

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel B. Heimovics, *Managing Editor*

1999

Volume 2

Southern Jewish History

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel B. Heimovics, *Managing Editor*

Editorial Board

Solomon Breibart	Leonard Rogoff
Micah D. Greenstein	Dale Rosengarten
Patricia M. LaPointe	Jason Silverman
Bobbie S. Malone	Ellen M. Umansky
Raphael Medoff	Saul Viener

Lee Shai Weissbach

Southern Jewish Historical Society OFFICERS: Bruce Beeber, *President*; Catherine C. Kahn, *President-Elect*; Patricia M. LaPointe, *Secretary*; Bernard Wax, *Treasurer*. BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Sandra Friedland, Juliet George, Mark Greenberg, Marcus Rosenbaum, Deborah Weiner, Hollace Weiner.

Correspondence concerning author's guidelines, contributions, and all editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor, *Southern Jewish History*, 2517 Hartford Dr., Ellenwood, GA 30294. The journal is interested in unpublished articles pertaining to the Jewish experience in the American South.

Southern Jewish History (SJH), is a publication of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. Subscriptions are a benefit of membership. Send memberships (\$30, \$50, or \$100 a year, \$1000 for life) to PO Box 5024, Atlanta, GA 30302. Order additional copies of *SJH*, (v. 2—\$15 for members; \$20 for non-members; v. 1—\$10 for members; \$15 for non-members; add \$5 for foreign) from the Managing Editor, 954 Stonewood La., Maitland, FL 32751. *SJH* invites benefactors (\$1,000), patrons (\$500), and sponsors (\$250).

SJH greatly appreciates the sponsorships of
Bruce and Linda Beeber and of Martin S. Weinberg
and the gifts of Beryl and Eleanor Weiner

Copyright © 1999 by the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

ISSN 1521-4206

PERMISSION STATEMENT

Consent by the Southern Jewish Historical Society is given for private use of articles and images that have appeared in *Southern Jewish History*. Copying or distributing any journal, article, image, or portion thereof, for any use other than private, is forbidden without the written permission of *Southern Jewish History*. To obtain that permission, contact the editor, Mark K. Bauman, at MarkKBauman@aol.com or the managing editor, Bryan Edward Stone, at bstone@delmar.edu.

Lives of Quiet Affirmation: The Jewish Women of Early Anniston, Alabama

by

Sherry Blanton

It took one hundred years for Temple Beth-El in Anniston, Alabama, to elect its first female president in 1989. Since the beginning, however, the women of this congregation worked diligently for the preservation of a Jewish way of life and a house of worship. Their initial endeavors were responsible for the very existence of a temple in their community as they actually purchased the lot, constructed the building, and presented it to the congregation debt free. These women, like other nineteenth century wives of Jewish immigrants, shared the tasks of organizing and maintaining Jewish communal life, as the men, no longer willing or able to carry out these efforts alone, adjusted socially and financially to their new circumstances. As historian Louis Schmier wrote, "The women usually were instrumental first in fundraising to purchase a cemetery or to construct a house of worship, and to assume the responsibility of its upkeep." For example, in 1878 the women in Donaldson, Louisiana, gave a "ball and a fair," raising six thousand dollars with "the money promptly being turned over for the building and outfitting of a synagogue." In Texas the women of the Alexandria congregation formed a ladies Hebrew benevolent society and "assisted greatly toward the accomplishment of the building of a temple."¹ In Anniston the monies raised by the women went directly into the treasury of their Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, which then decided how that money would be spent. Anniston's women

apparently did all the planning for the building including raising all the money, appointing the building committee (even dictating to it the terms under which a temple could be built), and, finally, naming the house of worship.²

As did so many others, Jews first settled in Anniston because of the town's early reputation for opportunity and prosperity. Before 1883 Anniston existed as a closed company town built around an iron furnace operation. With the arrival of the railroad, Anniston opened its doors, and newcomers crowded the city.³ Hearing of the rapid growth, Jews also came. Many of these first Jews were merchants, their stores dotting Noble (Main) Street. So many sold clothing that it could be said that they influenced the dress styles of the area's residents. Among the early Jewish residents to settle were Joseph Saks, Leon Ullman, and Anselm Sterne with Ullman and Sterne bringing wives and families.

Possibly Anniston's first Jew and one of its first merchants was Leon Ullman. In 1884 he moved to Anniston from Talladega, Alabama, a small town about thirty-five miles away, where he had been operating a dry goods and clothing store on the Court House Square. His Ullman Brothers carried "a line of general merchandise." Leon's four brothers, August, Abe, Leopold, and Solomon, at one time or another worked in the family's Anniston business. The enterprise, first located in the old Woodstock Commissary building, remained on Noble Street despite several changes of address (and a change of ownership in 1930 when Ullman died) until the 1970s. In a 1924 interview Leon Ullman, considered a "pioneer of the city," stated, "When we came here [to Anniston] there was no other dry goods store in the city. There was one clothing store . . . there was nothing above Tenth Street on Noble (where his store was located) except the Wikle Drug Store, a wooden hotel across the street from us and a mill." *The Anniston Star* thus referred to Ullman, who operated his store for forty-six years, as the "dean of the retail merchants of Anniston." Ullman was also involved in the civic activities as a member of the Exchange Club and the Chamber of Commerce. He served Temple Beth-El faithfully,

too, and was president when the sanctuary was dedicated in 1893.⁴

Another community builder, Joseph Saks, joined Ullman making Anniston his home in 1887. The Saks family, owners of the Saks Fifth Avenue Department Store, had sponsored the journey of Joseph, then ten years old, and his eleven-year old brother Sam to the United States in 1875. The family, cousins to the two brothers, educated them. They sent Sam to Washington to open a store and Joseph, first to Birmingham, and then to Anniston. In 1887 on Noble Street he opened The Famous (One Price Store) carrying men's and boys' clothing exclusively. After one move, when the business became known as Saks Clothing, the store remained on Noble Street until 1930, just three years before Joseph Saks' death. Saks was said to be so widely known that a letter mailed to him from New York City addressed to "Joseph Saks, Alabama" was promptly delivered.⁵ Saks was a prominent Anniston resident with a reputation for civic mindedness and generosity.

Saks also started a town located just outside Anniston. Since Jews of his native Germany were not allowed to purchase land, buying land in America was important to him. Little by little he accumulated 800 acres which Saks rented out to farmers. When they approached him about the need for a school for their children, he spoke with the school superintendent who promised him a teacher if Saks got a school built. Saks donated the land as well as the funds for the building. The parents did the actual construction. Thus the Saks school system got its start with a two room building where the teacher stood in the middle and taught two classes. The complex now includes an elementary, middle, and high school, as well as athletic fields. Joseph Saks later sold the land giving birth to a community called Saks.⁶

Deeply committed to Temple Beth-El, Saks served as president for over thirty years. On Friday afternoons he made the rounds of the Jewish businessmen reminding them that there were services that night.⁷ Known for his civic responsibility, Saks offered two prize ponies to finance a memorial for the soldiers in World War I. He was, furthermore, a 32nd Degree Mason, a

Shriner, a member of the Knights of Pythias, an Elk, and a charter member of the local Red Cross, the Rotary Club, and the Anniston Country Club.⁸ This early affiliation with the country club exemplifies the acceptance this family had in the community and its integration into Christian society. A bachelor when he became a resident here, Saks married Amelia Rice of Vicksburg, Mississippi, in 1905. Although not a member in the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society's formative years, she soon became involved in the women's activities, chairing committees including the "shroud committee," euphemistically known later as "the sewing committee."⁹

One year after Saks arrived, Anselm Sterne moved with his wife and children from Albany, Georgia, to Anniston. He had emigrated from Germany to West Point, Georgia, leaving there to serve in the Confederate Army as a member of the West Point Guards. He saw battle, was taken prisoner by the Union Army, and wrote a sketch of his army life. After the war he settled in Albany, becoming a grocer and a prominent citizen of that city. He was an Ordinary for Doughherty County, Georgia, the equivalent of an Alabama probate judge. When a doctor advised Sterne to seek a drier climate for his wife, Henrietta, and seven children, Sterne, at the urging of a former Confederate comrade whom he met while en route to Birmingham, chose Anniston instead.¹⁰ Despite having little formal education, Sterne, like many of his peers in Anniston, became quite successful in his adopted community. He ran a grocery store selling "Fancy groceries, fruits, and confectionaries," until his son Leon bought it from him in 1900.¹¹ Choosing not to serve as president, he acted as a lay reader for the congregation for twenty-five years. In 1900 he was responsible for the hiring of a student from Hebrew Union College for the High Holy Days.¹² A 32nd Degree Mason, Sterne helped start a Masonic Lodge in Anniston. He also participated in the founding of the Pelham Camp of the United Confederate Veterans. His gravestone carries a Confederate insignia bearing testament to his respect for that cause.¹³

Joseph Saks, Anselm Stern, and Leon Ullman, all prosperous Anniston businessmen, were Germanic Jews from the Reform

*Amelia Rice Saks, photographed
for her wedding, April 5, 1905
(Courtesy of Andrew J. Saks)*

tradition who worked as driving forces in Temple Beth-El's formative years and remained involved in the small congregation until their deaths. The influence of these three men and their families was very strong. Saks and Ullman frequently served as officers of the congregation while the three were the regular lay readers for Sabbath services. German Jews like these men had been leaders in the Reform movement which facilitated assimilation into their new communities. The presence of many Reform Jews of importance in the early town and congregation probably left little question as to the worship practices which were to be adopted. Assimilation and acceptance were as important for Anniston's new families as for other newly immigrated Jews into the southern culture. Writing of a Sabbath meal in a southern home at the turn of the century, Eli Evans quotes a family member: "Oh it was memorable. First—and he lifted his hands up—Mama blessed the

lights, and then we settled down to our favorite Friday night meal—crawfish soup, fried chicken, baked ham, hoppin John (black-eyed peas and rice), and sweet potato pie.” Mervyn Sterne, Anselm and Henrietta Sterne’s son, was describing the Friday night at his home.¹⁴ Sterne’s descendants who remained congregants carried on the temple’s Reform practice. Services were in English, and yarmulkes were discouraged.

On April 1, 1888, Anniston’s twenty-four Jews founded a Reform Jewish congregation with the following purposes: “The worship of God in accordance with the usages and customs of our ancient religion; the preservation and perpetuation of the tenets and principles of Judaism, the fostering of communal life and the cementing of the bonds of religious fellowship.”¹⁵

About one month later the congregation purchased plots at Hillside Cemetery (Tenth Street Cemetery) in Anniston to establish what has been referred to as the “Hebrew section” of the cemetery. Since educating their children Jewishly was of great importance, Henrietta Sterne organized a religious school on June 16, 1889. “The school opened with a membership of twenty-eight children: ten in the infant class of Miss Lena Scheslinger, ten in the primary class of Miss Fanny Ascher, and eight in the bible class of Mr. Abe Ullman. The Hebrew teacher was Mr. Zach Katzenstein, the superintendent, Mr. J. Freisleben (from West Point Georgia).” Henrietta Sterne also organized an adult Bible class in September 1893 described by a member in *The American Israelite* as “entertaining, instructive and beneficial.”¹⁶

On December 10, 1890, Anselm and Henrietta Smith Sterne had a meeting at their home for a dozen women of the congregation to discuss the need for a women’s charitable organization in Anniston.¹⁷ Henrietta Sterne was well-prepared for her role as matriarch. From her parents she had extensive experience in initiating religious institutions. The first Jewish services in Albany were held in her home there, and her mother established the first Sabbath School. Henrietta attended Mrs. Wise’s School in New York City. Like her mother, Henrietta also ran the Sabbath School in Albany until 1878 when she turned it over to the congregation while remaining its superintendent.¹⁸ The previous year she

Henrietta Smith Sterne
(*Courtesy of Marx Sterne*)

founded a school, Mrs. A. Sterne's Institute for Young Ladies and Misses, and had classes for two years in her home. When the school outgrew her home she moved it to a bigger building in 1880 where there were classes for kindergarten through college, providing an education for some of Albany's "most prominent matrons." She even admitted males for a short while. Upon moving to Anniston she continued to teach French and German at the Noble Institute for Girls, an Episcopal private school.¹⁹ Like her husband she was also greatly devoted to the Confederate cause. In Anniston she helped found The William Henry Forney Chapter #468, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and served as president.²⁰

The December gathering marks the founding of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society. Partly because the Sternes were

influential citizens the women responded enthusiastically. Frances Ullman recalled the initial meeting in a 1917 program: "The invitation to the Sterne home was answered by all; not one had ever been in an organization before; the ladies responded to a stirring and emotional speech by the Sternes about the importance of a society: our object to promote Judaism in our midst and aid our co-religionists in distress. Our aim would be to build a temple—a Beth-El."²¹

According to historian Jenna Weissman Joselit, "American Jewish middle-class women began increasingly, toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, to participate in social and cultural activities outside of its sacred precincts [the home]. These women formed hundreds of voluntary associations between the 1870s and the new century." These women's groups, variously called Hebrew aid societies or ladies auxiliaries, existed in almost all communities of any size.²² In cities such as Anniston where the number of men was limited, the association of the women into a benevolence group became even more important.

Henrietta Sterne was elected president of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society at the organizational meeting, a position granted for life in 1907. She served until her death in 1915 when the women renamed their organization the Henrietta Sterne Sisterhood. In May 1913 the members of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society had become dues paying members of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and began calling their organization the Anniston Sisterhood, Temple Beth-El.²³

Elected with Henrietta Sterne in 1890 were Frances Kaiser Ullman, vice-president, and Henrietta Long Katzenstein, secretary treasurer.²⁴ Frances Ullman, a native of New York, married husband Leon there. Frances Ullman served the society faithfully, taking office throughout her lifetime.²⁵ Henrietta Long Katzenstein, Henrietta Sterne's niece, was the wife of Simon Katzenstein.²⁶

After the initial meeting the women drafted a constitution and articles. The preamble stated "for our mutual benefit, for the cultivation of the amenities of social life, for alleviating the sick, aiding the unfortunate and distressed, and to awaken an interest

in Judaism, the undersigned agree to form themselves into a benevolent society."²⁷ These purposes were fairly typical for such societies. "Although some of these women's groups met purely for social intercourse, nonetheless, the majority organized for the sake of "doing good," to perform acts of charity. Historian William Toll states, "The responsibilities undertaken by the benevolent societies were partly ritual – preparing a woman's body for burial, partly nurture – sitting up with sick women and caring for their children and partly economic – providing funds in emergencies." For example, in October 1904, a committee of three ladies from the Anniston society met the body of Mrs. William Kohn at the train and escorted her home.²⁸ The authors of *The Jewish Woman in America* describe the important role of charity:

Philanthropic concern, particularly on a personal level, was considered one of the few activities that might legitimately draw a middle-class woman—a lady—from her home. Charity was considered an extension of the home and family obligations that women bore, and it became another example of her religiosity and purity. While there had always existed special "women's societies" within the traditional Jewish community, especially for providing the necessary care for the female sick and dead, charity had always been a communal activity, controlled and executed by men. Now many synagogues and most cities and towns boasted a Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society. . . . Though small in scale the philanthropic societies established by women throughout the nineteenth century became the forerunners of the great American Jewish women's organizations of the twentieth century.²⁹

Jacob Rader Marcus wrote: "If no male Hebrew benevolent society had been established, then the female organization would serve as Jewry's social welfare arm." As a mutual aid society, the women helped local Jewish poor, especially the women, and as an auxiliary to the synagogue they gave money for upkeep and beautification. Marcus continues "It was also the social club for the

town's Jewish women; the associative importance of such organizations cannot be over stressed."³⁰

A detailed set of articles and bylaws clearly described how the Anniston group was to operate. The articles not only addressed issues such as a quorum and officers but policies to encourage attendance and enrich the treasury: The quorum was set at seven members. By-law II stated that "any member absent from a meeting shall pay a fine of twenty-five cents unless excused by the Society for good and sufficient reasons." (Rain was not considered an acceptable excuse.)³¹ Frances Ullman remembered that "Absences and tardiness were rare occurrences"; the members "all were so interested and came so eagerly." Article III stated that each member should "pay monthly dues of twenty-five cents." To be eligible to join the organization the head of the prospective member's family had to be a member in good standing of the temple, be nominated by a member, and receive two-thirds of the votes of those "members present at the time of balloting for applicant." If the head of the applicant's family did not meet the congregational requirements, a unanimous vote was required. An initiation fee of one dollar accompanied an application for membership and a woman became a member upon signing the preamble. These signatures eventually provided the only record of the early congregation.³²

The constitution established three committees: "visiting the sick," "entertainment," and "finances." The committee for the sick was "empowered to relieve cases of urgent necessity where such necessity exists." In 1891 the committee reported that "the care of Mrs. Balsom was finished" and that "the nurse's bill of three dollars, for the care of Mrs. Balsom be settled by the society." The entertainment committee provided "amusements" or "entertainment" and the finance committee "examined the books of the treasurer." The entertainment committee also offered a means for Anniston's Jews to socialize. However important in its own right, for the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society socializing also meant another way to raise money. Parties such as the Purim balls were a way to celebrate a Jewish holiday and enrich the treasury, however, in 1891 the first ball unfortunately cleared

only \$7.30. Some events were limited to the Jewish community but others open to the public.³³

Although the title and preamble clearly suggest a desire to help the unfortunate and distressed, the minutes reflect that the women's efforts to build a house of worship occupied virtually all their time, energy, and money. Only occasionally do references appear to an effort on behalf of "the suffering party."³⁴ Again this was far from unusual. As William Toll wrote:

In addition to charity, the women also saw their mission as including support of local synagogues. In Trinidad, Colorado, the ladies' annual Strawberry Festival and Halloween Fair virtually supported the synagogue. In larger cities like Portland or Galveston they supplemented the funds raised by men. When an elaborate temple was built in Portland in 1888, the women paid for the vestry room. When Galveston had to rebuild after the hurricane and flood of 1900 the women, as they had done before, contributed funds amounting to about one quarter of what was given by the men.³⁵

Once the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society was formally established, Anniston's steel magnolias began work toward their goal. The society's first fundraising venture, a New Year's Hop on December 31, 1890, raised \$85.35. The refreshment fund offered a continuous source of income. At each meeting "light refreshments were served for which a small sum—ten cents—was required." This money, plus an extra dollar given by each member, provided a needle-work fund to purchase supplies for handmade items to be sold. The subsequent "fancy work," was so valued that if a woman failed to bring her handiwork to a meeting, she was fined ten cents. The ladies were determined that the quality of the work be high because, according to Frances Ullman, "we wanted to achieve our exalted purpose" to build a house of worship.³⁶ The temple's stained glass windows, in fact, came from the refreshment/needlework fund. The society's most lucrative under-takings were a series of bazaars. To prepare for

their second such event in December 1891 the members worked "over a winter," planning an auction with an assortment of items donated from local and distant merchants as well as their fancy work. Henrietta Sterne urged the members to "enlist the outside support of our husbands and other members of the congregation in our work." The ladies asked their husbands to solicit assistance from firms with whom they did business. The response was generous: "merchandise and money amounting to one thousand dollars." The donated goods included oysters, cigars, smoked meats, sausages, flour, bananas, tea, coffee, a box of laces, and some gentlemen's ties. From New York came a gentleman's smoking jacket, half a dozen dress shirts, and two "suits of fine underwear." Items were replaced as soon as others sold. Dinner and supper were served to the public during the three day event, and a raffle and "other means of chance" generated additional revenue. Afterward the treasurer reported \$985.08 in the bank with only a few bills unpaid and more money due.³⁷

On May 28, 1891, a committee, appointed to purchase a lot "for the further good of the society," reported that one indeed had been purchased on the northeast corner of Quintard and 13th Streets for \$1,500. Colonel John M. McKleroy, the president of the Anniston Land Company from which the land was bought, donated twenty-five dollars to help meet the first payment. McKleroy had encouraged the group to write to the land company in New York for further assistance as the directors and controlling stockholders there were "co-religionists." The women wrote, but the officers offered only a pledge of moral support. The society placed \$300 down and paid the remainder in four installments of \$300. With McKleroy's donation, the first payment was \$275. The women paid the second payment six months early saving twelve dollars in interest with an additional twelve dollar donation from McKleroy. When the group made the third payment on March 8, 1893, McKleroy gave forty-eight dollars for the interest.³⁸ The remaining payment was made after the building was completed. Although the ladies did not solicit funds for the temple's construction outside the Jewish community, they did receive a donation from Alfred L. Tyler, Sr., and fifty dollars from

William Zinn, both prominent Anniston Christians. Tyler, one of the city's founders was married to Ann Scott for whom Anniston, or "Annie's Town," was named.³⁹ These contributions indicated the respect these early Jewish residents had achieved.

The treasury increased as the women planned and carried out additional fundraising activities. A strawberry and ice cream party or "strawberry festival" in May 1892 and an oyster supper on April 26, 1892, benefitted the building fund. The women voted "to appeal to congregations across the United States for one dollar donations," and contributions came from Chicago, Selma, Spokane, and Charleston among others. The idea for this appeal may have stemmed from a one dollar donation given in May 1892 by the society in response to a request of a congregation in West Virginia.⁴⁰ An article in *The American Israelite* stated that "every possible means had been resorted to, to raise the necessary funds . . . hard work had to be resorted to, what scheming and contriving to carry out the noble work planned by this little society." The membership diminished during the year before the actual opening of the temple, causing the women to raise the "tax" on their weekly refreshments, from the initial ten cents to fifteen, "thus the sum of seventy five cents was raised weekly, three dollars a month to swell their treasury."⁴¹ Although the women carried out numerous fundraising events, they also frequently asked the men of the congregation to make donations. A "tariff levied on all the gentlemen who attended High Holy Days services with the money to be used for the good of the society" added thirteen dollars as each man paid one dollar to the treasury in 1892. Henrietta Sterne reported that her March 19 and 20, 1893, "subscription among the Jewish gentlemen to the synagogue" raised \$409.⁴²

The construction of a temple was especially vital to Anniston's Jewish residents because there was no place of their own to gather. They worshiped frequently in the Knights of Pythias Hall or in each other's homes.⁴³ The officers for 1893, Henrietta Sterne, Frances Ullman, Rebecca Adler, and Sophie Markstein, would lead the society to the fruition of their dream, a permanent house of worship for Anniston's Jews. Rebecca Schlesinger Adler was born in Austria, came to this country in 1880, and settled in

Huntsville, Alabama. She married Adolph Adler in Atlanta, and the two settled in Anniston in 1885. Sophie Pake Markstein, the wife of Max Markstein, was born in Mobile, Alabama, in 1854, and was raised there.⁴⁴ In March 1893, the remaining society members (as many of the earlier members were no longer involved), were Henrietta Sterne, Frances Ullman, Henrietta Katzenstein, Rebecca Adler, Bertha Frank Levi (the wife of Isadore Levi), and, Sara Ullman (married to Solomon Ullman, Leon Ullman's brother). They appointed a building committee composed of the male leaders of the congregation to "erect a house of worship." The society "empowered the committee to use what means are on hand to erect the building." The group, however, "expressly stipulated that no debt be incurred."⁴⁵

The members of the building committee were almost all the husbands of the women: Anselm Sterne, Leon Ullman, Adolph Adler, Max Markstein, Isadore Levi, Julius Levy, Joseph Saks, and Isadore Katzenstein.⁴⁶ In addition to being the "leaders" of the congregation, these men were prominent Anniston businessmen. This very public responsibility was one still relegated to the men. Although the women had planned, budgeted, and worked for almost three years, none of them served on the building committee. Although the actions of these women indicated a sense of independence, their identity still relied on the men in their lives. The minutes only identified members by their married names and husband's first names, never by their first or given names. It was not until many decades later that this policy changed.

On April 12, 1893, the building committee informed the women that the contract was ready to sign and that the "Temple would be built for \$2,200." On June 7, 1893, the society members named their synagogue Beth-El or House of God.⁴⁷ The original building contained a lobby, a sanctuary, two bathrooms, and a small room to the rear of the sanctuary. Anniston architect George Parker described the architecture of the temple: "This small but handsomely proportioned single story building has a rather Byzantine design inspiration; and the arched relief of the facade

creates an exquisitely scaled composition well related to the narrow corner lot."⁴⁸

As of 1996, according to Mark Gordon, Temple Beth-El was one of ninety-six pre-1900 buildings in the United States originally built as a synagogue and still standing. It may be the oldest one in Alabama since the date for B'nai Jeshurun in Demopolis is listed as circa 1893. Today Temple Beth-El is one of approximately thirty-one nineteenth century houses of worship still being used for Jewish services.⁴⁹

The synagogue opened its doors for Rosh Hashanah in 1893, only a few months after the appointment of the building committee. The building was completed but not furnished. There were no pews, so chairs were used. An organ was purchased from the profits of a raffle for a painting by Miss Helen Markstein, Sophie and Max's daughter. The proceeds not only purchased the organ, but also carpeted the bimah. The year-end treasurer's report for 1893 reflected a disbursement of \$2,472.36 for "building the Temple."⁵⁰

In the light of the grim times that had settled on Anniston, the women's accomplishments seem even more remarkable. Anniston's initial boom during 1883 and 1884 was followed by slow growth for the next two years only to be replaced by another boom from 1887 to 1891. In 1891, however, a severe depression began that lasted through 1894. Local industries were at a standstill, real estate values dropped, and hundreds of people left town. A visitor in 1893 remarked that Anniston looked like a "plague-ridden city." (Fortunately Anniston experienced a partial recovery in 1895-1897.)⁵¹ Nonetheless, donations itemized in the society minutes verified the continued generosity of Anniston's Jews during the economic downturn.

In addition to the poor economy another obstacle to be overcome by these determined women was the loss of members. At the time of the founding of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1890 fifteen women signed the preamble, and the constitution mandated a seven member quorum. The constitution was revised on August 26, 1892, setting a quorum of five. In November 1893 the minutes recorded a reduction to three members.⁵² It is difficult

to know why the membership decreased, but several possible reasons may be suggested. The economic climate in Anniston made it more difficult for residents to earn a living.⁵³ Another possible reason may have been the high level of involvement required by this group; building the temple with so few was an intense undertaking. The minutes frequently recorded resignations without providing any reasons. The April 7, 1891, minutes do note that Mrs. R. (Regina) Lippman's resignation be accepted, "on account of removal from the city." When in December 1891 Mrs. Lippman (another otherwise unidentified Mrs. Lippman) resigned from the organization, the women formed a committee to "investigate" her resignation. They visited her home and, finding that she was not there, voted to accept her resignation.⁵⁴ Being a member of this society also required a financial commitment for dues and refreshments, and, without a good excuse, an absent member had to pay a fine. Not only were the women asked to donate but "tariffs" frequently were levied on their husbands as well.

None of this diminished the temple opening on December 8, 1893. Dr. Max Heller of New Orleans, "one of the most distinguished and erudite rabbis of the country," officiated at the dedication service. His sermon was described as "scholarly and masterful." A member of the congregation wrote, "Never in the lives of our Jewish people, nor of our Christian friends, has one ever appeared, who so completely won our hearts, as the noble, gifted and eloquent man who conducted the dedication services."⁵⁵

Frances Ullman described the emotions of the service:

That dedication was the most wonderful and inspiring scene imaginable. The carrying of the Torah around the Temple, led by the Rabbi, and then came the president, each carrying a Torah, and then other officers in the Temple following. I believed they walked around the Temple twice, the rabbi offering prayers. Then the handing over of the keys of the Temple by a child, the scholarly sermon of the Rabbi. Some of us wept—tears of joy—it was sublime. I cannot refrain from mentioning the music on that occasion—it was truly operatic. Mrs. Joseph Aderhold of our city

rendered a wonderful solo, "Consider the Lilies," with exquisite charm.⁵⁶

The previous Thursday evening Temple Beth-El hosted a lecture on Judaism by Heller. He also addressed the Sunday school and conducted the regular Sabbath morning services. Heller was "highly pleased with the interest taken in Judaism in this city." An unidentified Anniston Jew offered the following description in *The American Israelite*:

Nothing more beautiful or impressive has ever taken place in our city than the dedication services last Friday night at our little synagogue, the work of a small community of Israelites in this city. For many months had this work gone on, and smaller and smaller had grown the little band of workers, until at times one doubted whether the work would ever be completed . . . to day [sic] there stands as a monument to their zeal and interest in Judaism, the little temple of which they not only feel proud, but to which every citizen of the city of Anniston points with pride.⁵⁷

Thus the building of a house of worship and decorous ceremony reflected both the success and acceptance of Anniston's Jews, similar experiences to that of other Jews throughout America during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Upon his return to New Orleans Heller sent the congregation a Bible which still rests on the rabbi's pulpit. Society members embroidered and made lace for a linen centerpiece for Dr. Heller's wife, Ida. "To help pay for the building," a small fee, probably levied by the ladies, was charged for the Thursday night lecture.⁵⁸ *The [Anniston] Weekly Times* reported that "No higher compliment could be paid our Jewish citizens than the tribute of regard and interest that centered in this site and that had called together so many of the citizens of Anniston of all denominations."⁵⁹

After the dedication, pews, pulpit furniture, and chandeliers had to be purchased for the inside, and fencing, trees, and lawn had to be added to the exterior. Frances Ullman recalled, "Only the members of those days know the amount of money and work

it took to establish that lawn. It was a matter of just pride with us that our lawn should be in harmony with our Temple. It was the fruit of our handiwork." Minutes of the following years made clear their efforts to beautify the grounds. A fence around the temple lot was the first outside project, perhaps because in 1894 Temple Beth-El was the only building on the block. The fence of chicken wire and wood cost \$16.49. In 1908 the ladies removed the fence and sold the materials for \$2.75. Refreshment funds, fancy work, dues, and fines continued to augment the treasury.⁶⁰

Religious education remained important for this young congregation which held its first confirmation in June 1894. An anonymous American Israelite informant wrote, "One of the main incentives to the earnest work that led to the erection of our synagogue was the desire that the children of the community might be educated to become good Jews and Jewesses and the parents of the confirmants felt in a great measure repaid for their efforts when the children showed themselves so earnest and well-informed in the principles of Judaism." The class, an "unusually bright one," consisted of Marion Pearl Sterne, Maurie Levi, Albert Ullman, and Josie Markstein. Rev. Leo Reich of Atlanta conducted the service. Abe Ullman was the teacher for the class, and Hattie Lippman sang for the service. In June 1897 the confirmation class consisted of four boys, Niel Sterne, Nat Ullman, Walter Levi, and Walter Markstein. Another person reported to the American Israelite, "As our congregation consists of only about a dozen members we cannot afford a rabbi of our own and consequently were dependent on the kindness of Rev. David Marx of Atlanta for whose trouble in our behalf we are sincerely grateful. . . . The (members) of the class acquitted themselves splendidly, reflecting great credit upon themselves and upon their teacher, Mr. C. (Columbus) Smith."⁶¹ Apparently from the onset the congregation used the Classical Reform custom of confirmation as opposed to the traditional bar mitzvah and the later bat mitzvah. Unlike recent immigrants, Anniston's Jews arrived already acculturated.

By the early twentieth century the interior and the exterior of the building was completed, and financial donations especially to

national institutions increased. It appears that more effort was devoted to assisting others after 1904.⁶² The payment for clothing and laundry for a sick child in the hospital and a bus ticket for a sick child who needed to travel north are recorded in the minutes. In 1906 the women responded to the request of a Mrs. Pelman, for help "to open a business," voting to assist her "when called on." Anniston's women followed a pattern of organizational dynamics and giving that was typical of other women's groups. "By the 1900s," historian Toll contends, "the benevolent societies were undergoing an eclipse, as the concept of sisterly charity and informal cooperation with men's benevolent societies was becoming obsolete. For the women (as the men) the concept of general nurturant benevolence was being replaced by more specialized institutions. The dispensing of charity to regional institutions like the orphanages in Atlanta, New Orleans or Cleveland, or to the National Jewish Hospital in Denver became a matter of routine."⁶³ The minutes of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society reported donations to the Hebrew Consumptive Hospital and the National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives. In the 1920s the Pennsylvania National Farm School, a Jewish institution to train Jewish males to be farmers, received regular donations of items, often sewn by the women themselves. Anniston's women were also generous to groups with no Jewish affiliation whereas some other Jewish women's groups often preferred to aid just their co-religionists. These actions may have been an effort to hasten acculturation into the Christian majority as well as an indicator of their interest in the welfare of others. By 1904 the society had become involved with the Free Kindergarten for disadvantaged students, providing refreshments as well as donations of time and money. The Free Kindergarten, one of Henrietta Sterne's favorite charities, was a cause that was popular with the upper-class women of Anniston.⁶⁴ Over the years the women hardly missed a chance to provide monetary gifts to Jew and gentile, young and old, sick and well. Still, the women maintained their intense dedication to Temple Beth-El. Even before they officially became a temple sisterhood they took the responsibilities of cleaning the building, maintaining the lawn, providing the altar cloth and flowers, and

preparing the building for High Holy Day services. They painted and did repairs as required, even paying for a cement sidewalk.

In 1906 the women voted that fines for absent and tardy members be abolished "leaving it optional with members to attend meetings." Thus, an old standby to make a little money and encourage attendance ended. The minutes provided no information as to why the women made this change. Membership had increased to twenty-four women who may have felt that relaxing this requirement might make belonging to the organization less burdensome.⁶⁵ Also with the new building extensive fundraising may have become a lower priority.

A milestone took place on September 25, 1907, when a "document" was recorded stating that "The Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society in consideration of one dollar paid to it by the congregation Beth-El 'granted, bargained and sold' the land on which the Temple sat and the Temple." For an unknown reason the last ninety feet of the lot, which the women donated several years later, was excluded. The deed, giving the temple to the congregation completely free of indebtedness, was signed by Henrietta Sterne, Frances Ullman, and Sallie Smith, appointed by the society as trustees.⁶⁶ The women, indeed, had played the major role in the birth and maturation of Temple Beth-El.

A further glimpse of Anniston's Jewish women is provided in their organization's minutes. These contain not only the business of the group but also correspondence to members and their families, thereby chronicling their lives. The custom of sending and recording a letter of congratulations to a member on the birth of a new baby formally noted that happy event: "[we] . . . wish to tender this heartfelt congratulation upon the birth of your [Mrs. Gerson's] daughter and hope you may live to see her grow into woman hood having attended the teaching of her religion and love of her fond parents prefer [sic] to her." A letter was written in August 1893 to Mrs. Joe Magnus on the death of her baby "to express to you the deep and heartfelt sorrow we all feel for you and yours on your irreparable loss . . . we all sympathize with you and may the almighty who watches and cares for us all, console

you in your sad affliction." The secretary documented the deaths of the members: "Our little band has been visited by Death, the grim reaper—with sorrow we record the loss of Mrs. William Kohn (in Asheville, North Carolina)." As was customary, the resolutions of condolence were sent to the family, "spread over the minutes," and published in the daily paper. "She was tender, loving and true, and a faithful member of this Society and although not active in its duties, her presence will be missed." The following was written for Henrietta Sterne in 1915:

Whereas, she was a true Mother in Israel, teaching her children by precept and example the lessons that have made them helpful, useful, worthy members of society; leading them along the narrow path of rectitude and noble living and watching over them with a protecting heart of love. No sacrifice was too great, no labor too strenuous in behalf of her near ones. In sickness and in health she was ever ready with heart, hand and mind at their service; and

Whereas she was ever a true neighbor, a loyal friend and a helpful, useful member of the community. Wherever duty called her, she "stood not upon the order of going," wherever service demanded her thither she hastened without question, wherever friendship and love besought her there was she to be found.⁶⁷

In their memorial resolutions the Anniston women again showed their similarity to other Jewish women of the times. William Toll wrote that as the members of the ladies Hebrew benevolent societies composed these memorial tributes they were in fact agreeing with Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler's image of "instinctive motherhood . . . that women had a different nature than men, based on an instinctive sense of nurturing." Toll continued, "In their memorial tributes to departed members—admittedly stylized but for that reason the quintessence of their sense of achievement—they agreed that women by nature sacrificed themselves to the home and to the community's institu-

tions of nurture.”⁶⁸ The bonds of true womanhood would be stretched without breaking.

According to their mission statement the women had come together “to promote Judaism in our midst.” To further that cause, they provided a permanent place for their community to worship and maintained it so that future congregants would have an institution with which to identify and continue to use. They also helped raise funds to care for the cemetery so that the Jewish community would have a fitting place to bury the dead. Furthermore they taught in the religious school over the years to help insure that their children might grow up to be committed Jews. The men may have organized the communal institutions including the congregation and the cemetery but the women maintained them.

In new environments like Anniston, women extended their actions beyond the home and family. As William Toll commented: “Especially in smaller towns where self-conscious minorities were carefully observed, the public realm rested on the club life of women and men.”⁶⁹ Thus still another responsibility for the women was to help shape the opinions of their non-Jewish peers concerning themselves and Judaism. Hosting events to which the public was invited exemplified this. The temple choir has been exclusively composed of Christians. Miss Bessie Russell, a member of the Methodist church, served as organist for the congregation for a half century.⁷⁰ Over the years editorials in the local paper have pointed out the role Jewish individuals played in promoting religious harmony. The generosity with which Anniston’s Jewish women embraced Christian causes, such as the medical clinic run by St. Michael’s Episcopal Church beginning in the 1920s, further enhanced the bond across denominational lines. In Anniston Jews worked and lived with their Christian neighbors in unity. Even today congregants speak of only isolated incidents of anti-Semitism.

Scholars have pointed out the important role that Jewish women played “to nurture religious sentiment both within and

Temple Beth-El, c. 1894

(Published by permission from the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce)

without the home . . . It was up to the American Jewish woman to see to it that Sabbath and the dietary laws were observed, the children educated Jewishly, and that the family attended religious services and participated in all manner of Jewish communal activity." Obligations of the women at home were carried into their community. In the case of Anniston's Temple Beth-El these obligations were even more pronounced in that, although for most of its 110 year history it has had a student rabbi for high holy day services and/or monthly or biweekly visits, it has never employed a fulltime rabbi. It has been up to its women to sponsor congregational activities whether it be the oneg shabbat after the Friday night services, the preparation of the building for the High Holy Days, or teaching in the religious school. The women frequently made reference in the minutes to the importance of attending Sabbath services. In an effort to improve attendance at one point, they openly condemned activities that had been organized by a youth group for a Friday night. Over the years

Anniston's women taught in the religious school, an extension of their responsibility of teaching their own children. Of their organizations, Jacob Rader Marcus wrote, "It is no exaggeration to maintain that the 'ladies' society' was the most important women's organization in the Jewish community. Indeed, it was an essential part of the structure, of the very being, of the entire Jewish group in any town."⁷¹

The impact of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society and the Henrietta Sterne Sisterhood on the birth and development of Temple Beth-El is enormous. The society is responsible for its very life. As Samuel Johnson said, "Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance." The few women were committed to the continuity of a Jewish way of life. They have helped ensure that Judaism remains in "our midst." A student rabbi in the 1980s summarized their role: "Although the women are older and hesitant to come to the bimah, they run the congregation."⁷² Although groups whose activities revolved around a house of worship, as did the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, are often referred to as an auxiliary of the temple, it would appear from looking at their actions that they were, in fact, the leaders. The members of the society demonstrated through their unshakable faith, vision, shrewd fundraising abilities, management skills, and loving care of their temple, the qualities which earn them the distinction of being called women of valor.

N O T E S

¹ Louis Schmier, ed., *The Letters of Charles Wessolowsky, 1878-1879* (Macon, GA, 1982), 43, 130.

² Their reasons are not given in their detailed minutes, only the actions they approved (or disapproved), including the expenditure of all monies, but it appears from looking at records of other women's organizations that these women were far more involved in the planning and construction than their peers. The web site of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (<http://huc.edu/aja/women.htm>) lists its holdings of information from women's organizations around the country. Only the Ladies Hebrew

Association (Baton Rouge, LA) is described as “initially organized to help build a synagogue.” The majority described their mission as benevolence. (Web site information accurate as of February 28, 1999)

³ Grace Hooten Gates, *The Model City of the New South: Anniston, Alabama, 1872–1900* (Huntsville, AL, 1978), 56, 60.

⁴ *The Anniston (AL) Star*, March 5, 1924 (“His Ullman Brothers store carried ‘a line of general merchandise.’”); March 1, 1930 (“The enterprise, first located . . .”); March 5, 1924 (“In a 1924 interview . . .”); March 3, 1930 (“Ullman was involved . . .”); March 1, 1930; program from the dedication of the sanctuary, Temple Beth-El Archives.

⁵ Andrew Saks interview, conducted by Sherry Blanton, June 18, 1996; letter from Julien Saks, May 16, 1978, copy in the writer’s file.

⁶ Saks interview.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *The Anniston Star and Daily Hot Blast*, February 28, 1919; March 7, 1933, Saks interview.

⁹ Newspaper clipping, April 5, 1905, archives of Julien Saks; unnamed Birmingham newspaper, copy in writer’s file; Minutes, Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society (hereafter LHBS), May 27, July 29, 1914, Temple Beth-El Archives, Anniston, AL.

¹⁰ *The Anniston Star, 75th Anniversary Edition*, 1957; August 27, 1961.

¹¹ *The Anniston Star*, March 20, 1900.

¹² *Ibid.*, January 22, 1914, Mervyn Sterne Collection, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, AL (hereafter, Dept. of Archives); *The American Israelite*, October 24, 1901. Temple Beth-El used a student rabbi for High Holy Days services until 1953 when a monthly and bimonthly visit became the practice. This continued until the hiring of Rabbi Fred Raskind as a visiting rabbi in 1988.

¹³ Sterne family history, Sterne Collection; Anselm Sterne’s tombstone, Temple Beth-El Cemetery, Anniston, AL.

¹⁴ Eli Evans, *The Lonely Days were Sundays* (Jackson, MS, 1993), 3.

¹⁵ By-laws of Temple Beth-El, Anniston, AL, April 1, 1888, copy in writer’s file; *The Anniston Times*, August 26, 1932. At it remains today, Anniston’s early Jewish population was a very small minority of the total population, estimated on October 10, 1887, in *The Anniston Hot Blast*, to be 7,000.

¹⁶ Newspaper clipping, *The Southern Israelite*, n.d., Saks Family archives, copy in writer’s file; *The American Israelite*, June 27, 1889; newspaper clipping, *The American Israelite*, n.d., copy in writer’s file.

¹⁷ Paper presented by Mrs. Leon Ullman at a meeting of the Henrietta Sterne Sisterhood, February 1917, Mervyn Sterne Collection, 1. This paper is also printed in Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History* (New York, 1981), 209.

¹⁸ Thronateeska Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, *History and Reminiscences of Dougherty County, Georgia* (Albany, GA, 1924), 199–200.

¹⁹ *The Anniston Star, 75th Anniversary Edition*, 1957.

²⁰ Sterne family history.

²¹ Ullman, 1.

²² Jenna Weissman Joselit, “The Special Sphere of the Middle-Class American Jewish Woman: The Synagogue Sisterhood,” in Jack Wertheimer, Ed., *the American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed* (New York, 1987), 208.

²³ Minutes, LHBS, December 10, 1890; January 30, 1907; May 27, 1913. Hundreds of synagogue sisterhoods had developed between the First and Second World Wars with virtually every house of worship having one. The members of these women's groups centered their efforts around service to the synagogue. In 1913 a coalition of Reform sisterhoods, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, was established. Within ten years it boasted 45,000 members. These umbrella organizations were founded to "Mobilize the forces of Jewish womanhood." Joselit, "Special Sphere," 209.

²⁴ Minutes, LHBS, December 10, 1890.

²⁵ United States Census, 1900, Calhoun County, AL, microfilm.

²⁶ Sterne family tree, Sterne Collection. Simon Katzenstein, of Baltimore, MD, worked at The Famous. He was a relative of Joseph Saks' cousin, Isadore Katzenstein, who had come to Anniston to help Saks open the store. Simon died in 1894, and Henrietta left Anniston shortly after his death. *Anniston City Directory*, 1887, 69; Letter from Julien Saks; *The American Israelite*, February 1, 1894; minutes, LHBS.

²⁷ Preamble, LHBS, December 19, 1890.

²⁸ Joselit, "Special Sphere," 208-209; William Toll, "A Quiet Revolution: Jewish Women's Clubs and the Widening Female Sphere, 1870-1920," *American Jewish Archives* 41 (Spring/Summer 1989): 10; Minutes, LHBS, October 26, 1904.

²⁹ Charlotte Baum, Paula Hyman, Sonya Michel, *The Jewish Woman in America* (New York, 1974), 30.

³⁰ Marcus, *American Jewish Woman*, 204.

³¹ Minutes, LHBS, December 10, 1890. The idea of assessing fines on members (probably to improve attendance) was not unique. These fines, however, did help build the temple. The Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society of Hartford, Connecticut, in 1880 not only fined members for "being absent without sufficient cause" but also fined members twenty-five cents for "not minding a call to order or not behaving properly." The Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society of Portsmouth, Ohio, in its 1891 constitution levied fines of twenty-five cents for absent officers and ten cents for absent members unless excused. Marcus, *American Jewish Woman*, 207, 213.

³² Ullman, 1; Minutes, LHBS, December 10, 1890.

³³ Minutes, LHBS, December 10, 1890; January 14, 1891; April 1, 1891.

³⁴ Minutes, October 7, 1891.

³⁵ Toll, "Quiet Revolution," 11-12.

³⁶ Ullman, 1; Minutes, LHBS, February 18, 1891.

³⁷ Ullman, 1; LHBS, November 23, 1891; December 30, 1891. Jacob Rader Marcus' publication of Mrs. Ullman's paper and its original copy states that the women turned the profits of the bazaar over to the congregation. This, however, was reported by Mrs. Ullman twenty-seven years after the event. The LHBS minutes for December 30 report: "The Society has in the bank at the present time \$985.08."

³⁸ Minutes, LHBS, May 28, 1891; Ullman, 2; Minutes, LHBS, March 8, 1893. Information as to whether the directors and controlling stockholders were, in fact, Jewish is not available. On the local level none of the officers were. According to Grace Gates, however, a group of New York investors had purchased a controlling interest in the Anniston Land Company in 1888, William Henry Woods becoming a director and vice-president. Gates, *Model City*, 99.

³⁹ Minutes, LHBS, April 12, 1893; February 15, 1893; Tee Morgan, *A Picture History of Anniston, Alabama 1880-1940* (Anniston, AL, 1990), 4.

⁴⁰ Minutes, LHBS, May 18, 1892; April 26, 1892; June 7, 1893.

⁴¹ *The American Israelite*, July 6, 1893.

⁴² Minutes, LHBS, October 12, 1892; April 5, 1893. Records are not available to indicate whether the group of thirteen men contributing this thirteen dollars constituted the entire male population of the congregation.

⁴³ Minutes, LHBS, September 30, 1891; Ullman, 1.

⁴⁴ Minutes, LHBS, December 28, 1892; February 15, 1893; *The Anniston Star*, July 20, 1941.

Max Markstein, Sophia's husband, was the co-owner and then sole owner of the Opera House Bar on Noble Street. The Marksteins moved to Anniston circa 1891 from Uniontown, AL. Max, a German emigrant, was a Confederate veteran and active congregant. The couple, married in Mobile and the parents of six children, left Anniston circa 1909. *Anniston City Directory*, 1896; United States Census, 1910; Henry Marks interview, conducted by Sherry Blanton, June, 1996. Adolph Adler, a Hungarian emigrant and "a pioneer settler of Anniston," was an Anniston resident by 1885. He and his wife, like many of their peers, were Noble Street merchants. They operated the Bee Hive Store, selling dry goods and produce. Eventually he became a dealer in hides exclusively. They remained in Anniston for

the remainder of their lives. United States Census, 1900, Calhoun County, microfilm; *The Anniston Star*, March 5, 1924; *Huntsville Independent*, November 19, 1885; *Anniston City Directories*, 1898, 1900, 1908, 1913.

⁴⁵ Minutes LHBS, March 1, 1893; United States Census, 1900, Calhoun County, microfilm. Isadore Levi, Bertha's husband, was of German descent. He owned I. Levi and Company Liquors, a wholesale shop and an adjacent saloon. From his stores in Anniston and Talladega he sold beer, wine, liquor, and tobacco. His obituary stated that "he had probably fewer enemies than any other citizen of this city." United States Census, 1910, Calhoun County, microfilm.; Morgan, *Annie's Town*, 49a; *The Anniston Star*, April 4, 1921.

⁴⁶ Minutes, LHBS, March 1, 1893. Julius Levy, an émigré from Carlsbad, Austria, came to Anniston from Baltimore, MD; Levy, a "pioneer merchant of Anniston," owned his own tailoring shop on Noble Street. He was a 32nd Degree Mason, a Shriner, and a member of the Chamber of Commerce and of B'nai B'rith. His wife, Lena, did not join the ladies society until 1896. *The Anniston Star*, September 24, 1935; minutes, LHBS, preamble.

⁴⁷ Minutes, LHBS, April 12, 1893; June 7, 1893.

⁴⁸ George Parker, *Architectural Highlights of Anniston* (Anniston, 1974).

⁴⁹ Mark Gordon, "Rediscovering Jewish Infrastructure: Update on United States Nineteenth Century Synagogues," *American Jewish History*, 84 (March 1996): 20-27.

⁵⁰ Newspaper clipping, from the archives of Marx Sterne, *The American Israelite*, n.d., copy in the writer's files; minutes, LHBS, February 7, 1894.

⁵¹ Gates, *Model City*, 126-127, 138.

⁵² Minutes, LHBS, December 10, 1890; August 26, 1892; November 8, 1893.

⁵³ During its first decade the membership of Temple Beth-El remained very small—a dozen members in 1897 and fifteen in 1901—one-third of whom were unmarried men. By 1905 there were twenty names on the roll of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society. Although the congregation grew over time, its membership has rarely exceeded fifty families.

⁵⁴ Minutes. LHBS, April 7, 1891; December 30, 1891. The Lippmans had a large, extended

family in early Anniston. Brothers Meyer and Marcus owned R. Lippman Dry Goods. Gabe Lippman was an Anniston resident, too. Hattie, Henrietta, Regina (widow of Leon), and Marion Scheslinger, Gabe's wife, were all members of the Lippman family living in Anniston during the temple's early years. *Anniston City Directory*, 1896, Minutes, LHBS, December 10, 1890.

⁵⁵ *The Anniston Star*, February 16, 1958; *The American Israelite*, December 14, 1893. Heller's presence at Temple Beth-El's dedication may have come from his belief in the importance of ministering to the needs of Jews in small southern towns who were "isolated from the Jewish mainstream." According to Bobbie Malone, "Heller became the first rabbi in the South who attempted to give people 'in small country places where no regular synagogues exist an opportunity of hearing the word of God occasionally.'" In 1895 Heller began to travel one week out of every seven months. Yet Heller was not the only rabbi of reputation and importance to visit Temple Beth-El in its early years. Other prominent rabbis from around the South were asked to officiate at confirmations, weddings, and funerals. Rabbi David Marx of Atlanta visited Anniston in April 1896 (the first time in nearly two years that services had been conducted by an "ordained minister") to conduct a weekday service. An article in *The American Israelite* reported that "His presence here was the result of an earnest desire on his part to promote the interests of Judaism as embodied in the plan of circuit preaching recommended by the last convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The Jews of Anniston are certainly indebted to Dr. Marx for the trouble taken in our behalf . . . Dr. Marx's visit produced much good by causing a renewed interest in Jewish affairs." This practice of circuit preaching was borrowed from the Christians. Morris Newfield of Birmingham, also officiated frequently for Anniston's Jewish congregation. Bobbie Malone, *Rabbi Max Heller Reformer, Zionist, Southerner, 1860-1929* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1997), 70; *The American Israelite*, April 30, 1896. On Newfield see Mark Cowett, *Birmingham's Rabbi: Morris Newfield and Alabama* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1986); For Marx and his outreach efforts see Mark Bauman and Arnold Shankman, "The Rabbi as Ethnic Broker: The Case of David Marx," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 2 (Spring 1983), 71-95; Janice Rothschild Blumberg, *As But a Day to a Hundred and Twenty, 1867-1987* (rev. ed., Atlanta, 1987); Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia, 1978).

⁵⁶ Marcus, *American Jewish Woman*, 211. Marcus points out that "The solo sung at the dedication, 'Consider the Lilies,' is a New Testament theme from Matthew 6:28. Music of Christian origin was frequently sung in Reform synagogues; for the most part, congregants were not aware of the provenance of the music that enraptured them." Marcus, *American Jewish Woman*, 205.

⁵⁷ *The (Anniston) Weekly Times*, November 30, 1893; *The American Israelite*, December 14, 1893.

⁵⁸ Ullman, 2; *The Weekly Times*, November 30, 1893.

⁵⁹ December 14, 1893. Temple Beth-El came into existence in the "City of Churches," as Anniston has often been called, shortly after the Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, and Catholic churches were founded. By the 1890s there were twenty-five churches in Anniston. Gates, *Model City*, 201. Since many of Anniston's Jewish men were accepted and promi-

ment as “pioneer citizens” and “settlers” in the non-Jewish community, it is not surprising that

Anniston’s Christians would attend this religious event. Through the years there are frequent references in newspaper articles to the number of Christians attending funerals,

confirmations, and marriages at the temple.

⁶⁰ Ullman, 3; Minutes, LHBS, October 4, 1894; May 27, 1908.

⁶¹ *The American Israelite*, June 28, 1894; July 1, 1897. Columbus Smith was given his first name because he was born on Columbus Day. The family name for Henrietta and her brother, Columbus, had originally been Schmidt. As Marx Schmidt, their father, boarded the ship for the United States, the purser suggested that Schmidt “Anglicize his name”; the purser entered him as Marx Smith which became his official name. Even before the Smith family officially arrived on United States soil the process of Americanization began. Sterne family history, Sterne Collection.

⁶² The minutes from the years 1896–1903 are missing.

⁶³ Minutes, LHBS, July 26, 1906; Toll, “Quiet Revolution,” 12. It is highly possible that there was not in Anniston a population of indigent Jews requiring the care and concern of these Jewish women. Census records and phone directories indicate that this early Jewish population, including the Eastern European Jews, especially those who became permanent residents, was self sufficient.

⁶⁴ Toll, “Quiet Revolution,” 11; *The Anniston Star*, April 6, 1901. The Free Kindergarten was not a Jewish-sponsored or Jewish-run organization, nor was it for poor Jewish children. It catered to those who lived on the west side of Anniston.

⁶⁵ Minutes, LHBS, November 28, 1906. The membership of the congregation had increased as new families moved into town. Additionally, Joseph Saks and Columbus Smith had married and their new brides became society members. Two of Henrietta Sterne’s daughters were also now old enough to become dues paying members of the society.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, September 25, 1907. Sallie Smith was the wife of Henrietta Sterne’s brother, Columbus Smith, who worked with Anselm Sterne in his grocery. Sallie and Columbus did not marry until 1902 and Sallie was not involved with the initial society activities. United States Census, Calhoun County, 1910, microfilm.

⁶⁷ Minutes, LHBS, March 7, 1913; August 23, 1893. October 26, 1904; September 12, 1915.

⁶⁸ Toll, “Quiet Revolution,” 9.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁰ *Anniston Star*, November 3, 1957.

⁷¹ Joselit, “Special Sphere,” 208, 207; Marcus, *American Jewish Woman*, 204.

⁷² Letter, Rabbi Scott Gurdin archives, copy in writer’s file.