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, January 17, 1839; "Council Chamber," *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, November 6, 1839; Martin, *Columbus, Geo.*, 1:99-103. The report also gave instructions for how citizen patrols should respond when a fire broke out, as well as required tenement owners to supply the city, when necessary, with two leather buckets to help fight fires. Additionally, the committee created a process for investigating and reporting on the causes of fires.

²⁸ "Married," *Charleston Courier*, December 7, 1839; Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 84, 129, 246, 265-266; Rosengarten and Rosengarten, *Portion of the People*, 103-106; Jean Kiralfy Kent, *Temple Israel of Columbus, Georgia* (Columbus, GA, 1999), 4. When KKBE voted on July 28, 1841, to change its constitution so the organ could be used on all occasions, Isaiah Moses cast the only dissenting vote.

²⁹ Minute Book of Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, November 29, 1840, 142, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (Charleston, SC) Records, 1764-1977, 1800-1928, AJA. It is possible that this Jacob Moses refers to someone else, but a survey of the Coming Street Cemetery done in 1974 indeed reflects that an unnamed infant daughter of Jacob and Rinah Moses is buried there. While the gravestone is difficult to read, surveyors thought the death date was 1840. Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) Coming Street Cemetery, Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, http://www.jhssc.org/Charleston_KKBethElohim_ComingStreet_Cemetery.html, accessed January 30, 2015. Hagy notes that occasionally KKBE members requested Jewish burials for non-members. After railroads became more common, former Jewish residents of Charleston often arranged for their interment in the cemetery. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 181-182.

³⁰ Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, Muscogee County, Georgia.

³¹ Holt, *American Whig Party*, 61-64; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 502-505.

³² Carey, "Jacksonian Party System," 812-813. See also, Anthony Gene Carey, *Parties, Slavery, and the Union in Antebellum Georgia* (Athens, GA, 1997), 46-53; Paul Murray, *The Whig Party in Georgia, 1825-1853* (Chapel Hill, 1948), 89-92. For an account of the convention's proceedings, see "Anti-Van Buren Convention," *Southern Recorder* (Milledgeville, GA), June 9, 1840, as well as a briefer recounting from the June 2, 1840, issue. Also see, "The June Convention," *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, June 6, 1840.

³³ "A CALL!!!," *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, June 13, 1840. The statement was subsequently reprinted in papers across the state, including the *Georgia Argus* (Columbus), the *Federal Union* (Milledgeville), and the *Macon Telegraph*.

³⁴ "State Rights Convention" and "The Marriage," *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, July 11, 1840; "State Rights Convention" and "Democratic Republican Convention," *Macon Georgia Telegraph*, July 14, 1840, and *Federal Union* (Milledgeville, GA), July 14, 1840; "Editor's Correspondence," *Columbus Enquirer*, July 8, 1840. For a mocking assessment of the conventions, see "A Look at the Convention," *Columbus Enquirer*, July 15, 1840.

³⁵ "Democratic Republican Meeting," *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, August 1, 1840; "Democratic Meeting," *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, August 8, 1840.

³⁶ "Council Chamber," *Columbus Sentinel & Herald*, January 13, 1841; *List of City Officials*, 41, City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA.

³⁷ Lynn Willoughby, *Fair to Middlin': The Antebellum Cotton Trade of the Apalachicola/Chattahoochee River Valley* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 54, 56.

³⁸ Willoughby, *Fair to Middlin'*, 57.

³⁹ Lynn Willoughby Ware, "Cotton Money: Antebellum Currency Conditions in the Apalachicola/Chattahoochee River Valley," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 74 (Summer 1990): 218–225.

⁴⁰ Announcement and "Change Bills," *Columbus Enquirer*, November 24, 1841. Milledgeville's *Southern Recorder* also took note of the Columbus merchants' announcement. Its editor criticized Democrats in Georgia's legislature for failing to authorize specie-paying banks to issue bills under five dollars that were redeemable with specie. In his opinion, passage of such a bill would truly reflect support for a "sound currency." *Southern Recorder* (Milledgeville, GA), November 30, 1841. Willoughby indicates that John G. Winter, "the most prominent capitalist in Columbus," was the worst offender when it came to circulating massive quantities of change bills. When Winter was convicted of violating state law regarding the circulation of change bills, he hired "a sly lawyer," Raphael J. Moses, who successfully challenged his conviction. Moses succeeded in the early 1850s in getting a new law passed by the Georgia General Assembly that benefitted Winter. See Willoughby, *Fair to Middlin'*, 59–60.

⁴¹ Willoughby, *Fair to Middlin'*, 64–65; "The Banks," *Columbus Enquirer*, April 28, 1841; "The Currency—The Exchanges," *Columbus Enquirer*, January 19, 1842.

⁴² *Columbus Enquirer*, June 9, 1842; "The Currency," reprinted in the *Southern Recorder* (Milledgeville, GA), August 30, 1842. The *Southern Recorder* identified the source of "The Currency" only as the *Jeffersonian*. This likely refers to the *Georgia Jeffersonian* of Griffin, Georgia. The action taken by the fifty Columbus merchants was referenced in the April 26, 1874, edition of the *Sun and Columbus Daily Enquirer* in its column, "Recollections of 1842." The paper observed that the determination to receive only bills and notes that could be redeemed "on a gold basis" was taken due to the "ruinous price of exchange." For actions by merchants in other towns, see *Columbus Enquirer*, August 17, 1842.

⁴³ *Columbus Enquirer*, September 14, 1842.

⁴⁴ "The Central Bank" and "The Central Bank and the Constitutionalist," *Columbus Enquirer*, August 10, 1842; "The State Currency," *Columbus Enquirer*, September 28, 1842. The Central Bank, chartered in 1828, redeemed its notes in specie until 1839, when it suspended these payments. During that same year, Georgia's General Assembly, with its Democratic majority, authorized the bank to dramatically increase the number of notes it issued. Guerry voted in favor of this bill. A *Columbus Enquirer* writer explained in the September 28, 1842, issue: "By this amendment, the flood gates of financial ruin were opened. . . . To this amendment of the bank charter we are indebted for the present ruinous depreciation of our State currency." Although Whigs repealed the bill when they gained control of the legisla-

ture in 1840, the Democrats promptly restored it the next year when they regained the majority.

⁴⁵ "Mr. Guerry's Bill," *Columbus Enquirer*, November 30, 1842; "The Currency. Movements of the People" and minutes of the November 29 and November 30 meetings, *Columbus Enquirer*, December 7, 1842; "Georgia Legislature. House of Representatives," *Southern Recorder* (Milledgeville), November 29, 1842; "Georgia Legislature. House of Representatives," *Georgia Journal* (Milledgeville), November 29, 1842.

⁴⁶ "The Currency. Movements of the People," and minutes of the November 29 and November 30 meetings, *Columbus Enquirer*, December 7, 1842.

⁴⁷ "Mr. Guerry's Bill," *Columbus Enquirer*, December 28, 1842. See also, "A Word to the Merchants" and "They Won't Do It," *Columbus Enquirer*, December 7, 1842; "The Mechanics of Columbus" and "The Merchants of Columbus," *Columbus Enquirer*, December 28, 1842; "Georgia Legislature. Senate," *Southern Recorder* (Milledgeville), December 27, 1842; "Georgia Legislature. Senate," *Georgia Journal* (Milledgeville), December 27, 1842.

⁴⁸ Note that by the late 1830s, the Whigs and Nullifiers, or State Rights Party, had largely merged in Georgia. Carey, "Jacksonian Party System," 812-813; Skelton, "States Rights Movement," 402.

⁴⁹ "The City Elections," *Columbus Enquirer*, December 14, 1842; "Many Citizens," *Columbus Enquirer*, November 16, 1842; "A Whig," "One of the Tax Payers," and "A Citizen," *Columbus Enquirer*, December 7, 1842.

⁵⁰ "The City Elections. Attention, Whigs!," *Columbus Enquirer*, December 28, 1842.

⁵¹ "The City Elections," *Columbus Enquirer*, January 11, 1843.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Carey explains that Georgia's early politics were based on particular individuals. During the early nineteenth century, William H. Crawford and George M. Troup led one party, while John Clark led the other. During Andrew Jackson's presidency, the two parties essentially dissolved and initially coalesced together in support of him, but as disagreements arose over Jackson's actions, the Union and State Rights parties emerged. Carey, *Parties, Slavery, and the Union*, 19-28.

⁵⁴ Ordinances and Resolutions Record Book, 1841-1846, January 9, 1843, 85, City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, February 6, 1843, 115-116.

⁵⁶ Carey, *Parties, Slavery, and the Union*, 26, 31, 67, 144. Carey describes Howard as a "Columbus hotspur." Howard was one of thirteen members placed on the Central Committee of the State Rights Association of Georgia on November 13, 1833, and he also attended both the 1840 State Rights and Democratic Republican conventions held in Milledgeville. See, "Great State Rights Meeting," *Southern Recorder* (Milledgeville), November 20, 1833.

⁵⁷ "City Election," *Columbus Enquirer*, December 30, 1840.

⁵⁸ Ordinances and Resolutions Record Book, 1841-1846, February 2, 1842, 43, City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, February 2, 1842, 42-44, November 18, 1842, 79-80, and May 13, 1843, 149-151. The entire text of the contract between the city and Howard and Echols, along with the plat of the water lots are included in the February 2, 1842, entry.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, July 8, 1843, 166-167.

⁶¹ *Columbus Enquirer*, July 19, 1843.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.* See also, "To the Members of the City Council," *Columbus Enquirer*, July 26, 1843. There is no indication that Henry T. Hall was related to Jacobs's partner Hervey Hall.

⁶⁴ "Columbus Water Lots," *Columbus Enquirer*, April 30, 1845.

⁶⁵ "Another Factory," *Columbus Enquirer*, July 13, 1847, and October 17, 1848; Martin, *Columbus, Geo*, 1:138, 2:22; "An act to incorporate the [Illegible Text] Water [Illegible Text] Company, in the city of Columbus, to be called 'The Water Lot Company of the city of Columbus,'" *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, Passed in November and December, - 1845, Private and Local*, vol. 1 (Columbus, GA, 1846), 123-125, <http://metis.galib.uga.edu/ssp/cgi-bin/legis-idx.pl?sessionId=29cec5f8-043f8a4673-0870&type=law&byte=22918628>, accessed June 2, 2015.

⁶⁶ The Muscogee Railroad's original charter indicated that it was to build the line from Columbus to West Point, but in 1850 the Georgia General Assembly gave permission for the Muscogee to connect with the Southwestern at Fort Valley. See, "An act to authorize and empower the Muscogee Railroad Company to connect their Railroad with the Southwestern Railroad, and for other purposes therein named," *Acts of the State of Georgia, 1849-1850*, vol. 1 (Milledgeville, GA, 1850), 245, <http://metis.galib.uga.edu/ssp/cgi-bin/legis-idx.pl?sessionId=29cec5f8-043f8a4673-0870&type=law&byte=24801892>, accessed June 2, 2015.

⁶⁷ "The Muscogee Railroad," *Savannah News*, reprinted in *Georgia Telegraph* (Macon), October 28, 1851.

⁶⁸ "The Railroad," *Columbus Enquirer*, September 2, 1846; "Muscogee Rail Road Company," *Columbus Enquirer*, November 11, 1846; Columbus, Georgia, Board of Aldermen Minutes, January 19, 1848, and January 24, 1848, Record Book A, 233, 235-237, City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA; "Council Chambers," *Columbus Enquirer*, March 7, 1848; "The Muscogee Railroad," *Columbus Enquirer*, November 7, 1848; "Railroad Meeting," *Columbus Enquirer*, November 21, 1848.

⁶⁹ Tax book, 1840, City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA, Columbus, GA; Georgia, v. 23, R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, Baker Library, Harvard Business School. In 1856, a statement of Jacob's assets indicated that his interest in Hall & Moses was about \$110,000 minus his indebtedness to the business of \$7,000. An 1865 inventory of his assets included \$117,621.25, "it being the interest of said Moses in said firm upon a settlement of said firm by arbitration." Statement of assets of Jacob I. Moses, March 17, 1856, Journal G, Probate Records, 288, Muscogee County Probate Court, Columbus, GA; Inventory of assets of Jacob I. Moses, January 2, 1865, Journal P, Probate Records, 69, Muscogee County Probate Court, Columbus, GA.

⁷⁰ "Destructive Fire" and "A Card," *Columbus Enquirer*, March 9, 1847.

⁷¹ Hall & Moses advertisements, *Columbus Enquirer*, March 23, April 13, and October 12, 1847.

⁷² Hall & Moses advertisement, *Columbus Enquirer*, June 29, 1847.

⁷³ Mark K. Bauman, "Beyond the Parochial Image of Southern Jewry: Studies in National and International Leadership and Interactive Mechanisms," in *New Essays in American Jewish History Commemorating the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Jewish Archives*, ed. Pamela S. Nadell, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Lance Sussman (Cincinnati, 2010), 139.

⁷⁴ Examples of southern Jewish business families that opened offices in New York City include the Seligmans and Lehmans. The Seligmans ran country stores in Alabama during the 1840s before opening an importing firm in New York. The Lehman brothers, who were involved in the cotton business in Alabama, opened an office in New York in 1858. See Elliott Ashkenazi, "Jewish Commercial Interests Between North and South," in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark K. Bauman (Tuscaloosa, 2006), 197–199.

⁷⁵ Jacob Moses and his family appear twice in the 1850 federal census, being enumerated both in Columbus and New York. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, New York, New York and Muscogee County, Georgia. The enumeration for New York was done on August 21. Living with Jacob and his family were two older, New York-born teenagers, Elias and Theophilus Mullison, who were working as clerks, likely for Jacob. The enumeration for Columbus was done on October 25. Jacob was living with his younger brother, Isaac, and another relative, J. P. Hendricks, both of whom were working as clerks, probably for Hall & Moses. The family immediately preceding them on the enumeration was that of William Beach. After Jacob's death in 1854, Isaac, Hendricks, and Beach partnered with Hervey Hall in running the hardware business.

⁷⁶ Will of Jacob I. Moses, Will Book A, 187–193, Muscogee County Probate Court, Columbus, GA.

⁷⁷ "Obituary," *Charleston Courier*, April 29, 1845; "Obituary," *Columbus Enquirer*, May 7, 1845; "Obituary, Mrs. Rinah J. Moses," *Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 3 (July 1845): 216.

⁷⁸ Minute Book of Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, May 21, 1848, AJA; "Married," *Charleston Courier*, May 27, 1848.

⁷⁹ In addition to marrying Jacob I. Moses's sister, Leonora, Rosenfeld performed the wedding ceremonies for at least two of Jacob's sisters and two brothers: Cecilia Moses to Abraham A. Solomons in 1843; Adeline Moses to Adolph J. Brady in 1845; Isaac I. Moses to Hannah M. Moses in 1856; and Abraham J. Moses to Annie Jonas Moses in 1859. See Barnett A. Elzas, *Jewish Marriage Notices from the Newspaper Press of Charleston, S.C., 1775–1906* (New York, 1917), 21–22; Marriage license of Isaac I. Moses and Hannah M. Moses, vol. D, 128, Muscogee County Probate Court, Columbus, GA; Marriage license of Abraham J. Moses and Annie Jonas, vol. 22, 222, Hamilton County Probate Court, Cincinnati, OH; "Married," *Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, November 24, 1859. Rosenfeld emigrated from Lissa, Posen, Prussia, in 1842 and became a naturalized citizen at the age of thirty-two

on December 21, 1846. Note that the naturalization papers record his last name as Rosenfeldt. Record of Admissions to Citizenship, District of South Carolina, 1790-1906, Ancestry.com, accessed February 28, 2015. Rosenfeld left Charleston and went to Cincinnati's Kahal Kadosh B'nai Jeshurun to serve as the hazan. He then went to Savannah's Mickve Israel from 1853-1862, and while there was, according to Gary Zola, "anything but a reformer." Gary Phillip Zola, "The Ascendancy of Reform Judaism in the American South during the Nineteenth Century," in *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil: A New History*, ed. Marcie Cohen Ferris and Mark I. Greenberg (Lebanon, NH, 2006), 172-173. See also, Saul Jacob Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry, 1733-1983* (Savannah, GA, 1983), 111-117.

⁸⁰ "Obituary," *Charleston Courier*, December 12, 1854; "Obituary," *Charleston Courier*, December 16, 1854; "Death of J. I. Moses," *Columbus Enquirer*, December 19, 1854.

⁸¹ "First List of Subscribers (1843)," *Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 1 (July 1843): 214-216. Jacob's father also appeared as a subscriber, as did Rosenfeld and Poznanski. One other person in Columbus, Elias Simpson, subscribed.

⁸² "The Ministry. No. II," *Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 24 (July 1866): 152.

⁸³ For information on Maimonides College, see Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit, 1995), 237-240. "Hebrew Festival," *New York Times*, January 28, 1854; "Jewish Institution. 1. New York 2. The Hospital," *Jewish Messenger*, January 11, 1867; "Mount Sinai Inauguration of the New Building," *Jewish Messenger*, May 31, 1872; "The Mount Sinai Hospital," *The New Era* 4 (February 1874): 67; Will of Jacob I. Moses, Will Book A, 188, Muscogee County Probate Court, Columbus, GA.

⁸⁴ "Notice," *Columbus Enquirer*, June 25, 1850. In 1890, Isaac's obituary indicated that he came to Columbus nearly fifty years before, suggesting that he arrived sometime during the 1840s. "Death of Mr. Isaac I. Moses," *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, December 14, 1890.

⁸⁵ Advertisement for Ezra I. Moses, *Columbus Enquirer*, November 14, 1854; Advertisement for Brady & Moses, *Columbus Enquirer*, October 10, 1868; "Death of Mr. E. J. Moses," *Savannah Morning News*, May 4, 1877; *Columbus Directory for 1859-1860* (Columbus, GA, 1859), 57.

⁸⁶ Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 18; Advertisement for Brady & Solomon, *Atlanta Weekly Intelligencer*, October 21, 1858. Brady came to the United States in 1842 from Hamburg, Germany. He first came to Atlanta in 1849, moved to New York in 1858, and died in Augusta in 1893. See *Pioneer Citizens' History of Atlanta, 1833-1902* (Atlanta, 1902), 355-356.

⁸⁷ "Dissolution," *Daily Confederation* (Montgomery, AL), April 18, 1859. Wyman, Moses, and Company consisted of Benjamin Leon Wyman, Abraham J. Moses, and Israel W. Roberts. They gave twenty-nine promissory notes to Isaac Moses, each for \$1,625, totaling \$47,125. The debt was paid off on April 13, 1863. See, I. W. Roberts, Abram J. Moses, and B. L. Wyman to Isaac I. Moses, April 15, 1859; Israel W. Roberts to Isaac I. Moses, January 10, 1861; and cancellation of notes by Isaac I. Moses, April 13, 1863, Deeds Book 13, 110-112, Montgomery County Probate Office, Montgomery, AL.

⁸⁸ "Dissolution" and "Copartnership Notice," *Columbus Enquirer*, February 20, 1855.

⁸⁹ Jacob P. Hendricks's mother was Esther Phillips, who married Isaac Hendricks of Augusta, Georgia. His grandparents, as well as Isaac and Jacob Moses's, were Jacob Phillips and Hannah Isaacks. See, Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 247, accessed March 1, 2015.

⁹⁰ See n.1 above for the connection between the Beach and Moses families.

⁹¹ All four partners appear, at one time or another, in New York City directories for the years leading up to the Civil War. See, for instance, *Trow's New York City Directory for the year ending May 1, 1857* (New York, 1857), 59, 346–347, 375, and 595, Ancestry.com, accessed February 9, 2015. Separate entries appear for all four partners, as well as Hall, Moses & Co. and Hall, Moses & Roberts. The address is the same for each entry, 55 Cliff, but each individual's home is given as Columbus, Georgia.

⁹² "Probably Fatal Duel," *Columbus Tri-Weekly Enquirer*, February 24, 1857; "Death of Mr. Hendricks," *Columbus Tri-Weekly Enquirer*, February 26, 1857; "Another Fatal Duel," *Savannah Daily Republican*, February 24, 1857. According to the February 25, 1857, edition of the *Savannah Daily Republican*, Hendricks's funeral was held at the residence of "Mr. Solomons." Rumors had circulated for several days that Hendricks and O. S. Kimbrough, who lived in Columbus, would duel. In order to prevent it, the authorities attempted to arrest both men, but they slipped out of the city and held the duel at a place identified as Screven's Fall. The March 7, 1857, edition of the *Macon Weekly Telegraph* reprinted a story from the *Augusta Constitutionalist* indicating that Hendricks's mother, sister, and brother lived in Hamburg, South Carolina. Isaac Moses served as executor of Hendricks's estate, and his brother Ezra helped put up the necessary bond. Hendricks is buried in Laurel Grove (North) Cemetery in Savannah.

⁹³ "Hervey Hall," *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, January 24, 1878. Hall died on October 29, 1877, in Brazil and is buried in Cemitério dos Americanos in São Paulo.

⁹⁴ "Hall, Moses & Co. Notice of Dissolution," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, June 3, 1871; advertisement for Wm. Beach, *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 11, 1871.

⁹⁵ Advertisement for Hall, Moses & Company, *Columbus Enquirer*, December 4, 1855.

⁹⁶ Advertisements for Hall, Moses & Company and Brown's Foundry, *Columbus Enquirer*, July 3, 1855. The two companies ran advertisements positioned next to each other from 1855 to 1858.

⁹⁷ John S. Lupold, J. B. Karfunkle, and Barbara Kimmelman, "The Columbus Iron Works" (1977), 3–4, The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) Collection, Columbus State University Archives, Columbus, GA. J. P. Golden II, *The First Hundred Years, 1882–1982: A History of Goldens' Foundry & Machine Company, Columbus, Georgia* (Columbus, GA, 1989), 4; "An Act to incorporate certain persons under the name and style of the Columbus Iron Works Company," *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, Passed in Milledgeville, at a Bi-ennial Session, in November, December, January, February & March, 1855–'56*, vol. 1 (Milledgeville, GA, 1856), 426–427, <http://metis.galib.uga.edu/ssp/cgi-bin/legis-idx.pl?sessionId=29cec5f8-043f8a4673-0870&type=law&byte=30688369>, accessed June 2, 2015. A full-page advertisement for the Columbus Iron Works that appeared in the October 1, 1895, edition of the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* indicates that it was established in 1853 by Brown and "his associates" and incorporated in 1856. Brown's obituary in 1902

cites Isaac Moses and William Beach as “early associates” in the Columbus Iron Works. See “W. R. Brown Passes Away,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, March 29, 1902. For examples of the goods produced by the Columbus Iron Works, see its advertisements in the March 30, 1858, and July 6, 1859, editions of the *Columbus Enquirer*.

⁹⁸ John S. Lupold, “History of the Columbus Iron Works,” <http://www.conventiontradecenter.com/history.cfm>, accessed March 3, 2015; Lupold, Karfunkle, and Kimmelman, “Columbus Iron Works,” 4–6; Diffie William Standard, *Columbus, Georgia, in the Confederacy* (New York, 1954), 40–45. Maxine Turner described the Columbus Iron Works as follows: “After a year of war . . . [the] Columbus Iron Works had supplanted the cotton industry with its capacity for building ships and casting cannon. In a group of buildings along the Chattahoochee on the present site of the Columbus Iron Works Convention and Trade Center, W. R. Brown had a collection of shops and sheds where workmen operated twelve or fifteen large and small lathes, a foundry 300 X 40 feet, a new blacksmith shop 100 feet long, and a 60-foot-square foundry with an air furnace capable of melting twenty tons of pig iron.” Maxine Turner, *Navy Gray: A Story of the Confederate Navy on the Chattahoochee and Apalachicola Rivers* (Tuscaloosa, 1988), 148–149.

⁹⁹ “Governor’s Message,” November 6, 1861, *Journal of the Senate of the State of Georgia, at the Annual Session of the General Assembly, Begun and Held in Milledgeville, the Seat of Government, in 1861* (Milledgeville, GA, 1861), 27, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/gasen61/gasen61.html>, accessed March 4, 2015. Gray began manufacturing rifles in Columbus in 1862, although it is not known if Isaac Moses partnered with him. Joseph B. Mahan, *Columbus: Georgia’s Fall Line “Trading Town”* (Northridge, CA, 1986), 58; Standard, *Columbus, Georgia, in the Confederacy*, 40; Gordon L. Jones, *Confederate Odyssey: The George W. Wray Jr. Civil War Collection at the Atlanta History Center* (Athens, GA, 2014), 107. Isaac also had an indirect connection to the establishment of Louis and Elias Haiman’s sword factory, another Jewish-owned firm that helped arm the South. The Haiman brothers, immigrants from Prussia, settled in Columbus and opened a tinsmith shop, but when the war started they began producing pistols and swords, eventually becoming the Confederacy’s largest sword manufacturer. In 1856 Isaac had purchased for five hundred dollars at public auction the lot on which the Haimans’ factory eventually stood. At the time of Isaac’s purchase, the lot contained buildings and equipment associated with an earlier iron works facility, the Union Foundry. The following year, Isaac helped open the Muscogee Iron Works on this site, but then sold it one year later at a nice profit for \$7,500 to the Columbus Iron Works, which in turn sold it to the Haiman brothers in 1862. Isaac’s initial purchase is found in William H. Lamar to Isaac I. Moses, August 5, 1856, Deeds, vol. K, 143–144, Office of the Muscogee County Clerk of Superior and State Courts, Columbus, GA. See “Muscogee County,” *Columbus Enquirer*, July 29, 1856, for the advertisement of the public sale of the Union Foundry lot. See also, Isaac I. Moses to Columbus Iron Works Co., May 26, 1858, Deeds, vol. K, 143, Office of the Muscogee County Clerk of Superior and State Courts, Columbus, GA. For the establishment of the Muscogee Iron Works, see advertisement for Muscogee Iron Works, *Columbus Tri-Weekly Enquirer*, November 12, 1857, and “Georgia, Muscogee County,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, June 17, 1859. For the Haiman brothers’ purchase, see

Columbus Iron Works Co. to L. Haiman & Brother, April 1, 1862, Deeds, vol. L, 178-179, Office of the Muscogee County Clerk of Superior and State Courts, Columbus, GA. This transaction indicates that the lot contained "the building known as the Muscogee Iron Works." Throughout all of these transactions, the lot is identified as lot #214 situated at the corner of Oglethorpe Street (now Fourteenth Street) and Franklin Street (now First Avenue). A historical marker now identifies the site.

¹⁰⁰ In 1863 Isaac also helped found the Calhoun Iron Works in Alabama to mine and manufacture iron and, in the war's final months, the Alabama Petroleum and Lamp Company. "An act to incorporate a mining and manufacturing company," December 8, 1863, *Acts of the Called Session, 1863, and of the Third Regular Annual Session of the General Assembly of Alabama* (Montgomery, 1864), 197-98; "An act to incorporate the Alabama Petroleum and Lamp Company," February 8, 1865, *Acts of the Session of 1865-6, of the General Assembly of Alabama* (Montgomery, 1866), 265-266. In 1873, the Alabama Petroleum and Lamp Company was renamed the Alabama Coal and Iron Company. See "An act to amend the first, second and third sections of an act entitled 'an act to incorporate the Alabama Petroleum and Lamp company,'" April 19, 1873, *Acts of the Session of 1872-73, of the General Assembly of Alabama* (Montgomery, 1873), 481-483. Isaac Moses's obituary indicates that he served on Governor Joseph E. Brown's staff, supervised Georgia's railroad system during the war, and provided manufactured goods from the Iron Works of Selma and the Columbus Iron Works. "Death of Mr. Isaac I. Moses," *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, December 14, 1890.

¹⁰¹ According to the slave schedule for the 1860 federal census, Isaac Moses owned six slaves (five females and one male), ranging in age from eleven to forty-five years old. Slave Schedule, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Russell County, AL.

¹⁰² Statement of incorporation of the Georgia Importing and Exporting Company, June 17, 1863, copy in box 2, folder 18 ("Moses, Raphael J. and family"), Temple Israel Collection, Columbus State University Archives, Columbus, GA.

¹⁰³ John G. Winter to Andrew Johnson, October 4, 1864, *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, ed. Leroy P. Graf, vol. 7 (Knoxville, TN, 1986), 211-218.

¹⁰⁴ I. I. Moses Application, Georgia, 1865, Case Files of Applications from Former Confederates for Presidential Pardons ("Amnesty Papers") 1865-1867, Ancestry.com, accessed February 21, 2015. Note that Ancestry.com identifies the name on this file as J. J. Moses, but this is a misreading of I. I. Moses. For the advertisement seeking a substitute, see "Wanted," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 29, 1862.

¹⁰⁵ Greenberg, "Becoming Southern," 57-63.

¹⁰⁶ Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (Berlin, 2013), 164-165, 204-205, 307-308. See also Daniel R. Weinfeld, "A Certain Ambivalence: Florida's Jews and the Civil War," *Southern Jewish History* 17 (2014): 91-129. Weinfeld argues that choices made during the Civil War and Reconstruction by several Jewish Floridians "challenge the premise of unstinting loyalty to the Confederacy" and "question the degree to which southern Jews should be viewed as fully embracing southern white identity and as distinctive from other American Jews" (93-94).

¹⁰⁷ In 1859, Hall, Moses & Company supported developing a railroad connection from Columbus with the Atlanta & LaGrange Railroad, while in 1866 Isaac Moses was appointed as one of the delegates to represent Columbus at the Savannah and Memphis Railroad convention held in Macon. Hall, Moses & Company also owned stock in the Mobile and Girard Railroad, as well as in the Eagle Manufacturing Company. Isaac owned stock in the Muscogee Building and Loan Association. "Railroad Connection," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 20, 1859; "Savannah and Memphis Railroad Convention," *Columbus Daily Sun*, August 30, 1866; *Transferred Stock – Mobile & Girard R. R. Co.*, 8, City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA; "Meeting of Stockholders of the Eagle Manufacturing Comp'y," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, November 5, 1874; Isaac I. Moses to Muscogee Building and Loan Association, March 1, 1860, Deeds, vol. K, 403, 406–408, Office of the Muscogee County Clerk of Superior and State Courts, Columbus, GA.

¹⁰⁸ Chris Monaco, "A Sugar Utopia on the Florida Frontier: Moses Elias Levy's Pilgrimage Plantation," *Southern Jewish History* 5 (2002): 110–14; C. S. Monaco, *Moses Levy of Florida: Jewish Utopian and Antebellum Reformer* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2005), 2, 103–104.

¹⁰⁹ Isaac Moses purchased land in Russell County, Alabama, at least as early as 1859 and continued to do so throughout most of his life. According to the *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, in 1860 Browneville (also spelled as Brownville) was "an old field, formerly cultivated by Dr. Ingersoll." It came into existence after the uptown bridge in Columbus was completed in 1858 (i.e., the Bryan Street bridge; see Martin, *Columbus, Geo.*, 88), and the first house built there was "a little brown tenement on the right side of the road (i.e., that led from the bridge) which was constructed by Mr. Isaac I. Moses." In 1883, the Alabama General Assembly incorporated the town. In 1889, its name was changed to Phoenix City and later, in 1923, to Phenix City, at which time it merged with the city of Girard. Prior to 1923, part of Browneville/Phenix City was located in Lee County and part in Russell County. S. M. Ingersoll to Isaac I. Moses, March 3, 1859, Deeds, vol. K, 534–535, Russell County Probate Office, Phenix City, AL; "Our Alabama Suburbs. Browneville," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, June 8, 1879; "An act to incorporate the town of Browneville," February 23, 1883, *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama* (Montgomery, 1883), 574–583; "An act to change the name of Brownville, in Lee County," February 19, 1889, *Acts of the General Assembly of Alabama* (Montgomery, 1889), 458.

¹¹⁰ *Columbus Sunday Enquirer*, August 20, 1882. For Isaac Moses's tenements, see *Columbus Enquirer*: October 6, 1878, January 30, 1881, February 27, 1881, August 20, 1882, September 16, 1883, March 9, 1884, March 23, 1884, and May 8, 1887.

¹¹¹ For the building and loan, see "Building and Loan Association in Girard," *Columbus Daily Sun*, June 9, 1870. For the Browneville newspaper, see *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, March 5, 1884, and March 16, 1884.

¹¹² Columbus Board of Aldermen Minutes, February 4, 1867, Book F, 205–206, City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA; "Meeting of the Trustees," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 11, 1867; Katherine Hines Mahan and William Clyde Woodall with Leonora Woodall Nilan, *A History of Public Schools in Columbus, Muscogee County, Georgia* (Columbus, 1977), 82–85, 92; "The Public Schools," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, August 15,

1888. For common elements between the Lord's Prayer and Jewish liturgy, see Kaufmann Kohler's article on the Lord's Prayer in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1904), <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10112-lord-s-prayer-the>, accessed June 2, 2015. Kohler, for instance, indicates that the prayer's opening phrase—"Our father"—appears in the Shemoneh Esrei/Amidah and other liturgical texts.

¹¹³ "The Public Schools," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, July 13, 1888. See also, "A Voice from Girard," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, July 22, 1888, in which a Girard resident asserted that Moses did not reside there; Mahan and Woodall, *Public Schools in Columbus*, 143.

¹¹⁴ "How the Representation Stands," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, July 18, 1888.

¹¹⁵ "The City Council," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, August 2, 1888.

¹¹⁶ "The Public Schools," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, August 5, 1888.

¹¹⁷ "The Public Schools," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, August 15, 1888. While antisemitism could have been an underlying factor motivating the charges against Isaac, nothing directly suggests that it did. Instead, the major issues seem to be equal representation across the city's wards and the board's power to fill vacancies.

¹¹⁸ Columbus Board of Aldermen Minutes, September 5, 1888, Book I, 336, City of Columbus Clerk of Council's Office, Columbus, GA; "City Fathers in Session," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, September 6, 1888; "The Public Schools," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, September 12, 1888, and November 14, 1888. See Isaac Moses's grateful response in "Our City Fathers," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, September 13, 1888. Columbus School Trustee Minutes, September 11, 1888, 127, Columbus State University Archives, Columbus, GA. See "Short Session of City Council," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, December 7, 1899. In 1893, the Columbus city council took over election of school board trustees. See "The Change Ordained," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, March 2, 1893. For Buhler's election, see "School Trustees Meet," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 14, 1891. The line of Jewish representatives on the Columbus school board includes Isaac Moses (1867-1890), Louis Buhler (1891-1898), Sol Loeb (1899-1912, 1913-1917), and Julius Friedlander, who was first elected in 1917 and served throughout the 1920s.

¹¹⁹ "School Trustee to be Elected," *Columbus Ledger*, June 3, 1917. When Loeb was first elected to the school board, the city council received "a communication from a number of Israelites recommending" him.

¹²⁰ Mark K. Bauman, "Factionalism and Ethnic Politics in Atlanta: The German Jews from the Civil War through the Progressive Era," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 82 (Fall 1998): 542-544.

¹²¹ "Columbus, Georgia," *Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities*, <http://www.isjl.org/georgia-columbus-encyclopedia.html>, accessed January 18, 2015.

¹²² Raphael J. Moses gave a brief description of Isaac's marriage to Hannah Maria in Young, ed., *Last Order*, 73. Will of Isaac I. Moses, January 20, 1881, Will Record, vol. 3, 172-174, 244, Russell County Probate Office, Phenix City, AL. Isaac J. Moses to Isaac Leeser, April 11, 1854, The Arnold and Deanne Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica, University of Pennsylvania Libraries, <http://verity.library.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php>

?id=LSDCBx2FF1_28, accessed March 7, 2015; "Payments," *Jewish Messenger*, September 28, 1860.

¹²³ Unfortunately, records for Temple Israel do not exist prior to 1880. Isaac appears on the membership rolls for 1884 and 1886. See Temple B'nai Israel Trustee Minutes, 1880-91, July 4, 1884, and December 19, 1886, 4-5, 19-20, AJA. He also hosted picnics for the Temple's children at his home in Alabama. See, "Pic Nic Yesterday," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, May 7, 1880; "Local Laconics," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, May 20, 1884.

¹²⁴ *Shalom Y'All: The Valley's Jewish Heritage*, exhibit booklet (Columbus, GA, February 20-July 13, 2014), 4. See also, "New Span is Named for I. I. Moses, Sr.," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, September 13, 1933; "Phenix Bridge Work to Begin at Early Date," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, September 29, 1933; "Cars Crossing Phenix Bridge," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 30, 1935; and "Large Crowd Present as Phenix City Opens Holland Creek Bridge," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, July 17, 1935.

¹²⁵ Mark K. Bauman, "A Multi-thematic Approach to Southern Jewish History," *The Columbia History of Jews & Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York, 2008), 263-290; Bauman, "Beyond the Parochial Image of Southern Jewry"; Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

¹²⁶ See Ashkenazi, "Jewish Commercial Interests Between North and South."

The Legal, Political, and Religious Legacy of an Extended Jewish Family

By

Joel William Friedman

The significant role that Jewish Americans played in the civil rights movement is well documented.¹ As communities forged by a common legacy of slavery and oppression, sealed by a shared commitment to human dignity and an innate antipathy toward intolerance and bigotry, Jews and African Americans frequently banded together to oppose racial and other forms of invidious discrimination in American life and culture.² For example, Jews have been among the most significant financial contributors to civil rights organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Urban League, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Furthermore, five of the six white lawyers who signed the NAACP's brief in the precedent-shattering school desegregation case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* were Jews.³ What is less documented and less known, however, is the fact that one of the most pivotal and notable figures in the racial integration of American society, United States Fifth Circuit Judge John Minor Wisdom, was a descendant of an extended southern Jewish family. From the era of the Civil War through the civil rights movement of the 1960s, several prominent members of this family played leading roles in the political and legal arenas; others took the lead in establishing vibrant Jewish communities in Charleston, New Orleans, and San Francisco; and their two most celebrated members (although the two least connected to Judaism) emerged as unlikely champions of civil rights. This is that family's story.

The lives and contributions of some members of this extended family, such as Judah P. Benjamin, are well known and extensively documented. So, too, is the saga recounted herein of the Reformed Society of Israelites and the ultimate move by Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) of Charleston, South Carolina, to Reform Judaism. This essay contributes to our understanding by placing Benjamin's life and experiences within new interpretive frameworks defined by an extended family system. It expands on the story of the movement of many of the Reformed Society leaders (in Benjamin's case, the son of a leader) away from Charleston and across the country. As shall be shown, Benjamin almost totally assimilated, but many of the others brought Judaism with them to city after city as they moved westward, even as they took their places in the larger society. The impact these family members had on both the development of Jewish communities in America and the cause of civil rights have heretofore gone unnoticed.⁴

Consistent with the experience of other Jews of their milieu, as these individuals achieved a level of success in their professional lives, they assimilated into the social and civic worlds of their communities.⁵ This assimilation, in turn, was also marked by their adoption of the cultural values and lifestyles of the South. While many of their Jewish contemporaries were notable for their successes in the business world, this family produced a line of distinguished attorneys and judges, several of whom created a unique legacy of civic, social, and political involvement. Yet many of these individuals also demonstrated the intertwining of law and commerce. They concentrated on commercial law and mixed their legal practices with trade and real estate transactions and development. Their careers illustrate a Jewish path to wealth, power, and prestige normally associated with the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Seeking economic opportunity wherever it appeared brightest, many demonstrated a sense of rootlessness. This rootlessness also characterized their association with Judaism, as some traversed from Reform to Orthodox Judaism and back to Reform. Supporters of slavery, the Confederacy, and white supremacy also advocated rights for African Americans in court.

Pragmatism was the salient feature of many of their seemingly enigmatic actions.

Origins: From Spain to Charleston

This narrative commences in fifteenth-century Spain during the reign of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Although Isabella is most popularly acclaimed for her financial sponsorship of the expeditions undertaken by the Genoese explorer Cristoforo Colombo, she and her husband occupy a more infamous place in world history thanks to their initiation of the Inquisition, an anti-semitic campaign that resulted ultimately in the Edict of 1492, which mandated the expulsion or execution of all Jews from Spain who refused to convert.

Compelled suddenly and without notice to leave the homeland that many of these families had inhabited for more than two hundred years, the largest contingent of Jewish refugees found their way to Turkey, while a vastly smaller number fled to Portugal. Among this lesser contingent was a family known as Mendes or de Mendes. Decades later, fleeing from the religious persecution that had followed Jews from Spain to Portugal, Solomon de Mendes moved to Holland and married Eva Levy, a Dutch woman of Ashkenazic descent. The family subsequently migrated to London, where in 1807 one of their three daughters, Rebecca de Mendes, married Philip Benjamin, a Sephardic Jew from Nevis, a British-controlled island in the Caribbean. Shortly thereafter, the Benjamins joined Rebecca's two sisters, who had moved to the British West Indies after marrying a pair of sugar planters from there. But within a year the Benjamins sailed to North America, intent on settling in New Orleans. When their ship was denied entry into U.S. waters by a British blockade, however, the couple ended up on British-owned St. Croix. On August 11, 1811, Rebecca de Mendes Benjamin gave birth to a son, Judah Philip Benjamin, on the island, a fortuity that resulted in his being born a British subject.⁶

Encouraged by the financial success that Rebecca's uncle, Jacob Levy, enjoyed in North Carolina, the Benjamins made a second attempt at immigrating to the United States. This time they

Isaac Harby, "A Discourse."

Title page of a speech given by Isaac Harby in Charleston in 1825 to the Reformed Society of Israelites, of which he was a founding member. This pamphlet was inserted into a manuscript prayer book written by Harby that was one of the first Reform prayer books ever produced. (Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.)

succeeded and joined the Levys in Fayetteville, North Carolina, in 1813. When, in 1821, life in Fayetteville failed to meet their expectations, and in the hope of finding a more prosperous and hospitable environment, the Benjamins moved to the port city of Charleston, South Carolina.⁷

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, Charleston had a well-deserved reputation as a thriving commercial metropolis with the largest Jewish community in the United States. Sephardic Jews had founded traditional congregation KKBE in 1749. By the beginning of the second decade of the nineteenth century, a collection of Charleston's young, native-born, civically involved, and philanthropically active members led by Isaac Harby sought to change the nature of KKBE's service and its attendant customs and practices. Concerned about the survival of an institution tied to traditional liturgy, they asked to translate Hebrew prayers into English, offer sermons in English, end the practice of seeking money offerings during the service, and shorten the length of the service. In 1825, when the congregation's more elderly trustees, known as the *adjunta*, rejected the petitioners' request, forty-seven congregants left the synagogue and founded the Reformed Society of Israelites.⁸ Drawing on traditions established by the Reform movement in central Europe, they confected an abridged ritual service that retained some of the traditional prayers, added new ones, translated the prayers into English, and introduced the use of instrumental music. Despite initial success, the Reformed Society enjoyed only a brief tenure, disbanding in 1833. Nevertheless, the society ultimately influenced KKBE, which in 1841 became the first congregation in the United States to officially adopt Reform principles. Ironically, this time the traditionalists seceded from the synagogue, forming their own congregation, Shearit Israel.⁹

The creation of the Reformed Society, a bold action by a small cohort of reformers, was a historic development marking the origins of Reform Judaism in the United States. It set a pattern for the expansion of Reform Judaism throughout the country. And one of the reform-minded members who signed the constitution establishing the principles and objectives of the Reformed Society and

*Tintype of Rebecca de Mendes
Benjamin, possibly made by
Solomon Nunes Carvalho.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
of Maryland, #1989.176.1.)*

served in a leadership position as a member of the society's corresponding committee was Philip Benjamin.¹⁰

Supporting his family as a dry goods merchant and later a fruit seller, Philip Benjamin was only able to eke out a modest living. He did not enjoy the same opportunities as the more prosperous Jewish families in the city. Nevertheless, his family worshiped at KKBE until his intolerance for the rigidity of orthodoxy led him to join the secessionists who established the Reformed Society. His wife shared his opposition to what they perceived as rigid traditionalism. Rebecca de Mendes Benjamin managed the family's fruit shop on Saturday when observance of the Sabbath was the order of the day for businesses owned and operated by Jews in Charleston. The family's participation in the religious community ended when Philip was expelled from the Reformed Society for reasons that remain unexplained.¹¹

With this parental example, it is not surprising that their son, Judah, would stray from the traditions of his Sephardic ancestors and retain only a limited connection to the organized

Jewish community.¹² Judah's early education was provided by a school operated by the local Hebrew Orphan Society, which supported the children of poor Jewish families as well as Jewish orphans, but he subsequently transferred to a non-Jewish private academy where he excelled in his studies, focusing on English and the classics rather than Hebrew or Torah. Nevertheless, Judah, like his parents, never denied his Jewish ancestry, nor did he lack training in Jewish law and customs. Rather he was the product of a home that was at the center of the maelstrom of discord between the orthodox and reformist strains of Judaism in mid-nineteenth century Charleston.¹³

In 1825, at the age of fourteen, Judah was accepted into Yale University to study law. Like many of the children of the leaders of the Reformed Society, he never again lived in Charleston. Departing Yale under uncertain circumstances after only two years, Judah Benjamin chose to start his career in New Orleans, the original destination of his parents seventeen years earlier.¹⁴

Subsequently, his ties to his Jewish ancestry were insufficient to deter his 1833 marriage to Natalie St. Martin, the daughter of a wealthy Creole insurance company executive and a member of the New Orleans Catholic aristocracy.¹⁵ Although Benjamin refused a request by his future father-in-law that he convert to Catholicism, he agreed to allow his children to be raised in the Catholic faith. Furthermore, the couple resided in her parents' home or in an adjoining house in a very Catholic environment for the first ten years of their marriage, at which point Natalie left Judah and moved to Paris with their one-year-old daughter.¹⁶

Benjamin's Career in Law and Politics

New Orleans, like Charleston, was a port city that experienced tremendous financial prosperity in the first third of the nineteenth century. After some missteps, the young Benjamin signed on as an apprentice with a New Orleans commercial law firm. He was admitted to the Louisiana bar in 1832 and built a successful commercial law practice. Within three months, he was arguing cases before the Louisiana Supreme Court. A decade later, Benjamin took a case that could have scuttled his growing

reputation but which, in fact, raised his local and national profile. During a voyage from Virginia to New Orleans, nineteen captives on a slave ship, the *Creole*, mutinied and forced the captain and crew to detour to Nassau in the Bahamas. After the local British authorities freed the slaves who had not participated in the mutiny, the slave owners sued the ship's insurers for the loss of the value of their human property. Representing the insurance companies before the Louisiana Supreme Court, Benjamin successfully argued that because slavery was in defiance of the laws of nature, the British authorities in Nassau were under no obligation to recognize the captives' status as slaves and, therefore, were within their rights to treat them as free persons. Moreover, Benjamin insisted, since the mutiny was precipitated by the inhumanely cramped conditions under which the slaves endured the voyage, responsibility for the losses occasioned by the mutiny fairly rested at the feet of the crew. The case received widespread notoriety, as did Benjamin's impassioned plea for recognizing the value of black lives and his role in securing the legal victory.¹⁷

Although Benjamin's remarks served his clients' interests, the passion with which he delivered his oration before the court displayed an uncommon sensitivity for the period, particularly for the owner of Belle Chase plantation and numerous slaves and whose father, even with his modest income, had owned three slaves. In fact, when his family lived in Fayetteville, North Carolina, with his uncle, Jacob Levy, Judah was raised primarily by one of his uncle's slaves. Shortly after they moved to Charleston, however, Judah and his family lived through the attempted slave uprising of 1822 led by Denmark Vesey. Not only was a cache of weapons intended to be used to murder the whites of Charleston found near KKBE, but one of the slaves who was tried, convicted, and hanged for participating in the unfulfilled conspiracy was owned by a member of the synagogue.¹⁸ Benjamin's biographers have suggested that the trauma of this event tempered his concern for the condition of slaves and helps explain why he remained a steadfast supporter of that malevolent institution for the remainder of his life.¹⁹ However, like most southern Jews of his generation, this ambitious son of a poor

*Judah P. Benjamin,
c. 1858. Photograph
by Matthew Brady.
(National Archives and
Records Administration.)*

Jewish shopkeeper who rejected traditional Jewish religious orthodoxy was also a prime target for assimilation and acculturation.²⁰ In any case, his early expression of concern for the treatment of nonwhites is eerily suggestive of a similar view espoused by John Minor Wisdom, a member of another branch of the Benjamin family tree and an equally unlikely proponent of civil rights more than a century later.

By the early 1850s, Benjamin's prominence was such that he now routinely represented clients in cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. Much has been written about Benjamin's unsuccessful, although widely celebrated, attempt to convince the court to vacate the will of a miserly, slave owning New Orleans land baron, John McDonough, who sought to leave the bulk of his es-

tate to the cities of New Orleans and Baltimore in order to build public schools for indigent black and white schoolchildren.²¹ But scant, if any, attention has been accorded the bulk of Benjamin's Supreme Court caseload.

Most of the cases he argued fell into three categories: commercial, property disputes, and admiralty cases. Benjamin's commercial cases were comprised primarily of rather mundane contractual disputes that typically involved issues concerning the interpretation and application of provisions of the Louisiana Civil Code, over which Benjamin developed a unique mastery.²²

Some of Benjamin's many property cases were simple boundary disputes.²³ In addition, however, he litigated several cases arising out of an 1803 act of Congress that awarded the Marquis de Lafayette more than eleven thousand acres of federally owned land in the Orleans territory in exchange for fighting with the U.S. Army during the Revolutionary War. In these cases, Benjamin represented the interests of heirs of General Lafayette or other individuals who claimed title to various portions of those lands. In one such case, Benjamin represented a man who claimed ownership of one thousand acres of land in Point Coupee, Louisiana, as the result of a deed he claimed to have obtained from Lafayette. The opposing party claimed to have filed an earlier dated deed with the local land office for the same parcel. Benjamin successfully convinced the court that since the other party had not had the property surveyed in accordance with the law, the federal government still controlled the land and could therefore grant it to General Lafayette and consequently to his heirs.²⁴

In keeping with his support of slavery and pursuant to the Supreme Court's ruling in the Dred Scott case, Benjamin frequently represented planters and slave owners who sought to enforce their right to buy and sell human property.²⁵ In a slight departure from the standard scenario, Benjamin represented an owner who was sued by his real estate agent for failure to pay a commission for negotiating the sale of the defendant's Bayou La Fourche sugar plantation and seventy slaves. The trial judge had issued a judgment in favor of the agent. Benjamin successfully argued that, before the deal was consummated, the purchaser proposed

to name his wife as the purchaser and that Benjamin's client had never consented to that change in the agreement. Accordingly, the court ruled that the contract for sale was never fully executed, and the broker was therefore not entitled to his commission.²⁶

Not surprisingly, many of Benjamin's cases were generated by the thriving business of the New Orleans port. Several of the admiralty cases that Benjamin argued before the high court involved collisions between ships in the waters near New Orleans.²⁷ Typical is a case where he represented a ship owner who claimed that his schooner was properly anchored in Lake Borgne when the defendant's steamer collided with it while running at an excessive rate of speed during a dark and rainy night. The schooner's owner sought to recover the value of the merchandise on board when the schooner sank as a result of the collision. The defendant claimed that the collision was caused by the failure of the schooner's captain to illuminate his ship properly. The trial judge ruled in favor of the schooner, but this judgment was reversed by the appellate court, which found that the schooner was at fault for not having a light in its forerigging to give notice of her position to the approaching steamer. Benjamin argued that even if his client's schooner was not properly lit (it turns out that the schooner had a light in its rigging when it originally docked, but one of the seamen had taken it down to wipe off the rain at the moment the steamer slammed into the schooner), the collision could have been avoided if the steamer had not been traveling at a speed that was unsafe in an area where ships were known to seek harbor during a storm. The high court agreed with Benjamin, reversed the court of appeals, and ordered the trial judge to apportion damages between the two parties.²⁸

In another admiralty case, Benjamin represented someone who claimed title to a ship he said he had purchased after it had run aground off the coast of Mexico, was abandoned, and was later boarded by the man who sold it to him. The court, however, ruled against Benjamin's client, concluding that the abandonment did not affect the owner's right of ownership and that the man who had boarded the ship lacked authority to sell it.²⁹

This page and opposite: Rogers v. Steamer St. Charles, 1856.

These pages from an 1856 U.S. Supreme Court decision contain opening arguments made by Judah P. Benjamin on behalf of the plaintiff.

(Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in
the Supreme Court of the United States.)

Benjamin's repertoire occasionally extended into international law. He was retained by the state of Louisiana, for example, to collect inheritance taxes from foreigners who claimed immunity from American taxation. Louisiana law required that any noncitizen who inherited money or property from someone who had died in Louisiana must pay 10 percent of the value of that inheritance to the state. When a Louisiana citizen died in Louisiana and left part of his estate to "subjects of the King of Württemberg," the legatees refused to pay the tax on the ground that the Louisiana law violated provisions of an 1844 treaty between the United States and the king of Württemberg. The Court agreed with Benjamin's argument that the treaty did not exempt foreigners from state inheritance taxes unless it treated them differently from Louisiana citizens in the same circumstance. But since the Louisiana tax law applied to the estates of all of those who died in the state, the court reasoned, the state law did not discriminate against foreigners, and so the nondiscrimination provisions of the treaty did not apply.³⁰

In another such case, a French citizen claimed to be the brother and therefore sole rightful heir of a Louisiana citizen who had died without a will. The Frenchman also insisted that he was immune from Louisiana's tax laws pursuant to the terms of a treaty between the United States and France. Again, the court ruled in Benjamin's favor but for a different reason. Here, Benjamin successfully argued that the treaty was inapplicable, since the treaty with France was ratified after the decedent had died.³¹

Benjamin was a planter and slave owner who, as shall be explained, supported the South and secession. Nonetheless his legal practice reflected cosmopolitan issues of local and national significance. His cases represented the needs of a flourishing commercial city and the business and property interests of the people who prospered within it.

In 1842, Benjamin made his initial foray into politics, successfully running for election to the lower house of the Louisiana legislature. He played an influential role in the Louisiana Constitutional Convention of 1852, particularly on the slavery issue, a matter on which his political pragmatism trumped his moral am-

bivalence. Benjamin convinced a majority of his colleagues to depart from the “three-fifths rule”—the provision of the U.S. Constitution that stated that five slaves were to be counted as three for purposes of taxation and representation—and instead to allow each black man to be counted in full. Since slaves did not have voting rights, this was simply a victory for the slave interests, who gained seats in the House of Representatives and electoral college. Buoyed by the influence and connections he developed over the next eight years, Benjamin easily won election to a vacant U.S. Senate seat in 1852 as a member of the Whig Party.³²

After Louisiana seceded from the Union in January 1861, Benjamin left the Senate to accept an offer from his former Senate colleague and then president of the Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis, to serve as attorney general of the new country. He later served serially as the Confederacy’s secretary of war and secretary of state.³³

*“Confederate Chieftains.”
Judah P. Benjamin, top, as a
member of Jefferson Davis’s
cabinet, c. 1861. (Courtesy of
the North Carolina Museum
of History, Raleigh.)*

In April 1865, with the war over, the Confederacy disbanded, and fearful of retribution, Benjamin fled to England. With the assistance of his political contacts there, Benjamin was able to get the traditional three-year apprenticeship requirement waived and became a member of the English bar in 1866 after only six months of study. During the next several years, he supplemented his legal fees by writing what became the classic treatise on English law governing sales of personal property, *Benjamin on Sales*. It was and still is considered the seminal authority on the topic. Unlike most legal treatises of that era, Benjamin's work was significantly more than a mere collection of summaries of leading cases. Rather it analyzed, organized, and synthesized these discrete rulings into a comprehensive and cogent narrative on the various doctrines that comprised this area of the law. Moreover, it offered its readers a comparative analysis of British law by including references to relevant American case law and European civil code provisions. It was so authoritative that the publisher eventually released an American edition that contained detailed notes analyzing important American and British doctrinal differences. Its most recent edition was published in 2014.³⁴

Within only four years of admittance to the bar, Benjamin was named a Queen's Counsel. He argued dozens of cases before the House of Lords and the Privy Council, England's two highest tribunals. Most of these cases involved commercial and maritime law, two of the areas in which he had specialized on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.³⁵

A Far-Reaching Extended Family

Although to that date Judah Benjamin was the most accomplished and renowned de Mendes descendant, he was not the only member of the extended family whose imprint can be seen on American legal and political history. One of his seven siblings, Penina Benjamin, married John Kruttschnitt, a German Jew who served as Prussian and later German consul in New Orleans, where the two met and married. They had a son and a daughter.³⁶

The son, Ernest Benjamin Kruttschnitt, became a highly respected lawyer in New Orleans with an extensive record of civic

involvement. A longtime president of the New Orleans school board and chairperson for several years of the Louisiana Democratic central committee, Kruttschnitt's portrait occupies a place of honor in the Louisiana Supreme Court building in New Orleans's French Quarter.³⁷ On two occasions, the party sought to name him as its nominee for governor, a designation tantamount to general election victory in the Democrat-controlled state. Kruttschnitt, however, refused both requests, content to practice law. Loevy, Kruttschnitt, Farrar, Jonas & Gurley specialized in railroad litigation, particularly surrounding bankruptcy receiverships imposed

Ernest Benjamin Kruttschnitt, c. 1898.
(Courtesy of the State Library
of Louisiana, Baton Rouge.)

on the Houston and Texas Central, International and Great Northern, and Texas Pacific railways. But his legacy ultimately was tarnished by his actions in relation to African Americans. As president of Louisiana's Second Constitutional Convention in 1898, Kruttschnitt led the move to amend the state constitution to effectively deny black men the right to vote. He persuaded the conventioners to pass an amendment that subjected the franchise to the poll tax and to educational and property ownership requirements that virtually no African American of that time could satisfy, with a grandfather clause exception for men or descendants of men who had voted before 1867. He also spearheaded the

amendment that permitted nonunanimous jury verdicts in criminal cases, a move designed to permit a white majority to outvote black jurors.³⁸

This was not Kruttschnitt's first opposition to black rights. In 1874, at "the battle on the levee," he joined the White League in defeating the New Orleans police and establishing white rule; within three days, however, federal troops had restored congressional power.³⁹ Two years later he participated in the disputed presidential election that ultimately resulted in the end of Reconstruction and the restoration of white rule. In 1889, Kruttschnitt served as a pallbearer at Jefferson Davis's funeral.⁴⁰

John and Penina Kruttschnitt's daughter, and thus Judah Benjamin's niece, is linked directly to the only member of the extended de Mendes family whose fame and importance rivals that of Judah P. Benjamin. Rebecca de Mendes Kruttschnitt married a non-Jewish cotton trader from New Orleans named Mortimer Wisdom. Tragically, less than a year after their marriage, Rebecca and her baby died in childbirth.⁴¹ Mortimer's second wife also died tragically at an early age. Then at the age of forty-four, Mortimer took as his third wife Adelaide Labatt, the thirty-year-old daughter of an attorney.

Like her husband, Adelaide Labatt came from a family with deep roots in the American terrain. She, too, could trace her lineage back to the Revolutionary era. Yet part of the heritage that Adelaide Labatt Wisdom brought to this marriage was of a distinctly different flavor than that contributed by Mortimer Wisdom. In sharp contrast to the Episcopalian traditions shared by Wisdom's ancestors, who traced their arrival in America to the 1650s, the Labatts belonged to one of the oldest Jewish families in the South. And like the de Mendes clan to which the Labatts were linked collaterally through Rebecca de Mendes Kruttschnitt's marriage to Mortimer Wisdom, the Labatt family tree is populated by lawyers and politicians. As was the case with many of the descendants of the Charlestonian Jews who attended KKBE, this branch of the extended de Mendes clan made its mark in Jewish communities outside of South Carolina. The names on this branch of that genealogical tree include the first Jewish lieutenant gover-

nor in American history; a cofounder of the first Reform synagogue in the United States; a founder of the first synagogue on the West Coast; and the first graduate of Tulane Law School, who, reminiscent of his distant relation from St. Croix, filed pathbreaking lawsuits on behalf of ex-slaves against their former masters.⁴²

Adelaide Labatt's grandfather, Abraham Cohen Labatt, was the first American-born member of the Labatt family. His parents settled in Charleston, where he was born in 1802 and where he met and married Caroline Hyams, the daughter of another of the city's well-established Jewish families. An active member of the Charleston Jewish community, in 1824 Abraham Labatt, like Philip Benjamin and Henry Hyams, became a charter member of the Reformed Society of Israelites.⁴³

By the end of the 1820s, however, Charleston declined as a center of trade. Increasing competition from the Northeast spurred by the development of the Erie Canal, coupled with yellow fever and malaria epidemics that had ravaged the coastal city, caused many of its merchants and professionals to seek new opportunities elsewhere. Abraham and his new bride, like

*Abraham Cohen Labatt,
from the Galveston Daily News, July 2, 1896.
(Courtesy of the Rosenberg Library, Galveston.)*

many of the reform-minded former members of KKBE, left Charleston in the hope of securing a better life, in his case, in the uncultivated lands in the northern part of the state.⁴⁴ Abraham opened a general merchandise business, and the couple helped found the town of Cheraw. A few years later, they crossed the border into North Carolina when President Andrew Jackson appointed Abraham postmaster of a yet-unnamed town. Labatt subsequently named the town Jacksonville in honor of the president.⁴⁵ The job of postmaster was a valuable patronage position and reflected Labatt's deep involvement with the Jacksonian Democratic Party.

At the same time that Caroline and Abraham Labatt were seeking refuge to the north from Charleston's shrinking prospects, other Charlestonians ventured westward to New Orleans. This bustling, wide-open port city offered the tantalizing prospect of an expanding economy wrapped in a highly seductive package. One of the former Charlestonian Jews who ventured to the banks of the Mississippi River was Caroline Hyams's brother, Henry Michael Hyams. Another of the young Sephardic members of KKBE who became charter members of the Reformed Society of Israelites, Hyams served as the society's secretary from 1826 to 1828. Lured by the city's promise of excitement, adventure, and fortune, and accompanied by his younger cousin, Judah P. Benjamin, Henry Hyams arrived in New Orleans in 1828 in search of financial opportunity and with an eye toward bringing the rest of the family to the city.⁴⁶

In the mid-1830s, Hyams moved to Donaldsonville, Louisiana, a small town about fifty-five miles up the Mississippi River, where he worked as a bank cashier and launched his political career. In 1835, he led an antiabolitionist rally and served on a vigilante committee created to squelch local antislavery activities and publications. After returning to New Orleans, Hyams established a law practice and amassed a fortune in landholdings including several plantations and numerous slaves. He became actively involved with the Democratic Party, a move that led to his election to the Louisiana senate in 1855. Four years later, Henry Hyams won election as lieutenant governor, the first Jew in

American history to serve in that office in any state in the Union. He held that position through the Civil War.⁴⁷

Henry remained in contact with the rest of his family and eventually persuaded his sister Caroline to join him in New Orleans. In 1831, Caroline, her husband Abraham Labatt, and their four-year-old son, David, drove by wagon from North Carolina to Mobile, Alabama, where they boarded a sailing vessel to New Orleans. Over the next eighteen years, Abraham worked in the wholesale dry goods business. He also visited Velasco, a town in Mexican Texas along the Gulf Coast, where he engaged in trade and met two other Jewish businessmen. He returned to Velasco six years later intent on establishing trade between Charleston, Mexico, and newly independent Texas. As he had done in Charleston, Abraham was actively involved in the New Orleans Jewish community and Masonic Lodge.⁴⁸ In 1847, he helped lead a small group that founded an orthodox congregation in New Orleans, the Dispersed of Judah. In 1870 this Sephardic synagogue merged with Shaarai Chesed ("Gates of Mercy"), a congregation that had been established in 1824 as the first in the United States located outside of the original thirteen colonies.⁴⁹

Like many other adventurous, fortune-seeking Americans, Abraham Labatt got caught up in the California gold fever of 1849.⁵⁰ The family crossed the continent via the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico and continued on to San Francisco, where he conducted business and won election as one of eight city aldermen. Abraham once again became a mainstay of the local Jewish community. In 1849 he helped found San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El and served as its first president. As chairperson of the dedication committee, he also conducted an early meeting called to establish a Sunday school and weekday Hebrew classes and to introduce Rabbi Julius Eckman. Eckman had served KKBE of Charleston until he came into conflict with former hazan Gustavus Poznanski and the reformist element in the congregation, resulting in his departure. In 1854 both Labatt and Eckman participated in the dedication of the sanctuary of San Francisco's Congregation Sherith Israel, just a short while before doing the same for Emanu-El's first edifice.⁵¹ Controversies ensued at

Broadway Temple, San Francisco, c. 1855.

*This is the first structure built by San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El. Abraham Labatt attended the building's dedication in 1855.
(Courtesy of the Archives of Congregation Emanu-El, San Francisco.)*

Emanu-El over board versus rabbinic control over *shochtim*, resulting in Eckman's departure and Labatt's resignation. After a decade, however, the allure of the Golden State diminished, and the Labatt family returned to New Orleans. Ten years later, Abraham and Caroline moved to Waco, Texas. When Caroline, Abraham's wife of fifty-five years, died in 1879, Abraham retired to Galveston, where he became active in Temple B'nai Israel, a

Classical Reform synagogue led by Rabbi Henry Cohen. Abraham Labatt remained in Galveston until his death at the age of ninety-seven.⁵² One of the findings of this essay is that some former members of the Reformed Society of Israelites became members of traditional synagogues, yet Labatt apparently rotated between Reform and orthodox institutions.

Abraham and Caroline's eldest of fourteen children, David Cohen Labatt, was barely four years old in 1831 when his parents left North Carolina for New Orleans. David was educated at home by his mother and a private tutor until the age of fourteen when he entered Jefferson College, a small military school just north of Natchez, Mississippi.⁵³ His studies were interrupted, however, when his father suffered a serious accident that caused a redirection of the family's resources and forced David to leave school. Reunited with his family in New Orleans, David grew closer to his uncle, Henry Hyams, and was inspired by Hyams and distant relation Judah Benjamin to pursue a career in law. David began his legal studies by reading law under the tutelage of federal Judge Thomas B. Monroe of Frankfort, Kentucky. There he studied with his New Orleans friend, H. J. Loevy, who eventually became a law partner of Ernest B. Kruttschnitt. In 1848, he received the first diploma in law conferred by the law department of the University of Louisiana, the forerunner of the Tulane University Law School—the same school that proudly claims his grandson, John Minor Wisdom, as an honored graduate.⁵⁴

Following the path taken by Judah P. Benjamin, his mother's cousin, David specialized in commercial law cases and supported the Confederacy, serving as a captain in the Fifth Louisiana Volunteers.⁵⁵ After the conclusion of the war, much work developed for attorneys to sort out the legal issues arising out of the new relationship between emancipated African Americans and their former owners.⁵⁶ In the grand tradition that began with Judah Benjamin and extended to John Minor Wisdom, David Cohen Labatt gained recognition in legal circles for his groundbreaking work in cases seeking to vindicate the human rights of African Americans. David was one of the few southern attorneys willing to file suits by ex-slaves against their former masters, and he de-

veloped a reputation as a farsighted, unprejudiced attorney who was among the first lawyers in the city to help black citizens obtain their legal rights.

But David was not the only attorney in his generation of the Labatt family. His younger brother, Henry J. Labatt, was not only a highly regarded member of the bar, but also an accomplished journalist. Unlike David, who had accompanied their parents from North Carolina to New Orleans, Henry was born in the Crescent City, although he spent most of his childhood in San Francisco. Like Benjamin, Henry attended Yale University; unlike Benjamin, Henry graduated with a master's degree. He followed his brother David's lead, studying law and receiving his degree from the University of Louisiana. He then returned to San Francisco to practice law, where his firm, Harmon & Labatt, represented a large number of local Jewish clients primarily in commercial litigation cases.⁵⁷

Henry's passions were not limited to the law. He quickly caught the political bug, successfully running for the office of Clerk of the Superior Court in 1855. The salary paid to court clerks at that time was minimal, so to supplement those funds, Henry began writing law books. His two most successful and well-received works were a digest of decisions of the Supreme Court of California from 1850–1861 and a handbook on civil trial practice.⁵⁸

Henry Labatt's fondness for and skill at writing extended beyond the legal milieu. He also pioneered Anglo-Jewish journalism in the West.⁵⁹ Labatt started his journalistic career as the San Francisco correspondent for *The Occident*, a monthly Jewish periodical published in Philadelphia by Isaac Leeser, the major leader of the traditionalist camp in American Judaism. A few years later, Labatt helped found *The Voice of Israel*, the second Jewish newspaper on the West Coast. Yet the story becomes more complex, as Rabbi Herman M. Bien also led the paper. Bien, a Reform advocate, had replaced Eckman, whom Labatt's father had supported, at Emanu-El, and the paper competed with Eckman's *Weekly Gleaner*.

In 1885, the Speaker of the California State Assembly, William W. Stow, declared, during debate over a bill to prohibit

Sunday trading in two northern California counties, that he was unconcerned about the impact on Jewish businesses because Jews “only came here to make money,” and this bill would “act as a prohibition to their residence amongst us.” Labatt wrote a scathing reply and denunciation that was published in a Los Angeles newspaper and in the *Voice of Israel*.⁶⁰

Labatt’s professional work complemented his active participation in the Jewish community. He served as secretary of the First Hebrew Benevolent Society; secretary of the board and attorney for Congregation Emanu-EL, a synagogue founded by his father; and president of the Hebrew Young Men’s Debating Society.⁶¹ Henry also provided legal assistance to the local *chevra kadisha* and helped another San Francisco congregation, Chebra Berith Shalom, incorporate in 1860.⁶² Eventually, Henry and his family moved to Galveston, where they joined his father. Thereafter, he opened a law firm with his son, served as Galveston city treasurer, and was elected to the Texas House of Representatives for the term comprising 1881 to 1883. Prior to his death in 1900, a one-store community in western Wilson County, Texas, was named for him.⁶³

The African American residents of Louisiana whose legal interests had been vindicated by Henry’s oldest brother, David, were not, however, the only minority group that had been victimized by the area’s institutionalized prejudice. Article 1 of French Louisiana’s Black Code (*Code Noir*) of 1724, for example, had mandated the expulsion of all Jews from the colony.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, during the post-Civil War period, the more than two thousand Jewish citizens of New Orleans had become a fully acculturated part of the community. Indeed, Jews were more integrated into the New Orleans political, social, and civic scenes than they were in most other major American cities of the era.⁶⁵ On the political front, at the same time that Judah Benjamin represented Louisiana in the U.S. Senate, Henry Hyams served as Louisiana’s lieutenant governor, and Dr. Edwin Warren Moïse was the state’s attorney general. Another former Charlestonian with ties to the Reformed Society of Israelites, Moïse later served as speaker of the state legislature. Social prestige in mid-

nineteenth century New Orleans society was much more attuned to affluence and longevity in the community than to religion or ethnicity.

The absence of hostility toward New Orleans Jews is also reflected in both the large number of intermarriages that occurred during this period—both Judah Benjamin and David Labatt married outside of their faith—and the admission of Jewish members into the city’s two most prestigious social clubs. Although each of these organizations subsequently adopted a policy of excluding Jews from membership, David Labatt and Judah Benjamin counted themselves among the many Jewish members of the Boston Club, and Armand Heine was a founder of the Pickwick Club. Jews also participated in the whirl of New Orleans society. In 1877, David Labatt’s sister Caroline reigned as the Queen of Carnival, five years after Louis J. Salomon had served as the city’s first Rex, King of Carnival.⁶⁶

John Minor Wisdom

When David Labatt married Elizabeth House, an Episcopalian from Philadelphia, the couple decided to expose some of their eight offspring to his Jewish heritage and others to her Christian faith.⁶⁷ One of their four daughters, Adelaide, was among the children who accompanied their mother to church and were raised as Episcopalians. So when Adelaide Labatt married Mortimer Wisdom, none of her three sons were exposed to or influenced by their Jewish heritage.

On May 17, 1905, Adelaide Labatt Wisdom gave birth to the couple’s second son, John Minor. John Wisdom was born into a family that had enjoyed financial prosperity and social position in the United States for more than two centuries, the product of three distinct branches of a deeply rooted family tree. He was a member of the tenth generation of a Dutch family whose patriarch, Mairdort Doodes, had migrated to America more than a century before the founding of the republic and whose progeny, the Minors, had built a fortune cultivating their fertile Virginia lands. He also was part of the eighth generation of an ex-British merchant family, the Wisdoms, whose founding members participated in the American

struggle for independence from their former homeland and whose descendants prospered in the cotton trade. Finally, he was a sixth-generation descendant of western European Jews, the Labatts, who had produced a line of successful lawyers and politicians. Their divergent backgrounds notwithstanding, the members of the Minor, Wisdom, and Labatt families shared a common bond: they all had achieved positions of social prominence and economic security in their respective communities. As the twentieth-century heir to this combined legacy, John Wisdom was a member of their city's socially elite, privileged class. And being a member of a "good" family was particularly important in a city like New Orleans, where social position dictated so many of life's opportunities.

Although Mortimer and Adelaide Wisdom surely were cognizant of Adelaide's Jewish heritage, the life stories of their Jewish ancestors were never a part of the family lore that they transmitted to their sons. So while never denying his Jewish heritage, John Wisdom neither gave it much, if any, thought, nor did he feel tied to it. There is no better evidence of this (and of his unwaveringly stubborn character) than his membership in the city's most prestigious—and religiously and racially exclusive—Mardi Gras organizations and social clubs. In his mid-twenties, Wisdom enthusiastically accepted an offer of membership in the city's four most exclusive Mardi Gras krewes—Momus, Comus, Proteus, and Rex. It was (and remains) a highly unguarded secret that the krewes of Comus and Momus did not admit Jewish members and that African Americans were excluded from Momus, Proteus, and Comus, of which Wisdom's eldest daughter, Kit, was anointed queen during one Mardi Gras season.⁶⁸ He also joined the city's two most elite and restrictive social clubs, the Louisiana Club and the Boston Club. Notwithstanding their undeniably discriminatory membership policies, Wisdom never seriously considered resigning from any of these organizations. Even at the height of his public visibility, when he was writing pathbreaking opinions as a judge on the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals that mandated the termination of decades of public segregation in voting, employment, and education, Wisdom maintained that there was a

John Minor Wisdom, left, with President Dwight Eisenhower and Louisiana governor Robert F. Kennon, October 17, 1953. Eisenhower was visiting New Orleans for events commemorating the sesquicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase. Wisdom was then a Republican national committee member who had helped Eisenhower secure the presidential nomination the previous year. In 1957, Eisenhower appointed Wisdom to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. (Courtesy of the Louisiana Division/City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.)

place within a pluralistic society for private pockets of exclusion. "There is something to be said," he declared, "for a place where a group of one-legged, red-haired Scots can gather together, aside from the rest of the world."⁶⁹ Although his adamancy as to this matter surprised and disappointed some of his most ardent admirers, Wisdom never tried to hide his memberships or his multiple reasons for retaining them. When asked, Wisdom steadfastly maintained that his membership in these restrictive clubs never affected his judicial judgment. Yet, while the record certainly supports this claim, in his later years Wisdom did acknowledge that the existence of these restrictive clubs had generated a negative economic impact on his city. He also recognized that the appearances created by membership in such organizations could reasonably lead someone else seeking high public office to eliminate such an affiliation.⁷⁰ But he never resigned in protest of these policies.

So while his connection to his Jewish ancestors enters the realm of a historical curiosity, his contribution to the cause of civil rights in the United States, a cause that carried through as a mixed heritage of generations of his Jewish ancestors, is undeniable. Like them, he was a product of privilege who nevertheless harbored a deep sense that fair treatment was a birthright of all, regardless of station, race, or creed. This scion of a well-established, socially prominent southern family became the universally acclaimed author of tradition-shattering and precedent-making judicial opinions that forever reshaped the contours of civil liberties in the United States.

At a time when most federal judges in the South were doing everything in their power to forestall, if not emasculate, the implementation of the Supreme Court's command in *Brown v. Board of Education* to desegregate public schools, Wisdom wrote nearly all of the opinions of the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reversing the dilatory and evasive actions of the trial judges and creating and monitoring public school desegregation plans that served as a model for courts throughout the country. He also was the author of the opinion that forced the University of Mississippi to integrate and admit James Meredith, its first African American

student, and held Mississippi governor Ross Barnett in contempt of court for his resistance to those orders. Wisdom's rulings eliminated longstanding, arbitrary, and invidious barriers to voting that had been erected and maintained in the southern states. Wisdom also authored scholarly opinions that provided the intellectual and analytical foundation for the Supreme Court's decisions upholding various forms of racial and sex-based affirmative action.⁷¹

Legions of stories are recounted concerning the impact of Jewish Americans on the legal, social, and political landscape of this nation, including their special place in the annals of the civil rights movement. This essay has attempted to trace the impact of one extended family—a collection of Jewish lawyers, business people, and politicians who trace their roots in the American soil to a Sephardic immigrant from Portugal. From one of the greatest figures in the Confederacy through a pathbreaking jurist whose opinions spearheaded the governmental enforcement of civil rights during the equal rights revolution of the 1960s, and from Charleston to North Carolina, New Orleans and Texas to California, these direct descendants and extended relations of Solomon de Mendes share a unique place in the history of the contribution of Jews to American legal and political history. Moreover, they were pioneers in the creation and dispersion of Reform Judaism in the United States and in the development of Jewish communities from Charleston to San Francisco. Theirs is a story of Jews and Judaism in America, of the impact of the South, and of the greater and lesser forces of assimilation and acculturation.

NOTES

¹ See, for example, Jack Greenberg, *Crusaders in the Courts: Legal Battles of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, 1994), 50–51; Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism* (New York, 1998), 24–54; Claybourne Carson, Jr., “Blacks and Jews in the Civil Rights Movement,” in *Strangers and Neighbors: Relations Between Blacks and Jews in the United States*, ed. Maurianne Adams and John H. Brace (Amherst, MA, 1999); Clive Webb, *Fight Against*

Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights (Athens, GA, 2003); Raymond A. Mohl, *South of the South: Jewish Activists and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, 1945-1960* (Gainesville, FL, 2004).

² Harvard Sitkoff, *Toward Freedom Land: The Long Struggle for Racial Equality in America* (Lexington, KY, 2010), 148-149.

³ Greenberg, *Crusaders in the Courts*, 50.

⁴ Allan Tarshish, "The Charleston Organ Case," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 54 (June 1965): 411-416, 449.

⁵ Mark K. Bauman, "Beyond the Parochial Image of Southern Jewry: Studies in National and International Leadership and Interactive Mechanisms," in *New Essays in American Jewish History*, ed. Pamela S. Nadell, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Lance J. Sussman (Cincinnati, 2010), 137-138.

⁶ Robert Douthat Meade, *Judah P. Benjamin: Confederate Statesman* (New York, 1943), 4-5; Eli N. Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate* (New York, 1988), 4; Arthur L. Goodhart, "Judah P. Benjamin," in *Five Jewish Lawyers of the Common Law* (Freeport, NY, 1971), 4. See also, Benjamin Kaplan, "Judah Philip Benjamin," in *Jews in the South*, ed. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson (Baton Rouge, 1973), 75-88.

⁷ Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 5; Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 7-9.

⁸ Gary Phillip Zola suggests that the average age of the reformers was thirty-two and that of the synagogue's trustees sixty-two. Deborah Dash Moore places the average age of the latter at fifty-six. Gary Phillip Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788-1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual* (Tuscaloosa, 1994), 120; Deborah Dash Moore, "Freedom's Fruits: The Americanization of an Old-time Religion," in *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life*, ed. Theodore Rosengarten and Dale Rosengarten (Columbia, SC, 2002), 14.

⁹ Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 6; Tarshish, "Charleston Organ Case," 411, 415-419; Dianne Ashton, "Expanding Jewish Life in America, 1826-1901," in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York, 2008), 49; Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston*, 122-123, 146-147; Kimmy Caplan, "The Ever Dying Denomination: American Jewish Orthodoxy, 1824-1965," in Raphael, *Columbia History*, 169; Moore, "Freedom's Fruits," 13, 19; Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Democratization of American Judaism," in Nadell, Sarna, and Sussman, *New Essays*, 106; Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 17; James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 237; Eli N. Evans, "Preface," in Rosengarten and Rosengarten, *Portion of the People*, xvii.

¹⁰ Sarna, "Democratization of American Judaism," 106; Tarshish, "Charleston Organ Case," 416, 449; Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 10; Evans, "Preface," xvii; Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 17.

¹¹ Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 11-12, 16-18; Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 75, 139, 158; Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 8. Eli Evans posits that Judah's father was expelled because his wife kept their fruit shop open on the Sabbath. Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 10.

¹² Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 12; Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 35; Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York, 1973), 64.

¹³ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 71; Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 10–12, 19.

¹⁴ Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 13, 15–22; Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 19, 24–28; Bauman, “Beyond the Parochial Image,” 146; Goodhart, “Judah P. Benjamin,” 5.

¹⁵ Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 25–26. See also, Winston De Ville, “The Marriage Contract of Judah P. Benjamin and Natalie St. Martin, 1833,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 37 (Winter 1996): 81–84. Inter-marriage with non-Jews during this era was common. Malcolm Stern estimates that 28.7 percent of those Jews married between 1776 and 1840 chose non-Jewish spouses. Jewish men in such marriages often did not convert but accepted the raising of their children in their wives’ faiths. Malcolm H. Stern, “Jewish Marriage and Inter-marriage in the Federal Period (1776–1840),” *American Jewish Archives* 19 (November 1967): 142–143. See also, Bertram Wallace Korn, *The Early Jews of New Orleans* (Waltham, MA, 1969), 215; Jonathan D. Sarna, “Inter-marriage in America: The Jewish Experience in Historical Context,” in *Ambivalent Jew: Charles Liebman in Memoriam*, ed. Stuart Cohen and Bernard Susser (New York, 2007): 125–133.

¹⁶ Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 36; Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 26, 33–34.

¹⁷ Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 23–25, 28, 38; Goodhart, “Judah P. Benjamin,” 6; Pierce Butler, *Judah P. Benjamin* (New York, 1981 [1907]), 40–42; Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 40–42. Cases before the Louisiana Supreme Court in which Benjamin represented the defendant insurance companies include *Thomas McCargo v. The Merchant's Insurance Co. of New Orleans* and *Shermon Johnson v. The Ocean Insurance Co.*, both in 1845. City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, <http://neworleanspubliclibrary.org/inv/creole.htm>, accessed June 27, 2015.

¹⁸ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 93; Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 8.

¹⁹ Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 14; Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 9, 37. Evans suggests that Benjamin’s ability to rail against the inhumanity of slave conditions but continue to support the system itself is a measure of his pragmatism. As a member of the U.S. Senate from Louisiana, for example, Benjamin frequently articulated the southern proslavery position, opposing what he deemed Congress’s unconstitutional exercise of power in prohibiting the extension of slavery into the territories. See, for example, *Cong. Globe*, 34th Cong., 1st Sess. 1092–1094 (1856).

²⁰ Bauman, “Beyond the Parochial Image,” 137–138; Evans, *Provincials*, 64.

²¹ Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 68–70; Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 43–44.

²² See, for example, *McGill v. Armour*, 52 U.S. 142 (1850); *Conrad v. Griffey*, 57 U.S. 38 (1853); *Coiron v. Millaudon*, 60 U.S. 113 (1856); *Ingraham v. Dawson*, 61 U.S. 486 (1857); *Hyde v. Stone*, 61 U.S. 170 (1857); *Martin v. Imhsen*, 62 U.S. 394 (1858); *Wiseman v. Chiappella*, 64 U.S. 368 (1859).

²³ See, for example, *Cousin v. Labatut*, 60 U.S. 202 (1856).

²⁴ *Ledoux v. Black*, 59 U.S. 473 (1855). See also, *Lafayette's Heirs v. Kenton*, 59 U.S. 197 (1855).

²⁵ See, for example, *Shields v. Barrow*, 58 U.S. 130 (1854); *Jeter v. Hewitt*, 63 U.S. 352 (1859); *Adams v. Preston*, 63 U.S. 473 (1859); *Cucullu v. Emmerling*, 63 U.S. 83 (1859); *Kimbro v. Bullitt*, 63 U.S. 256 (1859).

²⁶ *McGavock v. Woodlief*, 61 U.S. 221 (1857).

²⁷ See, for example, *Culbertson v. The Steamer Southern Belle*, 59 U.S. 584 (1855); *Ure v. Coffman*, 60 U.S. 56 (1856).

²⁸ *Rogers v. Steamer St. Charles*, 60 U.S. 108 (1856).

²⁹ *Ward v. Peck*, 59 U.S. 267 (1855).

³⁰ *Frederickson v. State of Louisiana*, 64 U.S. 445 (1859).

³¹ *Prevost v. Greneaux*, 60 U.S. 1 (1856). See also *The Widow and Heirs of Benjamin Poydras v. The Treasurer of the State of Louisiana*, 59 U.S. 192 (1855).

³² Goodhart, "Judah P. Benjamin," 7; Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 80. Despite assertions to the contrary by some of his biographers, Benjamin was not the country's first Jewish senator. David Levy, like Benjamin, was born in the West Indies, the son of a Sephardic Jew from Morocco who had migrated to the Danish colonial island of St. Thomas, and was raised in Florida. In 1845, members of the Florida legislature elected him to one of the state's seats in the U.S. Senate. The following year, Levy changed his name by an act of the legislature by adding his grandfather's Sephardic name, "Yulee." David Yulee, like Benjamin, married a Christian woman and attended church with her, but it is unknown whether he ever converted to Christianity, and if he did so, it was long after he served in the Senate. Among the Yulee papers at the University of Florida, Gainesville, is a letter dated December 4, 1872, from Nannie Yulee to her husband, David, in which she implores him "Go to Dr. Hall. Ask him to Baptize you . . . receive you in the Church. I know you believe, [repentence] will follow this act of faith as sure as the sun shines." Yulee and Benjamin served together in the Senate and became close friends. Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 46–47; Evans, *Provincials*, 65; Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC, 2000), 55, 58–59; C. S. Monaco, *Moses Levy of Florida: Jewish Utopian and Antebellum Reformer* (Baton Rouge, 2005); Leon Hühner, "David L. Yulee: Florida's First Senator," in Dinnerstein and Palsson, *Jews in the South*, 52–74; Maury Wiseman, "David Levy Yulee: Conflict and Continuity in Social Memory," Florida Conference of Historians, <http://fch.ju.edu/fch-2006/wiseman-david%20levy%20yulee.htm>, accessed May 1, 2015; Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=Y000061>, accessed May 18, 2015.

³³ During a debate on the Senate floor in 1858 over a mundane matter concerning arms appropriations, Mississippi's Senator Davis and Louisiana's Senator Benjamin exchanged harsh words. Benjamin apparently took offense at what he viewed as rude remarks by Davis, and this prompted Benjamin to challenge Davis to a duel. Davis quickly and publicly apologized, the matter ended without incident, and the two colleagues subsequently built a lasting relationship of deep friendship and respect. Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 98–99.

³⁴ Butler, *Judah P. Benjamin*, 383; Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 333; Goodhart, "Judah P. Benjamin," 11-12; Meade, *Benjamin: Confederate Statesman*, 336; *Benjamin's Sale of Goods*, Sweet & Maxwell Books, <http://www.sweetandmaxwell.co.uk/Catalogue/ProductDetails.aspx?recordid=5913>, accessed June 2, 2015.

³⁵ Goodhart, "Judah P. Benjamin," 12-13.

³⁶ Butler, *Judah P. Benjamin*, 335-336.

³⁷ Robert Smith, "Portrait of white supremacist welcomes visitors to Louisiana's Supreme Court, where struggle for racial equality continues," *Second Class Justice*, <http://www.secondclassjustice.com/?p=206>, accessed June 3, 2015. A 2014 blog post indicated that the portrait of Kruttschnitt had been moved to a less conspicuous location in the courthouse. "Ernest Kruttschnitt Portrait Moved to Where No One Will See It," <http://thompsongenealogy.com/2014/06/ernest-kruttschnitt-portrait-moved-to-where-no-one-will-see-it>, accessed June 22, 2015.

³⁸ Bidish Sarma, "An Enduring (and Disturbing) Legacy: 'Race Neutrality,' Judicial Apathy, and the Civic Exclusion of African-Americans in Louisiana," *Houston Law Review: Off the Record* 1 (Summer 2011): 49, 52, <http://www.houstonlawreview.org/2011/07/18/hlre-summer-2011>, accessed June 18, 2015; Obituary, "Ernest B. Kruttschnitt," *New York Times*, April 17, 1906; Boyce Thompson, "History No Longer So Kind to Ernest Kruttschnitt," *Thompson Family History*, <http://thompsongenealogy.com/2013/03/history-no-longer-so-kind-to-ernest-kruttschnitt>, accessed June 30, 2015; George Derby and James Terry White, "Ernest Benjamin Kruttschnitt," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York, 1900), 10:364; Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888-1908* (Chapel Hill, 2001), 140-147.

³⁹ The Battle for Liberty Place occurred in September 1874 when members of the Crescent City White League revolted against the Reconstructionist Republican government, headquartered in New Orleans, which was then in control of the state. Gathering on Canal Street on September 14, White Leaguers charged an outnumbered unit of municipal police, who were forced to surrender the statehouse, arsenal, and Jackson Square to the insurrectionists. Thirty-one people were killed in the initial fighting. See Joan B. Garvey and Mary Lou Widmer, *Beautiful Crescent: A History of New Orleans* (Gretna, LA, 2012), 198.

⁴⁰ Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 403.

⁴¹ Joel William Friedman, *Champion of Civil Rights: Judge John Minor Wisdom* (Baton Rouge, 2009), 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2-4, 5-6; Bauman, "Beyond the Parochial Image," 146.

⁴³ Bauman, "Beyond the Parochial Image," 146 n. 18; Tarshish, "Charleston Organ Case," 416; Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 137, 139; "He Died At Ninety-Seven: 'Father' Abraham Cohen Labatt Has Been Gathered To His Fathers," *Galveston News*, August 17, 1899. Abraham's father, David Labatt, came from Amsterdam, and his mother, Catherine Myers, was born in Hamburg.

⁴⁴ Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 22; Bauman, "Beyond the Parochial Image," 146.

⁴⁵ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana* (Chicago, 1892), 1:521.

⁴⁶ Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 143; Bauman, "Beyond the Parochial Image," 146 n. 18; Tarshish, "Charleston Organ Case," 416; Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 137, 139, 154; Evans, *Benjamin: Jewish Confederate*, 23, 29; Korn, *Early Jews of New Orleans*, 187–188.

⁴⁷ Korn, *Early Jews of New Orleans*, 189; Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 29, 151; Emily Ford and Barry Stiefel, *The Jews of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta: A History of Life and Community Along the Bayou* (Charleston, SC, 2012), 49, 64. Rosen (p. 29) indicates that Hyams also worked in real estate, railroads, and insurance during his extensive career.

⁴⁸ William M. Kramer, "Henry J. Labatt (1832–1900): Pioneer Lawyer of California and Texas," *Western States Jewish History* 28 (1996): 155; Bryan Edward Stone, *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (Austin, 2010), 29. According to Kramer (p. 156), Abraham Labatt also may have been the first Master of the first Masonic lodge in the west, a lodge he named for Davy Crockett.

⁴⁹ "He Died At Ninety-Seven," *Galveston News*, August 17, 1899. Although Henry M. Hyams intermarried, he remained a practicing Jew and also attended Dispersed of Judah. Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 29.

⁵⁰ Abraham Labatt's activities in California, as well as those of his son Henry, are documented in Ava F. Kahn, ed., *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush: A Documentary History, 1849–1880* (Detroit, 2002).

⁵¹ On the founding of Emanu-El and Sherith Israel, both in 1849, see Kahn, *Jewish Voices*, 37.

⁵² "He Died At Ninety-Seven," *Galveston News*, August 17, 1899; Kramer, "Henry J. Labatt"; Joshua Stampfer, *Pioneer Rabbi of the West: The Life and Times of Julius Eckman* (n.p., [1988]), 34–48, 62–69.

⁵³ This now defunct institution, chartered in 1802 and closed in 1964, counted naturalist John James Audubon among its faculty members and Jefferson Davis among its students. Bern Keating, "Nostalgia in Natchez: Amid Magnolias and Antebellum Mansions," *Washington Post*, November 10, 1985.

⁵⁴ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana*, 1:521; "Flashback: New Orleans A Century Ago," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, June 15, 1948.

⁵⁵ When New Orleans fell under the control of federal forces under General Benjamin Butler, David Labatt refused to take an oath of allegiance to the Union and, consequently, he and his family were banished from the city with an allotment of ten days' rations. The family moved to Wilmington, North Carolina, where Labatt rejoined the Confederate forces until he resigned for reasons of ill health. Shortly before the end of the Civil War, Labatt was taken prisoner by General Rutherford B. Hayes's troops. After his parole, he returned to New Orleans with his family and resumed his legal practice. *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana*, 1:522.

⁵⁶ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana*, 1:522.

⁵⁷ Kramer, "Henry J. Labatt," 155–157. See also, Fred Rosenbaum, *Cosmopolitans: A Social and Cultural History of the Jews of the San Francisco Bay Area* (Berkeley, CA, 2009): 30–31.

⁵⁸ Kramer, "Henry J. Labatt," 157–158; Norton B. Stern, "The Labatts' Attack in San Francisco and Los Angeles," *Western States Jewish History* 28 (April 1996): 180.

⁵⁹ Kramer, "Henry J. Labatt," 160.

⁶⁰ Stern, "Labatts' Attack," 179, 180; Kramer, "Henry J. Labatt," 1; Stampfer, *Pioneer Rabbi of the West*, 69, 89–91. Stampfer (pp. 90–91) quotes David Einhorn's opposition to the *Voice of Israel's* defense of Jewish rights. On Leeser, see Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit, 1995). For the complete text of Labatt's letter, see Kahn, *Jewish Voices*, 409–411.

⁶¹ Labatt's involvement with the First Hebrew Benevolent Society, which was founded by eastern European members of Congregation Sherith Israel, rather than with the Eureka Benevolent Association supported by his fellow congregants at Emanu-El illustrates his adaptability, nonsectarianism, and commitment to Jewish institutions in general. See Kahn, *Jewish Voices*, 197.

⁶² The activities in Los Angeles of Henry's brother, Samuel K. Labatt, resemble Henry's efforts in San Francisco. Along with a third brother, Joseph Labatt, Samuel arrived in Los Angeles in 1853 to act as business agents for their father's San Francisco store. The next year, Samuel organized the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Los Angeles, working closely with painter and photographer Solomon Nunes Carvalho, a Sephardic Jew from Charleston and another former member of the Reformed Society of Israelites. The brothers later returned to San Francisco and then moved on with Henry to Texas. The Labatts' movement from place to place, crisscrossing the country in pursuit of business opportunities while helping to found and develop Jewish institutions in the places they lived, reinforces the themes of this essay. Ellen Eisenberg, Ava F. Kahn, and William Toll, *Jews of the Pacific Coast: Reinventing Community on America's Edge* (Seattle, WA, 2009), 41. For more on the Labatt family in Los Angeles and their relationship with Carvalho, see Ava F. Kahn, "Introduction," in Solomon Nunes Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West with Colonel Fremont's Last Expedition* (Lincoln, NE, 2004), xiv–xv.

⁶³ Kramer, "Henry J. Labatt," 161–165. For information on Labatt, Texas, see Claudia Hazlewood, "Labatt, Tx," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hvl07>, accessed June 17, 2015.

⁶⁴ For detail on the *Code Noir*, see Ford and Stiefel, *Jews of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta*, 15–17.

⁶⁵ Bertram Korn concluded that there "was probably less prejudice against Jews in New Orleans during the anti-bellum period than in any other important city in the country." Korn, *Early Jews of New Orleans*, 227.

⁶⁶ Salomon was also the last Jewish monarch of New Orleans's Mardi Gras celebration. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, "with the rise of elitist anti-Semitism around the country, and the influx of new Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, Jews were excluded from the highest rungs of the New Orleans social hierarchy [the social clubs in particular]." "New Orleans, Louisiana," *Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities*, <http://www.isjl.org/louisiana-new-orleans-encyclopedia.html>, accessed June 3, 2015. See also, Ford and Stiefel, *Jews of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta*, 87.

⁶⁷ Elizabeth's parents, William House and Louise Lloyd, were Philadelphia-born Episcopalians, although her maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Timolion, was Greek, the daughter of Philotas Timolion and Elizabeth Lysistrate of Athens.

⁶⁸ Kathleen ("Kit") Wisdom, interview conducted by author, December 29, 1993.

⁶⁹ John Minor Wisdom, interview conducted by author, October 28, 1993.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Friedman, *Champion of Civil Rights*, xi-xii.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Louisiana Letters, 1855–1871: The Story of an
Immigrant Jewish Family

by

Jay Silverberg*

Meyer family letters:¹

Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, December 17, 1855

Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, February 17, 1856

Karl Meyer to Emanuel and Henry Meyer, December 6, 1864

Regina, Babette, and Karl Meyer to Henry and

Emanuel Meyer, [1868]

Caroline Meyer to her family in Germany, August 29, 1868

Abraham Levy to Henry and Emanuel Meyer, December 21, 1868

Emanuel Meyer was nearing his sixteenth birthday when he departed for Louisiana during the winter of 1855, leaving behind his family and everything he had known growing up in the Palatinate region of southwestern Germany.² Finally, the family received a letter from Emanuel, and in response his father could barely contain his joy at receiving news of his son's safe arrival in Louisiana:

We received your letter from Orleans on November 18th and see from it that God Almighty has led you healthily and fortunately to Orleans and that you had a good voyage, praise the Lord, and you were not sick, thank God, which was

* The author may be contacted at jbsilverberg@gmail.com. The entire collection of Meyer family letters, including the items excerpted here, can be accessed online at www.MeyerBrothersLetters.com.

always what we wanted. Since we have prayed for you day after day and God Almighty has heard us, and since we see in your letter how you arrived in Orleans, [and] that God Almighty led you immediately to such good people [who] embraced you immediately and immediately gave you such a big present, you can see: when distress is greatest, then God is nearest.³

Joseph Meyer, a forty-four-year-old butcher, wrote from his home in Lachen, Germany, on December 17, 1855, three days after receiving his son's letter. Emanuel had written from

Downtown Clinton, Louisiana, in the mid-nineteenth century. In the foreground is the East Feliciana Parish Courthouse, built in 1840 and one of four pre-Civil War courthouses constructed in Louisiana still in use today. Most likely, the photo was taken from the southwest corner of the courthouse square looking east down St. Helena Street. (Courtesy of the Jackson Historic District Commission.)

the home of his paternal step-uncle, Abraham Levy, 115 miles upriver from New Orleans in Bayou Sara, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana.⁴ Joseph Meyer's letter is the first in a collection of correspondence among the extended Meyer family in Germany and America. Their story is typical of many German Jewish families with shared experiences of struggle and triumph. Yet their experiences can be told with more clarity than others in similar circumstances because of an inexplicable quirk of historical fate, if not good fortune, that unfolded in 1975 in Clinton, Louisiana, a community that factored prominently in Meyer and Levy family life during the middle to late nineteenth century.

Storefronts in the main business area of Clinton, just across the street from the historic pre-Civil War courthouse and a block away from the equally historic buildings known as Lawyer's Row, were being prepared for demolition. The buildings, one of which was owned for nearly thirty years by Emanuel and Henry Meyer as the Meyer Brothers Store, had stood since the early 1800s. Inside this building remained volumes of detailed Meyer store records and the Meyer family letters, some written to each other after they had settled in Louisiana and Galveston, Texas; others were written in German or Yiddish from family members in Germany. The letters and ledgers likely had been forgotten in the early 1900s when the store closed.⁵

Store records have become standard sources that historians use when writing about pre- and post-Civil War southern general store management. The discovered Meyer documents include the store's day-to-day sales, receipts for shipment of goods, messages between the Meyer brothers and their financiers in New Orleans arguing about payment of debts, as well as notes from customers asking for anything from bacon to bullets, coffee to cornmeal. The store records and letter collection, including about 120 pieces of correspondence, are now part of the Meyer Brothers Store Records in the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. The letters reveal details of life between 1855 and 1871, predominantly involving Joseph Meyer and his step-

siblings Samuel, Abraham, Hannah, and Daniel Levy; and among Joseph, his wife Regina, and their children Caroline, Emanuel, Henry, Babette, and Karl Meyer. Forty letters were written from Joseph Meyer's family in Germany to their relatives in Louisiana. Most of the remainder are from either the Meyer siblings to each other; from Abraham Levy, writing in German and English, to his nephews; or from Levy's children and brother-in-law to family members in Louisiana and Texas. The letters, long overlooked by scholars more interested in the ledgers and the family's business interests, have only recently been translated and studied, revealing contents rich in detail about the Meyers' personal and business lives in Germany, Louisiana, and Texas, while supporting previous scholarly research about the motivations of German Jewish immigrants during the mid-nineteenth century.⁶

The letters show their age, with many of the pages torn or otherwise deteriorated. They survived in chronological groups of several months to years with gaps between many of the letters, the longest between letters from Germany lasting three and a half years (1861-1864), and the longest between letters from the United States at six and a half years (1861-1868). Postmarks on some of the letters from Germany indicate that they were sent via ship from Liverpool or Bremen. In some, the writers reference the time it would take for correspondence to arrive at its final destination, frequently a month or more. Some of the letters are simply addressed to "Abraham Levy, Baisara [Bayou Sara], State of Louisiana, America." Those from

Opposite: *The Meyer/Levy family tree.*

This tree shows the relationships among the letter-writers.

The Levy siblings who immigrated to Louisiana – Samuel, Abraham, Hannah, and Daniel – shared a stepbrother, Joseph Meyer, who was the father of the Meyer siblings who immigrated – Caroline, Emanuel, and Henry. Siblings Babette and Karl remained in Germany.

(Courtesy of Jay Silverberg.)

Germany usually include several separate communications from the family, occasionally some of them writing two or three times in one combined communication. Many are fairly perfunctory, almost matter-of-fact. Family members wrote about their lives as they intersected with events of the day from the significant, such as the economy, war, and social freedoms (or lack thereof), to the routines of business, parenthood, tradition, and religion. Comments indicate that the recipients shared them with each other and referred to them as they wrote replies. The collection does not contain any letters from Emanuel Meyer. Caroline Meyer, the oldest child in the Joseph Meyer family, who immigrated to Louisiana, wrote forty-five of the letters, including the only one in the collection sent from a family member in Louisiana to the family in Germany.

Differences between the sexes are evident in the grammar of the letters, likely reflecting their respective levels of education. The father, Joseph, and son, Karl, wrote elegantly and usually without grammatical issues. The women's penmanship was noticeably worse than the men's, and their language more colloquial. The mother, Regina Meyer, used Yiddish script throughout her letters. The younger daughter, Babette, improved her writing through the years, possibly reflecting her increased responsibilities for managing the family business in Germany. The penmanship and spelling of older daughter Caroline declined as she wrote letters from Louisiana and Texas, and her language became more like standard German, possibly because she spent much of her time with families who spoke German in their homes. Based on his letters, Abraham Levy likely possessed little formal education. His penmanship was almost illegible, and he apparently never received instruction in standard German spelling or grammar. He interspersed English words and sometimes English phrases and sentences in his German letters, typical of immigrants' writing after living in their adopted country for a few years. Nonetheless, despite his difficulty with the written word, the contents are introspective, at times tender, and demonstrate a distinct knowledge for business in his assumed role as patriarch of the family in Louisiana.

The letters from Germany also include flowing salutations — “I greet you many thousands of times” or “sending many kisses” — and invoke the name of God and wishes for good health. Such greetings typified western European letter-writing style of the era.⁷

The letters speak of the Meyer family’s work, schooling, religion, family, and friends all within specific communities — the six German towns of Klingenmünster, Lachen, Landau, Neustadt, Speyer, and Aschaffenburg; Clinton, Jackson, and Bayou Sara in Louisiana; and Galveston, Texas. The letters alone, however, barely tell the story without genealogical and historical detail that helps illuminate key aspects in the lives of these German Jewish family members, who follow economic and sociological patterns long established in scholarly research.⁸ The importance of historical and genealogical linkages is examined in several scholarly works, notably the groundbreaking research of Carolyn Earle Billingsley. A professional genealogist, Billingsley writes:

Merely providing genealogical connections adds little to our understanding of antebellum southern society. To reveal the significance of kinship, we must be able to identify the realm of meaningful or effective kinship. With written records such as letters or diaries, that task is fairly simple; visiting patterns, social activities, mentions of names in a diary on a regular basis, business records, gossip about certain people in a letter to one’s sister — these types of writings speak to us clearly about who was important in an individual’s life.⁹

In his examination of Jewish communities throughout the United States, historian Lee Shai Weissbach argues for a “comprehensive analysis of the experience of America’s small Jewish communities as a class” and discusses distinct patterns of social, cultural, and economic acculturation that are apparent in the Meyer correspondence.¹⁰ Specifically, six letters, augmented by details from numerous others, provide a framework for the family’s story, supporting genealogical, historical, and academic perspectives to help explain this family’s unstinting desire for business success in their new home, their concern about the

changing landscape in Germany, their devotion to each other, their struggles with the traditions left behind in their homeland, and ultimately their earnest desire to acculturate into their American home.

Welcome to America: "One is not rich immediately."

The Levys and Meyers joined the wave of 250,000 German Jewish immigrants between 1820 and 1880 who set off for the one- to two-week trip to Le Havre or Bremen and other European port cities before boarding sailing, or later steam-powered, vessels destined for Baltimore, Boston, Charleston, Galveston, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, or Savannah on a trip that took a month or more.¹¹ Most were young, from small towns and villages in southern Germany, fleeing from prolonged upheavals in their native land that tightened the vise of economic, social, and religious oppression that affected

*W. J. Bennett, "New Orleans, Taken from the Opposite Side a Short Distance above the Middle or Picayune Ferry," 1841.
(Wikimedia Commons.)*

Christians as well as Jews. Their condition foretold little future, at least none as good as what America promised. Historian Tobias Brinkmann acknowledges long-standing theories about anti-Jewish legislation and persecution prompting these departures, but he strongly suggests that the main reasons are found in the efforts to end feudal rule in the German states. Reform efforts eventually led to total emancipation of the Jews in 1871, but Brinkmann writes:

In some territories land reforms dragged on for decades and the situation of many small farmers did not improve. The persistence of traditional regulations and inheritance patterns, coupled with the impact of massive economic transformation, forced large numbers of young Christians in the southwest German countryside to move. . . . Most Jews who occupied niches as cattle traders or peddlers in rural economies were affected by economic change, not least by the departure of their Christian customers and employees.¹²

Illustrating Brinkmann's point about Jews struggling with Germany's economic issues, the Meyer family letters frequently reference the family's monetary plight and, conversely, contain very little concerning issues with religious freedom.¹³

Before Emanuel Meyer's arrival in 1855, four of his father's siblings—three uncles and an aunt—arrived in Louisiana between 1837 and 1847. Arriving shortly before 1840, Samuel Levy, the first to immigrate, was twenty-five years old when he settled in Rodney, Mississippi. He opened a store, married Fanny Haas, and waited for his twenty-two-year-old brother, Abraham, who arrived about 1841. Their brother Daniel, about twenty-five years old, and sister Hannah, twenty-three, likely followed Samuel and Abraham between 1842 and 1847.¹⁴ "Leaving the family, the aging parent, relatives and friends with no guarantee to see the beloved ones ever again must have been the hardest part for the early emigrants," Ursula Gehring-Münzel points out. "Not knowing what would await them in the American wilderness was also a frightening prospect. Therefore it would seem only natural that quite a number of

people from the same village or neighborhood set off on this adventure together.”¹⁵

The Levy siblings’ father was dead, and their sixty-one-year-old mother lived near other family members in Klingenstein, Germany. Her net worth, approximately seven hundred florins, supported her basic expenses, but details in the letters suggest that she relied on family members for support.¹⁶ Immigration records for Samuel and Abraham Levy include notes about their military obligations, a likely motivation for both to emigrate. Abraham’s conscription record listed him as “insubordinate” and noted in pencil: “to be arrested/brought in.”¹⁷

The family followed the typical chain migration pattern during the mid-1800s that Avraham Barkai, Rudolf Glanz, and numerous others chronicle in their examinations of German Jewish emigration, by which immigrants followed family members and people from the same areas from Germany to America.¹⁸ As tradition held, in 1855 the oldest son, Emanuel Meyer, joined his uncles and aunt in Louisiana. The letters are clear that he was to be followed by his older sister, Caroline, who arrived in Louisiana in 1859, then their brother, Henry, who made the voyage in 1864. Caroline and Henry were twenty-three and twenty-one, respectively, when they emigrated, and they hoped their younger siblings, Babette and Karl, and possibly their mother and father, would join them. As Glanz points out, Jewish emigration for entire families at one time was entirely too expensive, as it undoubtedly was for the Levys and

Opposite: *Maps of West and East Feliciana Parishes, above, and Louisiana parishes, below. On the state map, the Felicianas are in the center, bordered by the Mississippi River to the west and the Mississippi state line to the north.*

(Wikimedia Commons; Geology.com.)

Meyers. Nonetheless, they were joining other German Jews abandoning southwestern Germany, seeking economic, social, and legal equality largely unattainable in their homeland. As Barkai observes, “In many aspects these young emigrants considered themselves to be—as they often actually were—the pioneer vanguard that was clearing the way for the transplantation of whole families, clans, and even communities.”¹⁹

By 1860, the family had taken full advantage of the opportunities that Louisiana afforded. The Levy family’s wealth was nearly equal to some of the richest families in the Gulf South, all thriving in the pre-Civil War, cotton-driven economy in East and West Feliciana Parishes and the surrounding region bordered to the north and east by the Mississippi state line, to the west by the Mississippi River, and to the south by the outskirts of Baton Rouge. The business success of their uncles and aunt provided the foundation upon which the Meyer siblings and at least one other relative were able to leave Germany, join the family in Louisiana, and eventually take their place among the business elite in the Feliciana parishes and Galveston.²⁰ The first letter from the father, Joseph, offers insight into his family’s eagerness to see their oldest child, Emanuel, take advantage of the family’s business network and succeed as his relatives had before him:

Dear Child. One is not rich immediately. If you cannot send anything at the moment, all we know is that we are working day after day if you can only provide for yourself at this time. If you see that you would not like to travel long distances, [then] stay for a while in the area where your people are. You will still earn as much as you need for yourself once people know you a little.²¹

Emanuel’s welcome to his new home was not unlike many of the immigrants who preceded him, likely including his uncles who mentored him after his arrival in Louisiana. As his father’s letter alludes, Emanuel immediately began peddling goods during an unseasonably warm winter in 1855 along the dusty roads lined with stately oaks and magnolias to the large plantations and farm houses of the Feliciana parishes as the

planters prepared to harvest their cotton.²² A letter from home offered understanding and support:

[Your uncle] immediately bought you a horse and gave you goods, so that you should immediately head into the country, and [that] will have seemed funny to you because you were still such a stranger, but I believe that would happen to anyone. But you have your dear uncles, where you now have great support, in that they immediately helped you, so that you might amount to something. Dear child! I believe that this first time heading into the countryside was not pleasant for you. But [as the saying goes] all beginnings are hard. But you know that you would also have to slave away at home.²³

Although peddling was viewed as an inferior occupation in Germany, many of the Jewish immigrants arriving in America depended upon their peddler's pack. Peddling served multiple purposes. It was a stepping stone for the new immigrant who was usually given goods and some money to help him on his way into the countryside by a family member or other Jewish wholesaler; a business strategy by the supporting merchant to

C. G. Bush, "The Peddler's Wagon."
(*Harper's Weekly*, June 20, 1868.)

extend his network; and a medium by which the immigrant adjusted to American life and culture.²⁴ The Levys, Emanuel's mentors, had moved from peddling years earlier into the successful operation of four stores in the 1850's, one in Bayou Sara, one each in Williamsport and Livonia across the Mississippi River in Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana, and a fourth in Rodney, Mississippi. The Levys' model and Emanuel's experiences would serve him well later when operating his own store during the Civil War and Reconstruction when he hired peddlers on commission to sell Meyer Brothers' wares.

Emanuel was given a pack of goods and a horse when he took to the back roads in 1855. The strangeness had to be, as his father wrote, "funny" if not startling. The letters clearly indicate that when in Germany, Emanuel Meyer and his siblings supported their father's livelihood, butchering cattle, delivering meat, and selling other goods to earn a living. The letters refer to close family acquaintances as primary customers when discussing the Meyers' German business. In contrast, Emanuel's first Louisiana customers were strangers in a land he barely knew. Nonetheless, the young peddler found similarities. As historian Elliott Ashkenazi points out, "For both French and German Jews, the feudal, agricultural society of the antebellum South was similar to the European society they had left." He also writes that both German- and French-speaking immigrants found a common language among their new neighbors.²⁵ In Clinton, where Emanuel likely spent time selling, or gathering goods for his peddler's pack, he would have found that the majority of male immigrants were from his home country, with nearly half of them close to his age.²⁶

Emanuel's father followed his first letter with another two months later, filled with direct references to his son's ability to help support the family through his new business ventures and praise for his uncles' mentoring:

At noon on Wednesday when we saw your letter, we were so full of joy that we didn't want to eat anything more. . . . You can imagine . . . great joy when we saw that you sent an American dollar in your first letter. . . . You can't conceive the

joy we had, when you already sold so many goods on your first trip and got such a large sum of money.²⁷ It is good fortune when one comes to such a strange new land and can immediately fit in with humanity. . . . Now we are also very curious about what articles of goods your business consists of. When you write again, write about that. If [or when] you are used to it, also the business. . . . Dear Maier, just follow your dear uncles.²⁸ You will also see for yourself that everything they advise you is for a good purpose and [that they] do everything for your benefit [so] that you will certainly amount to something and can be a little helpful to us. . . . You write that you want to send us 50 dollars by Easter. If you can do that already, then it would certainly make us happy that your dear uncles put you in a business so that you can earn something.²⁹

From the father's perspective, his son's ability to earn "such a large sum of money" and to "fit in with humanity" left a long-standing impression, certainly as compared to his own family's economic circumstances. Joseph's net worth was about three hundred florin, approximately one year's wages in Germany—about the same as other German Jews from the region but still barely enough to buy a horse. While not destitute, the family was nonetheless beset with difficulties typical of the rural German Jewish lifestyle of the era as indicated from the letters and genealogical research. Men in the family toiled as butchers, cattlemen, coopers, peddlers, and tobacco farmers, and they traded wine grapes, scrap iron, and rags—typical work of German Jews during the nineteenth century.³⁰ One month's earnings selling rags and linen amounted to about fifteen florin, or about 150 dollars in today's value. In a letter written in May 1859, the father offers an oft-repeated lament: "I have to let you know that business with us is very bad now. Meat is very expensive. One pound here by us costs 13 kreuzer and one can't earn anything from that because beef is very expensive." Further, the letters indicate that Joseph Meyer was likely aware of his brothers' business success from other family members who returned to Germany and spoke of life in Louisiana, as well, undoubtedly, as from family

*Slave schedule from the 1860 U.S. Census for Bayou Sara,
Louisiana, listing Abraham Levy as the owner of eight slaves.
(National Archives and Records Administration.)*

correspondence exchanged through the years and not a part of the collection.³¹

While Joseph Meyer toiled in Germany, his younger brother, Abraham, attained social and economic stature in the Louisiana communities of Bayou Sara, Jackson, Clinton, and, in some respects, Galveston, Texas, that bound together the Levys, Meyers, Oppenheimers, Wolfs, Adlers, Haases, Michaels, and Mayers. Each was inextricably linked through German ancestry, immigration, marriage, and business. The letters demonstrate how the extended Meyer/Levy family life reflected the broader nineteenth-century Jewish immigrant experience from several perspectives. These include slave owning, a good indicator of an antebellum southern family's degree of social status and financial attainment. Several letters in the collection reference African Americans working for the family in their homes and stores, and a slave schedule from Bayou Sara in June 1860 shows Abraham Levy joining his fellow merchants and neighbors in owning slaves. Estate records for his brother Daniel include a forty-year-old enslaved female valued at seven hundred dollars.³² Jews and slavery have often been studied, and the family's experience is little different from others, as noted scholar Bertram W. Korn points out. "It would seem to be realistic to conclude that any Jew who could afford to own slaves and had need for their services would do so. . . . Jews wanted to acclimate themselves in every way to their environment. . . . [It] was, therefore, only a matter of financial circumstances and familial status whether they were to become slave-owners."³³ Thus, Jews such as Levy purchased slaves as house servants, just as did others in the middle and upper classes. The use of such servants, whether slaves or immigrants, reflected one's rise in socioeconomic status.

From economic and civic perspectives, Weissbach observes, "The occupational choices made by the heads of these pioneer families tended to facilitate their economic success, and to the extent that their businesses prospered, these individuals became widely recognized and centrally involved in the day-to-day life of their towns." Hasia Diner suggests that immigrants

like the extended Meyer family “decided that despite the promises of emancipation and economic freedom that could be heard in their European homes, America offered better and easier terms by which to work for both.”³⁴

Life in Their New Home: “A thriving and bustling place”

Once in America, the family and their fellow émigrés followed a pattern in which, as Barkai notes, they became “at least in the first, formative period up to the Civil War, an ethnic group that was, socially, highly homogenous and cohesive.”³⁵ Naomi W. Cohen asserts that the new immigrants tried to ensure that generations of Judaic tradition and ceremony “had to be interpreted in ways that would not obstruct their acceptance as Americans.”³⁶ The Levy siblings who were the first in their family to emigrate melded quickly into their new home, a place that was rapidly becoming one of the key economic regions of the United States. In 1850 the parishes of East and West Feliciana ranked fourth and eighth respectively among Louisiana’s forty-seven parishes in total wealth, with Clinton and Jackson established as regional banking and commercial centers. Clinton’s theatrical organizations hosted well-known North American and European actors, and the two communities were home to recognized educational institutions—Centenary College in Jackson and Silliman Female Institute in Clinton. Two of Abraham Levy’s sons and one of his nephews attended Centenary, his oldest son graduating in June 1881.³⁷

Each of the Levy siblings married after arriving in Louisiana. By the time Emanuel Meyer arrived in 1855 and the letters began, his relatives were well-established merchants in the region. In 1860, the Levy family was worth a combined \$42,400, the third wealthiest family among their three hundred Bayou Sara neighbors. Only a banker’s family (\$56,000) and another dry goods merchant’s family (\$50,000) exceeded the Levys’ personal and real estate holdings. Ten percent of the families in East Feliciana were multimillionaires in modern-day dollars, including the Levys.³⁸ Abraham Levy’s wife, Yette, contributed about twenty-five thousand dollars (approximately seven hun-

dred thousand dollars in today's value) to their joint estate after the death of her first husband, Israel Adler.³⁹ While the extended family was not among the planter elite, their economic and social standing placed them well within, if not above, the middle class—far removed from the plain folk of the region.⁴⁰ Dun reports describe Abraham Levy's business and personal travails during a thirty-year period, one in particular describing him as a "married, acute, [shrewd], illiterate, money-making, [unprincipled], successful Jew worth 75–100 [thousand]."⁴¹

Bayou Sara, Louisiana, and the Mississippi River in the 1840s.

St. Francisville is on the ridge in the background.

(Lithograph by Lewis Henry. Wikimedia Commons.)

Bayou Sara, where Abraham Levy and other Jewish immigrants first settled, was ideally situated for economic success. Commerce, especially cotton from the surrounding planters, flowed into town via the West Feliciana Railroad, which terminated not far from the busy local port that served as a daily destination for the steamboats taking trade and passengers to

and from the Felicianas. St. Francisville sat on the bluffs overlooking its neighboring community, astride the Mississippi River. Of the early immigrants in the family, Abraham Levy recognized the advantages that access to the river and rail provided to ply his trade and visit family. In his examination of the nineteenth-century economic and political environments in and around New Orleans, Scott Marler uses the Levys as an example of a family that understood the importance of expanding its business networks regionally—and thus its opportunities for success. He and Ashkenazi show immigrants' mutual dependence on relatives and fellow immigrants as business associates to achieve financial success and independence.⁴²

"If St. Francisville is stronger on the ornamental, Bayou Sara is out of sight ahead of her on the practical, for she does all the business, and a great deal of business is done, too," wrote J. W. Door in 1860, a New Orleans *Daily Crescent* correspondent who used the nom de plume *Tourist* for his "Louisiana in Slices" column. "It is a thriving and bustling place, and contains some of the most extensive and heavily stocked stores in Louisiana, outside of New Orleans." Door's dispatch specifically mentions A. Levy & Co., dry goods merchant.⁴³ This setting, coupled with the fact that slaves constituted nearly two-thirds of the population, may help explain the comments from Joseph Meyer to his son about the strangeness of moving into the countryside and fitting in among a "humanity" that the new immigrant did not know and whose disparate economic circumstances had to be eye-opening when compared to the life he had discarded in Germany.⁴⁴

As the years passed, the family's success in Louisiana became a focal point for the Meyers in Germany, who continually requested financial assistance. Indeed, the letters indicate that Emanuel sent considerable sums of money to his parents, not unlike other immigrants who assisted family back in Germany.⁴⁵ Yet the letters also disclose that the brothers and uncles struggled to find a balance in their level of financial support for family left behind. In May 1859, one set of letters is clear in its

intent but apparently had little effect. The mother, Regina, wrote her son, Emanuel, and brother-in-law, Abraham, about plans for her daughter, Caroline:

You will know . . . when someone in Germany has a daughter and with little money one cannot in the prevailing times [do anything] more. I believe when she comes to America she will be able to do more. Now my dear brother-in-law if you would send money, you could thus do so that she would embrace you and your dear brother. If it is God's will, as quickly as possible because you know how it is with us and continues to be worse every day.⁴⁶

Caroline, in fact, left for Louisiana in November 1859, about a year after her emigration had been delayed because her help was needed in the family cattle business. Her father had written his son two months prior, admonishing him to be mindful of his sister's welfare, because, after all "you will know when your sister comes to you that she doesn't want to [live] her life with nothing."⁴⁷ In the letters that follow her departure, the apparent income disparity between the families in Germany and Louisiana boiled into a months-long, acrimonious spat. For his daughter's voyage, Joseph Meyer borrowed 125 florins, nearly a half-year's wages, to be paid within eighteen months of her departure. With no money apparently coming from Abraham Levy, the expectation clearly was that Emanuel would send funds to repay the debt.⁴⁸ One year after Caroline's departure, her brother, Henry, wrote to his siblings:

We received your letter of August 1st and see from it that things are going well for you and that you, dear sister, like it very much, which makes us very happy. We were also very happy that our brother is providing so well for you and he will soon start a business. Dear brother Maier, since it has already been four months since we received a letter from you too, and since you wrote us that you wanted to send us some money that made us very happy. Since four months have gone by, however, and we haven't received the money, now there is nothing else we can do except remind you once again to keep your promise. . . . [S]ister knows after all that we borrowed the money . . . and it has to be paid back as soon as

possible. . . . I don't know anything to write except that business is now bad and so I remain hopeful.⁴⁹

The family in Germany had begun paying modest interest on the debt, but the issue festered to the point of embarrassment. Babette, another Meyer sibling, wrote to her brother Emanuel six months after Henry sent his letter:

Three months before our Caroline was away from here, you wrote us our sister should come to you in America, and if we don't have the money, we should borrow it, which we importantly did, from Wolf Maikammer, for two months. Why? Because we believed you would keep your promise and up until today you haven't yet kept it . . . which really mortifies our parents because he asks father for it each time he goes to Maikammer. As a result, father no longer has the heart to go to Maikammer and I don't at all for which I am ashamed and we can't pay it from our earnings and if you don't send it, then we will sell a field, which we need to have in this bad time. My dear brother, keep your promise as soon as possible. When you write again, then don't [write] anymore that you want to borrow money because people are laughing about that.⁵⁰

Unfortunately, the letters in the collection leave unresolved the question of whether the debt was repaid, yet the exchange underscores the themes of family ties and obligations that Barkai discusses. He points out that immigrants frequently confronted their misgivings about leaving behind deeply held social and cultural, if not family, traditions to start anew in America. Nonetheless, the tug the immigrants felt from family in Germany seldom overcame the pressures of assimilating into their new environment.⁵¹ In later years, Emanuel would have a reputation as a hardened but perceptive businessman, thus the simplest explanation about the travel debt may be that he believed that caring for his sister after her arrival was payment enough, even knowing the shame it may have caused his father, something not unlike experiences of other immigrants.⁵² In fact, a year before his sister left for Louisiana, Emanuel had sent the family an unspecified amount of gold as well as one hundred guilders, slightly less than the borrowed 125 florins but still a

considerable sum of money.⁵³ Further, Ashkenazi points out that Emanuel's business was struggling during the period when the letters about the debt were written, as he juggled debts owed for merchandise with his concerns about the potential for war, the cotton crop, and his personal needs.⁵⁴

Perhaps Emanuel thought his responsibilities had been met, or that his family's needs were not as profound given that their living costs had been reduced because of his departure and that of his sister. Further, the letters indicate in Emanuel a level of detachment from family affairs not untypical of immigrants who, as Naomi Cohen points out, viewed their migration as "a readiness to break the hold of a rigid community which one did not choose but was born into."⁵⁵ Emanuel's sister Caroline and brother Karl express their concern and surprise in several letters at not hearing from their brother and scold him for not writing the family.⁵⁶

As for Abraham Levy, he was dealing with issues that undoubtedly were more important to him than sending money to Germany, even though he could afford to do so.⁵⁷ His brother, Daniel, was ill with typhoid fever and died in September 1859, leaving a wife, three children, and property and personal holdings worth nearly one hundred thousand dollars (about two million dollars in current value), which Abraham inherited.⁵⁸ Two months after his brother's death, he welcomed the arrival of his niece, Caroline. Soon after her arrival, Caroline became caregiver to her uncle Daniel Levy's widow and three children. The letters show that she lived in Bayou Sara, with frequent references to her role within the Levy family and her closeness to other relatives and friends. Nine months after Caroline's departure from Germany, her mother wrote:

Dear Caroline, you should know that I always pray that the Almighty God should keep you well and bring you great fortune so that I may still come to experience much joy for your sake. You write that your dear uncle and aunt are so good to you. That certainly gives me great joy because I know that you have worked so hard at home and I see in your letter that . . . now you don't have to.⁵⁹

Leopold Mayer, nephew of Abraham Levy, cousin of Emanuel and Henry Meyer, and great-grandfather of the author. Mayer ran a store in Jackson, Louisiana, which Levy likely provided to him. Levy also paid for Mayer's passage to America and for his tuition to Centenary College in Jackson. In the 1890s, when Mayer and his wife died two years apart, Levy cared for the couple's three young children. Mayer's story illustrates Levy's commitment to helping his relatives immigrate, obtain livelihoods, and thrive in America. It also typifies the social and family networks on which immigrants frequently relied.
(Courtesy of Jay Silverberg.)

Caroline's environment differed greatly from the life she had left in Germany. "In the years before the American Civil War, wealthy and middle-class whites dominated Clinton's society and economy," wrote Virginia Elaine Thompson. "By building railroads, establishing strong mercantile houses and developing a varied corps of artisans, Clinton's elite made the town the center of a booming cotton region."⁶⁰ As her letters indicate,

St. Helena Street in Clinton, Louisiana, during the mid-nineteenth century. The Meyer Brothers store was most likely out of the frame, next to the stores to the right of the photograph. The proprietor of the H. L. Mayer store, seen in the center, was not related to Emanuel and Henry Meyer. (Courtesy of the Jackson Historic District Commission.)

Caroline quickly shed the drudgery of German life once she was exposed to the status of her family and her newfound access to the fineries previously unavailable to her. She asks her brothers for shoes, dresses, and sewing materials and occupies her time with child care and social events—all starkly different from supporting her father's butcher business or toiling in the family's tobacco fields in southwestern Germany.

During the Civil War, the Meyer/Levy family remained intact, and, although the collection includes forty-two letters written between 1860 and 1865, only three make specific reference to any war-related activity. Letters from Caroline to her brothers mention an army unit departing from Bayou Sara and that she was knitting for soldiers, and they inquire about a family friend serving as a soldier.⁶¹ Neither Emanuel nor his cousins joined the Confederate military. Instead, they continued in business making money during the Civil War despite intense fighting in and around Clinton and Bayou Sara that left the latter, riverfront community in ruins.⁶² Ashkenazi writes that Emanuel's business "during the war involved as much peddling with a horse and wagon as retail sales," while he worked diligently to meet his business obligations.⁶³

In 1868, Caroline moved to Galveston, where she wrote thirty-one of the forty-one letters in the collection. Her caregiver duties were needed in Texas because her Uncle Daniel's widow, Elise, had married Louis Michael, a business partner of the Levy brothers. Michael had relocated his new family to become store manager for Greenleve, Block & Co., a dry goods store on "The Strand" in Galveston's business center. Abraham Levy's brother-in-law, Leopold Oppenheimer, started as a clerk in Levy's Bayou Sara store and also worked for the Greenleve store, which he ultimately owned and renamed Block, Oppenheimer & Co., one of the most prominent stores in the region before its abrupt bankruptcy in May 1887.⁶⁴ Abraham Levy likely helped to steer these relationships that had begun before the Civil War through his business connections with the store founder, Abraham Greenleve, and Greenleve's business partners.⁶⁵

Caroline, the most prolific letter writer in the collection, enjoyed life in Galveston. She continually asked her brothers to send her clothes to attend various social affairs and mentioned getting dresses from her cousin's Galveston store. She wrote about the weather, her days at the Galveston beaches, and in 1869 one of two great fires in downtown Galveston. Neither fire affected the family store.⁶⁶

Henry Meyer, Caroline and Emanuel's younger brother, arrived in Louisiana in 1864 and began working in New Orleans as a clerk for D. Blum, Stern & Co., a Jewish dry goods wholesaler that supplied his brother's Clinton store. "Henry had a less abrasive personality than his older brother and developed confidence in Emanuel among the New Orleans merchants from whom Emanuel bought," according to Ashkenazi.⁶⁷ Eventually, Henry moved to Clinton, and by 1870 the Meyer Brothers store was one of the most prominent among a dozen stores in town. The brothers paid \$3,250 for the store property and sold their goods to Clinton residents and the farmers and planters in the region, as well as to a large number of black sharecroppers. They also bought cotton from local growers for a New Orleans factoring firm, A. Levi & Co., which their uncle, Abraham, had used years before.⁶⁸ According to Thompson, "The key to the success of the large number of merchant houses and skilled artisans was immigration. . . . German immigrants were particularly well represented among Clinton's merchants as well, and many of them were Jewish."⁶⁹

The brothers settled into the Clinton community, married local Jewish women, owned homes, became involved in community affairs, and managed their store. Emanuel paid his bills, kept the store operating, and remained a step ahead of his creditors, teetering at times on the verge of insolvency. In 1875, the brothers' uncle, Abraham, had to step in to negotiate considerable debt repayments that threatened the Meyers' business.

Emanuel and Henry also became leaders of Clinton's B'nai B'rith Feliciana Lodge No. 239, which included their uncle and cousins as members. Bayou Sara Lodge No. 162 likewise boasted active family members.⁷⁰ "The class of men who joined the B'nai B'rith paralleled those who joined the Odd Fellows and Masons. Drawing primarily from the ranks of small merchants, it probably helped young men make good business contacts and establish their reputation for civic-mindedness," Diner writes.⁷¹

*Advertisements for the Meyer store in Clinton, Louisiana.
Note the addition of Henry's name at the top of the second ad,
following his move to Clinton and new partnership in the company.
(East Feliciana Patriot, March 2, 1867, and February 27, 1869,
courtesy of Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections,
Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge.)*

As evidenced in the letters, the family's struggle with circumstances in their rapidly changing environments posed ongoing conflicts with long-held tradition, specifically the marital status of the sisters, Caroline and Babette. As they became increasingly exposed to modern secular society, America's new immigrants desired to sever the ties that had once connected them religiously, legally, and socially to their lives in Germany.⁷² At least from the perspective of family in Germany, Emanuel and Henry were not doing nearly enough, per their brotherly responsibilities, to properly ensure

their sisters' well-being, and their inattentiveness prompted family members in the homeland to admonish them for their behavior.

Brother Karl, then seventeen years old and fulfilling his military obligations, wrote in 1864 about a marriage of a friend in which the bride received five thousand florins (about fifty thousand dollars in current value) from her brothers. His anger is directed at his brothers Emanuel and Henry:

First of all I want to give you the news about my happy arrival in Lachen. . . . You can easily imagine the joy that our family had with me.

Our joy changed into great sadness today when we received the letter from you and Heinrich [Henry] in which you [withdrew] promises—which I never expected of you. . . . I don't need to mention anything at all about sister [Babette] because you have not thought at all about her. . . .

However, I see that you [two] are not offering anything for your sister. . . . Now I am asking you brothers to provide for your sister, because after all it is also an honor for you two if [you] provide the same. . . . I will offer everything in order to provide for sister Babette in a short time because I can't see her running around this way. So I ask you all to send 600 dollars soon for Babette. . . . I don't want to enjoy a single kreuzer from it, but instead I will make every effort to provide for myself and our dear parents, since they did not have as much. . . . Once again, don't forget the above . . . and provide it soon because it is a [dishonor] for all of our relatives that the brothers have married and the sisters are running around so and get gray hair. . . .

As I hear, your family is well. . . . So, dear Em, once again I ask you to send 600 dollars for Babette since I know that this is not much in America & then I will soon provide for dear Babette.⁷³

The result of this letter is unclear, at least in the months after it was written. Two years later, in 1866, Caroline was engaged to be married, but her fiancé died, prompting the expected words of support and condolence from family in Germany as well as the hope that she would eventually find a husband. The conflict between German and American customs

flared again, however, about three years later when Henry's marriage unleashed another torrent of anger, embarrassment, and conflict. Karl, his mother Regina, and his sister Babette repeated Karl's earlier comments almost verbatim, and after learning of Henry's planned nuptials, Regina wrote her sons, reminding them that their older sister, Caroline, remained unmarried. Her other letters usually ended with an expression of love. This one did not:

With dripping tears, we read from Heinrich that you did the same as your brother Meir when you also got married without even letting us know anything about it. . . . Meanwhile, you let [Caroline] run around single and we have to be ashamed in front of everyone and keep our eyes lowered since everyone is saying she will have to work in America until she is old and gray.⁷⁴

Twenty-three-year-old Babette added emphasis in this same letter's margin: "Much luck with all your plans. Excuse us. Hoping for a good answer." She continued:

You [two] have put her far away so that you don't have her before your eyes anymore. This is really nice of 2 brothers not to provide anymore for a sister. . . . Isn't it true, dear sister? . . .

What's loveliest is, Heinrich got engaged as a 24-year-old boy, when he really should still have been a stranger to such things. We were surprised about Emanuel, who was already more of an adult than Heinrich. But they will, I believe, come to regret it yet, but it will be too late. . . . I would be ashamed if any of our relatives knew. . . . You all can now use sister Karolina [Caroline] as a maid. Now you can do it this way: Brother Emanuel can for a few months. After that, Heinrich. That is really nice of brothers.⁷⁵

In his one attempt at placating his American siblings, Karl writes below Babette's last line, "If sister Babetta and our dear mother have offended you, then please excuse them." Yet even this is followed by the usual request for funds.⁷⁶ This kerfuffle about Henry's engagement also led to cross words between him and Caroline, who wrote her brother from Galveston. Not one

to withhold emotions, Caroline provided a tart comment in another letter asking her brother Emanuel about his wife. "What is Rose doing? Paper must be quite expensive at her house since nothing is heard from her."⁷⁷

Again, the letters from 1864 to 1865 do not resolve the question about whether the brothers ever sent money to repay travel debts, or for their sister's dowry, or how the spat about Henry's engagement was resolved. In later years, however, the letters indicate little evidence of lingering anger, especially from the mother, who was quite pleased with photos of her grandchildren sent to her from the Meyer siblings. Did they have the money to send? In the mid-1860s, the answer is probably not, or at least not as easily as the family in Germany assumed. Richard H. Kilbourne notes that in 1865, the family lacked the financing that a competitor had and depended on credit extended from their key cotton dealer in New Orleans, Abraham Levi, to finance their inventory of merchandise and manage the day-to-day operations of the store. Simply put, the six hundred dollars for a dowry, or about nine thousand dollars in today's currency, was a considerable sum for brothers struggling to manage their business during the Civil War era. Their family in Germany likely had little concept of how much such a sum meant to Emanuel and Henry.⁷⁸

The brothers' business prospects improved in succeeding years, based on their store ledgers and Dun credit reports that note in November 1869 their good character, sense for business, and annual store revenue of about four thousand dollars. Advertisements in the *East Feliciana Patriot* highlight groceries, dry goods, linens, and imported goods for ladies, men, and children. Still, their success largely depended on loan repayments from customers who paid for their goods based on the anticipated worth of the next year's cotton crop. The merchants borrowed money from their cotton dealers in New Orleans and delayed payment to their suppliers. "Emanuel's talent for holding his wholesale vendors at bay was truly remarkable," Kilbourne writes. "He made partial payments, he made excuses, but he also always responded promptly to the complaints of

his creditors with reassuring words." A Dun report from September 1870 observed, "Doing good bus[iness] got prompt on their payments," a clear reference to the Meyers paying their debts. Emanuel also bought a home in 1870, for which he paid \$3,500, an indication that the brothers had established a foothold and likely viewed their responsibilities to their German relatives as being of lesser and lesser importance.⁷⁹

Acculturating into America: "I really have a good homeland."

The Meyer letters, coupled with genealogical and historical detail, support the oft-discussed acculturation of immigrants into their adopted American home. Ashkenazi writes specifically about the family:

The distinctive nature of the Meyers' approach to business was Emanuel's willingness to run a store through the difficult time of the Civil War and then under almost impossible financing arrangements with [Abraham] Levi. The Meyer brothers persevered and succeeded because they exercised frugality in both business and personal habits. As so often happened in the small towns of Louisiana, Jews found a place for themselves by practicing self-denial in the face of southern values dominated by the conspicuous consumption of the planters. . . . [T]hey were willing . . . to accept deprivation with the expectation of future gain, as were other Jewish immigrants.⁸⁰

Especially the letters written after the Civil War indicate that the Meyers and their relatives followed well-established immigrant patterns, demonstrating their adeptness in adapting to their new environment in order to fit in. They relied on each other for emotional and economic support during the difficult years of Reconstruction in a network not always available to other immigrant families. The men in the family often wrote about their business affairs, whether good or bad, and exchanged greetings and news from business associates.

Two letters from 1868, mailed together on the same day, exemplify how the Meyers relied upon Abraham Levy and the network he had established. Eight family members, including the Meyer brothers, established businesses with the elder

Levy's financial support and close friendships throughout the region. In a six-page letter, Levy writes three pages in German to his nephew Henry and three pages, mostly in English with some German interspersed, to nephew Emanuel. The first letter is written on stationery from a New Orleans firm that imported foreign and domestic dry goods and had employed Henry Meyer before he moved to Clinton to work full time in the brothers' store. The owners were among Levy's long-time associates and likely attended to his personal and business needs when he visited New Orleans. The focus on business, specifically the payment of debts related to cotton shipments, is a common topic of the letters the men exchanged. Their business success revolved around cotton prices and the prompt shipment and receipt of the bales in New Orleans. Emanuel was continually bewildered, if not financially impacted, when bales of cotton were judged to be inferior and the price lowered when it was shipped from Bayou Sara. The elder Levy makes reference to "A Levi," the family's long-time partner in the buying and selling of cotton, as well the names of firms outside of Louisiana, indicating that the Meyer and Levy business interests extended regionally. Levy also references his travel plans and those of other family members who moved frequently between the Felicianas, New Orleans, and Texas, reflecting the common bonds of family, friendship, and business. Levy adds a personal touch to end each letter, indicating his fondness for his nephews and their families, if not his place in their lives as mentor and patriarch.⁸¹

The brothers also likely modeled their social involvement after their uncle, whose diverse business and community interests included ongoing support of the Jewish Widows and Orphans Home in New Orleans and a stint as a postmaster, a political patronage position commonly held by merchants eager to have residents visit their stores. Although their daily lives were likely consumed with business, Emanuel and Henry also occupied important roles among their peers. In addition to their leadership roles in Clinton's B'nai B'rith lodge, they raised money for a Jewish charity in Clinton,

The Levy House, still standing in Jackson, Louisiana.

Abraham Levy lived here for about twenty-five years after 1871.

*Built in the early 1800s, the house was once part of a school before being converted into a private residence about midcentury. It was moved in the 1970s to the grounds of nearby Asphodel Plantation and served as an inn and restaurant before it was moved again to its current location in Jackson, where it holds a private residence and business offices. The house was used for filming on the 1958 film *The Long Hot Summer*.*

(Courtesy of Jay Silverberg.)

sending tickets to suppliers and then unsuccessfully trying to charge them \$2.50 per ticket against their accounts, and followed their uncle in sending their daughters to the Silliman Female Collegiate Institute, one of the region's preeminent girls' schools.⁸²

The letters include few references to politics or government in Louisiana or abroad, yet Emanuel and Henry did become politically involved and were connected to one of the more wanton acts of the day, the 1875 murder of John Gair, a black Republican leader during Reconstruction, and the hang-

ing of his sister-in-law, Babe Matthews. The treachery and violence of the post-Civil War period in Louisiana had a particular hold on the Felicianas that carried through to the 1876 presidential election. While the historical record is unclear about the brothers' complicity in the murders of Gair and his sister-in-law, Henry Meyer is named in a congressional investigative report as a member of the posse of at least forty men who chased Gair from Clinton to Baton Rouge.⁸³

The events were precipitated by the alleged attempt by Gair's sister-in-law to kill the white Clinton doctor for whom she worked. She was reportedly coerced by a Gair associate to lace a bucket of water with poison. She was apprehended and questioned, pointing to Gair as the mastermind in the plot. Vigilantes took up arms and headed on horseback for Baton Rouge, where Gair was reportedly hiding. They found him and returned with him to Clinton, where members of the posse shot and killed him and left his body beside the road. His sister-in-law was hung from a tree on the Clinton courthouse square, according to contemporary reports.

From various accounts, Gair had upset the established political leadership in the region. He was reported to be the leader of an uprising during the summer of 1875 and had been forced to leave the area. Statements are unclear about whether his death was politically motivated, in particular if Democratic leaders had contrived a plot to have him killed. In any case, no one in Clinton was ever brought to justice for the two deaths.

The Meyer brothers also appear on a list of Democratic community leaders reporting on November 22, 1876, "that at the late election held in this parish on the 7th of November, 1876, there was a perfectly peaceable election. The canvass was remarkably quiet and during the whole canvass we have not heard of a single case of outrage for political purposes."⁸⁴ In fact, in East and West Feliciana and other parishes throughout Louisiana, black voters were threatened and told to stay away from the polls. Governor Henry Clay Warmoth, whose taste for intimidation was widely known, told a national reporter, "I

*Headline from the October 15, 1876,
issue of the New Orleans
Republican, announcing the
murders of John Gair and his
sister-in-law, Babe Matthews,
in Clinton, Louisiana.
(Library of Congress.)*

don't pretend to be honest. . . . I only pretend to be as honest as anybody in politics and more so than those fellows who are opposing me now. . . . [Why], damn it, everybody is demoralized down here. Corruption is the fashion."⁸⁵

In their studies of violent incidents in Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee, Paul Berger, Daniel Weinfeld, Stuart Rockoff, and Leonard Rogoff find that some Jews engaged in issues of black social and political equality during Reconstruction.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, even in terms of support for popular Democratic aims, "Most sources suggest that Jews stayed out of the complicated and often violent politics of Reconstruction," Rockoff writes in his detailed examination of Jewish leadership in Ascension Parish, about seventy miles south of the Felicianas.⁸⁷ Thus Henry Meyer's direct engagement with the Gair posse is contrary to typical Jewish actions of the era. Yet the evidence here supports the growing contention that Jews were involved in Reconstruction politics. Although the letters end in 1871, before these events unfolded, newspaper accounts mention the Meyers and two other family members as part of Democratic Party committees. Julius Freyhan and Mor-

ris Wolf served on the Elect Samuel Tilden executive committee in West Feliciana Parish.⁸⁸ Morris Wolf was Hannah Levy Wolf's son, and the two men were brothers-in-law and business partners. Evidently they agreed with the majority of their white neighbors in opposing Reconstruction and supporting the Democratic Party, and they acted as opportunists who mixed business with political engagement.

Religion is another common theme in the letters. By the mid-1850s, Jewish families in the region likely numbered no more than one hundred, and the family members counted themselves among the earliest of these.⁸⁹ Yet being Jewish in America was much different than in their homeland. The first synagogue in their region was not established until 1901 in St. Francisville, twenty-five miles from Clinton. Nonetheless the letters show that the families in Louisiana gathered for Jewish holidays, exchanged traditional Judaic greetings with each other, and received the same from their relatives in Germany. The Meyers joined other Jewish merchants in closing their stores for Rosh Hashanah, a pattern Jewish merchants frequently followed. Caroline wrote about attending the 1868 opening of Galveston's Congregation B'nai Israel.⁹⁰ In February 1860, Karl wrote:

Dear brother, you wrote me asking if I have learned anything since you left home. I have done my utmost because I am leaving school at Easter and will have my bar mitzvah 80 days after Easter. I would [like to] learn even more, though, because I am thinking of going to school in Neustadt in the summer if we have the strength because business with us is very bad right now. Dear, dear sister, no day, no hour, no minute passes that I don't think of you all, my dear sister. I remember especially every Sabbath when I put on my beautiful shawl that you bought me as a reminder of you.⁹¹

The letters from Germany frequently refer to the role of God, reinforcing the Meyers' Jewish identity, and there are similar references to God in letters from America. Participation in the B'nai B'rith symbolized social association with fellow Jews.

The letters also show the emotional conflicts between the family's bonds to the land of their birth and their adopted American home. The Franco-Prussian War dominated several letters in 1869 and 1870, as the siblings exchanged concerns about brother Karl's military obligation, yet letters from Germany mention little of the government turmoil undoubtedly affecting the family there. Babette worried about how work would get done with Karl gone and their father ailing, and Caroline, reading daily dispatches about the war on the front pages of the Galveston newspaper, expressed concern about her brother's well-being, a sentiment she had introduced some years earlier when she told her siblings how discouraged she was about Karl ever being able to emigrate because he was in the German Army.⁹²

One letter in particular, the only extant from America to Germany, encapsulates the emotions of separation from the immigrants' families in Germany and the comfort of knowing what they had achieved. Caroline had been gone from Germany for nine years when she wrote a few weeks before Rosh Hashanah on stationery from her cousin's Galveston store, Greenleve, Block & Co.:

Most valued parents and much-loved siblings,
[I am writing] to inform you that I am very well and hope the same of you all, which is always the main issue at this time of year, and I hope to God that it will continue to be so and that we will have a better summer than last year.

Now, my dears, how are things where you are? I hope that you received my letter of last month and that I convinced you all that everyone here is healthy. . . .

My dears, I have also received letter[s] from my dear brothers very often. They, along with their families, are in the best of health, thank God. . . .

Now, my dears, I think we're having New Year's celebration in three weeks, and for this I bid you all a cordial farewell, and happiness and joy for your children and children's children, and hope that we will still exchange letters with each other for a hundred years, or will possibly even see each other personally if we both now get some luck. Now, my

dears, I really have a good homeland now but I wish to God I could again have the happiness of being in your dear midst.⁹³

The letters end in 1871, the same year the Meyer siblings' mother, Regina, died and a year before their sister Babette finally married. Their brother Karl returned home from the Franco-Prussian War and eventually married. By the 1870's, Emanuel and Henry Meyer were established in their dry goods store in downtown Clinton. They raised their families in homes only blocks apart and not far from their store.⁹⁴ The letters from Germany often reference the photos of the brothers' children and the personal milestones the family in Germany could only experience through the words of a letter sent from five thousand miles away.

Caroline eventually married a Clinton grocer named Rudolph Carow, who had been born in Berlin in 1830, but their life together was troubled. Carow's store on the town square in Clinton burned down in 1878, and he lost the building and its entire contents, none of which were insured. With the help of other merchants, he opened a new store, although soon he and Caroline left Clinton for Baton Rouge, where Carow's new business failed. In 1893, he took his own life. According to a report in the *Baton Rouge Advocate*, he wrote to his rabbi saying that his life was in shambles and that he was broke, and he asked the rabbi to use insurance from B'nai B'rith and the Knights of Honor to take care of his wife.⁹⁵ Carow's story is a reminder that immigration to America did not inevitably lead to success: even in this hard-working and well-connected family, some members succeeded, others did not.

The ensuing years also were unkind to the Felicianas and their region. Weissbach asserts that Jewish communities that remained vital were able to grow economically and demographically in the decades after the significant Jewish immigration periods of the mid- to late-1800s.⁹⁶ Unfortunately, as the boll weevil began decimating the region's cotton crop, the Felicianas' economy rapidly declined. Mississippi River flooding eventually caused Bayou Sara's demise. The critical

linkages that Diner describes as “multiple migrations, youthful founders, . . . and the connectedness between family and community formation,” which bound Jewish families to the region for nearly fifty years, frayed and largely disappeared.⁹⁷ Abraham Levy died in December 1899 in Jackson, Louisiana, at eighty years old, his passing noted by his B’nai B’rith lodge brothers on the front page of the *Bayou Sara Times-Democrat*. His sister, Hannah, had died in New Orleans eleven months prior at age seventy-eight. Her last forty years were spent in New Orleans near her children, Morris Wolf and Sarah, who married Julius Freyhan, one of the more noted Jewish leaders of the time in the Gulf South.⁹⁸

By 1900, the entire Meyer/Levy family was all but gone from the Felicianas, as were many of the Jewish families who had settled there more than fifty years earlier. The first generation of the family to be born in the United States had moved

*Graves of Abraham Levy and Henry Meyer,
Jewish Cemetery, Clinton, Louisiana.*

(Photographs by Tara Marie Photography, courtesy of Jay Silverberg.)

their families, their businesses, and their lives to the larger cities of Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and New York. Emanuel Meyer had moved to Alabama, where, in his later years, he managed a newsstand in a Selma hotel lobby.⁹⁹ His brother Henry retired to a northern Louisiana community. Both lived with family members in their later years before their deaths in 1914 and 1921, respectively. Their widowed sister Caroline died in 1907 in New Orleans. Meyer and Levy family members occupy nearly one-third of the burial plots in the Jewish section of the Masonic cemetery, about one mile from downtown Clinton.

The Meyer Brothers Store was kept in the family and sold to Henry Meyer's cousin, Jonah Levy, Abraham Levy's son.¹⁰⁰ He became mayor of Clinton the same year he declared bankruptcy, resulting in the eventual closure of the store in the early 1900s—and hidden within its walls, the letters that help to narrate the story of a family's linkages in America and Germany despite the strains of immigration. The Meyers, Levys, and their relatives followed familiar patterns showing how critically important chain migration was in establishing an economic and societal foothold on which the family would base its business and personal success. To some extent, this is also a story of rootlessness. These people maintained various links as they spread out and moved for economic opportunity, to find Jewish marriage and business partners, to retire, or to move to larger Jewish communities. It is a quintessential saga of American Jewry.

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Meyer family letters:

Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, December 17, 1855

Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, February 17, 1856

Karl Meyer to Emanuel and Henry Meyer, December 6, 1864

Regina, Babette, and Karl Meyer to Henry and

Emanuel Meyer, [1868]

Caroline Meyer to her family in Germany, August 29, 1868

Abraham Levy to Henry and Emanuel Meyer, December 21, 1868

NOTE: The text of the letters appears exactly as in the translators' rendering of the original German and Yiddish documents, except that paragraph breaks have been inserted where they improve clarity. Some words, characters, and even entire passages in the letters are difficult to read or translate because of deterioration, tears, holes, and folds in the documents; bracketed ellipses indicate sections of the letters that are illegible. Editorial insertions, including translators' interpretations, are enclosed in brackets, with question marks inserted where the translators are uncertain in their attempt to decipher handwriting or words.

Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, December 17, 1855

Lachen, December 17, 1855

Dear Son Mayer,

We received your letter from Orleans on November 18th and see from it that God Almighty has led you healthily and fortunately to Orleans and that you had a good voyage, praise the Lord, and you were not sick, thank God, which was always what we wanted. Since we have prayed for you day after day and God Almighty has heard us, and since we see in your letter how you arrived in Orleans, [and] that God Almighty led you immediately to such good people [who] embraced you immediately and immediately gave you such a big present, you can see: when distress is greatest, then God is nearest. This

gave us very great joy: that you now immediately have money again, because your travel money was so little. When you also sent us an American [dollar?] from your present [. . .] we should enjoy looking at it [. . .]. We're doing that, too, which God Almighty knows.

I have to write you that this letter that you wrote from Baisara [Bayou Sara] on November 6th was received by us on December 14th and from it we saw that you found your uncles and aunts so healthy and [that they?] were so happy and immediately bought you a horse and gave you goods, so that you should immediately head into the country, and that that will have seemed funny to you because you were still such a stranger, but I believe that would happen to anyone. But you have your dear uncles, where you now have great support, in that they immediately helped you, so that you might amount to something. Dear child! I believe that this first time heading into the countryside was not pleasant for you. But [as the saying goes] all beginnings are hard. But you know that you would also have to slave away at home, though [. . .] that [. . .] hard to you. God will help, and when you write again, write how you like the climate and how things went for you on your trip.

Dear Child. One is not rich immediately. If you cannot send anything at the moment, all we know is that we are working day after day if you can only provide for yourself at this time. If you see that you would not like to travel long distances, [then] stay for a while in the area where your people are. You will still earn as much as you need for yourself once people know you a little. You know that your father is still working, that he always sees that he is also earning something. He sends the meat to Kirrweiler and Maikammer, as you do as well.¹⁰¹

Now I have to write to you about Germany. Business is coming along as ever. Every week, we and Mayer slaughter 2 pieces, and a pound of meat [. . .]. We just slaughter[ed] a [. . .] that cost 50 [florin] and [. . .] quarter weighs 70 pounds; a pound of skin costs 2 [or 12?] florin. A pound of [Tashlikh?] costs 16 florin.¹⁰² Today we just slaughtered a cow of [. . .] that cost 20 [standard?] thalers for almost [. . .] 90 florin. Today, father has the [. . .] to Wolf

from Maikammer. We sold that for 8 florin. Now I have to tell you that Mother and Heinrich are staying in Münster [probably Klingenmünster] with Grandmother, that Grandmother is now very happy, and she is still very healthy and can walk as well as she did 10 years ago.¹⁰³ Now I have to tell you how the fruits are with us. A hundred pounds of grain cost 8 thaler. Spelt costs 7 thaler. Barley 6 thaler, 30–40 cents. A [. . .] of potatoes costs 36 cents. The tobacco business is bad this year. We still have ours. I remain your father forever. Many thousands of greetings.

[Joseph] Mayer.

Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, February 17, 1856

L[ache]n, February 17, 1856

Dear Son Maier,

Your letter that you wrote on January 11th, 1856 arrived here on February 14th and from it we see that you are healthy, thank God. That made us very happy. At noon on Wednesday when we saw your letter, we were all so full of joy that we didn't want to eat anything more. You write that you have hardly received any answer to your letters [that] you have written to us. We have received all of your letters, and found the dollar inside your letter that you wrote from Orleans. You can imagine [. . .] great joy when we saw that you sent an American dollar in your first letter.

The second letter, which you wrote on November 6th in Baisara [Bayou Sara] at your Uncle A. [Levy's] home, we received on December 14th and immediately sent off a letter, so that you would be sure to receive an answer soon, dear Child, so that you would not live in any [uncertainty?]. I think you will have received the letter. You can't conceive the joy we had, when you already sold so many goods on your first trip and got such a large sum of money. It is good fortune when one comes to such a strange new land and can immediately fit in with humanity—for that one can thank God Almighty. Now we are also very curious about what articles of goods your business consists of. When you

write again, write about that. If [or when] you are used to it, also the business. You will certainly be happy to do that.

Dear Maier, just follow your dear uncles. You will also see for yourself that everything they advise you is for a good purpose, and [that they] do everything for your benefit [so] that you will certainly amount to something and can be a little helpful to us— which are also in your thoughts if God Almighty keeps you healthy and brings you luck. You write that you want to send us 50 dollars by Easter. If you can do that already, then it would certainly make us happy that your dear uncles put you in a business so that you can earn something. Dear brothers, I thank you all for everything you are doing for my child now and in the future. Dear Maier, you write that your uncle D. [Levy] has said to you that your Karolina [Caroline] wants to come. If she should write you for now that cannot yet be. You yourself will know that the others are all still little and one cannot demand anything of them because they are still going to school.

And the American dollar that you put in the letter, we added to it and bought your sister Karolina [Caroline] a pretty dress, so that she already has a present from her brother, [and] so that she will certainly be happy when she looks at it because it is from her dear brother. You write that your uncle A. L. [Abraham Levy] is asking his wife for prunes. I would be happy to do that. I would rather send them to her than eat them myself. But for now it is impossible because for that, one has to have a procurement opportunity. For now I don't know of any opportunity at all ([anyone] who is heading to Orleans). For now, I don't know of any more news to write. I greet you and my brothers and sisters and sisters-in-law many thousands of times.

I hope that the letter finds them as healthy as us when it left us.

Joseph Mayer

Second page of the February 17, 1856, letter from Joseph Meyer in Lachen to his son Emanuel in Bayou Sara, Louisiana. This letter illustrates how the family combined multiple messages into a single letter. Joseph's portion ends mid page with his signature, followed by messages written and signed by various family members including his wife, Regina, who wrote in Yiddish. (Courtesy of the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge.)

Karl Meyer to Emanuel and Henry Meyer, December 6, 1864

Lachen, December 6, 1864

Dearest Brothers,

First of all I want to give you the news about my happy arrival in Lachen. I [report?] that our family is well and in good spirits. You can easily imagine the joy that our family had with me.

Our joy changed into great sadness today when we received the letter from you and Heinrich in which you [withdrew] promises – which I never expected of you. [. . .]. Above all, you ought to have thought of your sister Karolina in America, because before you two provided for her, I would really not have believed it of either of you both to [. . .]. However, you moved sister Karolina far from you, because you think that far away is good for the [shoes? shoe sales?] I don't need to mention anything at all about sister [Babette] because you have not thought at all about her, that she is older than you and H.

Recently I heard that Beer from Billigheim is marrying a girl from Ingenheim, whose brothers sent her 5,000 florin. However, I see that you [two] are not offering anything for your sister. I really believe that you would have received the same [. . .] in 4 or 5 years. Now I am asking you brothers to provide for your sister, because after all it is also an honor for you two if [you] provide the same and the [. . .] circumstances of our parents that one cannot give any daughter [anything] from it. I will offer everything in order to provide for sister Babette in a short time because I can't see her running around this way [selling meat?]. So I ask you all to send 600 dollars soon for Babette however far away (please don't believe it is for me). I don't want to enjoy a single kreuzer from it, but instead I will make every effort to provide for myself and our dear parents, since they did not have as much as [Grandma]. Since you, dear H., asked about me at the end of your letter, I'll do the same with my congratulations at the end, but I ask you again if it is possible to calculate back until our sister is provided for. I congratulate you warmly and wish you much luck in your project. Once again, don't forget the above [. . .] and provide it soon, be-

cause it is a [dishonor] for all of our relatives that the brothers have married and the sisters are running around so and get gray hair.

Dear [Emanuel], the [. . .] also applies to you. As I hear, your family is well, which is always [. . .]. As you know, I was in Aschaffenburg for 10 months, but during this time did not receive a single line from you all, then soldiers or brothers or relatives in America had always received letters.¹⁰⁴ So, dear Em, once again I ask you to send 600 dollars for Babette since I know that this is not much in America & then I will soon provide for dear Babette. Now enough, or much too much, for today. Now I am ending the [. . .], but not in my heart. I greet you and kiss you all warmly many thousand times. Something else to mention—probably you, dear Emanuel, will be responsible for this [. . .] so that Heinrich [can] come to this big [wedding?]. Excuse me if I have been so [. . .] to one of you.

**Regina, Babette, and Karl Meyer to Henry
and Emanuel Meyer, [1868]¹⁰⁵**

REGINA TO HENRY

Today I received your letter. With dripping tears we read from [. . .] Heinrich that you did the same as your brother Meir when you also got married without even letting us know anything about it. You would have certainly believed if you had let the matter be prolonged that you certainly would have received the large necessary [. . .], but it would have been nice if something had been said since [you] would have provided for your sister. Meanwhile, you let her run around single and we have to be ashamed in front of everyone and keep our eyes lowered since everyone is saying she will have to work in America until she is old and gray. After that, she can go around begging in America.

Her brothers are not concerned about her. Just think what a great sorrow this is for [your] parents and siblings. I am just ashamed to go out among people, but probably this did not cause you any sorrow either. Can't you remember how [vehemently?] I entreated you all? Now you should just think about not causing so

much sorrow. You should have thought about making your parents happy and providing for your sisters. It would have been nice if we had known the matter. [If we could have said] brothers have provided for their sisters. Now I think you will certainly send 600 dollars for Babette and not let the matter slip out of sight and certainly send it when you receive this letter. [Your] brother Meir waited until he was 26 years old, but you do not search for your [. . .] at all to [take advantage of?]. Now I [. . .] don't know any other news for today and I finish with my writing.

Regina Meyer

KARL TO HENRY AND EMANUEL

If sister Babetta [Babette] and our dear mother have offended you, then please excuse them, for our dear mother is very angry and upset since you, dear Heinrich, did not ask her for advice & Babetta now thinks all is lost. Once again, I ask you all to provide what I wrote you about & then everything will be forgotten. The only thing is that I'm very sorry that you all didn't ask sister Karolina & [that] you, dear Heinrich, were [married]. For now, I won't say anything to anyone until [it] is exposed by other people later. Dear brother Heinrich, I certainly believed I would often receive a few lines from you in [Jacksonburg?], which was not the case. I arrive here [for the first time? on the 1st of the month?] and now have to hear this again already, and don't know how long it will last. But I expect to make sister Babetta a bride in this time. I ask you just to provide what I wrote you about. Once again, I apologize on all of our behalf, because, dear Heinrich, you yourself will perceive that you have done wrong.

Once again may you be greeted and kissed and with that, I remain your loyal brother forever.

K. Mayer

Hoping for an answer soon. Excuse our poor handwriting.

This page and opposite: *“With dripping tears we read . . .”*
Yiddish letter from Regina Meyer in Germany to her son
Henry in Clinton, Louisiana, probably in 1868. The German
portion at the bottom was added by Henry’s sister Babette.
(Courtesy of the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections,
Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge.)

BABETTE TO HENRY AND EMANUEL

I refer to the notes of brother Karl and our dear mother. When we received the letter today and saw in it that our dear parents have raised such virtuous sons and have accomplished fine results and have asked them nicely for advice, that really makes me happy – so that I might be ashamed if a stranger should see in at such a time [that] there is such a group of ignorant young people. I could almost die of grief when I think of my sister who is now almost 32 years old and has been hurt by her brother so greatly behind the light. You [two] have put her far away so that you don't have her before your eyes anymore. That is really nice of 2 brothers, not to provide anymore for a sister. That really needs to be inserted into all newspapers beforehand. Unfortunately, no one has to suffer from this except for sister Karolina, who has been [there] for years and unfortunately did not have any recourse [or shelter] anymore except with strangers. Isn't it true, dear sister? We have nice brothers in America who provide nicely for their sisters.

Really, they can no longer remember in what poverty [their] parents raised them and really believed that the brothers did their duty as brothers and children. What's loveliest is, Heinrich got engaged as a 24-year-old boy, when he really should still have been a stranger to such things. We were surprised about Emanuel, who was already more of an adult than Heinrich. But they will, I believe, come to regret it yet, but it will be too late. If you [two] want brother Karl to travel to America too, your father-in-law probably has another daughter that he should immediately make obligatory for them.

Oh, I really thought brother Heinrich must be crazy, to throw away his youth in such a way. I would be ashamed if any of our relatives knew. We are really not permitted to have any enjoyable hour on earth anymore. No sooner is brother Karl home for a few days, then we already have to have great trouble again. A person really does not need to wonder about you all. You all did not ask your parents for advice. Now I am ending my letter and greet you all many times. You all can now use sister Karolina as a maid.

Now you can do it this way: Brother Emanuel can for a few months. After that, Heinrich. That is really nice of brothers.

Babette Mayer

My dears, before [. . .] this, there is something else to mention: I am really very sorry that I have to write and send off such letters to brothers.

Much luck with all your plans. Excuse us. Hoping for a good answer.

Caroline Meyer to her family in Germany, August 29, 1868

Greenleve, Block & Co.
Wholesale Dry Goods,
Strand Street
Galveston, Tex., August 29, 1868

Most valued parents and much-loved siblings,

[I am writing] to inform you that I am very well and hope the same of you all, which is always the main issue at this time of year, and I hope to God that it will continue to be so and that we will have a better summer than last year.

Now, my dears, how are things where you are? I hope that you received my letter of last month and that I convinced you all that everyone here is healthy, God be praised.

We are really having a very warm summer, but we'll accept that from God Almighty—Just healthy—that's all-important. My dears, I have also received letter[s] from my dear brothers very often. They, along with their families, are in the best of health, thank God. Now, my dears, is there any good cabbage at home this year? I think—and, as I hear—it is going to be pretty good here. We can use it, after all, because there has hardly been any harvest here for a long time. Only God Almighty knows when it will be time. Whoever trusts in Him is never abandoned.

Now, my dears, I think we're having New Year's celebration in three weeks, and for this I bid you all a cordial farewell, and happiness and joy for your children and children's children, and

hope that we will still exchange letters with each other for a hundred years, or will possibly even see each other personally if we both now get some luck. Now, my dears, I really have a good homeland now but I wish to God I could again have the happiness of being in your dear midst. Just patience. God will help, who has already helped so often.

Now, sister Babetta [Babette], have you already made your [. . .] dress? I already made mine last week, which is nothing new here. Dear sister, here people make them all year long. I've often wanted to send you the [. . .] from my [. . .], in order to compare yours with mine. I am not quite as [glossy-haired?] as you. That comes from being in this country. Now, my dear, I hope that I hear special news from you soon, and now you still have to do as many lovely tasks as when I was home.

Do you still remember the [. . .] that you knitted? I still have mine safely stored. I feel happy when I look at it. Now, my dear, I've written everything necessary. I'll write more when it is a little cooler. Now, my dear parents and siblings, once again I wish you a good New Year as you would wish for yourselves, and kiss each other for me many times. Farewell and may you be greeted and kissed. The one who wishes that is your daughter and sister.

Caroline Mayer

Hope to hear from you soon. Say hello to everyone who asks about me.

Opposite page: *Letter from Caroline Meyer, August 29, 1868.*

Caroline, who settled in Galveston, Texas, in 1868, was the most prolific writer in the collection, responsible for forty-five letters.

This letter is the only one in the collection sent from America to Germany.

(Courtesy of the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge.)

Abraham Levy to Henry and Emanuel Meyer, December 21, 1868

LEVY TO HENRY MEYER

D. Blum, [Stern] & Co.
No. 63 Custom House St.

Office in New York, No. 57 Murray Street
New Orleans, December 21, 1868

Dear Henry

Today I received your letter of the 18th of this [month] here. I believed I would be in B. Sara [Bayou Sara] today. However, since I didn't get to [Corpus Christi], I am going [there] tomorrow evening and will be in B. Sara on Wednesday. Also, I expect Louis will be here today from Galveston.¹⁰⁶ All will be coming to Jackson and also to Clinton. In regard to the bill that you owe, I believed – and it is also the case – that Louis settled it with his bill last summer before he left. That's what Louis told me. So if Louis comes today I'll ask him and [I] also want to see Dr. Flescher about it. Now, how is it going with my bills that I turned over to you all in Clinton? How is it [going] with A. J. [Hanly]?¹⁰⁷ You all told me that L. A. [. . .]'s cotton will be on it on the 20th of this [month]. You wrote me [didn't you?] that [. . .] wants to pay for his cotton. I hope that you are [trying?] to get all the money for me, as much as possible, since I want to pay all my debts, so that I get everything in order. How is business? Good, I hope. Louis and I will go to Clinton when we go to Jackson. Otherwise, nothing new except I very much hope everyone is well. Greetings to all the family from your uncle.

A Levy

Be so good as to write now to Bayou Sara how it's going with all the oats & cotton bills that I gave you all for collection. Also, I am going to see Dr. [Flescher] this evening. Greetings to Emanuel & wife and children.

A L

LEVY TO EMANUEL MEYER¹⁰⁸

Dear Nephew,

I received your letter of the 20th of this month, 1868, and [. . .] naturally in regard to Kelly's cotton I do. nat. understand you. Yesitatey [Yesterday] Yuu say Mr. Kelly has no fonts [funds] and then Yuu Say Mr. Kelly has given You A Draft on A Levy A Levi NO [New Orleans] [. . .] & hee paid [when?] hee has funds on hand. I hope that will be Meight son [mighty soon] as I do need the money to make payments in NO of over all indebtnes [indebt- edness] from 1867 & 1866 to gett my Rest Once more.

Now, how is it with A. [J]. Hanly, because his cotton is [. . .] and I want to take cotton [fabric?] for it at the New Orleans market Or even ¼ ½ more because I want to have my money in Order to Settle up. Please let me know about the claime of ~~T R T N.~~ and Gambry & for ~~427-50~~ R L Brown 427.50 I R Montgomey [Montgomery?] 128.44. Please let me know since I want to have all of that in order. You all told me that I can settle both of them. How is it [going] with Mr. Hall's cotton, in other words with A. J. Hanly? Please Lett me [know] if Henry is going to [M?] City[.] You will go and stay At My house. Nattey [Nothing] New [. . .] So. La. Catton ahr [South Louisiana cotton are] worth 80 pounds in B Sara. I wand [want] to go to the City my Self next Sunday if I kan Gett of [off]. So please Lett me Know all about it. Sent [Send] your letter by the mail Reider [rider] or by mail. I will go to Jaken [Jackson] on Monday. Or if [I] Can To Day if nat Monday. ma bee [Maybe] I will pay you a Viskit.

All my famly is Well hlen [when] I Left them Last Thurstay. Trape Me Lanne [Drop me a line] if You all Wallt [would] Like To See Henry bfor hee goes to the City. Natting Els New [Nothing else new]. Fonly [Fondly] your Unkel

A. Levy

"I. do. nat. understand you."

Abraham Levy alternated in his letters between German and broken English, as indicated in this passage from a letter dated December 21, 1868, written from New Orleans to his nephews in Clinton, Louisiana.

*Addressing his nephew Emanuel, Levy discusses business concerning A. Levi, the Meyers' cotton broker in New Orleans.
(Courtesy of the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections,
Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge.)*

NOTES

The author is a descendant of the families writing these letters. The Meyer siblings were his grandmother's cousins; Samuel, Abraham, and Daniel Levy were her great uncles; and Johanna Levy was her great aunt. Abraham Levy likely paid for the passage of the author's great-grandfather, Leopold Mayer, in 1872 and established him in business in Bayou Sara and Jackson, Louisiana, where he and his wife, Addie, became parents to three children who were orphaned in 1897, briefly leaving Levy as the youngsters' caretaker.

The author wishes to thank the translators of the letters: Barbara Guggemos, who translated the German and organized the letter set to include both the German and Yiddish translations; and George Plohn, who translated the Yiddish sections of the letters. A Southern Jewish Historical Society grant helped defray the author's costs for these translations.

¹ The letters referenced here are from the Meyer Brothers' Store Records, Mss. 2909, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Special Collections, Hill Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge (hereafter cited as MBSR and LLMVC); In addition to the Meyer store records, MBSR contains correspondence from Abraham Levy's brother-in-law, Leopold Oppenheimer, and son, Emanuel Levy; Louis Michael, who married Elise Levy, the widow of Abraham Levy's younger brother Daniel; Solomon Wolf, a Meyer cousin; and Tim Taylor, a friend of Emanuel Meyer. The Bertram Groene Collection at the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana, includes records from the Meyer Brothers store but no family letters.

² *Germany* in this article, especially in references prior to 1871, refers to a sociocultural concept rather than a political unit. Germany, as a state, did not exist until 1871.

³ Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, December 17, 1855, MBSR.

⁴ Joseph Meyer and the Levys—Abraham, Samuel, Daniel, and Hannah—had the same mother, Schonele Bach. Joseph was her child with her first husband, Martin Meyer, and the Levy siblings with her second husband, Emanuel Levy. The letters continually refer to the Levy siblings as “uncle” or “aunt” without any reference to “step” brother, uncle, or aunt.

⁵ Parish records indicate that the store was in Clinton at least from 1834, with multiple transactions regarding the property occurring before the Meyer purchase. Property records, Book Q, 188, East Feliciana Parish Clerk of Court. The story of the building demolition and donation was told to the author in Clinton, Louisiana, on May 9, 2014, by Anne Reilly Jones, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Jones, who donated the records to Louisiana State University.

⁶ Materials from MBSR, not including the letters, are referred to in Elliott Ashkenazi, *The Business of Jews in Louisiana, 1840–1875* (Tuscaloosa, 1988) and Richard Holcombe Kilbourne, Jr., *Debt, Investment, Slaves: Credit Relations in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, 1825–1885* (Tuscaloosa, 1995).

⁷ Barbara Guggemos, who translated the letters, and Diana Matut of the Department of Jewish Studies at Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, Germany, provided the

analysis. The use of the term *Yiddish* to describe the Meyers' language is problematic, as properly speaking, Yiddish is an eastern European, Polish-inflected language that is markedly different from the German-inflected "Western Yiddish" commonly spoken by Jews in central Europe. Indeed, it is still more complicated in this case, as Matut explains in an e-mail to the author on June 22, 2015: "The language of the Yiddish-script letters captures the transitional moment in the history of Western Yiddish, when its speakers moved toward German. While the spoken language contained [fewer] elements of Western Yiddish, and High German (or a local dialect thereof) became the standard of everyday conversation, all written forms adapted to this situation as well. Starting from being Western Yiddish in Yiddish letters, language development continued to various transitional forms (not Western Yiddish anymore, not standard German yet), but still written in Yiddish letters. Yiddish script usually was the last frontier before the complete change to German in Latin letters. In writing, therefore, a certain retarding moment can be observed, depending on gender, age and class. Sometimes the language of this transitional moment is called 'Judeo-German,' albeit it would be more correct to call it—depending on the level of transformation—either 'Western Yiddish remnants' or 'transitional German in Yiddish script.'" Matut also pointed out that the salutations follow patterns in the Yiddish *brivnshteler*, guides used during the period to teach writing skills. Although a more precise term such as those Matut offers might be preferable, with these considerations noted, this article will use the simpler and more familiar *Yiddish*.

⁸ The author used his genealogical research as well as information from the Civil Registry Office, Bad Bergzabern, Germany, and the State Archives, Speyer, Germany, gathered by Stefan Jamin of Landau under the supervision of Roger Lustig, a genealogical researcher in Princeton, New Jersey. Lustig provided translations of Meyer family documents. The Levy family and extended relatives are referenced in several books: Benjamin Kaplan, *The Eternal Stranger: A Study of Jewish Life in the Small Community* (New York, 1957); Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*; Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, Slaves*; Scott P. Marler, *The Merchants' Capital: New Orleans and the Political Economy of the Nineteenth-Century South* (New York, 2013); Anny Bloch-Raymond, *From the Banks of the Rhine to the Banks of the Mississippi: The History of Jewish Immigrants and Their Individual Stories*, trans. Catherine Temerson (Santa Maria, CA, 2014), Kindle edition.

⁹ Carolyn Earle Billingsley, *Communities of Kinship: Antebellum Families and the Settlement of the Cotton Frontier* (Athens, GA, 2004), 23. Rudolf Glanz notes that he reviewed many German Jewish biographical works that failed to provide "a complete picture of the situation of the family of the emigrant who is the biographical subject." Ricky L. Sherrod writes, "Increased emphasis on kinship relationships and the use of genealogy are heretofore underutilized tools that the historian can employ to create a robust narrative of southern history during the antebellum years, the Civil War, and Reconstruction." Rudolf Glanz, "The German Jewish Mass Emigration: 1820-1880," *American Jewish Archives* 22 (April 1970): 51; Ricky L. Sherrod, "Plain Folk, Planters, and the Complexities of Southern Society: Kin-

ship Ties in Nineteenth-Century Northwest Louisiana and Northeast Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 113 (2009): 3.

¹⁰ Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America* (New Haven, 2005), 4.

¹¹ Passenger lists indicate that at least four members of the family departed from Le Havre destined for New Orleans. "Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New Orleans, Louisiana, 1820-1902," Records of the U.S. Customs Service, 1820-ca. 1891, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as NARA). A Jewish immigrant's trip to Le Havre is detailed by Stefan Rohrbacher, "From Württemberg to America: A Nineteenth-Century German-Jewish Village on its Way to the New World," *American Jewish Archives* 41 (1989): 151. See also Julius Weis, *Autobiography of Julius Weis* (New Orleans, 1903).

¹² Tobias Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai* (Chicago, 2012), 14.

¹³ For additional information on the German Jewish immigrant experience, see Glanz, "German Jewish Mass Emigration," 65; Rudolf Glanz, *Studies in Judaica Americana* (New York, 1970), 1-85; Steven M. Lowenstein, "The Rural Community and the Urbanization of German Jewry," *Central European History* 13 (1980): 218-236; Rohrbacher, "From Württemberg to America," 151; Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore, 1992); Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States* (Berkeley, 2004), 83-87; Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai*, 14-17; Hasia R. Diner, *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migrations to the New World and the Peddlers Who Forged the Way* (New Haven, 2015).

¹⁴ Information regarding the years of arrival of Levy family members has been compiled from a variety of sources. Passenger lists indicate that Hannah (Johanna) Levy arrived in New Orleans on December 30, 1847, and she appears in the 1850 U.S. Census as part of her brother Samuel's household in Mississippi. A German conscription record indicates that Samuel had left for the United States by 1837. Arrival dates for brothers Abraham and Daniel are from parish court records. "Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New Orleans, Louisiana, 1820-1902," NARA; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Jefferson County, Mississippi; Conscription records, 1817 book, Civil Registry Office, Bad Bergzabern, Germany; West Feliciana Parish Clerk of Court, minute book 12, June 17, 1851, 335 and minute book 1, May 29, 1858, 396.

¹⁵ Ursula Gehring-Münzel, *The Emigration of German Jews to America in the 19th Century* (New York, 2000), 9.

¹⁶ The letters refer to several monetary types of the period in Germany, including florins, kreuzers, thalers and guilders. Estimating values of German currency from the nineteenth century in current values is inexact, thus current-day estimates are based on several sources including Weis, *Autobiography of Julius Weis*, 3; Alexander Cowan and Jill Steward, *The City and the Senses: Urban Culture Since 1550* (Burlington, VT, 2007), 189-191; and measuringworth.com, which provides historical comparisons of currency values. Weis was born in Klingen, one mile from the Meyer home in Klingenmünster. In his autobiography, published in 1903, he wrote that one florin was worth about forty cents, or about eleven dollars in today's value. From Weis's information and the measuringworth.com

website, the author estimates that the annual wage in the Palatinate in 1860 was about 277 florins, or 16,641 kreuzers (one florin equal to about sixty kreuzers), or \$110–200 in today's value. Cowan and Steward's research, while referencing other European locations during a period ten to fifteen years after the letters were written, provides additional context regarding the Meyer family's financial status. The costs for 2.2 pounds of various foods, as listed in *The City and the Senses*, are as follows: beef (fifty kreuzers); pork (fifty-six kreuzers); potatoes (four kreuzers); sugar (forty-two kreuzers); salt (thirteen kreuzers). Additionally, a letter dated May 18, 1859, references a pound of meat costing thirteen kreuzers. Cowan and Steward also mention that an unskilled carpenter earned about forty kreuzers, or less than one florin, per day.

¹⁷ Conscription records, 1819 book, Civil Registry Office, Bad Bergzabern, Germany. Hasia Diner identifies fear of conscription as a leading motive for German Jews to emigrate. Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 46.

¹⁸ Glanz, "German Jewish Mass Emigration," 52; Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out: German Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820–1914* (New York, 1994), 1–14, 39, 87. See also Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830–1914* (Philadelphia, 1984), 13; Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 161; Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South* (Boston, 2013), 49, 54.

¹⁹ Barkai, *Branching Out*, 39.

²⁰ The letters indicate that family in Louisiana helped to pay for the Meyer siblings' immigration. Further, Abraham Levy likely paid for the immigration of a nephew in 1872, based on archival records from Centenary College, then in Jackson, Louisiana, that show that Levy also paid for the young man's tuition. Barkai states, "In more than one sense, German-Jewish immigrants indeed constituted an economic subcommunity. A network of business and family relationships, within the place of residence and with other parts of the country, proved to be an equal or even more effective, cohesive factor of Jewish solidarity as religious or social contacts." Records and Matriculation Book of Centenary College of Louisiana, 1852–1907, 82, Centenary College of Louisiana Archives and Special Collections, Shreveport, LA (hereafter cited as CCLASC); Barkai, *Branching Out*, 87.

²¹ Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, December 17, 1855, MBSR.

²² James Marston, a prominent plantation owner in the Felicianas, logged daily temperatures in his diary. Marston (Henry and Family) Papers, Mss. 624, LLMVC.

²³ Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, December 17, 1855, MBSR.

²⁴ For background on southern Jews and peddling, see Glanz, *Studies in Judaica Americana*, 104–121; Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, 22; Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 67–103; Barkai, *Branching Out*, 44–46; Hasia Diner, "Entering the Mainstream of Modern Jewish History: Peddlers and the American Jewish South," *Southern Jewish History* 8 (2005): 1–30; Marler, *The Merchants' Capital*, 105–106; Diner, *Roads Taken*.

²⁵ Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 158, 159.

²⁶ Virginia Elaine Thompson, "Southern Small Towns: Society, Politics and Race Relations in Clinton, Louisiana, 1824–1880" (Ph.D dissertation, Rice University, 2003), 34.

²⁷ Lewis Atherton states that peddlers who traveled on foot or horseback carried limited merchandise. One peddler had two hundred dollars in goods when he was found dead on a Louisiana roadside. Lewis E. Atherton, "Itinerant Merchandising in the Ante-bellum South," *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society* 19 (1945): 35-49.

²⁸ Emanuel Meyer's family refers to him in the letters by his given name, Emanuel, as well as Mayer, Meir, and Maier, variations of the name Emanuel according to the translators.

²⁹ Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, February 17, 1856, MBSR. Here and in many other letters, the Meyers used the German word *Ostern*, or *Easter*, rather than *Pesach*, or *Passover*; in some later letters. However, beginning in the late 1860s, they occasionally used *Pesach*. The usage suggests their balance between Jewishness and assimilation, as well as indicating that Christian holidays were normally recognized, even by Jews, in their acculturated region of central Europe.

³⁰ Birth, marriage and land records for numerous members of the Levy and Meyer families were found in the Civil Registry Office, Bad Bergzabern, Germany, and the State Archives, Speyer, Germany. These records helped to confirm the relationships between the families, their occupations, places of residence and other details referenced in the essay. Hasia Diner indicates that 80-90 percent of German Jews made their living in some form of petty trade. In contrast, Rudolf Glanz references *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* (1847), in which a report states that families from an area about forty miles from Landau "possess a fortune of four or five thousand florins. A landed proprietor in the neighborhood of Arnsheim raised 12,000 florins through the sale of his possessions" before emigrating. Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 11; Glanz, *Studies in Judaica Americana*, 19-20.

³¹ Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, May 15, 1856, and May 18, 1859; Babette and Karl Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, March 19, 1867, MBSR.

³² Abraham Levy to Emanuel Meyer, December 24, 1861, and December 27, 1861, MBSR. In these two letters, Levy asks Meyer about fencing work he asked "boy" Ben to complete. Slave schedules, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana; property records and succession of Daniel Levy, Box 61, July 11, 1860, West Feliciana Clerk of Court. The census schedule shows seventeen men owning seventy-nine slaves—thirty-eight males and forty-one females. Levy is shown as owning five females, aged fifty, forty, thirty-five, thirty-five, and thirteen, and three males, aged five, three, and two.

³³ Bertram Wallace Korn, *Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789-1865* (Elkins Park, PA, 1961), 26. See also Clara Solomon, *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon: Growing Up in New Orleans, 1861-1862*, ed. Elliott Ashkenazi (Baton Rouge, 1995); Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC, 2000); and Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2003).

³⁴ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 221; Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 35. On the economic motivation of immigrants, see Rohrbacher, "From Württemberg to America," 153; Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 65; Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South*, 45; Bloch-Raymond, *From the Banks of the Rhine*, locs. 200, 212.

³⁵ Barkai, *Branching Out*, 22.

³⁶ Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, xi.

³⁷ Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., "Mechanisms of Planter Power," *Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 39 (1998): 19–44; *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, June 9, 1881; Thompson, "Southern Small Towns," 9, 12; Minutes of Trustees' Meetings, Centenary College, 1840–1906, 205, CCLASC.

³⁸ Louisiana, v. 5, v. 18, v. 22; Texas v. 13, R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School (hereafter cited as BLHC); Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana; Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, Slaves*, 6.

³⁹ Elliott Ashkenazi writes that Yette Levy's first husband, Israel Adler, was a business associate of Abraham Levy and Abraham Levi, the family's cotton broker in New Orleans. After Adler's death in 1851, Levi urged that Yette and Levy be married. Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 80, 102.

⁴⁰ Numerous entries are contained within the Dun reports indicating the Levys' business success despite the various economic challenges of the day. Census schedules for Louisiana, 1850–1880, list only one member of the extended families, Henry Oppenheimer, who was Abraham Levy's brother-in-law. The schedules show that Oppenheimer, who at one point was in the dry goods business with Levy, owned a horse and four cows worth ninety-five dollars. For further discussion of economic stratification in Louisiana, see Frank Lawrence Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Chicago, 1949); Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., *Pistols and Politics: The Dilemma of Democracy in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1810–1899* (Baton Rouge, 1996); Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., ed., *Plain Folk of the South Revisited* (Baton Rouge, 1997).

⁴¹ Louisiana, v. 5, West Feliciana Parish, R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, BLHC. The original notation "mf." indicated that Levy was estimated to be worth between seventy-five and one hundred thousand dollars; it is here replaced with the bracketed insertion.

⁴² Marler, *Merchants' Capital*, 106; Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 105.

⁴³ J. W. Door, *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, May 21, 1860.

⁴⁴ Raleigh Anthony Suarez notes that the Bluff region, including East and West Feliciana, ranked third in total slave population in 1850. The region's 26,531 slaves amounted to 68.3 percent of the population, and in no other region was slavery so predominant in the population. Raleigh Anthony Suarez, Jr., "Rural Life in Louisiana, 1850–1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1954), 16.

⁴⁵ On immigrants supporting family in Europe, see Barkai, *Branching Out*, 39; Diner, *Roads Taken*, 6, 21.

⁴⁶ Regina Meyer to Emanuel Meyer and Abraham Levy, May 18, 1859, MBSR. The mother's comments constitute one portion of a larger letter that her entire family sent to Meyer and Levy in Louisiana.

⁴⁷ Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, April 30, 1858, MBSR.

⁴⁸ Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, April 30, 1858, and September 23, 1859; Caroline Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, November 6, 1859; Regina and Henry Meyer to Emanuel Meyer,

May 1, 1861, MBSR. On the day of her departure, Caroline wrote her ship name as the *Lemuel Dyer*, then in different ink wrote *Fanny Fern*, the ship that would take her and a traveling companion to New Orleans, where she arrived on December 29, 1859. The letter is addressed to Abraham Levy in Bayou Sara with instructions to give it to Emanuel Meyer. The *Lemuel Dyer* arrived in New Orleans a few days after the *Fanny Fern*. "Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New Orleans, Louisiana, 1820-1902," NARA.

⁴⁹ Henry Meyer to his siblings, November 20, 1860, MBSR.

⁵⁰ Regina and Henry Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, May 1, 1861, MBSR.

⁵¹ Barkai, *Branching Out*, 154, 155.

⁵² Julius Weis, who was born one mile from Klingenstein, immigrated in 1844 and went on to become a prominent New Orleans businessman. He wrote about returning home in 1857. During the trip, farmers visited Weis and asked that he pay debts of less than one hundred dollars that his father owed them. When Weis told his father the debts had been paid, his father said, "I am now happy that I can die without any debt hanging over me." Weis, *Autobiography of Julius Weis*, 15-16.

⁵³ Joseph Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, May 18, 1859, MBSR.

⁵⁴ Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 77.

⁵⁵ Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, 42.

⁵⁶ Immigrant families viewed the departure of a family member as a way to improve their own economic well-being, despite the emotional implications of a loved one leaving home. Bloch-Raymond, *From the Banks of the Rhine*, loc. 403.

⁵⁷ The Levys were well established in the community pre- and post-Civil War. The Dun records for Bayou Sara noted in July 1866: "A Levy is said to be the most honest Jew in our town. . . . [W]e know him to be honest, prudent and of good bus[iness] capacity." A February 1868 note indicates: "A Levy said to be wealthiest man in the place." Ashkenazi devotes much of a chapter titled "Country Stores and Cotton" to the Meyer family, discussing in detail Emanuel Meyer's ongoing struggles with cotton sales, his financial handlers, and the operation of his store, which in 1872 had an inventory valued at fifteen thousand dollars and which Ashkenazi describes as "of average size." Louisiana, v. 22, R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, BLHC; Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 89.

⁵⁸ U.S. Census Mortality Schedules Index, 1850-1880, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, July 7, 1860; Inventory, Succession of Daniel Levy, Box 61, July 11, 1860, West Feliciana Clerk of Court.

⁵⁹ Regina Meyer to Caroline Meyer, September 2, 1860, MBSR.

⁶⁰ Thompson, "Southern Small Towns," ii-iii.

⁶¹ Caroline Meyer to Emanuel and Henry Meyer, July 29, 1861, September 18, 1861, and December 17, 1864, MBSR. The 1864 letter mentions Emanuel's travels to Matamoros, Mexico. It is likely he joined other merchants in trading there because Civil War blockades had restricted their ability to sell or obtain goods in Louisiana.

⁶² In reference to A. Levy & Co., an R. G. Dun & Co. correspondent noted on November 15, 1865: "have resumed business. Made money during the war. An excellent businessman,

responsible and reliable." Louisiana, v. 22, West Feliciana Parish, R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, BLHC.

⁶³ Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 73.

⁶⁴ Materials on the business dealings of the firm prior to bankruptcy can be found in the Greenleve, Block & Co. store records, 1865–1883, Galveston and Texas History Center, Rosenberg Library, Galveston, TX, and in Texas, v. 13, Galveston County, R. G. Dun & Co., Credit Report Volumes, BLHC. The bankruptcy of Oppenheimer, Block & Co. is detailed in a filing dated May 25, 1887, with the Fifth Circuit Court of the United States, Eastern District of Texas, Galveston, between Howard National Bank and Oppenheimer, Block. The filing describes the firm's precipitous decline in two years, from assets of more than \$1 million in 1885, to assets of \$181,000 in 1886, to debts of more than \$400,000 in 1887.

⁶⁵ A Dun reporter's note mentions "A Levy of NO a special partner" in reference to Greenleve, Block & Co. Texas, v. 13, Galveston County, BLHC.

⁶⁶ Caroline Meyer to Emanuel and Henry Meyer, February 24, 1869, July 15, 1869, November 12, 1869, and January 1, 1870, MBSR.

⁶⁷ Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 91, 97.

⁶⁸ Property records, Book V, 231, East Feliciana Parish Clerk of Court; Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 98; Karl Meyer to Emanuel and Henry Meyer, December 6, 1864, and December 17, 1864, MBSR.

⁶⁹ Thompson, "Southern Small Towns," 26.

⁷⁰ B'nai B'rith Lodge No. 162 records, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter cited as AJA).

⁷¹ Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 110. See also, Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 90; Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, Slaves*, 141–151.

⁷² Barkai, *Branching Out*, 88.

⁷³ Karl Meyer to Emanuel and Henry Meyer, December 6, 1864, MBSR.

⁷⁴ Regina, Babette, and Karl Meyer to Henry and Emanuel Meyer, [1868], MBSR. Although no date is on the letter, it is likely from 1868 based on events it mentions. The January 8, 1866, letter discusses Caroline's engagement.

⁷⁵ Regina, Babette, and Karl Meyer to Henry and Emanuel Meyer, [1868], MBSR.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Caroline Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, January 20, 1870, MBSR.

⁷⁸ Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, Slaves*, 141–151; Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 98. An R. G. Dun & Co. evaluation in 1865 indicated that the credit rating for E. Meyer was 3–2 —between Good and Fair. The only other rating for Meyer came in 1871—a 3½, or Fair. Louisiana, v. 33, Mercantile Agency Reference Book, R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, BLHC.

⁷⁹ Louisiana, v. 5, East Feliciana Parish, R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, BLHC; Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, Slaves*, 141–151. MBSR includes details regarding an insurance policy related to Emanuel Meyer's purchase of his Clinton home.

⁸⁰ Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 101.

⁸¹ Abraham Levy to Henry and Emanuel Meyer, December 21, 1868, MBSR. Various records indicate that Abraham Levy's business reach extended to his nephews Emanuel Meyer, Henry Meyer, and Leopold Mayer; his brother, Daniel Levy; his brothers-in-law Leopold and Henry Oppenheimer; and his business associates Louis Michael, who married his brother Daniel's widow, and stepson Leon Adler.

⁸² The records of the Jewish Children's Home in New Orleans contain annual reports showing that Levy and other family members contributed money to the home. Jewish Children's Home records, 1870–1981, Manuscripts Collection 180, Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University, New Orleans. Levy's brother Daniel also served briefly as a postmaster, appointed June 26, 1858. City directory, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1868; U.S. Appointments of U.S. Postmasters, 1832–1971, June 29, 1869, Ancestry.com, accessed June 8, 2015. Silliman Institute attendance records are listed in Betty Lou Cain and Mildred P. Worrell, *Silliman* (Clinton, LA, 1990), 48, 194. *Silliman* also reproduces an 1883 tuition receipt for Emanuel Meyer's daughter, Mathilda.

⁸³ Hearing Before the Select Committee on the Recent Election in Louisiana, January 17, 1877, 44th Cong., 262, 402, 461, 481. A witness was asked to list the names of the men involved in the Gair incident. Among those he names is an "H. Meyer." In additional testimony about those subpoenaed to testify before the committee, another witness lists a "Henry Meyer, in New Orleans so far as anything could be found out about him." The committee apparently had no success in serving any of the subpoenas for the men named in the Gair incident.

⁸⁴ *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, November 25, 1876, which references the Meyer brothers in the list of men reporting on the election. The election of 1876 was a crucial one. On the national level it pitted Rutherford B. Hayes against Samuel J. Tilden. Tilden, the Democratic governor of New York, won a majority of the popular vote, but the results were disputed based on alleged fraud in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina. The election went to the U.S. House of Representatives, which reached a compromise. All twenty electoral votes in dispute, and therefore the election, went to the Republican, Hayes. In return, federal troops still present in those three states, the last of the former Confederacy to be occupied by the military, would be removed. In essence, Congress would no longer defend the rights of African Americans in the South, and Reconstruction would come to an end.

⁸⁵ Quoted in T. Harry Williams, "The Gentleman from Louisiana: Demagogue or Democrat," in T. Harry Williams and Estelle Williams, *The Selected Essays of T. Harry Williams* (Baton Rouge, 1999), 195.

⁸⁶ Paul Berger, "Midnight in Tennessee: The Untold Story of the First Jewish Lynching in America," *Forward*, December 29, 2014; Daniel R. Weinfeld, "Samuel Fleishman: Tragedy in Reconstruction-Era Florida," *Southern Jewish History* 8 (2005): 31–76; Stuart Rockoff, "Carpetbaggers, Jacklegs, and Bolting Republicans: Jews in Reconstruction Politics in Ascension Parish, Louisiana," *American Jewish History* 97 (March 2013): 39–64; Leonard Rogoff, "A Tale of Two Cities: Race, Riots, and Religion in New Bern and Wilmington, North Caro-

lina, 1898," *Southern Jewish History* 14 (2011): 37–75. For additional information about the violence in the Felicianas, see Hyde, *Pistols and Politics*.

⁸⁷ Rockoff, "Carpetbaggers, Jacklegs, and Bolting Republicans," 40.

⁸⁸ *West Feliciana Sentinel*, August 30, 1876.

⁸⁹ This estimate is based on membership records and minutes of the B'nai B'rith Lodge No. 162, Bayou Sara, Louisiana, MBSR, and B'nai B'rith Lodge No. 239, Clinton, Louisiana, AJA.

⁹⁰ Ben Kaplan, who interviewed two descendants of the Levy family while researching a 1957 book on Jewish life in small towns, asserts that the Meyers and Levys maintained a semblance of Judaism. This assertion is supported by the May 4, 1878, edition of the *Clinton Patriot-Democrat*, which reported that Abraham Levy, then living in Jackson, Louisiana, accompanied by several relatives and friends, erected a headstone and footstone at his wife's gravesite in the Jewish section of the Masonic Cemetery outside of Clinton. Yette Levy had died the previous year, and it is likely that Abraham was following Jewish tradition in placing the markers within the year after her death. Kaplan also notes that the families met for High Holy Days in a public school building. An additional indication of the family's connection to Jewish life is included in a letter from Charles Wessolowsky, who wrote on April 6, 1879, after a visit to Galveston, that L. C. Michael of Greenleve, Block & Co. was vice president of B'nai Israel, Galveston's Reform synagogue. Michael married Daniel Levy's widow, Elise, moved his family to Galveston, and helped manage the family store there. Benjamin Kaplan, *Eternal Stranger*, 80–81, 83, 86; Louis Schmier, ed., *Reflections of Southern Jewry: The Letters of Charles Wessolowsky, 1878–1879* (Macon, GA, 1982), 80–84. On the challenges of maintaining Jewish tradition among German Jews in small-town America, see Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, 5; Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 103; Thompson, "Southern Small Towns," 27; Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 228.

⁹¹ Karl Meyer to Emanuel and Caroline Meyer, February 20, 1860, MBSR.

⁹² Caroline Meyer to Emanuel Meyer, August 27, 1870, MBSR; *Galveston Daily News*, July 29, 1870, August 1, 1870, and August 3, 1870.

⁹³ Caroline Meyer to her family in Germany, August 29, 1868, MBSR.

⁹⁴ A map probably drawn in the 1850s and held by the East Feliciana Parish Clerk of Court in Clinton, Louisiana, shows property the Meyer brothers owned one block from each other. See also, Louisiana, v. 5, West Feliciana Parish, R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, BLHC.

⁹⁵ *East Feliciana Patriot*, January 19, 1878; *Baton Rouge Advocate*, January 4, 1893.

⁹⁶ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 47, 87.

⁹⁷ Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 59.

⁹⁸ Abraham Levy obituary, *Bayou Sara Times-Democrat*, January 1, 1900; Hannah Levy obituary, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, January 11, 1899; cemetery headstones in the Jewish section of the Masonic Cemetery, Clinton, Louisiana. Members of the Levy and Meyer

families are included on burial lists provided by Benjamin Kaplan, *Eternal Stranger*, 163–167.

⁹⁹ Emanuel Meyer's descendants had a prominent role during the twentieth-century effort to integrate southern universities. In 1962, as editor of the University of Alabama student newspaper, *The Crimson White*, Melvin Meyer, Emanuel's great-grandson, defended an editorial supporting James Meredith's admission into the University of Mississippi and advocating the peaceful integration of the University of Alabama. His life and those of his family in Starkville, Mississippi, were under constant threat from the Ku Klux Klan and other reactionary groups for nearly a year. The *Starkville News*, which was operated by his father, Henry F. Meyer, was forced out of business by the controversy. See Dina Weinstein, "Melvin Wali Ali Feiler Meyer: A Student's Struggle with Insider/Outsider Status in Civil Rights-Era Alabama," *Southern Jewish History* 16 (2013): 215–243.

¹⁰⁰ Property records, Book H2, 190–191, East Feliciana Parish Clerk of Court; Kaplan, *Eternal Stranger*, 163–167.

¹⁰¹ Joseph refers to himself in the third person. The small towns referenced here are southwest of Lachen.

¹⁰² The apparent reference to *Tashlikh* is unclear. The Rosh Hashanah ritual involves gathering at a river to empty one's pockets and cast crumbs into the water, a symbolic cleansing of the year's sins. Perhaps he is referring to bread.

¹⁰³ Probably a reference to Joseph Meyer's mother.

¹⁰⁴ Karl indicates in other letters that his military unit was based in Aschaffenburg.

¹⁰⁵ The correspondence frequently includes letters from several family members written on the same paper and mailed together. In this letter, the mother, Regina, her daughter Babette, and son Karl write individually to Emanuel and Henry regarding their concern about Henry's marriage. The year this letter was written has been estimated based on the topic it covers. Babette Meyer references her brother becoming engaged at twenty-four years old. Henry was born, according to his headstone, on December 25, 1844, thus the most likely year for the letter is 1868.

¹⁰⁶ This is likely Louis Michael, who married the widow of Abraham Levy's brother, Daniel, and moved to Galveston. Levy eventually moved from Bayou Sara to Jackson, Louisiana, where his home is currently used as a private residence and business.

¹⁰⁷ An A. J. Hanly is listed in the 1871 New Orleans city directory (p. 146) as an auditor for U.S. Customs. Levy's business interests at times extended beyond the boundaries of the United States, thus this may be a reference to an issue with Customs. Hanly is not listed in the directories from 1868–1870.

¹⁰⁸ This letter from Abraham Levy was written partly in English and partly in German. The portions that have been translated into English appear in italics. The letter was included with Abraham's letter to Henry dated December 21, 1868.

Book Reviews

Carolina Israelite: How Harry Golden Made Us Care about Jews, the South, and Civil Rights. By Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 359 pages.

Four-year-old Chaim Goldhirsch immigrated with his family to the United States from Galicia (now Ukraine) in 1907 and became the best-known Jew in the South by the late 1950s. Chaim Goldhirsch became Hyman Goldhirsch, then Herschel Goldhirsch, then Harry Goldhirsch, then Harry L. Goldhurst, until – almost certainly trying to hide disgraceful episodes in his past – he finally settled on Harry L. Golden.

As Golden, he was the smart, well-read, witty, and charming newspaper editor whose Charlotte-based *Carolina Israelite* grew to reach 55,000 subscribers. Its liberal views and humorous takes on civil rights pricked, provoked, and sometimes shamed his adopted South, including its Jews. His two dozen books and scores of columns, reviews, and magazine articles made him popular on college campuses, on national television, in the White House, and in civil rights and journalism circles. Golden's writings and speeches reaped him a great deal of money, while also turning him into a national symbol of the forged-in-oppression bond that characterized black-Jewish relationships in the 1950s and 1960s.

But Harry Golden, who died at seventy-nine in 1981, was also a self-involved, self-promoting, convicted stock swindler. He was a liar, philanderer, briber, scofflaw, and check kiter. He was frequently a careless writer, self-plagiarist, and expropriator.

By whatever name, this maverick voice remains one of the more fascinating, entertaining, and complicated figures to settle in

and emerge from the South in the twentieth century. Until now, anyone interested in learning more about Golden was limited to newspaper and newsmagazine archives, fleeting moments in political and cultural histories, articles in scholarly journals, and a thesis and dissertation here or there, plus Golden's 1969 autobiography, *The Right Time*.

Alas, as Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett tells us, Golden's version of his life is unreliable, "peppered with inaccuracies of fact" (249). Hartnett, a former newspaper reporter whose mother once worked for Golden, has assumed the formidable task of looking behind the multiple masks and myths of Herschel Goldhirsch to discover the true life of Harry Golden.

Hartnett has taken the examination of Golden deeper than anyone else to date. Still, she might agree that for a biography that seeks to be definitive and whose title makes ambitious promises, she needed about a hundred more pages and more resources to visit more archives and conduct more face-to-face interviews in order to finish incomplete story lines.

Hartnett portrays an ambitious, garrulous, and headstrong man whose father, Lieb, had been, in Golden's word, a "failure" by American standards in the early twentieth century. The father was indifferent to money and the status it conferred. Although his son admired him for such integrity, Golden wanted more of both in his own life. His mother, Anna, maintained an Orthodox home, lit the Shabbat candles every Friday evening, and constantly uttered Yiddish refrains.

She also raised her children to build American lives, Hartnett tells us, to be adaptable in a Christian-dominated land. Soon Har-

ry was eating ham sandwiches, enjoying Jewishness more than Judaism, absorbing what he liked most about the Jewish experiences – the stories – and becoming known, like his father, for what Hartnett adeptly describes as his “joyful contrariness” (13).

In New York, he pursued and married a Catholic woman, Genevieve (“Tiny”) Gallagher, and agreed to raise their four sons in her faith. Golden tested the marriage many times and in many ways, and when he headed south in 1941, Tiny stayed in New York and never joined him. Of their marriage she would later write: “It never quite gelled” (97).

Golden arrived in Charlotte at the dawn of a tumultuous and transformative time in the South. Intent on advocating for civil rights and poking fun at white supremacists, Golden gave the *Carolina Israelite* a test run in 1942, then in 1944 began publishing full-steam. For the next twenty-four years, he contributed just about every word of text. Publication was initially erratic, but he settled into about six issues a year after 1956. His durability cannot be attributed to enthusiastic support from the Charlotte Jewish community, or from southern Jews more broadly. Main Street’s Jews – for the most part self-conscious, satisfied with their political invisibility, and happy with quiet assimilation – were deeply uncomfortable with Golden or his bold liberalism serving as their totem, Hartnett writes.

Golden’s success as an editor of a small-circulation niche newspaper would have made him merely quirky. But from 1958 to 1960 he jumped into the public eye with three best-selling books – *Only in America*, *For 2 Cents Plain*, and *Enjoy, Enjoy!* – that landed on nightstands and bookshelves of thousands of Jewish households across the United States. Soon he was visiting with Adlai Stevenson, spending weekends with Carl Sandburg and Ralph McGill, meeting with the Kennedy brothers, joining the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., at staged events, and cracking wise on television with Dave Garroway, Jack Paar, and Johnny Carson.

All the while Golden harbored significant secrets, one of which burst into the public domain soon after *Only in America* was published. News organizations received anonymous letters

describing how Golden, then known as Harry Goldhurst, had pleaded guilty in 1929 to mail fraud in connection with two shady stock operations in which he was clearly the driving force. He also had bribed a former girlfriend, who was a lawyer inside the U.S. Attorney's Office, only to realize after being caught that she was playing him. Ultimately he served three years, eight months, and twenty-two days, the normal length of time for the nominal five-year sentence he had been given.

Much of that story has been told before by the late Robert A. Hohner, a scholar of southern history, in the *North Carolina Historical Review* in 1988. Hartnett adds to that narrative the devastating impact that Golden's tawdry behavior (including many paramours) had on his family. Hartnett also describes well how Golden, joined by his publisher and editor at World Publishing, astutely manipulated the news coverage that revealed his past to make it appear that a conscience-stricken celebrity had come forward on his own.

Golden had a second secret that Hartnett reveals, even as she misses an intriguing backstory that can be found in the papers of one of Golden's most determined nemeses, Tom Waring, the segregationist editor of the *Charleston News & Courier*. Golden, as H. L. Goldhurst, had pleaded guilty in a separate mail fraud case in 1943 in Birmingham after getting caught in a check-kiting scheme that stiffed a hotel and a couple of companies. He was put on probation for five years. (Astonishingly, the feds failed to connect this case to his 1929 guilty plea.) A review of Waring's papers would have shown how he, some FBI officials, Jesse Helms (then a North Carolina radio station executive), and assorted other segregationists gathered and quietly distributed the incriminating evidence against Golden. In the end, none of them published the dirt, but they delighted in spreading the gossip from 1960 to 1962 in hopes of eclipsing Golden's rising star.

Waring despised Golden—but not because he was Jewish. Waring's papers at the South Carolina Historical Society reveal a man deeply offended when a South Carolina chapter of the Citizens Councils distributed what he called "crackpot anti-Semitic

literature." But he could not stand the way that Golden made fun and fools of segregationists.

An even more prominent segregationist editor, the gruff James J. Kilpatrick in Richmond, showed deep affection for Golden. Hartnett captures much of that, but she missed this gem in a 1957 letter to Golden, found in Kilpatrick's papers at the University of Virginia: "I have not abandoned hope of converting you to conservatism. In fact, the more I reflect upon these things, the more I am persuaded that one day we shall pass each other, like steamers crossing in mid-ocean, you proceeding steadily toward the right, and I tacking erratically toward the liberal left. Let us grow old together, Harry. Life is awfully short."

That divergence of views about Golden from the segregationist camp shows the unique role Golden played in the transformation of the South, the way his wit and warmth divided and conquered segregationist forces in advancing the cause of civil rights.

Hank Klibanoff, Emory University

The reviewer may be contacted at hklibanoff@emory.edu.

The Harness Maker's Dream: Nathan Kallison and the Rise of South Texas. By Nick Kotz. Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 2013. 337 pages.

In the 1890s, the Pale of Settlement was a place of horror for Russian Jews, who were confronted with rampaging pogromists and villainous Cossacks. At the age of seventeen, Nathan Kallison said goodbye to his widowed mother and left the only world he knew to undertake the perilous journey to America. Unlike the stereotypical story of the Russian Jewish immigrants who made their homes either in the crowded Lower East Side or the ghettos of Chicago, Kallison would undertake the unimaginable and settle with his wife, Anna, a fellow immigrant, in San Antonio, Texas. There he used his skill as a harness maker—one of the few occupations open to Jews in the Pale—to eventually develop Kallison's store. It would become "the largest farm and ranch

supply business in the southwest," and the Kallison Ranch promoted "the latest scientific methods in modern agriculture" (1). Pulitzer Prize winner Nick Kotz brings this unusual story to life and does so in a personal manner: he is the grandson of Nathan Kallison.

The Harness Maker's Dream is not simply an instance of Texas Jewish history, but it is an immigrant story too. Kallison's story is both a trans-Atlantic and transnational one. At the beginning of his text, Kotz explores the Russian prejudice that Kallison escaped and the economic hardships Russian Jewish immigrants faced in crowded neighborhoods like Chicago, where Kallison first settled before moving to Texas. His ability to contextualize these environments in time and place enables the reader to see why an immigrant might take the chance to move to San Antonio, which was much more heavily populated with Catholics (many of whom were Mexican American) than with Jews. Their community did not boast of an active Jewish culture, but through their determination and success, Kallison and his descendants were able to integrate their lives into the fabric of San Antonio without losing sight of their Jewish roots and values.

Kotz makes note of the importance of Judaic practice to dispel the notion that this story is merely about assimilation. In Chicago, Kallison had lived where "it seemed as though there were synagogues on every block" (41). The challenges to remaining a practicing Jew were not insurmountable because the culture made Judaism accessible. In San Antonio there were "pealing cathedral bells, joined by those of other churches through the city" (41). Antisemitism existed in Texas,

where it was far milder than in czarist Russia. Nativism was directed at Mexicans as well as newcomers from eastern Europe. Nathan and his wife Anna were “shocked” to discover such a different world and eventually began to “abandon the orthodox rituals” of their upbringing (2). They worshiped at the Reform Temple Beth-El, a German-dominated institution that provided a Jewish environment that helped congregants fit in with the general population. Beth-El united Jewish men through business by not denigrating their relentless work ethic on the Sabbath. Kotz briefly considers the role of San Antonio’s Rabbi Ephraim Frisch, who advocated the teaching of evolution and fought for “civil rights and economic justice for blacks and Mexicans, stood up against anti-Semitism, and took on the Ku Klux Klan” (105). Frisch inspired the Kallison children to become active in the synagogue and within the Jewish as well as non-Jewish communities.

Although the family became absorbed in American life, they did not ignore their Jewish identity. Kotz explores the way that Nathan’s son Perry Kallison wore two hats, one in the Jewish community and the other in San Antonio at large. “In his religious and community leadership roles,” Perry “dropped his folksy ‘Ol’ Trader’ persona, but he remained the same effective advocate for his causes” (197). Living in both worlds enabled him to fight discrimination against African Americans and Mexican Americans, although Kotz does not delve into this activity in great detail. Perry Kallison also became a passionate Zionist who aided the state of Israel by strengthening its agricultural industry.

The Harness Maker’s Dream is not simply about the way in which the Kallisons adapted their faith but also about how they managed to triumph economically. Their success was a product of diligence and an incredible work ethic that Nathan Kallison promoted. His children worked in the store as early as the age of ten. Between 1910 and 1914, the patriarch purchased the large tracts of land that became the Kallison Ranch and built a house there. He left a legacy that spanned five generations. In the second generation, for example, his sons, Perry and Morris, furthered the dream in distinctive ways. Perry created a radio program, *The Ol’ Trader*,

which helped to promote the family business by appealing to South Texas farmers and ranchers who exhibited curiosity about the world. *The Ol' Trader* became the "longest continuous rural radio broadcast in the world" (283). This book fascinatingly shows how Perry transformed himself into something like a preacher complete with a Texan drawl in order to relate to his listeners. His talks resembled "sermonettes," as though delivered by "an editorialist or a rabbi" (181). Both brothers lived comfortably within two worlds. As Kotz puts it, "Both Morris and Perry presented themselves as men filled with bonhomie, ambition, and a confident projection that declared: 'I belong here. I am Texas'" (180).

This book is not exclusively about triumph against the odds. It is also a tragic story that details the loss of the store. The changing economy, which shifted from rural to suburban, the advent of the shopping mall, and the loss of ranches to real estate development caused this flourishing institution in South Texas to vanish, giving way to chain stores like Fed-Mart and later Walmart. Generational disputes over management created a firestorm in the family that could not be quenched. Downtown San Antonio was losing its appeal to shoppers.

Although the store disappeared, Kotz presents photographs of both the business and the family in order to preserve their memory. The Kallisons' story is thus brought to life. As though it were a personal photo album, the family's history as well as the growing Jewish presence in San Antonio are lovingly traced. A detailed chronology also tracks Nathan Kallison and his family placing them within both European and Texas history. A genealogical chart allows the reader to trace all members of the family down to Kotz himself. The evolution of the family thus becomes comprehensible. The author hopes that his book will serve as a model for others to research their past and record their history. By telling the Kallison story over the course of several generations, Kotz illumines the values that his grandfather instilled: "hard work, solidarity, faith, love of family and country, respect for the land and compassion for their fellow human beings" (253). The Kallisons epitomize the American dream of escaping persecution, finding freedom, and achieving success. *The Harness Maker's*

Dream shows how the ordinary lives of individuals could truly be extraordinary.

Allison Elizabeth Schottenstein, University of Texas at Austin
The reviewer may be contacted at alleys@utexas.edu.

German Rocketeers in the Heart of Dixie: Making Sense of the Nazi Past during the Civil Rights Era. By Monique Laney. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. 320 pages.

Two noteworthy books have recently examined the United States' role in recruiting and employing Nazi scientists. Annie Jacobsen's *Operation Paperclip: The Secret Intelligence Program that Brought Nazi Scientists to America* (2014) and Eric Lichtblau's *The Nazi Next Door: How America Became a Safe Haven for Hitler's Men* (2014) explore how and why thousands of Nazi scientists, intelligence agents, and others deemed of value were saved and protected. The American government ignored or obscured possible and real war crimes by many of these Germans, including the most renowned of the postwar engineers, Wernher von Braun. Jacobsen's and Lichtblau's focus, however, is largely national and international in scope. In contrast, Monique Laney, an assistant professor of history at Auburn University, examines the impact of some of these scientists on Huntsville, Alabama, where they resettled and were employed in the U.S. rocket and space programs. *German Rocketeers in the Heart of Dixie* adds nuance to the story of these former Nazi scientists by exploring two general themes: how these German "refugees" adapted to their lives in Huntsville; and how their neighbors made sense of their Nazi past in the context of the Jim Crow South.

Huntsville changed profoundly in the postwar period. Because of the growth of federal investment in Redstone Arsenal and the rapid influx of federal personnel from outside the region, Huntsville provided new high-tech opportunities that other southern cities did not enjoy. This rapid modernization, coupled with a significant number of newcomers, fostered new ideas and

an atmosphere that was more open and much less reactionary than Birmingham or Montgomery, the two Alabama cities at the center of the civil rights movement. By comparison, Huntsville had relatively few disturbances during the turbulent 1950s and 1960s, and the city even started desegregating some public facilities before the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

When the first German rocketeers arrived in Huntsville in 1950, the local press presented them to the public as sympathetic figures, even as victims of the Nazis. The politically and socially savvy von Braun in particular was portrayed as very much in the mold of middle-class America, albeit with an expertise that his neighbors lacked. A few white, non-Jewish members of the community – usually veterans or people who had lost family members during the war – harbored animosity, but it largely remained below the surface. The majority of the white non-Jewish community embraced the scientists, especially as the Cold War intensified and as Huntsville's fortunes blossomed with the expansion of Redstone Arsenal and, later, NASA and the Marshall Space Center. Most of the German families residing in Huntsville became part of civic life in the community, and with Huntsville's growing prosperity, locals overwhelmingly embraced the immigrants. Indeed, the Germans made a positive and enduring impression on the community. The city even named its sports and exhibition hall the Von Braun Center.

Yet Huntsville's Jews, especially those who lost family members in the Holocaust, did not welcome the German scientists with open arms. The older generation clearly reacted with caution and even suspicion against the Germans, although

they rarely expressed such feelings openly. Later generations of Jews apparently did not hold these attitudes, but Laney does not say why, nor does she probe further into the Jewish response to the German scientists in Huntsville. Although it may have been more open-minded than some other southern cities, Huntsville was still racially bifurcated and closely governed by the strictures of racism and segregation that severely limited both the contact between blacks and the German families and economic opportunities for African Americans even in the rapidly modernizing community. Because of this, blacks formed few impressions of the German scientists and engineers, who were considered part of the elite white community. The Germans' presence in Huntsville, however, served as an uncomfortable reminder that white newcomers enjoyed more privileges than southern blacks. Conversely, the first generation of German Jewish families accepted Jim Crow and made little or no effort to improve the plight of blacks, thus ignoring the obvious similarities between Jim Crow and Nazi racism.

The scientists' and engineers' Nazi background had been all but forgotten—not only in Huntsville, but also throughout the nation—until 1984, when the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) focused on Arthur Rudolph, the director of Nazi Germany's V-2 rocket program, which had used slave labor at the concentration camp Dora-Mittelbau in central Germany. Rudolph had come with von Braun's team to Huntsville, and these revelations altered how the American public viewed von Braun and the German scientists. Soon, the American press began referring to the German rocket scientists as Nazi rocket scientists. While this development had little to no effect on most Americans, it had a profound effect on the natives of Huntsville. The responses ranged from portraying Rudolph as a victim of the OSI to excusing his behavior because of his work on the Apollo program. The most extreme reactions included open antisemitism and Holocaust denial. Huntsville's white non-Jewish population largely defended Rudolph, recruiting local and regional politicians as well as educational and religious leaders to defend him. Not surprisingly, Huntsville's Jews saw broader implications with the case and did

not question his guilt. As for the German families in Huntsville, particularly the first generation, the Rudolph case produced anger, bitterness, and not a small amount of fear at what they regarded as a false or misleading portrayal of their experiences. The second generation widely believed that their parents, including Rudolph, had been the victims of both the Nazi regime and an overzealous American government. Even today, Huntsville's leaders are wont to ignore the past, both of the German rocketeers and their support for segregation.

Monique Laney conducted more than seventy interviews in writing *German Rocketeers in the Heart of Dixie*, and her book best fits into a field called Memory Studies—how the experience of groups or individuals (whether white, black, Jewish, or German) informed their understanding of the past. As such, this is not a traditional history of the German rocketeers' activities either under the Third Reich or in the United States. In fact, in the interviews with first-generation German scientists, Laney did not ask them about their involvement with the Nazis or the use of slave labor in the German V-2 rocket program. Her book relies little on archival research on the various segments of the Huntsville community. Readers seeking a conventional account of Operation Paperclip or of the wartime activities of the German scientists who came to Huntsville had best look elsewhere.

While Laney provides a fascinating exploration of how these groups and individuals understood their place in Huntsville and its environs, her study feels incomplete. The reactions of Jews and African Americans could and should have been developed to a greater degree, especially in regard to the similarities between Nazi racism and Jim Crow. The analysis of the Jewish reaction in particular is lacking, because the Huntsville Jewish community was not as insignificant as Laney suggests. Huntsville had a smaller Jewish population than Birmingham, but by 1960 it boasted the fourth largest Jewish community in the state. The civil rights struggle was largely centered in Alabama in the 1950s and early 1960s, yet Laney makes no mention of the civil rights demonstrations that roiled the state during that period, regardless of the book's subtitle. Despite these shortcomings, Monique Laney

nevertheless deserves praise for having written an engaging and illuminating study of Huntsville's reactions to the German scientists who settled and established new lives with their families in this northern Alabama community.

Dan J. Puckett, Troy University

The reviewer may be contacted at dpuckett45442@troy.edu.

That Pride of Race and Character: The Roots of Jewish Benevolence in the Jim Crow South. By Caroline E. Light. New York: New York University Press, 2014. 278 pages.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish communities across the United States grappled with an immigration problem. Although they were usually only a generation or two distant from their own immigrant forebears, native-born Jews watched with concern as émigrés from the Pale of Settlement ballooned in numbers, enlarging the Jewish populations of their cities and towns. The growing presence of a European Jewish proletariat possessing meager economic resources and scant familiarity with the mores and cultural habits of the New World prompted established Jews to create organizations and institutions to aid their needy coreligionists.

But what sort of "aid" did immigrants need? Would economic and educational assistance suffice? Or should benevolent organizations actively encourage (or even aggressively coerce) these newcomers to become more "American," to assimilate in their appearance and behavior so that they would not stand out as different from the American mainstream? In her first book, Caroline E. Light examines turn-of-the-century American Jewish benevolent organizations and the ideologies that shaped their policies and practices. Like many other historians who have engaged this subject, Light finds that the men and women who ran these organizations were motivated by a paternalistic mix of compassion for eastern European Jews and disapproval of their foreign ways. She also points, as do others, to benevolence institutions'

surveillance of immigrants in even the most private of settings and suggests that immigrants resented and resisted their scrutiny.

Unlike the vast majority of the historians of such charged encounters, however, Light focuses on Jewish benevolence in a southern context and pays particular attention to Atlanta and New Orleans. In her analysis, Jewish life in the South, and the meaning and purpose of southern Jews' benevolence efforts, was determined almost wholly by the color line.

For Jews to feel truly acclimated to their surroundings—to feel that they were seen as southern and American in the eyes of their non-Jewish neighbors—they had to be white. According to Light, southern Jews' *gemilut hasadim* was suffused by the ulterior motive of “whitening” recent Jewish immigrants. A failure to do so, they feared, would tarnish their own respectability and undermine their claims to citizenship. Southern Jewish benevolence in the era of Jim Crow was thus a form of “race uplift,” Light writes, and it was implemented “in the name of self-preservation as well as altruism” (12).

Light focuses on organizational efforts to aid the most vulnerable and powerless among the recent Jewish immigrants. Officials of the Atlanta Hebrew Orphans Home and the New Orleans Jewish Orphans Home, two of the institutions founded to care for children whose parents had died or were unable to support them, were intent on molding their young charges into respectable and self-sufficient citizens. The boys were taught how to meet their future breadwinning responsibilities but dissuaded from manual labor, which would suggest that they were of similar

social status to African Americans and would place them in economic competition with blacks and other marginalized ethno-racial groups. The girls would learn to be worthy wives and responsible mothers, and, importantly, women of moral virtue and sexual purity—a most significant and meaningful quality in the Jim Crow South. All of these orphans, according to Light, would embody “the prevailing codes of racialized gender etiquette” (77).

Also of concern to benevolent Jews, according to Light, were *agunot*, Jewish immigrant wives whose husbands had disappeared or had deserted them and refused to grant them a *get*, a rabbinically approved divorce. Under the prevailing gender practices of the day, without Jewish institutional aid, such women would inevitably become public charges unless they turned away from Jewish tradition and remarried civilly without a *get*. For the leaders of the benevolence movement, both of these options were to be avoided at all costs. Light points out that between 1890 and 1920, between 10 and 15 percent of the Atlanta orphan home’s charges were the sons and daughters of abandoned women. Light’s chapter on the problem of the *agunah* includes an investigation of philanthropic efforts directed at Atlanta’s Sephardic population, who had migrated from Turkey, Greece, and the island of Rhodes in the early twentieth century. Here, too, she focuses on race, finding that the Montefiore Relief Association’s primary intent was to force Sephardim to conform to dominant racial sentiments.

It would be hard to argue against the claim that racial status mattered to southern Jews, especially those who were already established and deeply invested in maintaining their position in the region. But there are hazards to this kind of thesis-driven approach to historical evidence: it can tend toward an overly narrow interpretation that insufficiently takes other relevant (and perhaps, in their context, equally pressing) factors into account. Consider, for instance, the Jewish girls and young women whose sexual purity the orphan homes were so intent on protecting. For Light, when benevolent Jews fixated on Jewish girls’ “virtue,” they were in fact demanding that their charges conform to racialized gender codes. But it is equally likely that relief organizations’ primary concern was that young unmarried girls and women not

become pregnant for reasons that had less to do with racial ideologies than Light assumes.

Even so, *That Pride of Race and Character* will undoubtedly interest scholars of the southern Jewish experience. The author illumines sources that have previously received little attention and plumbs these materials with admirable thoroughness. Although the prose and structure of the book reflects a scholarly preference for detached analysis over poignant stories, and one might occasionally wish that her rigorous discourse analysis evinced a little more emotional force, Caroline Light has made a significant and valuable contribution to the field of southern Jewish history.

Marni Davis, Georgia State University

The reviewer may be contacted at marnidavis@gsu.edu.

The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire. By Adam D. Mendelsohn. New York: New York University Press, 2015. 296 pages.

Adam R. Mendelsohn earned his Ph.D. at Brandeis University and served as associate professor of Jewish studies at the College of Charleston until his recent move to the University of Cape Town, South Africa, where he directs the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research. This book marks him as one of the most promising scholars of American Jewish history. It is a deeply researched and engrossing comparative study of Jews in the garment industry of the nineteenth century in America and the British Empire. While the South was geographically remote from the major garment manufacturing centers of New York and Chicago, Jews in the region played a major role in the industry's development during the nineteenth century, and there is much in the book that will interest readers of this journal.

"It was in the West and South," Mendelsohn claims, "that Jews were to establish the initial foothold that enabled them to later conquer the clothing trade in New York" (56). Jews in

Charleston, New Orleans, Memphis, Louisville, and other southern ports were involved in the crucial cotton trade with northern and European garment manufacturers. One of these was Adolph Brandeis, whose son became a Supreme Court justice. The father was less successful, failing as a cotton broker in the 1870s. In exchange for the cotton, southerners imported luxury goods, including clothing from the North and Europe.

Over half of the garments manufactured in New York City during the 1850s were shipped to the South where southern merchants sold them, including Jews such as Leon Godchaux, who had established a fashionable clothing store in New Orleans in 1845. Godchaux moved to New York in 1858 where he opened a large garment factory to manufacture goods for his New Orleans store. Godchaux was not the only Jewish clothing merchant of the Crescent City. Forty percent of the Jews in New Orleans in 1860 worked in the clothing and textile trades, mostly as small shopkeepers. They comprised a quarter of the clothing and dry-goods business in the city even though they constituted no more than 3 percent of the population.

On the eve of the Civil War, one third of the Jews in the South lived in Louisiana, and many peddled along the cotton belt of the Mississippi and its tributaries. One German traveler to the delta reported it was common in the small towns to spy "a Jewish dandy decked out in the most tasteless fashion." This did not prevent him from purchasing a lightweight suit from the peddler. The landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who traveled extensively throughout the South during the 1850s, warned that the "swarm" of Jewish peddlers he encountered was infecting the South with all sorts of maladies, including encouraging slaves to steal from their masters.

Such peddlers, including the first generation of the Seligman and Lehman families of banking fame, were part of an ethnic economic network that encompassed northern manufacturers and southern wholesalers and retailers. Many of these peddlers would eventually become wholesalers or open a "Jew store," which for a time played an important economic and social role in the small towns of the South. By 1880, two-thirds

of the stores in the important commercial center of Greenville, Mississippi, were owned by Jews, while Chinese merchants owned several others. For Mendelsohn, these humble Jewish traders of the South (and Midwest) “were the rumpled foot soldiers of the market revolution and the vanguard of an expanding ethnic economy” (72).

The Rag Race won the Jewish Book Council’s 2014 National Jewish Book Award in American Jewish Studies and is the latest in a series of recent books focusing on the role of Jews in various industries. These include Sarah A. Stein’s *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce* (2008); *Chosen Capital: The Jewish Encounter with American Capitalism* (2012), edited by Rebecca Kobrin; and Marni Davis’s *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* (2012). No industry was more important for Jews in the nineteenth century than clothing manufacture and sale. “In few other areas of the modern economy were Jews so central,” Mendelsohn observes, and “few other occupations left as important a legacy for modern Jewish history in the New World” (7).

The Rag Race is part of a larger debate among historians, economists, and sociologists regarding the relative importance of cultural versus purely economic factors in illuminating the diverse contributions of various ethnic and religious groups to economic development. One aspect of this debate is explaining why Jews during the past two centuries in Europe and America experienced such phenomenal rates of upward economic and social mobility. Were cultural values regarding work, enterprise, risk-taking, and money of prime importance? Or were factors distinctive to the

various industries in which Jews congregated more consequential? Mendelsohn is wary of attributing Jewish success to cultural values, perhaps because this might seem to be a form of ethnic-religious special pleading, and his book focuses on factors that directly impacted the garment industry such as the California gold rush of the 1840s and the Civil War.

In his book's early chapters, Mendelsohn discusses the factors that attracted Jews in great numbers to the rag trade, so much so that during the nineteenth century the Jewish ragmen of Petticoat Lane in London and Chatham Street in New York City became stock figures in the popular culture of both countries. This early involvement in the rag trade was the first rung up the garment industry ladder of success, and by the mid-twentieth century Jewish designers and manufacturers dominated the men's and women's clothing industry in New York City. A statue of a Jewish garment worker wearing a skullcap on his head sits in the heart of the city's garment center, a testament to the important role played by Jews in this industry.

American Jewish labor leaders came from the garment unions, many American Jewish fortunes were made in the clothing industry, and Jewish clothing designers were influential in showing Americans how to dress. They included a group of clothiers in New Haven, Connecticut, the home of Yale University, who conceived the Ivy League look of men's suits and jackets. American Jews were instructed in the first half of the twentieth century that the secret of upward social and economic mobility was "to think Yiddish and to dress British." But dressing Yiddish had also become a mark of success, as indicated by such names as Hart Schaffner & Marx, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Donna Karan, and Michael Kors.

The writing of comparative history is a formidable task, and in Mendelsohn's case it required a familiarity with the general political, economic, and social history of the United States and the British Empire, the history of the garment industries of both regions, and the history of Jews in central and eastern Europe, America, and the British Empire. Among the questions he sought to answer is why American Jews in the clothing industry did

much better financially than their British Empire counterparts. "The garment industry," he writes, "became an enabling occupation for the shiploads of new immigrants who arrived in both England and America beginning in the 1880s, although it propelled them forward at different speeds" (16). Why this was so is an extraordinarily difficult question to answer.

One factor mentioned by Mendelsohn was that the more concentrated population of England was already served by entrenched clothing merchants, and an advanced system of canals, roads, and railways had created a national market in which there was little demand for the goods offered by Jewish peddlers and Jewish-owned clothing stores. The less developed American transportation system and the more dispersed and isolated American population, by contrast, offered greater opportunities for nineteenth-century Jewish peddlers and merchants. These early ventures created "an expansive ethnic ecosystem that had momentous implications" for the later involvement of Jews in the garment industry (79). In addition, the acquisition of California in the 1840s provided additional opportunities for Jews willing to make the trek west. The rapidly growing American population created a rising market for garments, and the Civil War created a demand for military uniforms. The Civil War, Mendelsohn believes, was a watershed for American Jews in the garment trade. It resulted in a dramatic broadening of Jewish involvement in the manufacture of ready-made clothing and encouraged more Jews to enter the industry.

The garment industry in the United States, particularly in New York City, was flexible, dynamic, and decentralized, traits encouraged by the introduction of the sewing machine, which allowed clothing manufacturing to take place in cramped settings. It was not difficult to establish a garment sweatshop in a New York tenement apartment and not unusual for an American garment worker to become the manager or owner of a factory. In 1913, three-quarters of the firms producing men's clothing in New York City employed five or fewer employees. Here the divide between garment workers and owners was permeable and readily surmounted by the more ambitious. Employment in the needles trade

was generally a one-generation phenomenon for immigrant Jews in America but not for British Jews.

The British census of 1901 reported that less than 3 percent of Jewish men identified themselves as shopkeepers or traders. Jewish men in Britain were far less entrepreneurial than their American counterparts, and Mendelsohn is undoubtedly correct that a major trait of American Jewish immigrants was "the rapidity with which the typical worker sought to strike out on his or her own" (209). These Jewish immigrants viewed themselves as incipient petty entrepreneurs rather than members of a permanent proletariat, and the sweatshops, for all their faults, often served as their launching pads into middle-class respectability.

In England the footprint of Jewish clothing firms was "narrower and shallower" and the opportunities offered by the industry to the Jewish immigrants of the late nineteenth century more limited. They did not have access to "anything equivalent to the geographically dispersed ethnic networks and traditions of entrepreneurship created by peddlers, storekeepers, and wholesalers in the United States" or to "the resources, connections, and inspiration that such structures provided." The crucial factor in distinguishing the "centrifugal" American Jewish ethnic network from that of Britain's "centripetal" Jewish ethnic network was the much larger American Jewish population, which led, in turn, to a greater presence in all aspects of the country's garment industry. Because of the smaller number of Jewish garment manufacturers, wholesalers, contractors, jobbers, sewers, and retailers, Jewish garment workers in England had "fewer advantages when they entered the trade and fewer advantages when they later left it behind" (204-206). While eastern European Jews advanced economically more rapidly in England than other groups, "their passage was belabored when compared to their American counterparts" (228). But this was not due solely to differences between the two countries' garment industries.

Part of the story of the British and American garment industries lies outside the industries themselves. This larger story includes the new forms of merchandising in the nineteenth century, including department stores and mail-order catalogues; the

revolutions in communication and transportation brought on by the telegraph, telephone, steam-driven railroads, subways, and street cars; and the increased availability of capital. None of these are explored in depth in *The Rag Race*, nor does it probe some of the non-economic factors that might have affected the differing rates of Jewish economic mobility within the American and British garment industries. These include the saliency of antisemitism, zoning ordinances, regulations regarding wages and working conditions, and other governmental restrictions on economic enterprise, the prestige attached to industry and trade, the ability of labor unions to inhibit entrepreneurship, and the extent to which class consciousness in each country discouraged workers from seeking to rise into the ranks of managers and owners. *The Rag Race* is a good book, but a broader and deeper focus would have made it even better.

Edward S. Shapiro, Aventura, Florida

The reviewer may be contacted at edshapiro07052@yahoo.com.

Daughters of Israel, Daughters of the South: Southern Jewish Women and Identity in the Antebellum and Civil War South. By Jennifer A. Stollman. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013. 260 pages.

Jennifer Stollman rightly claims in the introduction to her book that historians often fall for simplifications in their studies of the American Jewish experience. According to Stollman, historians tend to underestimate the pre-1880 immigration by assuming that immigrants “readily and willingly shed their Jewishness” in return for their integration and assimilation into a welcoming American society—and that Jewish women especially were to blame (15, 17). Stollman, in contrast, strongly and correctly argues against assumptions that “a) southern Jews did not face anti-Semitism and b) during the antebellum and Civil War period, American southern Jews pressed ahead in the assimilation process” (16). *Daughters of Israel, Daughters of the South* shows how crucial women were in constructing and defending their Jewish

identity “while upholding the reigning notions of appropriate behavior for people of their sex” (19). Claiming that historians have assigned Jewish women a passive role in southern society, Stollman goes beyond familiar examples like Phoebe Pember to describe southern Jewish women’s activities in defending their and their families’ Jewish identities. As such, she rightly individualizes them beyond marriage and family.

In her introduction, Stollman criticizes a “trans-historical narrative of Jewish patriotism and productivity [that] unintentionally but effectively ignored the diversity in the American Jewish historical experience and downplayed American anti-Semitism” (12). Countering that narrative is the leitmotif of her work, and her call for nuance is laudable. *Daughters of Israel* argues that Jewish women ensured the survival of southern Judaism in a threateningly proselytizing Christian environment. In advancing this argument, Stollman subdivides her book into five chapters examining southern Jewish women’s roles in the fight against Christian proselytization, in Jewish education, as writers on antisemitism, in their interactions with slaves, and as Confederate ambassadors during the Civil War.

Stollman presents the methods and symbols through which southern Jewish women ensured their Judaism, and she mainly relies on their own writings. Some examples, however, may raise questions. Are these behaviors indeed inherent to the southern Jewish female perspective? Are a southern Jewish female identity and the quest to preserve it really evident in remembering Passover in the family circle if, as in chapter 1, the example Stollman uses is a convert to Christianity (63)? Is visiting a

European synagogue for Rosh Hashanah while on vacation a manifestation of a conscious or subconscious strategy to preserve Jewish identity, or is it simply a custom (59)? On the other hand, examples of public calls such as Penina Moïse's "Daughters of Israel, arise!" definitely are such a manifestation (53).

Stollman also asserts in chapter 1 that one "of the principle ways in which southern Jewish women demonstrated their dedication to Judaism was through their attachment to their synagogue," expressed through raising "funds for the building . . . , religious articles, and the salary of clergy." Decorations such as "silver Torah plates and lush Torah covers . . . reminded synagogue members that the female membership was central in demonstrating the holiness of the Torah and, subsequently, assuring the preservation of Judaism in the southern context" (40, 42). But is there any difference here from the overall rural—male and female—American Jewish experience, or even from the European one? As an arbitrary counterexample, in 1851, thus within Stollman's time frame, Jews in Magdeburg, Prussia, dedicated their synagogue. As reported in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, the decoration included some "magnificent curtains and covers for the שלחן [*shulchan*] and pulpit, made in Berlin, [which] were gifts of a ladies' society devoted to this cause." Thus, is such activity a convincingly southern—or even American—phenomenon? It seems a common international practice that Jewish women and men worked together to preserve their Judaism.

The treatment of slaves, as Stollman rightly argues in chapter 4, manifested the wish to underscore Jewish women's whiteness, and thus their racial superiority. Yet, did they interact with their slaves as white Jewish women or simply as white slave owners? In other words, was there indeed a difference between the interactions of slaves with their Christian or Jewish mistresses? It might also be argued that this specific interaction was merely a manifestation of the general relations between black slaves and white women, with a nondefining Jewish dimension added to it. A comparison to non-Jewish slaveholding families could have supplemented the discussion.

Chapter 5, "An Ardent Attachment to my Birth," discusses Jewish women in the Confederacy. When presenting the conditions of the Civil War, Stollman asserts that "southern anti-Semitism encouraged southern Jewish women to find traditional feminine ways to actively display the loyalty to the Confederacy for all to see" (191). *Daughters of Israel* again places the possession of a minority religion at the root of southern Jewish patriotism. Stollman emphasizes that Jewish Confederate patriotism was, to a large degree, a strategy to counter antisemitism and to "advance southern Jewish women's goals of achieving southern society's tolerance of Judaism and equality for its adherents" (192). The examples described, however, such as fundraising, collecting supplies, or caring for the sick, were not specifically southern Jewish endeavors. These seem to have been activities of women nationwide. Did these southern Jewish women act any differently or, indeed, out of fear of antisemitism?

Most examples used throughout the book draw from the same background of rather wealthy upper-class women such as Phoebe Pember, Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander, and the Mordecais (without presenting in detail the family's confusing interlinking of Jewish and Christian members, as Emily Bingham has done so splendidly elsewhere). Because *Daughters of Israel* relies heavily on diaries and personal writings, women of other social layers are underrepresented. They might indeed have acted out of fear of southern antisemitism during the Civil War. They might also have left the region or resisted the war, the Confederacy, or wartime scarcities. A discussion of that dimension of the social strata would have contributed to Stollman's thesis. In addition, upper-class southern Jewish women, as Stollman rightly claims, referred to the same biblical stories when describing the Civil War (47) as did northern Christian males. What, then, does this tell us about southern Jewish women? Here, as when her subjects invoke God in their correspondence (45), the author describes a common global religiosity of the nineteenth century, not necessarily a genuine southern female perspective.

Daughters of Israel rests fundamentally on the argument that Jewish women fiercely defended their families' Judaism against

an extremely hostile southern environment (and against indifferent or at least utterly passive husbands, it seems). Is it possible to draw a solid line between dedicated Jewish wives and devil-may-care Jewish husbands? Or is this rather an artificial barrier between male and female contributions? *Daughters of Israel* is often painted with heavy brushstrokes. Were women indeed the only defenders of their Judaism, and was the South as antisemitic as Stollman presents? Little of what is discussed seems specifically southern, and what is distinctive (slave ownership and how slaves were treated) lacks a particularly Jewish dimension. Nevertheless *Daughters of Israel*, *Daughters of the South* is a nice introduction to how women as individuals demonstrated their Judaism in an overwhelmingly Christian environment. A more nuanced, less categorical, or more comparative approach could add to the merits of this thought-provoking work.

Anton Hieke, Bobbau in Anhalt, Germany

The reviewer may be contacted at an.hieke@googlemail.com.

Website Review

Jewish Atlantic World. <http://cdm.reed.edu/cdm4/jewishatlanticworld/>. Created and maintained by the Reed Digital Collections. Reviewed March 2015.

Between 1492 and 1776, Europeans roamed the Atlantic unceasingly. As they sailed by ship in and out of settlements new and old in pursuit of gold and glory, they rapidly expanded and enriched colonial empires and global knowledge. Particularly eager to take to the sea were Jews, many of whom had been rendered homeless by the Spanish expulsion or transformed into crypto-Jews, wary of the Inquisition. Theirs was a time and place that seemed ripe with spiritual and religious meaning. The Safed Kabbalists had revolutionized mystical knowledge and Shabtai Zvi had stirred messianic expectation. These Jews now found themselves in a new world that many—fueled by mystical excitement—understood as laden with messianic import. Today it may seem odd to hear of Jews in places like Curaçao and Jamaica, but in the eighteenth century these were larger and more established Jewish communities than those in Newport, Charleston, Savannah, Philadelphia, and even New York. Arguably up until the 1820s, Jews in the South were Atlantic more than they were British or American, as ties of travel and correspondence, business, and family traversed communities bonded together by the often dark realities of the Atlantic trade.

Even as most studies of American Jewish history begin after 1880, this history reaching back to the beginnings of European contact is receiving renewed scholarly attention. The Jewish Atlantic World database, created by Laura A. Leibman and a team at Reed College, seeks to make this story better known and

its sources more easily accessible. In so doing, it also expands the digital possibilities for American Jewish studies.

In the field of the digital humanities, the emphasis has predominantly been on words, especially those that are difficult to transcribe or translate. Impressive efforts have been undertaken in Jewish studies to put online textual materials related to one site like the Cairo Geniza or the writings of great men such as Isaac Leeser, Isaac Mayer Wise, and Mordecai Kaplan. In contrast, the Jewish Atlantic World database attends to multiple places and to physical, nontextual sources of knowledge, fruitfully benefiting from the methodological insights of two recent scholarly turns, the transnational and the material.

Home page, <http://cdm.reed.edu/cdm4/jewishatlanticworld/>.

The database emerged from research for Leibman's recent book, *Messianism, Mysticism, and Secrecy: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life* (London, 2013), and includes domestic and religious architecture, schoolhouses, funerary art, household items, documents and texts, and images. These can be browsed or searched, and each entry includes a photograph that the user can zoom into, along with basic classificatory data and, for some objects, background information. The bulk of the materials lie in the eighteenth-century Caribbean, although they range from the six-

teenth century to the present and span the Americas and western Europe. Leibman's method catches a wider array of historical actors in her net than do most digital humanities projects—or scholarly monographs, for that matter—including materials used by women, slaves, and non-Jews in a range of locations. This approach helpfully illuminates alternative experiences and provides fodder for exploring important comparisons and broader contexts.

Many of the materials—for instance, synagogue interiors and exteriors—are effectively utilized in Leibman's rich monograph, which includes but does not emphasize Charleston and Savannah. Returning to her materials with an eye toward the regional could bring new insights into the aesthetics and necessities of southern Jewish life within its Atlantic context. For instance, the examples of kitchen implements—ranging from china used in Curaçao to cooking vessels owned by working women in Lowell, Massachusetts—could help us understand what might have been available for use in the everyday lives of southern Jewish women.

Of special note to readers of this journal are the photographs of eighty-five gravestones from Charleston's Coming Street Cemetery before 1902 and fifty-nine gravestones from Savannah's Mordecai Sheftall Cemetery before 1881, which can be used for information on the individuals interred but also to understand changing styles and values. A savvy scholar might compare these with gravestones elsewhere to consider continuities and ruptures in southern Jewish approaches to mourning, death, and the after-life. The funerary art is the heart of the collection, but the ritual baths are also wonderful and could fuel further comparative scholarship. For instance, there are pictures from multiple angles of both the exterior and the interior of the Nidhe Israel Mikveh, built in Bridgetown, Barbados, in the 1650s, which vividly show the presence of Jewish women and the perpetuation of traditional Jewish practice in the Caribbean. This leads one to wonder: Where, when, and how were *mikvaot* built in southern communities? What did they mean to local Jews? And how did they differ from those built elsewhere in the Atlantic world and the American continent?

"Exterior of the Nidhe Israel Mikveh (ca. 1650s) in Bridgetown, Barbados,"
<http://cdm.reed.edu/cdm4/jewishatlanticworld/>.

Apart from the possibilities they raise for new research, the visual materials displayed in this database seem especially well suited for teaching. Leibman and her team prepare for both possibilities, including PDFs of potential assignments on the site along with other resources to aid in using its objects. Also included is an accessibly written blog produced between February 2010 and October 2012, which covers a variety of topics ranging from Purim to family portraits to naming practices.

These supplementary materials are helpful because the objects are largely left to speak for themselves, likely leaving nonspecialists and those who have not read Leibman's book uncertain about how to interpret them. Not all materials are given equal attention or explication, and there is not always a clear rationale for inclusion. Some organizational idiosyncrasies also appear. For instance, there are many different categories to browse, but they cannot be combined to enable, for instance, a view of gravestones organized chronologically. The database can feel a bit haphazard, truly a dip into one scholar's evidence bag. Despite its limits, the Jewish Atlantic World database is an admirable effort and certainly worth browsing for pleasure, research, and/or teaching. In some ways, Leibman has deprived us all of a

great pleasure—she went to the Caribbean so we don't have to—but she has also done a great service, pushing the boundaries of the digital humanities and American Jewish history in ways that will hopefully continue to reverberate in both fields. Leibman reminds us of—and allows us to see for ourselves—the power of the material and the significance of early Jewish adventurers throughout the Americas.

Shari Rabin, College of Charleston

The reviewer may be contacted at rabinsl@cofc.edu.

Exhibit Reviews

The Life of the Synagogue, from the William A. Rosenthal Judaica Collection. <http://lifeofthesynagogue.library.cofc.edu>. Created and maintained by the Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library, College of Charleston. Curated by Samuel D. Gruber, Sarah Glover, and Amy Lazarus. Reviewed May 2015.

The visually appealing and engaging online exhibit the Life of the Synagogue should be of interest to a diverse audience. Skillfully curated by Samuel D. Gruber, an expert in the preservation of Jewish historic sites, and archivists Sarah Glover and Amy Lazarus, the exhibit presents a selection of materials from the William A. Rosenthal Judaica Collection at the College of Charleston, which, the curators explain, is “one of the largest accessible collections of imagery related to synagogues and other aspects of Jewish life and culture around the world.” From that collection, the curators have chosen a sampling of engravings, lithographs, postcards, newspaper illustrations, and other materials from which to explore the religious practices and public activities of Jewish communities. The exhibit is divided into nine sections: “Siting the Synagogue,” “Building and Dedications,” “Inside the Synagogue,” “Rabbis,” “Life Cycle,” “Fasts and Festivals,” “Women,” “Patriotism,” and “Education.” With its clear presentation of images and historical background, the exhibit should engage experts in Jewish history as well as more casual online visitors, including those with limited familiarity with Jewish history and customs. The exhibit might be usefully employed in the classroom, from primary school classes to introductory university courses.

The exhibit makes no attempt to present an exhaustive study of synagogues throughout history. Rather it is the selected presentation of a single collector’s interests. In 2007, the College of

Home page, <http://lifeofthesynagogue.library.cofc.edu>.

Charleston Special Collections acquired the Judaica materials that Rabbi William A. Rosenthal had collected throughout his life, selecting pieces from print and antique shops, bookstores, and flea markets, aided by suggestions from personal and professional correspondents. While the exhibit's curators inform viewers that the collection includes material "drawn from every continent except Antarctica," the online presentation places heavy emphasis on nineteenth-century western Europe. For many viewers, the focus on the merits of the selected materials may be a relief from exhibits that attempt—and inevitably fail—to present exhaustive surveys of Jewish religious and cultural activities.

"Bear in mind that images are not neutral," the curators instruct the viewer in the introduction to the exhibit, providing an important reminder for experts in visual culture and those new to this kind of analysis. Many of the selected images demonstrate how relationships between Jews and non-Jews have been negotiated through visual images. Not only were many of the synagogues designed and built by non-Jews, but many of the images, especially earlier ones, were created by non-Jews for a

variety of polemical purposes. Such images, for example, may have been included in antisemitic tracts or may have been intended to help non-Jewish viewers understand Jews as fellow citizens, as in an 1886 engraving of the inauguration of the synagogue in Lechenich, Germany, depicting the event as a public affair including Jewish and non-Jewish functionaries. Images created by Jews, on the other hand, often suggest a longing for imagined Jewish pasts, as in the images of life cycle events by famed artist Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, who created widely reprinted images of life cycle events in the Jewish ghettos that appealed to cosmopolitan Jews who had abandoned or felt ambivalent about traditional Jewish lifestyles. As the curators correctly suggest, the distribution of these images created a shared Jewish visual culture of nostalgia for communal pasts.

While the curators have done an admirable job of assembling a cohesive and coherent presentation of diverse materials, they might have taken more advantage of the online format. Viewers can peruse the images page by page as in an exhibit catalog, or they can click on images of their choosing within each section. Nonetheless, the page for each image does not indicate which section it is in. Rather than citing sources used on each page, the exhibit concludes with a single bibliography, a page that seems quaintly out of place in a virtual exhibit. The curators and designer might have included more hyperlinks—both internally, linking to related content in different sections, and externally, linking to related online sources for future exploration of the subjects included in this exhibit. Curators and designers of online exhibits have an opportunity to encourage further study in a more direct manner not available in traditional physical exhibits. In addition, many of the images include minute details that viewers should be encouraged to explore by looking at larger versions of the images than those presented in the exhibit. (Computer-savvy viewers can right-click and open the image in a new tab to view a larger version of the images, but not all viewers will think of doing this.)

To the curators' credit, Jewish and non-Jewish women appear in images and as authors of texts in every section in the exhibit—not a given in an exhibit on the synagogue, primarily

*“Rosh Hashanah card,” <http://lifeofthesynagogue.library.cofc.edu>.
The Yiddish poem reads: “Grandfather goes away to shul / Mother lights the
candles with tears / ‘God in heaven, May you with joy /
Bring us the New Year!’” (Courtesy of Special Collections,
College of Charleston Libraries.)*

men’s space throughout much of Jewish history. The curators have also chosen to mimic the layout of traditional synagogues by including a separate section labeled “Women.” Within this section, the curators acknowledge that a focus on historical materials related to the synagogue means a predominant focus on representations of men. This acknowledgment might be better placed in the introduction to the exhibit, where attention should be drawn to women’s absences and presences within materials throughout the exhibit. To the casual viewer, the current presentation may uphold the notion that men are unmarked Jews—a Jew, without further description, is a man—while women are marked as a secondary category of Jews. Each of the six items chosen to be included within the “Women” section might have been included

within another section where they could have inspired questions about the materials surrounding them. For example, an undated Rosh Hashanah postcard published by a Polish company and printed in Germany depicts women lighting candles as an elderly man leaves the room and includes a Yiddish poem beginning with the line, "Grandfather has gone to shul." This item might have been included in the "Inside in the Synagogue" section, where it would have more clearly raised questions about who has and has not sat in synagogues in different periods of Jewish history. Penina Moïse's 1839 hymns for the dedication of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim's new temple in Charleston already do this in the "Synagogue Building and Dedications" section, besides appearing in the "Women" section.

As physical buildings and images, synagogues have long been representative sites of Jewish communities. Who has been highlighted and who has been marginalized in these representations? How have the roles of rabbis and congregants, men and women, and students and teachers changed over time within these buildings? How have congregations participated in nation-building in their respective countries? *The Life of the Synagogue* provides a space for scholars, teachers, and students to ask questions about the history of the images of Jews and Jewish spaces.

Scholars of southern Jewish history will find a few images that directly relate to their work, such as the aforementioned Penina Moïse hymns. The exhibit also includes an undated painting of the interior of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim's 1794-1838 synagogue building by Solomon Nunes Carvalho; a photograph of Washington Hebrew Congregation's confirmation class of 1925; and a postcard of the Expressive Modernist temple of Congregation B'nai Judah in Kansas City, Missouri, built in 1969. More broadly, scholars of southern Jewish history will find the exhibit useful as a way to help place their own work within broader historical and geographical contexts, just as the curators' discussion of Beth Elohim's interior places it within the context of Sephardic architectural traditions exemplified by the well-known Bevis Marks Synagogue in London and the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam. As this exhibit demonstrates, southern Jewish syna-

gogue buildings and congregations should be understood within the broader contexts of Jewish congregational and architectural changes around the world, and studies of southern Jewry provide valuable contributions to interpretations of Jewish communities and spaces in other regions. As scholars of southern Jewish history and other subfields of Jewish history will find, the *Life of the Synagogue* is a wide-ranging, beautiful, versatile, and thoughtful contribution to online resources about Jewish history and visual culture.

Rachel Gross, Virginia Tech

The reviewer may be contacted at rbgross@vt.edu.

Of Passover and Pilgrimage: The Natchez Jewish Experience.

Presented originally in 1994, running continuously. Curated by Marcie Cohen Ferris with the assistance of Kenneth Hoffman and Marie Owen. Temple B'nai Israel, Natchez, Mississippi. Visits by arrangement only, <http://www.isjl.org/natchez-site--exhibits.html>.

Nestled in the red brick and oaks of one of the oldest cities and neighborhoods in the Deep South, Temple B'nai Israel is a breathtaking testament to the power of historic preservation. The temple and exhibits inside help communicate the historical complexity of Natchez, Mississippi. The city of Natchez has spent decades crafting itself as a heritage tourism destination. Ample signage, historical markers, and informative didactic displays mapped throughout the historic districts provide rich context in which to experience a remarkable piece of cultural heritage such as Temple B'nai Israel.

The exhibit, *Of Passover and Pilgrimage: The Natchez Jewish Experience*, which details the long and complex history of Jewish Natchez, is tucked away in one corner of the former religious education space in the temple's basement. The exhibit premiered as part of the Natchez Jewish Homecoming celebration in 1994. Marcie Cohen Ferris, now a noted scholar of southern foodways and a professor of American Studies at the University of North Carolina,

curated the original *Of Passover and Pilgrimage*, and it was later included with the Natchez component of the three-city exhibition *Alsace to America: Discovering Southern Jewish Heritage*, curated by Dr. Pamela Dorn Sezgin in 1998.

Visitors should note that Temple B'nai Israel is only open to the public through appointment. Contact information for access to the temple is available through the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) website. While the historical marker for the temple and the building are well represented in Natchez's heritage tourism promotions, there is no mention of the exhibit still on display, and the ISJL website includes it only as one part of the "Natchez Jewish Experience," alongside guided tours of the temple, a documentary film, and group tours of historic sites and Jewish homes "by special arrangement." Despite the difficulty in reaching the exhibit and visiting the temple, the few remaining members of the congregation who have taken on the responsibility of maintaining the building, in addition to coordinating irregular temple services, take great pride in their community and are immensely accommodating to visitors interested in exploring Natchez's history by experiencing its distinctly Jewish heritage.

The nine overflowing panels in *Of Passover and Pilgrimage* are arranged more or less in chronological order, with numerous reproductions of images and documents, most of which have held up remarkably well with little fading. The exhibit tells a comprehensive history of Natchez from the Jewish perspective beginning with the first settlers in the late eighteenth century. The narrative of the integral role of Jews in Natchez continues through the expansion of the cotton economy, the Jewish community's significance in helping Natchez rebound after the Civil War, then again after the hardships of the boll weevil and the Great Depression, and ultimately until the precipitous decline of the Jewish population in the city after the 1950s. An important achievement of the exhibit is the personalization of this story, as the congregation continues to negotiate its profound existential crisis. Many of the Jewish family names in Natchez's long history are shown in image captions and on reproduced documents, connecting the

place and its history to the people who helped build the community.

One inescapable conclusion the exhibit communicates and that remains clear and enlightening more than two decades later is that Jews made an enduring impact on Natchez. At one point in the late 1800s, one third of the businesses in Natchez were Jewish-owned. Women in the Jewish community such as Emma Marx were key leaders in the early development of the historic "pilgrimage" concept and rebranding of the city as a well-preserved example of the Old South. Jewish-built mansions are home to many of the famed bed-and-breakfasts that exist in the city today. Images of the extravagant wedding reception for Hortense and Sol Benjamin, recorded in 1903 and set amid the rich interiors of the Benjamins' mansion, illustrate the status they shared with other Natchez Jews, even as the city as a whole struggled to regain a fraction of its antebellum wealth.

The exhibit introduces the long decline of the Jewish community in Natchez after its population peak in 1906. The narrative explains the broad economic and social factors that began the diaspora of Natchez's Jews: the impact of the boll weevil on cotton production; the attrition caused by the deaths of older members; youth increasingly lured to larger cities such as Memphis and New Orleans; and the changing role of Natchez as a commercial center as the railroads overtook the Mississippi River as the dominant means of transporting goods to national and international markets. Interspersed with the history of declension are photographs showing the committed congregation members who were still actively working on behalf of the community through the 1980s. Those images help continue the story established by the numerous photographs of old Natchez, many of which come from the remarkable work of the Henry and Earl Norman studio. (The Norman studio photographs are part of the Thomas H. and Joan Gandy Collection archived at Louisiana State University Libraries Special Collections, which includes more than twenty thousand images documenting one hundred years of Natchez history.)

One last particularly impactful aspect of the exhibit is pictures of children's education classes and camp trips that took

Temple B'nai Israel, Natchez, Mississippi. (Library of Congress.)

place as late as the 1980s. By this time, the congregation was already aware of its limited future. In the early 1990s the congregation entered into a preservation agreement with the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (MSJE), later known as the ISJL, in order to save the temple building and its holdings. The exhibit includes display copies of the agreement and related memoranda, which represent one more lasting example of the forethought of Natchez's Jewish community and the dedication of its members to contributing to the culture and vitality of their city.

The agreement with the MSJE dictates that if the congregation ever declines to a level that is no longer viable, control of the temple would transfer to the MSJE, and it would become a permanent museum in memory of Natchez's Jewish heritage. The agreement garnered the MSJE and Temple B'nai Israel an award from the national organization Partners for Sacred Places. In the not-so-distant future, the temple hopefully will become an active museum, open to the public, preserving the legacy of Natchez's once vital Jewish community, and engaging the stewardship of its public memory.

There are opportunities two decades after its creation to make the exhibit's core content even more effective in communicating Natchez's Jewish history. Disassembling the nine-panel design in favor of freestanding displays would create a more immersive, physically interactive experience that, were it to remain in the temple's basement, would also help integrate the historical materials into the historic space. More consistent identification of the sources of the objects included in the exhibit would help establish richer historical and intellectual context. Curators could also employ different media, such as samples of the documentary film or audio recordings of members of the congregation, to create greater dimensionality, help personalize the stories, and allow further interactivity. The temple itself has numerous artifacts, from library card catalogs to classroom objects, sacred objects, and community relics that could be incorporated into an augmented exhibit. With the wealth of content already collected and displayed, the exhibit could use hands-on materials and infographics to help achieve educational objectives and which could prove very

useful for K-12 teachers and other educators and students. Whether Of Passover and Pilgrimage is still there, or revamped installations attempt to fill B'nai Israel's hallowed halls, the important story of Natchez's Jews will continue to be told.

Joshua Cobbs Youngblood, University of Arkansas Libraries

The reviewer may be contacted at jcyoungb@uark.edu.

Glossary

Adjunta ~ the board of trustees of a Sephardic congregation

Agunah (*plural: agunot*) ~ an abandoned woman; a woman whose husband has disappeared, deserted her, or refused to provide a divorce

Bar mitzvah ~ traditional coming-of-age ritual for Jewish males reaching the age of thirteen

Brivnshteler ~ manuals for teaching writing skills in Yiddish

Chevra kadisha ~ literally, *holy society*; Jewish burial society

Gemilut hasadim ~ literally, *acts of lovingkindness*; charitable acts requiring personal involvement and no thought of reward

Get ~ Jewish divorce decree

Hazan (*plural: hazanim*) ~ cantor; religious leader leading prayers/chants during religious services

Kabbalah ~ literally, *to receive*; the Jewish mystical tradition

Landsman (*plural: landsleit*) ~ a fellow countryman; someone from the same area in Europe

Mikvah (*variant: mikveh; plural: mikvaot*) ~ ritual bath

Rosh Hashanah ~ literally, *head of the year*; the new year on the Hebrew calendar; one of holiest days of the Jewish year

Sephardic ~ having to do with **Sephardim**, Jews and Judaism originating in the Mediterranean region, especially Spain and Portugal

Shabbat (*also shabbes*) ~ Jewish Sabbath; Friday evening to Saturday evening at the appearance of the first stars

Shochet (*variant: shokhet; plural: shochtim*) ~ ritual slaughterer, kosher butcher

Shul ~ congregation or synagogue

Shulchan ~ table

Tashlikh ~ literally, *throw*; a ceremony performed during Rosh Hashanah in which Jews gather at a stream and empty their pockets (or throw bread or crumbs) into the water. It symbolizes the casting away of sins.

Torah ~ Five Books of Moses; first five books of the Bible; the body of Jewish law and ritual tradition

Note on Authors

Marni Davis is associate professor of history at Georgia State University and author of *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* (2012). She is currently researching immigration and ethnic communities in Atlanta between 1880 and 1960.

Joel William Friedman is Jack M. Gordon Professor of Procedural Law and Jurisdiction at Tulane University Law School and author of six books. He earned a J.D. from Yale University in 1975.

Rachel Gross is a visiting assistant professor in the Department of Religion and Culture at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). She received her Ph.D. from Princeton in 2014. Her current project, *Objects of Affection: The Material Religion of American Jewish Nostalgia*, is a material culture and ethnographic examination of representations of American Jewish immigration history, including studies of Jewish genealogists, the use of historic synagogues as heritage sites, children's books and dolls, and American Jewish foodways, particularly the culinary revival of the new Jewish food scene.

Anton Hieke is the author of *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (2013), as well as several articles on southern Jewish history. He earned a Ph.D. from the University of Halle-Wittenberg.

Hank Klibanoff, the James M. Cox, Jr., Professor of Journalism at Emory University, received his bachelors degree in English from Washington University in St. Louis and his masters in journalism from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He is the coauthor with Gene Roberts of *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation*, which won the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in History. He directs the Georgia Civil Rights Cold Cases Project at Emory (coldcases.emory.edu) and coteaches a class in which students examine Georgia history through racially motivated killings that took place during the modern civil rights era.

Scott M. Langston has taught biblical and religious studies and American history for over twenty-five years at the undergraduate and graduate levels. He currently teaches religion at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. He has written several essays and books in the fields of southern Jewish history, the reception history of the Bible, and

religion, including *Exodus Through the Centuries* (2006). A former president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, he currently serves as a board member of the Texas Jewish Historical Society and editor of the Primary Sources section of *Southern Jewish History*.

Dan J. Puckett is associate professor of history at Troy University. He was a Starkoff Fellow at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (2011–2012) and currently serves as Vice-President of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and on the Alabama Holocaust Commission. Puckett has published numerous articles on World War II, the Holocaust, Alabama Jewry, and race relations in Alabama. His book, *In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama's Jews, the Second World War, and the Holocaust*, was published in 2013.

Shari Rabin received a Ph.D. in religious studies from Yale University, where she wrote a dissertation titled "Manifest Jews: Mobility and the Making of American Judaism, 1820–1877." She is assistant professor of Jewish studies at the College of Charleston and associate director of the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. She has published in *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues*, *Annals of Iowa*, and *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*. Her current research is on Judaism and the spatial dynamics of everyday life in nineteenth-century America.

Allison Elizabeth Schottenstein is a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Texas at Austin. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Summa Cum Laude from Brandeis University with a bachelor's degree in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies. She received her masters in history from the University of Texas at Austin and simultaneously won the Perry Prize for best master thesis for "'Perl's of Wisdom': 'Rabbi' Sam Perl, New Models of Acculturation, and the 'In-Between' Jew." Her broad interest is in American Jewish history with subfields in European Jewish history, American race/ethnic history, and religion. She wrote "Jews, Race, and Southernness," published in the Race volume of *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (June 2013). She is also a book reviewer for PopMatters. Her dissertation, "Behind Closed Doors: The Houston Jewish Community's Reaction Towards the Long Civil Rights Movement," focuses on the Houston Jewish community's relationship with the African American community between 1940 and 1980.

Edward S. Shapiro earned a B.A. from Georgetown University and Ph.D. in history from Harvard University. He taught American history at the University of Maryland, St. John's University (Minnesota), and Seton Hall University, where he is now professor of history emeritus. His publications include *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II*

(1992), *We Are Many: Reflections on American Jewish History and Identity* (2005), and *Crown Heights: Blacks, Jews, and the 1991 Brooklyn Riot* (2006). He has also published essays on Jewish orthodoxy in Florida and anti-semitism in Mississippi.

Jay Silverberg lives in Petaluma, California, and is semiretired after a forty-year career working as a reporter and supervising editor for newspapers in Missouri, Florida, New York, Illinois, and California and as senior vice president for public relations agencies in California and Washington, D.C. He continues to assist a few clients and supports several not-for-profit organizations in his hometown, while also serving on the board of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. He received his bachelors of journalism degree from the University of Missouri. He intends to continue his research into his family in Louisiana and Mississippi and its relationship to southern Jewish history.

Joshua Cobbs Youngblood is Research and Outreach Services Librarian for the Special Collections of the University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. Previously he served as Archives Historian for the Florida Memory Program of the State Library and Archives of Florida. Youngblood holds an M.A. and is A.B.D. in history from Florida State University and a member of the Academy of Certified Archivists. His most recent article, "*BAD Times and Good Stuff at the University of Arkansas: University Archives, Student Access, and Promoting Diversity in Special Collections*" (with Amy Allen), appeared in *Archival Practice* (October 2014). A forthcoming article, "Following a Trail of Tin Cans: Archival Engagement, 'Tin Can Tourism,' and the Internet Life of Historical Images," will appear in *Archival Issues* (Fall 2015). Exhibits he has recently curated include "A Tune Caused the Valley to Ring": Remembering Arkansas Folksongs, Musicians, and Collectors (June 2015); Jewish Studies Beyond the Holocaust: Arkansas, History and the World (with Jennifer Hoyer, January 2013); and Crusader for Civil Rights: Celebrating the Life of Daisy Bates (January 2012).

Contacting the Editors

Correspondence regarding the content of *Southern Jewish History*, including submission queries, should be addressed to:

Mark K. Bauman, Editor
Southern Jewish History
6856 Flagstone Way
Flowery Branch, GA 30542

e-mail: MarkKBauman@aol.com

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Correspondence regarding management and business issues, including questions about subscriptions, circulation, and advertising, should be addressed to:

Bryan E. Stone, Managing Editor
Southern Jewish History
PO Box 271432
Corpus Christi, TX 78427

e-mail: bstone@delmar.edu

Book, Exhibit, and Website Reviews

Book Review Editor: Stephen J. Whitfield, swhitfie@brandeis.edu

Exhibit Review Editor: Jeremy Katz, jrkatz@thebreman.org

Website Review Editor: Adam Mendelsohn,
adam.mendelsohn@uct.ac.za

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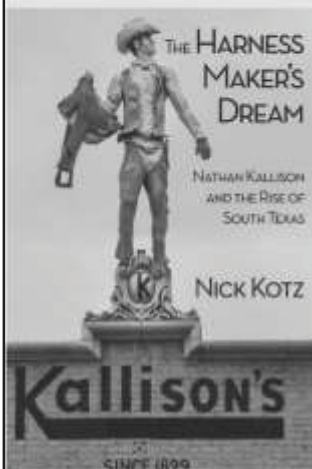
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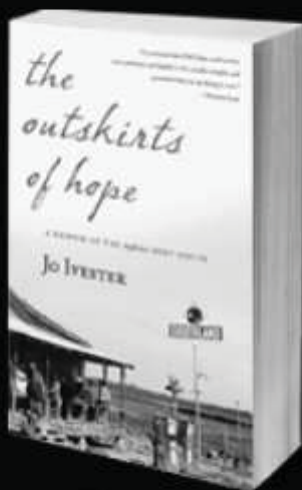
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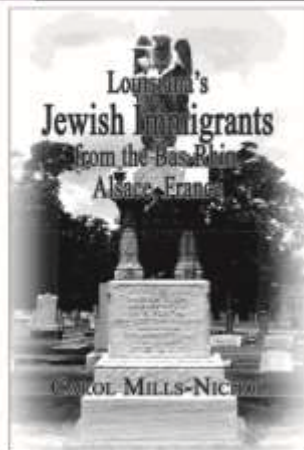
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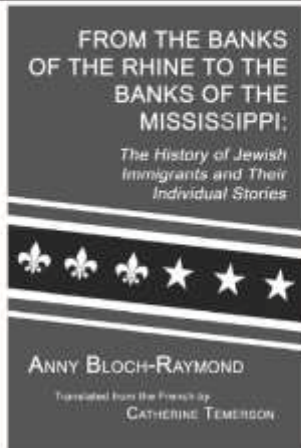
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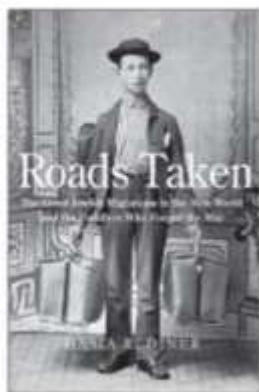
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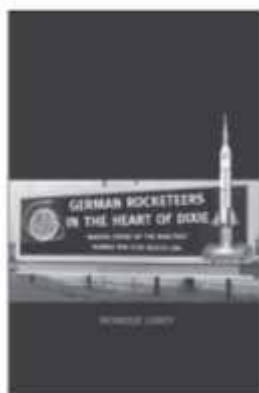


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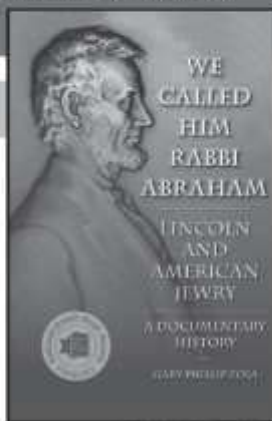
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