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Cover Picture: 1919 postcard of Synagogue Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE), 86 Hasell Street, Charleston, South Carolina. Two of the subjects covered in this issue were affiliated with KKBE. Marx Cohen and his family, discussed on pages 1–43, were members prior to the Civil War. Maurice Mayer, whose career is discussed on pages 45–89, served as KKBE rabbi from 1875 to 1893. (Courtesy of William A. Rosenthal Judaica Collection, Special Collections, College of Charleston.)

From the Editor . . .

The authors represented in this volume and their articles reflect the tremendous depth and lines of growth in the field of southern Jewish history. Although he has now completed a fellowship in Israel and attends graduate school at Johns Hopkins University, Seth R. Clare wrote the first version of his manuscript as an honors student at the College of Charleston. Anton Hieke, whose work previously appeared in the journal while he attended graduate school (volume 13, 2010), now writes from Germany after completing his doctorate and publishing a book and numerous important articles. New York attorney Daniel Weinfeld first published here (volume 8, 2005). Adam Mendelsohn also first published here (volume 6, 2003) as a graduate student in his native South Africa. He currently serves on the faculty at the College of Charleston. Edward K. Kaplan holds a professorship at Brandeis University, while Josh Parshall is pursuing his doctorate at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill. The locations and time periods of these articles traverse South Carolina to Florida, Massachusetts to Mississippi and on to Georgia, and from before the Civil War to the 1960s. The topics are equally diverse. America is in the midst of celebrating fiftieth anniversaries of numerous events associated with the civil rights movement as well as commemorating one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversaries related to the Civil War. This volume brings these milestones alive via the articles by Daniel R. Weinfeld and Edward K. Kaplan.

Seth Clare offers a revisionist view of antebellum plantation owner and businessman Marx E. Cohen. In doing so, he provides the first in-depth analysis of a Jewish-owned plantation by delving into its business records more thoroughly than has previously been done. Unlike previous historians who described

Cohen as a Lowcountry rice planter, Clare centers Cohen's plantation production on the manufacture of bricks and wood products. After the Civil War, Cohen relocated from Clear Springs and Charleston to Sumter, South Carolina, and entered into the hardware and dry goods businesses. This is but one of several contrasts Clare observes between Cohen's behavior and that of typical non-Jews of his socioeconomic background and milieu.

Maurice Mayer, the subject of Anton Hieke's article, was an active revolutionary in the German states and equally revolutionary in his approach to Reform Judaism throughout his career in the United States. Hieke's study of this previously neglected rabbi sheds new light on Reform in Charleston and America and on interaction among rabbis and between rabbis and congregants. Hieke paradoxically situates Mayer's opposition to the abolitionists and seeming support for slavery within the rabbi's worldview concerning the separation of church and state and equal rights for Jews.

In a case study focusing on Florida, Daniel Weinfeld provides the most thorough statistical analysis available of Jewish Confederate military service. Jews had a variety of experiences and exhibited equally varied behaviors. In perhaps his most controversial finding, Weinfeld reinforces and expands on questions Hieke raises in *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (2013) concerning Jewish support for the southern cause and the amorphous nature of southern Jewish identity.

Volumes 7 (2004) and 10 (2007) of this journal included special sections with interviews and/or memoirs of founders of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. Subsequently, Adam Mendelsohn conducted a far broader interview with Bernie Wax. Here Mendelsohn provides an overview of the interview with excerpts. Because Wax's memoir in volume 10 concentrated on the founding of the society, Mendelsohn emphasizes Wax's background and pivotal position as executive director of the American Jewish Historical Society. Wax's postscript that follows offers important current insights through a comparison and contrast of

changes in the two societies with which he has been most closely associated.

Josh Parshall begins the primary source section with a translation from Yiddish of an article on the Arbeter Ring/Workmen's Circle. He provides the first detailed account of the activities and divisions within this socialist organization in the South. As with so many Jewish organizations, the Arbeter Ring linked Jews together regionally, nationally, and internationally and provided a mechanism for both continuity of tradition and gradual acculturation.

Many Jews were deeply involved in the civil rights movement. Their early and continued commitment was particularly apparent through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Jews served it as founders, presidents, and attorneys. During the heyday of the movement, perhaps no individual played as significant a role in the financial well-being of the organization as Kivie Kaplan. His son, Edward Kaplan, offers an account written by his father concerning a 1964 foray into the Deep South in support of integration and to investigate the deaths of three young activists. Kaplan also provides his personal account of a second trip he made with his father and others to march with the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., from Selma to Montgomery. Kivie Kaplan, Edward Kaplan, and others like them were heroic activists who placed their lives on the line for a cause they held dear. Nonetheless, many Jews in the South resented the intrusion of Jews from the North, partly because of fear of an anti-semitic backlash. Kaplan's article illustrates the heroism and commitment of northern Jews who ventured south but also how they remained oblivious to the impact their actions might have on local Jewish communities.

Sadly, Beryl Weiner passed away in April, followed by Sumner Levine in June. Beryl and Sumner were past presidents and stalwarts of the society, constant supporters of the journal, and friends to all who knew them. Our heartfelt wishes for the very best memories go out to Eleanor Weiner and Phyllis Levine and their families. Perhaps the losses of Beryl and Sumner, who both epitomized the word *mensch* (Yiddish for a real southern

Jewish gentleman), will encourage the society to launch a broader program to interview other early and key leaders of the organization.

The publication of this volume of the journal reflects a transition in several areas. The founding editor of the exhibit review section, Phyllis Leffler, retired from that position after several years of highly capable efforts. Archivist Jeremy Katz of the Breman Museum in Atlanta has agreed to succeed Phyllis. Dina Pinsky, the journal's first website review editor, resigned and has been replaced by Adam Mendelsohn. Associate managing editor Bryan Edward Stone assumed more of Rachel Heimovics Braun's duties as she moves toward retirement. Bryan copyedited and formatted all of the materials in this volume, as well as other tasks, while Rachel concentrated on business and production issues. Scott Langston and Stephen Whitfield continued to provide exemplary leadership respectively over the primary source and book review sections. Finally, society president Dale Rosengarten spearheaded an effort that resulted in the redesign of the SJHS logo and journal cover. We thank her, her committee, and designer Anna Westbury for the journal's new look.

In addition to members of the editorial board, Canter Brown, Jr., Anton Hieke, Adam Mendelsohn, Michael Meyer, Marcia Synnott, and James Tuten provided invaluable service by peer reviewing articles. David Braun continues in his role as the journal's unofficial expert and translator of Yiddish. Bernie Wax, Karen Franklin, Hollace Weiner, and Shannon Dougherty graciously undertook the arduous task of proofreading.

Mark K. Bauman

Marx Cohen and Clear Springs Plantation

by

Seth R. Clare*

Historian Jacob Rader Marcus observed that a full and accurate telling of American Jewish history can be accomplished only by looking at “the horizontal spread of the many” as opposed to “the eminence of the few.”¹ It was my intention to explore the “spread of the many” when I discovered the plantation records of Marx E. Cohen in the Manuscripts Division of the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina.² Born and raised in Charleston, Cohen was one of only a few Jewish plantation owners in the antebellum South. I had hoped to use these records to create a microhistory of Clear Springs, his rice plantation on the Ashley River roughly fifteen miles outside Charleston, and to explicate Cohen’s life and times in order to add his life story to an already large corpus of literature on Lowcountry rice planters. To have done so would have resulted in a historiographical milestone, as it would have been the first full-scale biography of a Jewish rice planter.

However, as is often the case with historical scholarship, the more I researched the plantation records, the more I realized that other historians and I had made unfounded assumptions in examining Cohen. It has been natural to assume that because Clear Springs was a rice plantation, Cohen must have grown rice as a major cash crop and principal source of income. However, my

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analysis of the Clear Springs records, among other primary sources, revealed a disparity between the reality of Marx Cohen's management of the plantation and the manner in which several historians have portrayed it. While most historians have called Marx Cohen a "rice planter," my research led to the conclusion that this title is misleading. This essay will show that while Cohen did come from a wealthy, land-endowed family, owned a plantation, and even referred to himself as a "planter," life on his plantation did not conform to the prototypical economic pattern

*Marx Edwin Cohen, Sr. Artist unknown, c. 1875. Private collection.
(Courtesy of Natalie Moses, Brasstown, NC.)*

of a Lowcountry rice plantation. Instead, Cohen generated income from a variety of economic activities, primarily using Clear Springs to produce and sell bricks and lumber, and cultivated only negligible amounts of rice. While Cohen and Clear Springs represent only a single case study, this essay offers an important model for what may have been the typical economic activities of antebellum southern Jewish plantation owners.

Historians' Assumptions

This analysis of Cohen and Clear Springs contradicts assumptions long made by historians of pre-Civil War southern Jewish life. Historian Clive Webb writes that in seeking to understand more about Jews as slave owners and planters,

it is important to stress the paucity and poor quality of the sources. The methodological problems posed to the scholar are most clearly illustrated by the plantation records of Marx E. Cohen. Cohen owned one thousand acres on the Ashley River in South Carolina, fourteen miles from the city of Charleston. Although his records are the most extensive bequeathed by any Jewish slaveholder, they are singularly unenlightening.³

Although Webb is generally accurate in his assessment of the extant Jewish-owned plantation sources, this essay will demonstrate that Cohen's plantation records are, contrary to Webb's statement, quite enlightening. Aside from various deeds and wills that show that Jews did indeed own plantations in the Old South, few primary sources are available that explicate how these operated on a daily basis.

The dominant narrative of southern Jewish history is one of acceptance and inclusion of Jews in southern society. One need not look beyond the titles of some of the best-known books in the field to illustrate this trend. Rosengarten and Rosengarten's *A Portion of the People*, Hagy's *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston*, Ferris and Greenberg's *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil*, and Rosen's *The Jewish Confederates* all bear witness to this dominant theme.⁴ But because Jews were so highly integrated into southern society, some historians may have assumed too much. The few descriptions of Marx Cohen all convey the same general message: he was a planter who used his plantation to produce large quantities of cash crops. In *The Hebrews in America*, Isaac Markens describes Cohen as "an extensive planter." Barnett Elzas, in *The Jews of South Carolina*, describes him as "a planter who lived near Charleston." In *Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South*, Bertram Korn says that Marx Cohen owned a "farm" in St. Andrews Parish, yet this is also misrepresentative

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because few yeomen farmers in the Old South could afford to retain as many slaves as Cohen did. One website even claims that Cohen “produced about six to eight 550-pound bales [of] cotton each year,” a sum that is totally unsubstantiated.⁵

Such assessments of Cohen could not have been based on a critical analysis of his extant plantation records. Because Cohen listed himself as a planter in the Charleston city directories of 1849 and 1855, as well as in a federal census conducted in 1860, it is possible that these historians have assumed that, in fact, he planted for a living.⁶ These historians may also have reached such a conclusion based on other primary sources. For example, Lee Cohen, one of Marx Cohen’s daughters, vividly recounts her family’s slaves singing as they threshed rice in an essay called “In the Days When We Were Young”:

A voice, melodious yet plaintive, was singing a plantation song. The words stamped the man as a ‘low country,’ South Carolina darkey, and carried my memory back to the splendid days of my childhood. Once more the chorus trilled out on the air:

T-r-a-sh your rice,
Ya mingo ho!
B-e-a-t your rice,
Ya mingo ho!
F-a-n your rice,
Ya mingo ho!
Ole man Jeems,
Ya mingo ho!⁷

Perhaps this account from Lee Cohen, or others like it, led historians to postulate that Marx Cohen’s slaves labored primarily in rice production. However, a critical examination of this account reveals that her father’s slaves did not “by the light of the blazing pine knots . . . beat and thresh rice from the chaff” in order for it to be produced and sold in bulk, but rather to make it “ready for the next day’s meal.” Lee continues, “If there is one thing a ‘low country’ negro loves, it is rice—and he can cook it to perfection.”⁸ If there is any hard evidence that the rice on Clear Springs was meant for anything beyond household consumption, it has yet to

surface. Until new sources are discovered, the Cohen plantation records are, as Webb claims, the “most extensive” historians have at their disposal and provide an unparalleled source for reevaluating past assumptions.⁹

Using plantation records to elucidate the life and times of antebellum plantation owners is by no means unprecedented. *Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter*; *The South Carolina Rice Plantation as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston*; and *Life and Labor on Argyle Island* are three of the excellent studies which have done just that.¹⁰ However, no one has yet endeavored to use plantation records to write a biographical sketch of a Jewish plantation owner. This essay represents the first attempt to do so.

The Cohen Family

Marx Edwin Cohen was born on July 25, 1810, and became a plantation owner the same way that most others did in the nineteenth century: by being born into a family of exceptional wealth. His father, Mordecai Cohen, was one of the richest men in South Carolina. Born in 1763 in Zamosc, Poland, Mordecai Cohen came to the United States in 1788. Although his place of arrival and first residence remain unclear, the earliest record of him in South Carolina is a certificate of his oath of allegiance to the United States dated 1794. In *This Happy Land*, James Hagy describes him as one of “two outstanding Jewish merchants in the antebellum period.” Poor at first, Mordecai Cohen’s hard work propelled him from peddler, to shopkeeper, to merchant, and finally to wealthy landowner. Rather than closing his mercantile enterprises and real estate speculation when he became a plantation owner, Mordecai Cohen opted to pursue diverse business interests, a practice common among planters given the risky nature of plantation agriculture. Besides his Ashley River plantation, the senior Cohen had land holdings in downtown Charleston, upstate South Carolina, and North Carolina. At the age of thirty-two, Mordecai married Leah Lazarus, then seventeen, the eldest daughter from a respectable family of Sephardic origin in Charleston.¹¹

As he rose to prominence, Mordecai served as commissioner of the Charleston Poor House and Orphan House, commissioner

*Mordecai Cohen, Marx E. Cohen's father.
Portrait by Theodore Sidney Moïse, c. 1830.
(Courtesy of the Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina
Art Association, Charleston, SC.)*

of markets, and director of the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad. Before bequeathing Clear Springs to his son, Marx, Mordecai Cohen had twenty-seven slaves laboring at the Ashley River plantation. Indeed, Mordecai Cohen actively participated in the slave trade, buying twenty-five individuals and selling twenty-six between 1795 and 1838. Ownership of so many slaves required serious capital, and Mordecai was among the richest men in Charleston. When General Lafayette visited Charleston in 1825, the gold plate and silver used at the banquet in his honor was borrowed from the Cohen household. Such was the affluence of the Cohen family that in remarks made at Marx Cohen's 1882 funeral, he is described as a man "born to fortune" and "reared in

*Leah Lazarus Cohen, Marx E. Cohen's mother.
Portrait by John Canter, c. 1820.
(Courtesy of the Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina
Art Association, Charleston, SC.)*

luxury.”¹² While few Jewish immigrants reached the same level of prosperity and wealth as Mordecai Cohen, the fact that he was able to do so shows how Jews were free to rise to the highest strata of southern society, at least economically. Whether or not Mordecai Cohen mingled with the city’s gentile upper class socially is difficult to discern, but based on his involvement with non-Jewish civic organizations, he was able to do so, even if his social life was anchored firmly within Charleston’s Jewish community.

Marx Cohen was educated at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. He married Armida Harby, daughter of the famed Jewish intellectual and religious reformer Isaac Harby, on November 14, 1838. While they lived in Charleston, the family enjoyed a lux-

urious existence. A tax assessment reveals that Cohen owned a piano, sterling silver dishes (possibly the same set used during General Lafayette's visit), and a gold watch. The Clear Springs plantation records divulge that Cohen held railroad bonds and other stocks worth thousands of dollars. He acquired Clear Springs plantation from his father in a deed of gift dated October 23, 1833. The deed indicates that Clear Springs contained 673 acres of forested highlands, 484 acres of rice fields, 28 acres of salt marsh, and 26 acres of freshwater swamp.¹³ Along with land, the senior Cohen also bequeathed a score of slaves to his son, including two unnamed infants priced at one hundred dollars each and Sam, who presumably had some special skill set, valued at three hundred and fifty dollars. The values of the other enslaved individuals fell between these figures.

While the Clear Springs rice fields were modest in size compared to the typical Lowcountry rice plantation, Cohen's property holdings in Charleston were befitting a true aristocrat. He owned dozens of buildings on Ashley Street, King Street, and throughout the downtown area. In 1845, Cohen commissioned the building of a Greek Revival summerhouse at 85 King Street which can still be seen today. Like other well-to-do Charlestonians who owned plantations, Cohen migrated to his posh urban dwelling in the summer months, exchanging the hot and buggy plantation locale for the Charleston peninsula's refreshing ocean breeze. The Cohen plantation records mention, for example, a trip to and from Charleston in September 1855. It is unclear if Clear Springs served as the Cohens' primary residence. The fact that Cohen did not employ white overseers to manage his slaves and made daily notations in his plantation journal, where he also recorded several visits to Charleston, all indicate that Cohen lived at Clear Springs for a substantial portion of the year. On the other hand, the federal census of 1860 lists Cohen as living in the Sixth Ward of the City of Charleston. According to an unpublished memoir written by one of Cohen's grandsons, Herbert A. Moses, the Cohen family "lived at times . . . in the city of Charleston."¹⁴

Like many of Charleston's other distinguished Jewish citizens, Cohen supported Charleston's Hebrew Orphan Society. Occasionally he also sold this institution white corn grown at Clear Springs.¹⁵ Founded in 1801, the Hebrew Orphan Society is the oldest Jewish charitable organization in the United States.¹⁶ The preamble to the society's constitution states that

a Hebrew society should be formed, for the purpose of relieving widows, educating, clothing and maintaining orphans . . . making it a particular care to inculcate strict principals of piety, morality, and industry . . . [so that they] may freely assume an equal station in this favored land with the cheering conviction that their virtues and acquirements may lead them to every honor and advantage their fellow citizens can attain.¹⁷

The society's first president was David Lopez, Sr., the father of the renowned builder discussed below. Marx Cohen's father was among the organization's twenty-two founders. As a board member and benefactor of the Hebrew Orphan Society for more than four decades, Mordecai Cohen's tombstone memorializes his generous spirit: "[By] his strict integrity, his just and charitable disposition, he won the confidence and esteem of his community."¹⁸ It is evident that Marx Cohen took part in the same charitable responsibilities conferred upon his father and the rest of Charleston's Jewish elite. He also worked in civic offices serving on the Charleston Board of Health from 1846 to 1849 and as a magistrate to the St. Andrews Parish from 1843 to 1845.¹⁹

Together with Armida, Marx raised four daughters and one son, Marx Cohen, Jr. A dentist by trade, Marx, Jr., enlisted in the Confederate cavalry early in the Civil War. Had he sought to avoid combat, he could have utilized the "twenty-negro law," which permitted Confederate families to exempt a white man from conscription for every twenty slaves they owned. Yet he chose to enlist. By 1864, Marx, Jr., was a member of Hart's artillery company, part of Hampton's cavalry brigade. His demise was ironic: although he left a duel with another Confederate soldier unscathed on the morning of March 19, 1865, he was killed by artillery fire that same day at the Battle of Bentonville, the last major battle of the Civil War.²⁰ Young Cohen's participation in the tradi-

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tion of dueling, along with his willingness to fight for the southern cause, illustrated that he considered himself as much a part of southern society as any upper-class white person.

Four generations of the Harby/Cohen family, 1895.
Back row: Armida Harby Cohen (center, pasted in), who married Marx Cohen, pictured at the age of 75. Left is her daughter Lee Cohen Harby, age 45; right, Lee's daughter, Lily Lee Harby Isaacs, age 25. Front row: Lily's sons, Arthur Sydney Isaacs, age four, and Cyril A. Isaacs, age three. (Gift of Octavia Moses Mahon, courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.)

The same could be said of Marx Cohen's daughter Lee. While Marx, Jr., displayed his devotion to the South on the battlefield with saber and pistol, Lee used her pen and paper. Like other young women of her class and status, she received an education at home from family members and private tutors. The Cohen family was rife with literary role models for the young Lee, who would become an accomplished writer herself. Her aunt Octavia Harby Moses and great aunt Caroline de Litchfield Harby were poets, and her older sister Caroline Cohen Joachimsen wrote for newspapers, magazines, and Jewish periodicals. In 1869, Lee married her cousin John de la Motta Harby. The couple moved to Texas, where she found the subject matter for her more historical works. The American Historical Association (AHA) published her articles "The Earliest Texans" and "The Tejas: Their Habits, Government, and Superstitions" in the *AHA Annual Report* for 1891 and 1894, respectively.²¹ In 1888, her article "City of a Prince," an account of the founding of the German community of New Braunfels, Texas, appeared in the *Magazine of American History*. Lee Cohen is probably best remembered for composing the "Flag Song of Texas," which she wrote for a contest sponsored by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and which later became the official flag song of the state. The song's Victorian lyrics raise an interesting question:

Oh, prairie breeze, blow sweet and pure,
 And, Southern sun, shine bright
 To bless our flag wher'er may gleam
 Its single star of light;
 But should thy sky grow dark with wrath,
 The Tempest burst and rave,
 It still shall float undauntedly —
 The standard of the brave!²²

Since the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, is the "Southern sun" alluding to Confederate pride? It is difficult to say in this instance, but overall there can be no doubt that Lee was a proud Confederate, given her written remarks for the 1901 United Daughters of Confederacy State Convention describing the Battle of Fort Sumter:

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[When] the two days' fight was over, when the Palmetto Stars and Bars replaced the flag which had come to mean to us oppression and wrong, when "the boys came home," . . . [there] arose a very babble of exultation and thanksgiving, while sweethearts embraced without shame (for do not the brave deserve the fair?), and mothers clasped their sons, and fathers wrung their hands and felt proud of their boys, just passed through such a baptism of fire. . . . God bless them all – the sacred dead in their graves, and the old veterans that are left to us, living monuments of the spirit and the glory of the South!²³

Although she passionately supported the Confederate cause, Lee and her husband eventually moved to New York City, where she established herself "as a role model for her generation and for feminists to come." Her essay "On Women and Their Possibilities" advised Jewish women to become educated and self-reliant, and she used Sorosis, a women's club in New York City, as a venue for the promotion of the intellectual freedom of women.²⁴

Marx E. Cohen, Jr., c. 1860.
(*Courtesy of Special Collections,*
College of Charleston.)

Despite Lee's rousing words and the voluntary enlistment of Marx, Jr., into Hart's battery, it is still uncertain if the Cohen family, and Marx Cohen, Sr., in particular, supported southern independence. Many southerners opposed secession yet came to support the Confederacy after the war broke out. When the younger Marx enlisted in the Confederate Army at the start of the conflict, he was one of many young southern men to do so regardless of their fathers' position. While South Carolina's plantocracy overwhelmingly supported secession, Cohen was not a typical southern plantation owner, and his family members were not typical upper-class southerners. Instead they were urban-dwelling Jews from an immigrant background on Mordecai Cohen's side of the family. Without more primary sources, it is impossible to draw any substantial conclusions from the 1882 obituary of Marx Cohen, Sr., which claimed "A Union man from his youth, [Cohen] did not enter heart and soul into the secession movement."²⁵

Just as one cannot know for certain if Marx Cohen and his family supported secession, so too is it difficult to understand the family's religious convictions. Cohen and his family lived in a momentous time and place in Jewish religious history. Marx Cohen's father-in-law, Isaac Harby, served as the intellectual backbone of the Reformed Society of Israelites, the first formalized effort to reform Judaism in North America. Before turning his attention to religious reformation, Harby was an editor and newspaper publisher, playwright, educator, and respected political and social commentator at a time when Charleston was one of America's most important cultural centers. His biographer, Gary Phillip Zola, describes him as "one of the most distinguished publicists, litterateurs, journalists, and critics of this period in American history."²⁶ Though Harby died in 1828, Cohen helped to realize the reforms that his father-in-law had instigated. On July 26, 1840, members of Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) voted on whether or not to install an organ in the sanctuary. Such a reform would have broken with over a millennium of Jewish tradition because most rabbis believed that the destruction of the First Temple warranted the removal of joy from religious services. It was believed that as long as Jews remained in exile, they should

not play music in the synagogue. Nevertheless, the proposal to install the organ passed by a vote of forty-six to forty, with Mordecai and Marx Cohen both voting with the "Organ Party."²⁷ The Cohen men thus participated in one of Reform Judaism's earliest alterations to synagogue services. The organ incident resulted in a major court case and ultimate schism in the congregation.

Aside from Marx Cohen's vote to reform KKBE's services, Cohen clearly identified as a Jew and raised his children as Jews. They attended services at KKBE, married within the faith, and are buried in Hebrew cemeteries. In an illustration of her Jewish upbringing, Lee Cohen reminded her readers in the *Jewish Messenger* that Yom Kippur "is the most sacred of Jewish holidays. . . . [O]rthodox and reform join issues on this point and concede it to be the most holy of all holy days." Further illustrative of the next generation, Cohen's daughter Octavia served as president of the Sumter Temple Sinai's Ladies Aid Society. Her husband, Altamont Moses, presided over the Hebrew Benevolent Society and the Sumter Society of Israelites, and they raised six children, all Jewish. However, the remarks by Charles H. Möise at Cohen's funeral, reprinted in an issue of *The Watchman and Southron* newspaper on March 7, 1882, suggest that while Cohen was culturally and socially Jewish, he was not necessarily a devout, practicing Jew in a spiritual sense. "He was not," said Möise, "what we call a religious man. He did not pretend to sentiments which he did not feel. . . . [In] addition to the fine qualities of head and heart which he possessed, a pious faith was not vouchsafed to him."²⁸ Such a remark is not surprising—Cohen was a Reform Jew, and his vote to reform KKBE was part of a broader trend that devalued ritual observance and the mystical aspects of Judaism.

Lowcountry Rice Cultivation

Before examining Cohen's management of Clear Springs, it would be useful to briefly describe rice planting in the South Carolina Lowcountry. European colonists built some of the region's first rice plantations on land obtained through grants from the British monarch. On May 5, 1704, for example, Shem Butler received a royal grant and named his property "Tipseeboo," which

in Cusabo means "Clear Springs." This land eventually became Cohen's plantation property. Initially, rice-growing operations were established adjacent to inland swamps, but this changed in the mid-eighteenth century with the introduction of new tidal technology.²⁹

Indeed, this development signaled the dawn of a new era in rice cultivation. Whereas inland swamps tended to drain and flood unpredictably, tidal river zones, with creeks that ebbed and flowed with the ocean tide, were easier to predict and control. Using the tides to control water levels in the rice fields proved to be revolutionary. By designing massive embankments and flood-gates called "trunks," planters eliminated the hazards of the devastating flash floods of the swamps. They could use the river water to kill grass and weeds that stole nutrients from rice plants; the growing season was shortened, and crop yields per acre significantly increased. However, use of the tides strictly limited where rice could be grown. A rice plantation too close to the ocean suffered from periodic saltwater encroachments that ruined entire harvests, while one too far from the sea would be unaffected by the tides. Consequently only a stretch of ten to twenty miles on any given tidal river was suitable for this sort of rice planting. Geographic restrictions on rice planting were thus so severe that, according to historian James Clifton, had Cohen cultivated rice at Clear Springs, he would have been one of fewer than five hundred rice planters in all of South Carolina in 1850.³⁰ Furthermore, the twenty-eight acres of salt marsh mentioned in the Clear Springs deed of gift indicate that the Ashley River water flowing through Cohen's property might have been brackish. Had this been the case, Cohen would have had to depend on fresh water held in reservoirs to irrigate his rice fields.

Dependent on and benefiting from slave labor, antebellum rice plantations were extremely profitable and productive. Although rice production in the Lowcountry temporarily declined in the 1820s as a consequence of trade embargoes, the War of 1812, and a short-lived recession, it otherwise increased steadily until the Civil War. Carolina rice plantations were so productive between 1850 and 1860 that some have called this decade the

“zenith” or “golden era” of South Carolina rice planting. One study estimates that of the five million bushels of American rice grown in 1860, South Carolina plantations produced three and a half million. Rice prices slowly rose from the late 1790s until the 1860s, and, when all went well on the plantation, profits could be astounding. Charles Manigault of Georgia effused in an 1847 letter that his rice plantation had “in 14 years paid for itself twice, and is going on to pay for itself a third time. . . . [By] placing \$20,000 down I have . . . by a little industry made a moderate sum produce a steady income which it would require more than \$200,000—placed at Legal Interest to yield.” William Dusinberre estimates that Manigault’s Gowrie plantation made over \$266,000 in profit from an original investment of less than \$49,500, which, all things considered, was “not an inconsiderable return.”³¹

Most Lowcountry rice plantations, and certainly those that turned profits like Gowrie, occupied massive properties and utilized large numbers of slaves. By 1860, South Carolina had, on average, the largest farms of any state in the country, doubtless due to the massive scale of rice plantations, which averaged about one thousand acres. During the so-called “zenith” of Lowcountry rice planting, South Carolina produced more rice with fewer but larger plantations. For example, of the eighty-eight rice planters in 1860 in the preeminent rice-producing region of Georgetown County, one produced a crop exceeding four million pounds, another more than two million, and ten others in excess of one million. This is a staggering increase in output compared to 1849, when only four plantation owners produced more than a million pounds of rice in a pool of many more individual plantations. These figures suggest that while Georgetown County housed fewer rice plantations in 1860, those that remained tended to be bigger—although improvements in the mechanization of rice threshing also contributed to this increase in output.³²

Large rice plantations required large numbers of laborers to work them, which explains why rice planters made up the overwhelming majority of antebellum slave owners who possessed more than one hundred slaves. Moreover, according to reports

from the National Census Office, of the fourteen southern plantations in 1860 that housed more than five hundred enslaved workers, nine grew rice. In Georgetown County, the median number of slaves per plantation totaled 135. The labor requirements of these enormous rice plantations were also reflected in the region's demographics, with slaves comprising over 74 percent of the Lowcountry's population in 1850. Aside from sugarcane plantations, there were probably no more grueling working conditions for a slave than in the Lowcountry rice fields. Lee Cohen's assertion that "the little darkeys" living on rice plantations "lived better and easier than any other working class on the face of the earth" is dubious at best.³³

*Managing Clear Springs:
Production, Customers, and the Planter's Identity*

While Marx Cohen's experience with Clear Springs illustrates certain similarities with the trends described above, it nevertheless appears to diverge from the norm. Although historians have often called Clear Springs a "rice plantation," this is a most unfitting title. If Cohen's own plantation records leave any ambiguity concerning rice cultivation at Clear Springs, the 1860 agricultural census leaves little to the imagination. While Clear Springs is reported to have produced one thousand bushels of Indian corn that year, no rice production of any quantity is listed. This information corroborates Cohen's plantation records, which frequently mention the sale of corn yet nowhere note rice sales. Moreover, only two hundred of the property's thousand acres are listed as improved (suitable for farming).³⁴ Between 1833, when Cohen acquired the property, and 1860, the property's arable land was reduced to less than half its original size, another sign that Cohen did not put his time, money, or other resources towards agribusiness. While Lee Harby had fond memories of her father's slaves winnowing rice, the grain was almost certainly grown as a provision crop, considering that Cohen's plantation records fail to mention rice threshing or sending any rice to market. Notation of the hydraulic technology and "trunks" associated with tidal rice irrigation is

*Lap desk owned by Marx E. Cohen. The nameplate reads,
"M. E. Cohen, Charleston, Feby. 1, 1823."
(Courtesy of Natalie Moses, Brasstown, NC.)*

also absent from the plantation records. Rice used to sustain the enslaved labor on Clear Springs was probably irrigated with reservoirs of fresh water rather than directly from the Ashley River.

Nevertheless, Clear Springs was likely a successful financial enterprise. Cohen used the plantation for a robust brick and timber business. Because planting was chancy even in the best of times, many planters sought diverse, nonagricultural income. Like Marx Cohen and his father Mordecai, plantation owners were often more capitalist-entrepreneurs than pure agrarians. Yet Cohen is anomalous because instead of using brick and timber to supplement the cultivation of cash crops, he apparently resorted to these endeavors in lieu of planting. Cohen's field hands spent most of their days either hauling and chopping wood or making bricks. With the advantage of a wharf located on the outskirts of his property, Cohen was able to send his bricks and timber down the Ashley River to Charleston, where they were in high demand. Although there is no record of Cohen having sold any rice in 1853, he did sell more than 150,000 hard brown, soft brown, gray, and red bricks in May of that year alone. Clear Springs was also endowed with a variety of timber species, including oak and loblolly and yellow pine. Although his laborers apparently spent the most time cutting loblolly, yellow pine was considered the more valuable commodity. Cohen's business receipts from the West Point rice mill in Charleston are particularly enlightening. Rather than Cohen's paying the mill to process rice, the mill paid Cohen for wood.³⁵

Analysis of Cohen's labor force offers another indication of his economic enterprise. The Clear Springs records indicate that between 1850 and 1860 Cohen kept about twenty slaves at Clear Springs, far fewer than the typical rice plantation. Of those enslaved at Clear Springs, females outnumbered males and both were given the same types of tasks, although the slaves were typically segregated by gender for work. According to the slave schedules of the 1850 federal census, Cohen owned forty-two slaves. Thus Clear Springs's enslaved labor accounted for about half of Cohen's overall slave holdings.³⁶ Although Cohen's work-

ers were spared from toiling in rice fields (work considered especially insalubrious even by the standards of slave owners), their master nevertheless kept them busy. According to Cohen's plantation journals, his slaves cleared land, cut wood, made bricks, dug potatoes, ground corn, cut hay, and burned brush.

To accomplish such tasks, Cohen apparently divided the labor into small groups, each assigned to a different chore without close supervision. For example, on November 15, 1840, Cohen's workers split into separate groups to make bricks, cut wood, and tend to potatoes. Only briefly did Cohen have the help of a white overseer at Clear Springs. On May 24, 1841, Cohen hired a Mr. Martin to be his overseer through November 24 at a rate of eleven dollars per month. Yet he did not rehire Martin. The plantation records mention Martin's "bad management" and indicate that Cohen never again hired an overseer.³⁷

Had he grown rice, Cohen's decision not to keep an overseer on staff would have been at odds with traditional Lowcountry planting practices, where work was apportioned according to the task system rather than organized by the system of gang labor used to grow other cash crops, such as cotton, tobacco, and sugar. While some variations exist, the gang system generally was characterized by a slave force working in unison under the supervision of a taskmaster or overseer. Slaves finished a day's work and returned to their living quarters only after being given permission to do so. The task system, on the other hand, involved slaves working on individual tasks with little or no supervision. While rice planters typically employed overseers, the large number of slaves and acreage of rice plantations made close monitoring problematic. If a slave finished his or her task(s) early in the day, then he or she may have had some measure of free time to hunt, fish, make baskets and other useful (and salable) objects, cultivate a garden, cook, sew, care for children, or socialize. Why the task system became tradition on South Carolina and Georgia rice plantations but nowhere else remains a subject of debate.³⁸ In any case, since Cohen apparently did not grow cash crops at Clear Springs, it is not surprising that he adhered to neither the gang labor system nor the task system.

Regardless of his organization of labor, Cohen was a typical plantation master in that he provided his slaves consistent rations at fixed intervals of time. Lee Cohen describes this ritual in detail:

Early every Sunday the negroes drew their supplies for the week. First they assembled at "the bank" and received their sweet potatoes; next they went to the barn and got their rations of corn, peas, and rice; to the smoke house and got their allowance of bacon or pork, and fish; from their master's store-room they were given their salt, syrup, and tobacco, and the gardener gave to them the cabbages, or turnips, or whatever vegetables they were to have.³⁹

Cohen's plantation records corroborate Lee's account, showing that each week the slaves received some variety of potatoes, fish, tobacco, bacon, rice, and corn. The amounts of each seem to have been based on need rather than productivity. For example, in one tallying of rations, Cohen gave more potatoes to women with children than to men, even though the men had been more productive than the mothers at cutting wood during the prior week.⁴⁰

Workers at Clear Springs produced subsistence crops and livestock that Cohen used to sustain his rural (and possibly urban) labor force rather than take to market. Field hands at Clear Springs grew small quantities of peas, white corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and rice. Cohen raised dairy cattle, hogs, sheep, and poultry of both common and exotic varieties. According to the federal agricultural census of June 1, 1860, Clear Springs housed four horses, six asses and mules, forty milk cows, thirty sheep, and forty swine. Since Cohen's bookkeeping never mentions the sale of this livestock, it was probably intended for work and household consumption. The ample amount of bacon that Cohen distributed to his slaves further supports this conclusion. Because rice plantations were spread out from one another along a river rather than clustered together near a town, geographic constraints necessitated that they evolve into self-sufficient institutions.⁴¹ Thus Cohen's practices in this regard mirrored the rice planter norm.

Clear Springs was not an archetypal rice plantation by any means, but Cohen seems to have observed one ubiquitous practice

*Page 7 from the first volume of Marx Cohen's plantation journal,
describing the daily labors at Clear Springs
between July and November 1840.*

*Page 11 from the first volume of Marx Cohen's plantation journal, noting the occurrence of Christmas 1840 and "play days" for the slaves.
(Both this and facing page courtesy of South Caroliniana Library,
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.)*

among rice planters. Although Cohen was Jewish, rice planter tradition dictated that Christmas Day was the slaves' one true break from work, and the Clear Springs plantation journal shows this along with two additional days in late December indicated as "play days" for the slaves.⁴² While it is not known if Cohen offered any special meals or gifts to his slaves on Christmas, the records make clear that no plantation work was accomplished. Christmas was a time of revelry for the white people at Clear Springs as well. "For who ever knew a southern planter's home," writes Lee Cohen, "that was not full to overflowing at the Christmas tide. . . . Speak about a New England Thanksgiving! Its cheer could never compare with that of a Southern Christmas!"⁴³

Cohen's choice to devote Clear Springs to the production of timber, bricks, and provision crops rather than rice cultivation likely arose, at least in part, from the uncertainty of rice planting. While Charles Manigault, owner of Gowrie rice plantation, sometimes earned profits of more than 25 percent in a given year, a hurricane, slave-killing cholera outbreak, or poor harvest could just as easily produce losses of equal or greater magnitude. Rice plantations, more than any other producers of staple crops, were especially vulnerable to mishaps as a result of inattention or poor management. As journalist Edward King observed on a tour of South Carolina, "A rice plantation is in fact a huge hydraulic machine, maintained by constant war against the rivers," and as a result "the utmost attention and vigilance is necessary, and the labor must be ready at a moment's notice for the most exhaustive of efforts." Without the help of an experienced overseer, it would have been up to Cohen to exercise sound judgment in the speed of rice milling, manage the rice fields' water levels, plant at just the right time, and foresee floods.⁴⁴ Educated and wealthy, Cohen would have been well aware of just how demanding and financially perilous rice planting could be.

Perhaps most important, the banks of the Ashley River did not provide optimal conditions for growing rice. The most productive Lowcountry tidal rice plantations were found on the Combahee, Santee, Waccamaw, and Savannah Rivers. Indeed, many Ashley River plantations such as Middleton and Magnolia,

with their sprawling and grandiose gardens, were used as venues of entertainment rather than to grow cash crops. Clear Springs was directly across the river from the famed Magnolia gardens.⁴⁵ If Cohen's supply of water from the Ashley River was brackish, that would explain why the owners of nearby plantations also chose not to grow rice. Both the Middleton and Drayton families, respective owners of Middleton and Magnolia plantations, owned many other properties on which they depended for income. Clear Springs may not have been so different from Magnolia or Middleton. According to the remarks made by Charles H. Möise at Cohen's funeral in Sumter, "many are the happy memories of the joyous days passed in [Cohen's] genial home in Charleston, or at his pleasant county house at Clear Springs!"⁴⁶ This statement indicates that the property served as a rural retreat, although probably a pecuniary affair first and a "pleasant country house" second. Had Cohen wished only to own a countryside getaway, he could have done so on a much smaller and cheaper estate with fewer slaves and less responsibility.

Cohen's business practices could also be explained as a pragmatic response to the Great Charleston Fire of 1838. On the eve of

*Marx E. Cohen residence
at 85 King Street in
Charleston, South
Carolina. (Courtesy of
Paul D. Saylor,
Preservation Society of
Charleston, 2014.)*

April 27, a fire ignited near the corner of King and Beresford (now Fulton) Streets and destroyed five hundred properties and eleven hundred buildings in the heart of the city's commercial district. Many Charlestonians blamed the fire's rampant destruction on the fact that most of the affected buildings were made of wood rather than brick. Following the fire, the Charleston City Council passed a series of ordinances limiting the use of wood for reconstruction. On June 1, 1838, the South Carolina General Assembly ratified an Act for Rebuilding the City of Charleston, "proposing to rebuild that portion of the city of Charleston now lying in ruins." Builders were offered state-issued loans on the "condition, that the money loaned shall . . . be expended in the erection of brick or stone buildings."⁴⁷ The Great Fire and subsequent legislation caused a tremendous increase in the demand for bricks and may explain why Cohen thought his workers' time was most valuably spent in this industry.

Cohen's best brick and timber customer was renowned Jewish builder-architect David Lopez, Jr., whose demand for building materials was all but insatiable in the aftermath of the Great Fire. Born in Charleston and educated at Yale, Lopez first was exposed to construction when he worked as a supplier of building materials for other contractors. During his career he built houses, apartments, commercial and civic buildings, and churches, solidifying his place in history by designing Institute Hall, where the South Carolina Ordinance of Secession was signed in 1860.⁴⁸ Lopez's first big break came, however, when he obtained a contract to rebuild Charleston's synagogue, KKBE, after it was destroyed in the 1838 conflagration.⁴⁹ Lopez's purchases from Cohen between 1839 and 1841 suggest that Clear Springs likely produced some of the bricks that still support the synagogue at 90 Hasell Street.

Moses Cohen Mordecai—"by the standards of his day, a shipping tycoon and a civic colossus"—was another of Cohen's customers. Making his fortune importing fruit, sugar, tobacco, and coffee, Mordecai was Charleston's most prominent Jew. He represented his district in both houses of the South Carolina legislature. Even the less-than-tolerant South Carolina governor James

Henry Hammond, who once called Mordecai's brother Isaac "a miserable Jew," had to admit that Mordecai was "a man of impressive force and influence." As a senator, Mordecai expressed strong reservations about secession. He owned a controlling stake in *The Southern Standard*, a newspaper that opposed South Carolina's exit from the Union. Although Mordecai argued against secession, he wholeheartedly embraced the Confederacy once the Civil War began. In April 1861, Mordecai's steamer, the *Isabel*, removed Union defenders from Fort Sumter. It subsequently served as a blockade-runner for the Confederacy. Mordecai's shipping company brought the bodies of South Carolina soldiers killed at Gettysburg home at no cost to the families of the deceased. As the war drew to a close, Mordecai served as a member of a delegation sent to discuss South Carolina's return to the Union with President Andrew Johnson in 1865. Moses Cohen Mordecai, who lost twelve buildings in the fire of 1838 and frequently appears in Marx Cohen's plantation records, was probably the most distinguished purchaser of Clear Springs's bricks and timber.⁵⁰

Cohen's income stream from real estate conceivably could have dwarfed the annual profits (or losses) from Clear Springs. A census of Charleston conducted in 1861 reveals that E. Megher and Edward Simons lived as tenants in buildings Cohen owned at what were then, respectively, 128 King Street and 37 Ashley Street.⁵¹ This is only the tip of the iceberg. Between 1842 and 1869, Cohen acquired sixteen properties in downtown Charleston. Between 1839 and 1869, Cohen sold or mortgaged over fifty different properties in and around the city.⁵² Given these holdings, along with Cohen's investments in railroad bonds, it appears likely that Clear Springs was not Cohen's principal source of income.

First and foremost, Clear Springs served Marx Cohen as a symbol of wealth and gentility. Scholars have written exhaustively about the importance of land ownership in antebellum Charleston. As William and Jane Pease, authors of *The Web of Progress: Private Values and Public Styles in Boston and Charleston, 1828-1843*, succinctly put it: "those who had the choice opted for planting, for such noneconomic values as social prestige and polit-

ical power were vested in the conduct of large-scale agricultural pursuits." High social standing would have been unattainable without an impressive country property. Even if Cohen did not cultivate rice, owning a plantation property and his score of slaves would nevertheless have provided him with the social cachet tied to a planter's lifestyle. According to Lee Cohen, "the southern planters lived like princes, each on his own wide domain, surrounded by his own people. Their establishments and retinues were baronial, their entertainments the very height of hospitality." One simply cannot discuss what Clear Springs may have meant to Cohen as a financial enterprise without also considering the image of power and gentility he garnered through ownership of a landed estate and a rural work force. For men like Cohen, just as managing a plantation was a way to make money, it "was often an affair of heart and mind as well. The plantation was [a] way of life."⁵³ Being a plantation owner was more than a vocation; it was for some a source of identity. Based on Cohen's actions following the Civil War, however, plantation ownership was not his only source of identity.

The Postwar Years

If Clear Springs did not function as a typical rice plantation before the war, Cohen's postwar experience differed markedly from those of typical Lowcountry rice planters. "Often," writes historian James Roark, "a planter's postwar experience was a prosaic tale of gradual decline and relative poverty. Most escaped total collapse, but few escaped hardship."⁵⁴ Many postwar factors undercut the prosperity of plantation owners, but the loss of slave labor was the most significant, certainly in the short term, and most planters understood their utter dependence on slavery. When learning of emancipation, one plantation owner wrote to his business partner:

The Yankees have declared the negroes all free. . . . [We] have no authority to control them. . . . [C]ountry and town are filled with idle negroes, crops abandoned in many cases. On some plantations *all* the negroes have left. . . . In all our material interests, we are hopelessly ruined. The loss of our slaves, to a very great extent destroys the value of all other property.⁵⁵

Besides depriving the South's landowning class of slave labor, the Civil War wrought physical destruction as well. One historian has estimated that Confederate wealth declined by as much as 43 percent in the war years, excluding the value of freed slaves. A great deal of this had to do with declining land values. Northern and southern armies used once-productive plantations and farms as battlefields, hospitals, barracks, provision centers, labor pools, and recreation areas, all of which halted agricultural production. Both Confederate and Union troops also looted and stole from plantations. While the war raged, the destruction of Mother Nature accompanied that of man as swamps gradually reclaimed arable land across South Carolina. According to data compiled by the U.S. Census, in 1860 South Carolina had 4,472,060 acres of arable land, with the aggregate value of farms totaling \$139,653,508. By 1870, these figures had dropped to 3,010,539 acres and \$44,808,783.⁵⁶

While many plantation masters attempted to restore the profitability of their enterprises, doing so required a substantial capital investment and was made especially difficult by a lack of credit. With the loss of their slave property and plummeting land values, many plantation owners had insufficient collateral for loans, which had never been more expensive. In the aftermath of the Civil War, "plantations were reorganized, but prosperity remained elusive." Frequently, plantation owners had little choice but to abandon their identities as "masters of the big house" and forge a new life for themselves and their children. As former plantation owner George Bagby eloquently stated, "The houses, indeed, are still there, little changed, it may be on the outside, but the light, the life, the charm, are gone forever. 'The soul is fled.'"⁵⁷

Marx E. Cohen was one of countless plantation owners who left their beloved country properties after 1865, yet it seems that this was Cohen's choice in contrast to the many planters who found plantation management impossible in the postwar economy. The records of the Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance Office reveal that during and immediately after the war, Cohen mortgaged or sold most of his residential and com-

mercial properties in Charleston. Even with falling real estate prices, this would have yielded a considerable amount of money. Clear Springs is not listed in the Register Mesne Conveyance Office records, and the fate of the property and of Cohen's slaves will remain a mystery until new sources are discovered. Herbert A. Moses claims in his unpublished memoir that the plantation was sold to phosphate prospectors but thereafter quickly fell into dereliction, although he does not specify when or to whom the property was sold. This account of Clear Springs follows a prevailing pattern: "from 1870 to 1900, the Lowcountry economy experienced a short revival with the creation of the new phosphate industry" and "phosphate emerged for many rice planters as the solution to their problems" when it became apparent that "their plantations often contained the richest deposits of phosphate."⁵⁸

The Cohen family left Charleston and moved to Sumter, South Carolina, in November 1868. According to Herbert A. Moses, Cohen sold Clear Springs and moved to Sumter "because of the drastic change in conditions." This supposition is corroborated by Cohen's plantation records, which have no entries after 1868. Perhaps Cohen was too bereaved from losing his only son in the war to continue living in Charleston. Given Lee Cohen's dark depiction of the "dread realities" of life during the war, including "the negro soldiery and their white brethren in arms who committed the dastardly outrages but too common in the city," it is possible that Charleston conjured up too many painful memories to continue dwelling there. Most likely the emancipation of Cohen's slaves accounted for the "drastic change in conditions." For obvious reasons, the Reconstruction period would have been an ideal time to be in the brick and lumber business, but perhaps Cohen was unable to remain in this industry in a cost-effective way if he had to pay his workers. Whatever Cohen's reasons, Moses tells us that his grandfather bought a new home at 14 South Washington Street and "his [Sumter land] holdings included not only this house and the land it is on, but also . . . 10 South Washington Street; and too he owned the lot directly on the opposite side on the street from us, the lot now vacant, and the lot on the

corner of Washington and Dugan Streets. . . . Having lived for years on a plantation, I guess [Marx Cohen] did not wish to be cooped up in narrow space in town, but wanted plenty of elbow room."⁵⁹

Clearly Cohen did not fare all that poorly after the Civil War if he had the means to buy so much property for the sake of "elbow room," especially when one considers that Cohen owned a separate building behind the house used as servants' quarters and had the resources to remodel his Washington Street property considerably. Aside from servants, the Cohen family managed to transplant many of the comforts of Clear Springs and Charleston to Sumter, including their grand piano, several pieces of furniture, and table silver.⁶⁰ While Lowcountry rice planters suffered financially during the Reconstruction era, Cohen seems to have spent his golden years quite comfortably.

Though he left Clear Springs behind, Cohen was "used to a plantation," according to his grandson, and "naturally wanted plenty of planting space." Cultivating crops became something of a hobby for Cohen in Sumter. His "vegetable garden" had "plenty of food crops, the usual vegetables, but also some more unusual" varieties including peaches, crab apples, gooseberries, and even a scuppernong grape arbor, the grapes of which the Cohens made into wine. Cohen's chicken coop must have held a great many fowl if, as Moses claims, it was almost two stories high. Along with chickens, Marx Cohen also kept cows and horses at his Sumter home.⁶¹ It would seem that while the plantation master left the plantation, the plantation never really left the master.

In addition to agricultural activities, Cohen also entered into commerce in Sumter. On August 20, 1870, Cohen invested four thousand dollars in a hardware and dry goods store located on the northwest corner of what were then Main and Liberty Streets. Given the time and place, this was a substantial investment, further demonstrating that Cohen left Charleston under financially stable circumstances. He joined in a partnership with C. E. Stubbs and L. G. Pate. There is no record to indicate that either was Jewish. According to Aaron D. Anderson's *Builders of a New South*,

after the Civil War recent Jewish immigrants usually formed business partnerships with other immigrant Jews, while native-born southerners typically went into business with other southerners. Cohen would have had more in common culturally, linguistically, and politically with gentile southerners than with Jewish immigrants. Thus it is unsurprising that he chose Stubbs and Pate as business partners. While the initial investment forged a partnership that lasted only one year, Cohen remained in the dry goods business until at least 1873.⁶²

One historian has claimed that the typical prewar Charleston elite considered a struggling plantation owner more genteel and noble than a thriving urban merchant. Indeed, for most plantation owners, transitioning from planter to shopkeeper would have been a demoralizing process, yet Cohen was not a typical plantation owner, and it is unclear if he harbored such sentiments. While Cohen's obituary claims that "in late years, his fortune was seriously impaired," his ability to shift from brick and timber production at Clear Springs to dry goods sales in Sumter nevertheless left him better off than most rice planters after the Civil War.

Because the average planter's identity was so vested in his agricultural occupation, many plantation owners desired to remain on their estates, clinging to their identities as the "masters of the big house." According to Lee Cohen, southern planters "developed a pride of birth and station which has been the source of all that is refined and noble in southern society—it was a matter of noblesse oblige with them, they could not fall beneath the standard requirements of their position." In some cases planters even reduced themselves to bankruptcy in an effort to continue their gentlemanly agrarian lifestyles despite the economic, environmental, and labor challenges posed to them in the aftermath of the Civil War. Cohen does not fit this description. He and his family lived comfortably enough thanks to his flexibility in switching from agrarian to mercantile enterprises. When Cohen died on February 24, 1882, he was buried in Sumter's Temple Sinai cemetery, and when his wife, Armida, died thirteen years later, she was buried next to him.⁶³

*Comparison with the Oaks at Goose Creek:
Economics and Religion*

Jewish plantation masters were few and far between in the Old South, and it is difficult to draw comparisons between the experience of Cohen and that of other Jewish planters. One cannot assume that because Cohen did not use his plantation for cash crop production, other Jews followed the same pattern. However, the Oaks Plantation at Goose Creek, located approximately seventeen miles from Charleston, seems to fit the Cohen model. While the Oaks did produce some rice, it was by no means the plantation master's main source of revenue. Created in 1680 as a warrant to Edward Middleton by the British Lord Proprietors, the Oaks remained in the Middleton family until they sold it in 1794. In 1813, a Bavarian-born Jew, Isaiah Moses (no relation to any of the aforementioned Moseses), and his wife, Rebecca, purchased the Oaks. Like Mordecai Cohen, Isaiah had immigrated to Charleston from Europe in search of prosperity. Between 1801 and 1813, he progressed from "grocer" to "shopkeeper" and finally to "planter" in the Charleston city directory.⁶⁴ Like Marx Cohen, Moses listed himself as a planter despite the fact that his wealth came principally from nonagrarian pursuits.

A plat of the Oaks based on a land survey conducted in 1817 shows 328 acres of cleared land, 389 acres of woodlands, but only 60 acres of rice-growing land—far short of the acreage necessary to justify the expense of a tidal irrigation system.⁶⁵ Indeed, the Middleton family, who owned many plantations in their heyday, had built the Oaks in order to display their wealth and to entertain rather than to grow cash crops. While the rice fields were peripheral to the Oaks, the avenue lined with picturesque oak trees leading up to the big house appeared visible from the road. Several published accounts marveling at the Oaks's beautiful entrance support the supposition that the plantation's builders meant for the property to be seen by passing travelers.⁶⁶

For twenty-eight years, the Moseses cultivated rice at the Oaks. Moses employed as many as fifty field hands on the plantation, a figure hardly warranted considering the small size of the property's rice fields. The Oaks also produced livestock, bricks,

*Marx E. Cohen sales invoice, September 18, 1873.
(Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.)*

and timber, making it entirely comparable to Clear Springs. Like Marx Cohen, Moses's plantation was not his principal source of income. For most, if not all, of the time the Moses family grew rice at the Oaks, the couple also operated a dry goods store in Charleston. In 1840, the Oaks plantation house burned down, and the following year, financially constrained by outstanding debts to KKBE, Moses sold the Oaks for some two thousand dollars less than he paid for it.⁶⁷ Thus, in the same year Moses was forced to sell his plantation, Cohen was reaping profits from the rebuilding of Charleston after the fire of 1838. While both Cohen and Moses seem to have owned plantations for the same entrepreneurial reasons, the key difference between them was that Cohen presumably could afford Clear Springs, while the less affluent Moses had to abandon his country property during hard times.⁶⁸

Comparisons between Cohen and Moses are all the more interesting when one considers their lives away from the plantation. Moses's ownership of so many enslaved people and his well-documented high volume of slave purchases and sales might tempt us to consider him upper class, yet many bills of sale show that he sold and bought the same slaves within just a few months. Most likely, Moses purchased these people, held them a short while, and sold them for a profit rather than retaining them for long-term labor at the Oaks or for urban servitude. Moses was an entrepreneur who looked for diversified profits rather than one who concentrated his resources in cash crop production at the Oaks. Since Moses consistently worked as a grocer and merchant in addition to planting, his main residence was probably in Charleston. In *This Happy Land*, Hagy describes Moses as "a solid member of the middle class."⁶⁹

Unlike Marx Cohen and his father, who both voted in favor of making organ music a part of synagogue services, Moses opposed reform. In 1820, as a member of the KKBE *adjunta*, Moses promulgated the implementation of a new, more traditional congregational constitution. Along with the rest of the *adjunta*, Moses had accomplished a great deal in life, enjoyed a respectable standard of living, and occupied a position of importance in the community. The trustees did not favor disturbing the status quo.

Anyone who sought to bring about change would have a difficult, if not impossible time. Moses was “vehemently opposed to reform” —he could never have acquiesced to installing an organ at KKBE or giving up the temple’s Sephardic Spanish and Portuguese liturgy. In 1846, when the traditionalists lost a court battle over control of the synagogue, they established the breakaway congregation Shearit Israel and chose Moses’s son-in-law, Jacob Rosenfeld, as the first hazan.⁷⁰

Cohen proved an exception to the pattern of upper-class opposition to reform. The difference goes beyond economics. While Marx Cohen was relatively nonobservant, Moses was just the opposite. A letter by Hannah M. Moses, a granddaughter of Isaiah Moses, written January 31, 1927, humorously depicts the extent of her grandfather’s piety:

Once when [Isaiah] was Vice President of the Synagogue, he had indigestion, couldn’t keep anything on his *breadbasket*, so the doctor told him to eat *raw oysters*—Great Mercy! What! Never! Against all Jewish law. No shellfish. Here our wonderful grandma spoke up. She said, “take them as medicine, your health requires it to be done.” Well in order not to set a wicked example to his family, he went out to the furthest corner of the Oaks with a trusted servant to open the oysters and began to eat the oysters—but alas! At that very corner just over the fence was a lot belonging to the Synagogue property. Just at that time two members came out to inspect it. What did they behold? Mr. Isaiah Moses, that pillar of the Synagogue, eating oysters!!! He was ordered to face the powers of the Congregation, but here again our wonderful Grandma came to the front. She brought the Doctor. He was absolved.⁷¹

In sum, despite their economic and religious differences, Isaiah Moses and Marx Cohen demonstrate that plantation ownership in the Old South did not make one a traditional planter.

Conclusion

If Marx Cohen’s plantation records offer posterity a rare glimpse into life on a Jewish-owned plantation, they tell a story much different from the classic Lowcountry rice plantation. Cohen owned a plantation but was not strictly speaking a planter. Suc-

cessful rice plantations were massive undertakings that utilized a great many slaves toiling on vast acreages of land and consumed the majority of the owners' time, energy, and capital in order to produce enormous quantities of rice. Aside from owning a rice plantation property, Cohen's financial enterprises have little in common with this business model. Cohen used Clear Springs to generate income by brick making and lumbering and to produce provision crops to feed his workers. Cohen also profited from land rents in Charleston and investments in railroad bonds. After the Civil War, Cohen managed to move to Sumter, become an urban merchant, and live in economic security with servants and a large property that would remain in his family for generations to come. This also departs from the typical experience of rice planters, who often fell on hard times after the Civil War.⁷² While it is unclear if Cohen's activities at Clear Springs produced the majority of his income, this essay has shown that he was not primarily a rice planter. Instead of cultivating rice, he used his plantation property dynamically, responding to the Great Fire of 1838 by producing timber and bricks. Though not a typical planter, Cohen's behavior was in a sense a precursor to what historian Aaron D. Anderson would call "a new kind of planter" in the Reconstruction period: men who "were always searching for other means of entrepreneurial endeavor that would complement their plantation holdings and existing businesses or open possibilities for profits in new areas."⁷³ They, and probably Cohen, were not romantically tied to plantation agriculture and viewed their plantations as no different from any other business venture. For Cohen as well as Anderson's "new kind of planter," plantation ownership was a means to the end of revenue, which contrasts with most antebellum planters who considered planting and the planter's lifestyle ends unto themselves.⁷⁴

Clear Springs and the Oaks show that historians cannot assume that ownership of a plantation made one a planter by vocation in the Old South. Cohen's plantation records serve as a sharp reminder that assumptions, no matter how logical or seemingly obvious, have no place in scholarly research. Indeed, this microhistory of Cohen has profoundly reshaped the historical

view of him, but more importantly, provided the first detailed analysis of a Jewish plantation master.

In conclusion, Cohen's management of Clear Springs clearly diverged from the common practices of gentile plantation operation, not because Jews and gentiles operated their plantations differently, but because Cohen simply was not a typical planter. Jews and gentiles may have exhibited important differences, however, in terms of how plantation ownership defined their identity. The literature on plantation owners stresses the importance of planting as a source of identity. Most scholars would agree that the "plantation was the heart of the master's world. It was the source of wealth, status, power, and often identity itself," but Cohen does not fit this description.⁷⁵ It would appear that after the Civil War, Cohen had enough money to remain on his plantation, and his decision to switch into mercantile pursuits is worth scrutinizing. While it is difficult to extrapolate without more research, perhaps Cohen's willingness to abandon plantation life highlights an important difference between Jewish and gentile plantation owners. Plantation ownership served as a source of his identity, yet it was not the only or even the primary source. Cohen also identified as a Jew, which explains why he may not have felt the same romantic ties to his plantation that consumed so many of the South's planter elites after the Civil War.

Indeed, it is quite possible that Marx Cohen's community of Jewish friends and family supplanted what Roark describes as the "heart of the master's world." Cohen's best customers at Clear Springs were other Jews; he attended synagogue, supported the Hebrew Orphan Society, and raised his children as Jews. Considering that Marx Cohen's father, Mordecai, came to the South as a pauper-immigrant, it is unlikely that he would have had his identity strongly vested in the ownership of a plantation. Cohen may have enjoyed having Clear Springs as a symbol of his wealth and power, but his ownership of the property probably did not define his identity. If this had been the case, it would be perplexing that he "did not enter heart and soul into the secession movement."⁷⁶ South Carolina was the first state to secede from the Union, in no small part because Lowcountry plantation owners overwhelm-

ingly dominated the state senate and were united in their acute fear of the economic consequences of emancipation.⁷⁷ Although there are few Jewish plantation masters with whom to compare Marx Cohen, one could argue that Isaiah Moses, who abandoned the Oaks when it became financially untenable and was actively involved in the affairs of KKBE and then Shearit Israel, also fits this pattern of Jewish identity and commercial traditions diminishing the significance of the planter identity. Perhaps, then, there was something unique about Jewish plantation masters after all.

NOTES

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¹ Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776-1985* (Detroit, 1989), 1:16. Quoted in Gary P. Zola, "Why Study Southern Jewish History?" *Southern Jewish History* 1 (1998): 5.

² As a supplement to the Bachelor's Essay on which this article is based, I examined and wrote metadata for the first volume of Marx Cohen's Clear Springs plantation journal. To view the journal and metadata online, visit <http://digital.tcl.sc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/marxcohen/id/274/rec/1>.

³ Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2001), 2.

⁴ Theodore Rosengarten and Dale Rosengarten, eds., *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life* (Columbia, SC, 2002); James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993); Marcie Cohen Ferris and Mark I. Greenberg, eds., *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil: A New History* (Waltham, MA, 2006); Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC, 2000).

⁵ Isaac Markens, *The Hebrews in America: A Series of Historical and Biographical Sketches* (New York, 1888), 60; Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Philadelphia, 1905), 188; Bertram Wallace Korn, *Jews and Negro Slavery in*

the Old South, 1789–1865 (Elkins Park, PA, 1961), 14; Richard N. Côté, “The Marx E. Cohen House, c. 1845,” accessed January 22, 2014, <http://www.bookdoctor.com/85king.html>.

⁶ John Price Radford, “Culture, Economy, and Urban Structure in Charleston, South Carolina, 1860–1880” (Ph.D. dissertation, Clark University, 1974), 330; James William Hagy, *Directories for the City of Charleston, South Carolina: For the Years 1849, 1852, and 1855* (Baltimore, 1998), 9, 124.

⁷ Lee C. Harby, “In the Days When We Were Young. Part I, In Quarters,” *Jewish Messenger*, May 21, 1886.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 2.

¹⁰ Theodore Rosengarten, *Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter, with the Plantation Journal of Thomas B. Chaplin (1822–1890)* (New York, 1986); J. H. Easterby, ed., *The South Carolina Rice Plantation as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston* (Columbia, SC, 2004); James M. Clifton, *Life and Labor on Argyle Island: Letters and Documents of a Savannah Rice Plantation 1833–1867* (Savannah, 1978).

¹¹ Dale Rosengarten, “Narrative of the Exhibition,” in Rosengarten and Rosengarten, *A Portion of the People*, 81; Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 25, 45, 194; James H. Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide: The Fall of the South Carolina Rice Kingdom* (Columbia, SC, 2010), 54.

¹² Bertram Wallace Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (New York, 1970), xxiv; Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 95, 194; Rosengarten, “Narrative of the Exhibition,” 102; Charles H. Moise, “Remarks at the Funeral of Mr. Marx E. Cohen,” *Watchman and Southron*, March 7, 1882, accessed April 8, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn93067846/1882-03-07/ed-1/seq-3/>.

¹³ Malcolm H. Stern, *First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies, 1654–1988* (Baltimore, 1991), 93; Internal Revenue Assessment Lists for South Carolina, 1864–1866; Marx E. Cohen Plantation Journal, 2:3; Marx E. Cohen Plantation Records, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, accessible online at <http://library.sc.edu/digital/collections/marxcohen.html>; Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance Records, Deeds of Gift, October 23, 1833, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www2.charlestoncounty.org/>.

¹⁴ Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance Records, Deeds and Mortgages, Direct Deed Index Books, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www2.charlestoncounty.org/>; Côté, “The Marx E. Cohen House, c. 1845”; Radford, “Culture, Economy, and Urban Structure,” 49; Cohen Plantation Journal, 1:70; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, District of Charleston, South Carolina; Herbert A. Moses, “Our Home: 14 South Washington Street, Sumter, S.C.,” October 1968, 1, Moses Family Papers, acc. #2014-07, College of Charleston Special Collections, Charleston, SC.

¹⁵ Cohen Plantation Journal, 2:6.

¹⁶ Thomas J. Tobias, *The Hebrew Orphan Society of Charleston, S.C., Founded 1801: An Historical Sketch* (Charleston, SC, 1957), 1.

¹⁷ “Hebrew Orphan Society,” The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, accessed March 23, 2014, http://www.jhssc.org/JHSSC_Hebrew_Orphan_Society.html.

¹⁸ Tobias, *Hebrew Orphan Society*, 4.

¹⁹ Côté, "The Marx E. Cohen House, c. 1845."

²⁰ Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, 314; James L. Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 1977), 47.

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²³ Lee C. Harby, "The Days That Are Dead," November 14, 1901, "South Carolina Women in the Confederacy," accessed January 22, 2014, http://genealogytrails.com/scar/women_conf/woman_conf_6.htm#daysofdead.

²⁴ Henry, "Leah Cohen Harby."

²⁵ Moïse, "Remarks at the Funeral."

²⁶ Gary Phillip Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788–1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual* (Tuscaloosa, 1994), xi, xii.

²⁷ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 243, 271.

²⁸ Lee C. Harby, "Yom Kippur," *Jewish Messenger*, October 8, 1886; "Sumter, South Carolina," ISJL Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed August 14, 2013, <http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/sc/sumter.html>; Moïse, "Remarks at the Funeral."

²⁹ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 12; Rosengarten, "Narrative of the Exhibition," 101; Henry A. M. Smith, "The Ashley River: Its Seat and Settlements," *South Carolina Historical Genealogical Magazine*, 20 (1919): 81.

³⁰ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 12; Clifton, *Life and Labor*, xi, xii, xiv.

³¹ William Dusenberre, *Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps* (Athens, GA, 2000), 13, 16, 388; David Doar, *Rice and Rice Planting in the South Carolina Low Country* (Charleston, SC, 1970), 41, 43; Clifton, *Life and Labor*, xvi; Alfred Glaze Smith, Jr., *Economic Readjustment of an Old Cotton State: South Carolina, 1820–1860* (Columbia, SC, 1958), 225.

³² Clifton, *Life and Labor*, xiv; Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 1.

³³ Leigh Ann Pruneau, "All the Time Is Work Time: Gender and the Task System on Antebellum Lowcountry Rice Plantations" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arizona, 1977), 41, 42; Dusenberre, *Them Dark Days*, 391; Leslie Ann Schwalm, "The Meaning of Freedom: African-American Women and Their Transition from Slavery to Freedom in Lowcountry South Carolina" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1991), 23–24; Lee C. Harby, "In the Days When We Were Young."

³⁴ Eighth Census of the United States, Agricultural Schedule, 1860, St. Andrews Parish, District of Charleston, South Carolina.

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³⁶ Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, St. Andrews Parish, District of Charleston, South Carolina.

³⁷ Cohen Plantation Journal, 1:5, 1:8, 1:10.

³⁸ Pruneau, "All the Time Is Work Time," 28, 40.

³⁹ Lee C. Harby, "In the Days When We Were Young."

⁴⁰ Roger L. Ransom, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (Cambridge, England 2001), 57; Cohen Plantation Journal, 1: 59, 94, 97.

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⁴² Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 159; Cohen Plantation Journal, 1:11.

⁴³ Lee C. Harby, "Old Christmas Times in the South," *Jewish Messenger*, n.d. Lee C. Harby Papers, Mss. 1019, College of Charleston Special Collections, Charleston, SC.

⁴⁴ Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 10, 12; Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 25.

⁴⁵ Moses, "Our Home," 1.

⁴⁶ Moïse, "Remarks at the Funeral."

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⁴⁸ Barry Stiefel, "David Lopez Jr.: Builder, Industrialist, and Defender of the Confederacy," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 64 (2012): 53, 54, 57.

⁴⁹ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 239.

⁵⁰ Rosengarten, "Narrative of the Exhibition," 128, 129, 130; Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 112, 130; Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, 2, 40.

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⁵² Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance Records, Deeds and Mortgages, Cross-Index Books, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www2.charlestoncounty.org/>.

⁵³ William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, *The Web of Progress: Private Values and Public Styles in Boston and Charleston, 1828–1843* (New York, 1985), 14; Lee C. Harby, "Old Christmas Times in the South"; Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 46.

⁵⁴ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 176.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 106.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 77, 173; Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 24.

⁵⁷ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 148, 208, 209.

⁵⁸ Rosengarten, "Narrative of the Exhibition," 102; Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance Records, Deeds and Mortgages, Cross-Index Books, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www2.charlestoncounty.org/>; Herbert A. Moses, "Pertaining to the Moses Family," June 2, 1961, 27, Jewish Heritage Collection vertical files, College of Charleston Special Collections, Charleston, SC; Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 39, 40.

⁵⁹ Moses, "Our Home," 1; Harby, "The Days That Are Dead."

⁶⁰ Moses, "Our Home," 1, 2, 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2, 3, 4.

⁶² L. G. Pate, C. E. Stubbs, and Marx E. Cohen, "State of South Carolina. County of Sumter. Special Copartnership," *Sumter Watchman*, October 26, 1870; Aaron D. Anderson,

Builders of a New South: Merchants, Capital, and the Remaking of Natchez, 1865–1914 (Jackson, MS, 2013), 42; “Bills of Sale from Sumter (S.C.) Stores,” Mss 1034-083, College of Charleston Special Collections, Charleston, SC.

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⁶⁴ Judith Alexander Weil Shanks, *Old Family Things: An Affectionate Look Back* (Washington, DC, 2011), 9, 13.

⁶⁵ Rosengarten, “Narrative of the Exhibition,” 105.

⁶⁶ Shanks, *Old Family Things*, 13.

⁶⁷ Rosengarten “Narrative of the Exhibition,” 103.

⁶⁸ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 133.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 94, 133.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 133, 134–136; Rosengarten, “Narrative of the Exhibition,” 103.

⁷¹ Quoted in Rosengarten, “Narrative of the Exhibition,” 106.

⁷² For overviews of the postwar experiences of southern planters, see Roark’s *Masters Without Slaves*. See Tuten’s *Lowcountry Time and Tide* for the postwar experiences of rice planters in particular.

⁷³ Anderson, *Builders of a New South*, 115.

⁷⁴ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 46.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁶ Moïse, “Remarks at the Funeral.”

⁷⁷ Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 352.

Rabbi Maurice Mayer: German Revolutionary, Charleston Reformer, and Anti-Abolitionist

by

Anton Hieke*

Seven rabbis held the pulpit of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) in Charleston, South Carolina, between Gustavus Poznanski, who held the post from 1836 to 1850, and David Levy, the congregation's first American-born rabbi, who served between 1875 and 1893. None of the rabbis during this crucial period of reform served as long as Moritz (Maurice) Mayer, who held the office for seven years ending in 1859. After Poznanski, he was only the second Reform rabbi in Charleston. Little is known of Mayer's early years as rabbi at KKBE because the congregational minutes do not cover the period between his appointment in 1852 and his receipt of life tenure in 1857. Today, Mayer is largely forgotten except for his translations of German Reform works into English.

He does not deserve this fate. In fact, Mayer may be described as the embodiment of mid-nineteenth century European and American Jewish history. He witnessed the most lasting religious, social, and political developments of his time and acted at the center of those changes. As a Forty-Eighter, a participant in the German Revolution of 1848–1849, he fought for political freedom. As an early and prominent member of the fraternal order of B'nai B'rith (today the International Order B'nai B'rith [IOBB]), he

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played a crucial role in its cultural-educational agenda. Mayer, a German-born American and Jew, sought to bridge German and American Judaism and Jewry spiritually, linguistically, and publicly.¹

He filled the pulpit of the oldest and arguably the most American of America's Reform congregations. While in Charleston, Mayer became one of the most active correspondents to American and German periodicals, pursuing a clear agenda. He was the only German champion of radical Reform in a non-German congregation and the one true Forty-Eighter to serve as a rabbi in a slaveholding society. As a southerner, he weathered the Civil War in New York. As a lawyer, he worked on important cases dealing with the nature of the war and its results. Most remarkably, especially in light of his earlier involvement in the German revolution for liberty, Mayer struggled against the abolitionism of his time. For him, his support for the revolution in Europe apparently stood in accord with and served as the very basis for his opposition to abolitionism in America. Finally, Maurice Mayer provides a case study of German and American Jewish identities in the mid-nineteenth century Atlantic world.

The following is intended to shed light on an overlooked rabbi and southern politician of Judaism in the 1850s. His biography and activities make him a remarkable and important figure in mid-nineteenth century European and American Jewish history. After offering a sketch of Mayer's life, this article will focus on his involvement in the German revolution, his southern rabbinate, and his political convictions in America, with an emphasis on his opposition to abolitionism.

*From Moses Maier to Dr. Maurice Mayer:
A Biographical Sketch*

Maurice Mayer as a person and personality has left few traces. He has sunk to such obscurity that even historian and rabbi Bertram Korn listed his death as 1862 instead of 1867.² Many eulogies and obituaries, however, present his life as a prominent German-born, southern radical Reformer.

The son of a merchant, Maurice Mayer was born in Dürkheim as Moses Maier in 1821. Dürkheim boasted one of the largest

The German Confederation in 1849. Locations that were especially important in Mayer's life include Dürkheim, where he was born in 1821; Speyer, where he attended school; Munich, where he attended university; Kaiserslautern, where he was a Candidate of Law; Göllheim, where he was a recruiter for the revolutionary effort; Wissembourg, where he hid before turning himself in; and Landau, where he was imprisoned. (Map by Anton Hieke.)

Jewish communities in the Bavarian/Rhenish Palatinate, with some two hundred Jews, and served as the seat of a rabbinate.³ Mayer was educated at the Latin school there and in Speyer, where his grade reports testified to his talent for languages. On graduation he moved to Munich to enter studies first in philosophy and then law. The 1846 academic year is the last that he appears as a student at Ludwigs Maximilians University. No proof is extant that Mayer studied at the prestigious University of Heidelberg, as obituaries claim, or earned his doctoral degree in Europe.⁴ When returning to the Palatinate he became a *Rechtskan-*

didat ("candidate of law") at the Royal Court in Kaiserslautern. After the failure of the German revolution in 1849, Mayer was indicted as one of the culprits. One of only four Palatinate Jews sentenced to death for their involvement, he chose exile.

Almost nothing is known of Mayer's flight to New York, how he escaped from prison, or which route he took. Possibly he traveled through Switzerland and Le Havre, as did other revolutionaries from the Palatinate.⁵ He arrived in New York City in the winter of 1849, using the name Moritz Mayer in German-speaking circles and Maurice Mayer in English ones, and taught German and arithmetic at "Rev. Dr. [Max] Lilienthal's Hebrew Commercial and Classical Boarding School." In 1850 he worked with the Committee in Aid of the German Political Refugees, which held mass meetings in churches as nondenominational fundraising events.⁶

Throughout his life in America, Mayer remained faithful to his ideal of German *Bildung* (education and cultivation), although not necessarily to the language. In New York he supported the young B'nai B'rith's educational and cultural activities. When four IOBB lodges in New York City jointly established the order's first library, the Maimonides Reading Institute and Library (now the Maimonides Library Association), Mayer helped initiate the project as the representative of Lebanon Lodge No. 9. In 1851, he drafted the institution's constitution and, with his election as librarian, oversaw the acquisition of books and Jewish periodicals, mostly German newspapers to which he later became a busy correspondent. For the library's lectures, the revolution's "red republican" spoke on socialism.⁷

Mayer might have prepared for the rabbinate in New York before becoming rabbi of Charleston's KKBE in 1852 at the age of thirty-one. After he left this position, he briefly served other Reform congregations, including Anshe Emeth in Albany (1862), Sinai in Chicago (1865), and occasionally Emanu-El in New York City, until his death.⁸ He affirmed after his resignation from Charleston that he was "terribly homesick for — — the cowl [*Kutte*]," and he was offered positions (such as in Curaçao in 1864), but the pulpit in Charleston remained his only long-term

synagogue employment.⁹ Contrary to Mayer's obituaries, he departed Charleston in 1859 after a fierce struggle with the board of trustees over money and authority, not because of alleged abolitionist convictions.¹⁰

After his resignation in Charleston, Mayer moved back to New York and into the legal profession.¹¹ In 1863 he became Grand Mazkir (secretary) of B'nai B'rith's Grand Lodge, a position he held until his death. In a eulogy, Reform Rabbi Samuel Hirsch of Philadelphia compared Mayer with George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and even "Moshe, the man, as his character was constituted as human, a character which only enabled him to become all the greatness which he did." The latter likely was a politer version of an unusual addendum to the eulogy in the *Jewish Messenger* that opined Mayer was "a good man [who] unhappily had no 'tact' [and] was not 'popular.'"¹²

Hirsch remembered Mayer—in German—as the "pride of American Judaism . . . perhaps the only one among all alive today who was capable of, skilled enough and willing to bring to the understanding of the English-speaking brethren the treasures which German knowledge has carved from Judaism." No doubt Mayer would have preferred an English eulogy. One of Mayer's greatest legacies is his translation of German Reform works. His literary endeavors—"if [translations] might be called such," in Mayer's words—opened German Reform thought to a broader English-speaking audience. Through these translations, Mayer sought to "contribute [his] own piece to the honor of Israel and Israel's God." Mayer's magnum opus as a translator was the first volume of Abraham Geiger's *Judaism and Its History*. Also important were his presentations of history in the making. In his correspondence and articles for American and European periodicals, he presented valuable insights into the development of contemporary Judaism, especially in the South, through such stories as that of Billy Simons, Charleston's black Jew, and his early discussion of Reform Judaism's development in America with an emphasis on Charleston.¹³

Mayer died on August 28, 1867, likely from lifelong "periodical attack[s] of sickness during the summer season," as the

Occident and American Jewish Advocate wrote and Mayer predicted in his private correspondence. His grave in Salem Fields Cemetery in Brooklyn is complemented by a “beautiful and appropriate monument” erected by the IOBB. Chicago’s third B’nai B’rith lodge was named in his honor a year later.¹⁴

The Red Republican

Begun in January 1848, the Sicilian revolt for independence from the Bourbon monarchy marked the beginning of developments that are only comparable to the wave of European revolutions in 1989 or to the Arab Spring. The young *Rechtskandidat* Mayer became deeply involved in the revolution and sacrificed his life in Europe for it. Historian Bertram Korn identifies Mayer as one of only forty true Jewish Forty-Eighters, Jews who had participated in the German Revolution of 1848–1849 and consequently immigrated to America. Mayer was also one of only seven who later served as rabbis in their new home.¹⁵ Contrary to Korn’s general assumption, however, Mayer was not one of the “obscure young men who had followed the leadership of older men” in the revolution.¹⁶ To the Bavarian authorities in 1850, Mayer was a “red republican” whom they sentenced to death as a culprit.

*A group of delegates
approaching St. Paul’s
Church in Frankfurt am
Main in March 1848 for the
first national assembly of
a unified German nation.*

*The German tricolor is
displayed over the building.*

*Painting by
Jean Ventadour, 1848.
(Wikimedia Commons.)*

From March 1848 onward, the German states were beset with revolutions aimed at unifying and democratizing the nation. The issues of “unity, justice, and liberty” (Germany’s national motto) were central; the German democratic colors, black, red, and gold, were omnipresent. The revolution of 1848 encountered a seemingly brittle conservative system as ruling monarchs fled their capitals, including Berlin and Vienna, and the Bavarian king abdicated.¹⁷ A democratically elected German national assembly introduced in Frankfurt am Main devised and passed German civil rights statutes in December 1848 and a constitution the following March. The refusal of the Austrian emperor and the several German kings to ratify these documents, and the Prussian king’s rejection of the crown of a lesser German empire in April 1849, anticipated the revolution’s eventual demise. The impotence of the central government had become apparent as early as November 9, 1848, when vice president of the assembly Robert Blum was court-martialed and shot in Austria. Primarily Prussian troops crushed the revolution within eighteen months.

Baden and the Bavarian Palatinate in the southwest had been centers of republicanism and civil war. When the Bavarian king refused to acknowledge the German constitution, his subjects in the Palatinate rioted and installed a “committee for national defense.”¹⁸ On May 17, 1849, this de facto provisional government acknowledged the German constitution and prepared to secede from Bavaria. Authorities crushed the rebellion the following month. Baden remained occupied and under martial law until 1852, and the Palatinate returned to Bavarian rule.

In the aftermath, the “Royal [Bavarian] Procurator General’s Office of the Palatinate” prosecuted the perpetrators of the revolution, secession, and armed resistance. A simple process of conviction, imprisonment, and execution was impossible in Bavaria as the Palatinate enjoyed a special jurisdiction that dictated trial by jury. Because the majority of the defendants had been educated in the legal system, they knew their advantage. The authorities initially prepared for some 1,400 men to be tried. Then the number dropped to 333. *Rechtskandidat* Moses Maier (Maurice Mayer) ap-

pears as number 27. He was charged as an “accomplice and conspirator through knowingly and willingly supporting sedition against the Bavarian king, . . . calling for and openly supporting civil war, . . . actively supporting the formation of illegal troops against the authority, . . . actively heading and supporting the insurrection against the Bavarian authority, [and] . . . passively supporting the insurrection through speeches, notices, and propaganda.” Each charge was punishable by death or exile.¹⁹

According to historian Bernhard Kukatzki, Mayer was one of the most “remarkable representatives . . . of the homegrown revolutionaries.”²⁰ When the revolution hit the German states and the constitution passed in the Palatinate, Mayer became an emissary to the “committee on defense” and, according to the bill of indictment, “took part in the armed rebellion and crimes against the internal security of the state.”²¹ Contemporary reports depicted Mayer as an ardent supporter of a “second revolution. He must appear as a red [fierce or socialist] republican and knew how to establish his position at any possible opportunity in Göllheim so that this recently calm county was predominantly instigated through him.” Mayer had been sent to Göllheim, fifteen miles from his native Dürkheim, to mobilize the people for the revolution and the defense of Palatinate independence. Contemporaries described Mayer as providing revolutionary speeches in which he repeatedly advocated “the [socialist] republic and thus at least the armed rebellion.” Mayer, according to the bill of indictment, strongly urged “casting off the princes’ yoke . . . [as he] described how all princes and governments oppressed and enslaved the people. He named the only remedy against it: the Republic [and] advertised a second revolution as a radical instrument.”²²

Mayer served on the revolutionary county commission and on the commission of recruitment, both foundations of the Palatinate’s secessionist administration, and “from the beginning to the end and at every opportunity he called on the [people] to support the revolutionary forces.”²³ He apparently succeeded as a recruiter. Ludwig Bamberger, a fellow Jewish revolutionary and later a cofounder of the Deutsche Bank, recalled that the two thousand

men from Göllheim constituted one of the largest contingents of the pitiful defense of the Palatinate. However, he also recalled that their fighting morale when facing the Prussians was as low as anybody else's in the Palatinate where, according to Friedrich Engels, the establishment of "independent bars [wine halls] was the first revolutionary act."²⁴

Mayer also acted as a leading member of the democratic societies, the core of the Palatinate's revolution. An informer of the Bavarian authorities reported that even "if all speakers were more or less intense, only [the speeches of the] candidates of the law Fries [and] Maier . . . can be described as trouble-stirring [to] the highest degree as they have called for an immediate attack."²⁵ A friend of Mayer's from Munich mockingly addressed him in a letter as a "democratic agitator of the people, future General-Auditor [of the independent Palatinate], to be found with the holy republican black-red-golden militia for the liberation of the Palatinate, . . . much-promising delighter of the people." Kukatzki sees Mayer's public appearance as the reason why many Jews in Göllheim joined the revolutionary side while Jews elsewhere largely awaited the outcome.²⁶

Kukatzki further asserts that Mayer "likely belonged to the group of Jews who believed—in their deep religious conviction—to have identified in the revolution a manifestation of the messianic age."²⁷ Mayer's motives were plainly political. In May and early June 1849 the German spring had largely run its course. Only the revolutionaries in a few regions like Baden and the Palatinate still clung to hope for the adoption of the constitution that never materialized. Among them were Jews for whom the constitution was the one prospect of ending inequality and injustice in Germany. Indeed, it brought temporary equality to Jews in several states for the duration of the revolution.²⁸

The essence of German civil rights and of the 1849 Frankfurt constitution was the separation of political concepts from religious creeds. Section VI, Article V of the proposed constitution would have established a novelty in Germany, granting freedom of religion and abolishing "state privileges [for any religious body] above others." The state further would have relinquished its right

A selection from Section VI, "Fundamental Rights of the German People," of the Frankfurt constitution of March 28, 1849. The portions of Article V shown here read as follows:

§144

Every German enjoys complete freedom of religion and conscience. No one is obliged to disclose his religious convictions.

§ 145

No German is limited in his common domestic and public religious exercises. Crimes and misdemeanors committed during the exercise of this freedom will be punished according to the law.

§ 146

The enjoyment of civic and civil rights is neither based on nor infringed by reason of any religious conviction. The same must not infringe the civic duties.

§ 147

Every religious society allocates and administers its affairs independently; they are bound, however, to the general jurisdiction of the state. No religious society enjoys state privileges above others; there is further no state church. New religious societies may be formed; the state's recognition of their commitment is not required.

§ 148

No one may be forced into a religious act or ceremony.

§ 149

The formula of oath shall be: "So help me God."

(Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches: Amtliche Ausgabe [Constitution of the German Empire: Government Edition], Frankfurt am Main, 1849. Courtesy of the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle an der Saale, Germany. Translation by Anton Hieke.)

and requirement to officially recognize any new religious body.²⁹ The constitution affirmed that the state would not interfere in religious matters and conversely also prohibited religious interference in state matters. This radical German revolution would have separated church and state, the *leitmotif* of what became Mayer's American political mission. Yet, apparently this was insufficient for him. As indicated, Mayer had "nam[ed] the only remedy against [enslaving the people]: the Republic." Republicans such as Mayer were in the minority. They most often referenced the Constitution of the United States, with its emphasis on federalism and the First Amendment.³⁰ Only the republic would have perfected the constitution by obliterating the last remnant of intertwining politics and religion and ultimately would have rescinded the divine right of the German princes.

As a "candidate of the law" and a Jew, Mayer represented both the majority and the minority in the revolution. "The Palatinate's lawyers were the engine and carriers of the movements for liberty, and put them on a legal basis," as historian Hannes Ziegler argues.³¹ Interestingly, despite Bavaria's record of antisemitism, the bill of indictment never referred to Mayer's Judaism. Apparently the Bavarian authorities wished to seem impartial. Individual contemporaries did not. One concluded,

Not only average subjects were affected by this epidemic [the revolution], it raged . . . especially among the class of lawyers, predominantly if the same were from Jewish stock. Their oratory skills and jabbering were heightened through this epidemic most terribly. These were the most dangerous because of the infection they spread and which mostly originated in them.³²

Jewish participants especially faced having their motives questioned. In the Palatinate, Lazarus Straus(s) of Otterberg and later of Talbotton and Columbus, Georgia, had been elected to the community council in June 1849. He faced the allegation that his support for the revolution wavered because he showed greater concern with "a bettering of the social position of the Jews." Mayer was characterized as "a Jew who cannot deny his ancestry through his impertinence which lasts as long as he does not have to face any danger for himself."³³

Mayer was taken to jail on June 30, 1849. He likely turned himself in.³⁴ The possessions found on him symbolized his convictions: a loaded gun on a "student's chain," the German eagle and colors, and a letter written in Western Yiddish. Mayer apparently found time during the revolution to further his Jewish studies. His possessions included a note with compositions by several cantors and rabbis.³⁵

Mayer was eventually charged with "not only provoking high treason through public speeches or pamphlets and [other] printed material, but also of the real participation and contribution to both crimes [of] armed rebellion and high treason."³⁶ Mayer was among the few active Jewish participants in the Palatinate revolution and among the few who were sentenced to death. Like three others, he chose exile and moved to New York City. None of the death sentences were actually carried out; the defendants were later pardoned.³⁷ Since Mayer's case never went to trial, the accuracy of the accusations against him remains unverified.

Reverend Dr. Maurice Mayer of Charleston

In 1851, KKBE advertised for a rabbi in several American and European Jewish periodicals. After receiving two applications, the congregation accepted Mayer's over that of Isaac Mayer Wise, possibly because Wise had rejected the position the previous year.³⁸ Mayer, who was supported by traditionalist Isaac Leeser, was invited to Charleston on April 4, 1852. With this, the minutes of the congregation break off for five years. Mayer delivered a sermon at KKBE the following month and won election in June.³⁹

This was Mayer's first and most important employment as a rabbi, as well as his first American home outside the moderate Reformers' environment in New York. In Charleston, he became a personal friend of his predecessor, Gustavus Poznanski, and a close ally of David Einhorn immediately after the Reformer's arrival in America in 1856.⁴⁰ Korn asserts that "none of [the] rabbis [among the Forty-Eighters] was an extreme radical theologically. All of them were moderate Reformers or traditionalists in America: Even in Europe their political views were more radical than their religious concepts." Maurice Mayer, however, identified as a

radical Reformer. As he wrote in 1856, “all young congregations are sternly Orthodox. . . . That does not matter, though. The sun never rests as it turns to the west!”⁴¹ From his perspective, the future of Judaism was European and American and thus in modernity and Reform.

Mayer repeatedly voiced his pride in the fact that he was a German rabbi in a reforming Sephardic congregation. He introduced the confirmation of children on Shavuot in 1855, “according to Rab. [Leopold] Stein [of Frankfurt am Main] with some alterations.” KKBE’s new book of hymns appeared a year later and, according to Einhorn’s *Sinai*, entailed “original compositions by members of the congregation [especially Penina Moïse] and their minister, Dr. Mayer, partially metric translations of German hymns.”⁴² The next year *Sinai* further reported that KKBE also adopted parts of the prayer order of Einhorn’s *Har Sinai* in Baltimore “in the translations of Dr. Mayer [into English].” The congregation abolished the *Mussafim* and the *aliyot*. Einhorn never “doubt[ed] that this brave congregation will be consequent enough to abolish the prayers for a return to Jerusalem as well [as] the proclaimed denial of the belief in a restoration of the sacrificial cult.”⁴³

The Frankfurt am Main newspaper *Der Israelitische Volkslehrer* reported in 1857 that Mayer was appointed “for life (a considerable raise of [his] salary included) in appreciation of [his] achievements.”⁴⁴ Earlier, in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, Mayer had warned German rabbis not to come to American congregations lightheartedly. He emphasized that they should insist on a minimum salary and employment for life as “[t]he position [is] a most precarious one, and all it often takes is the disapproval of one single influential member of the congregation to build a majority *against* [the rabbi’s] re-election.” He concluded that the “plentiful” negative examples he offered were, “thank goodness, not mine.”⁴⁵ Less than two years later, they became his.

The minutes of KKBE resume at Mayer’s appointment for life. They show that money and the question of authority—the crux of Mayer’s warnings in the *Allgemeine*—as well as Mayer’s health, contributed to his resignation. He wrote in August 1858

that “as soon as I am able to walk [I] will go to the North to restore my health.” A few days later, Mayer informed the board of trustees of his intention to travel to the North, as “I have cause to apprehend the return of the disease [*sic*] under which I have suffered so much.”⁴⁶

Mayer neither requested the board’s consent for leaving the city, as the minutes note, nor did the trustees offer it. They rather stopped his pay “from the time of his departure . . . at a time his clerical services were most likely to be needed.” The board referred to the yellow fever epidemic of 1858. Mayer declared in a private letter from New York at the end of October, “I must not return to Charleston. . . . This year, the conditions there are worse than ever; even native [Charlestonians] have fallen victim to the [yellow] fever.” The epidemic was indeed the gravest since 1817. More than seven hundred people, mostly Irish- and German-born immigrants, died in September and October, when Mayer departed the city.⁴⁷

The correspondence between the rabbi and board as noted in the minutes reflects the fierce argument over the discontinuance of his salary. In April 1859, Mayer threatened to sue the congregation, an action that infuriated the board. Mayer offered his resignation as rabbi on September 5, 1859, and the board accepted it. In November, a resolution “recalled [Mayer] as [temporary] minister of this Congregation on the same terms and condition as [before].” It is unknown whether or not Mayer accepted, but correspondence shows that he had been back in Charleston since at least the end of March and until early 1860.⁴⁸

The quarrels over the rabbi’s presence or absence in Charleston and the board’s reluctant payments were manifestations of a deeper estrangement on both sides. In October 1858, Mayer wrote to Rabbi Bernhard Felsenthal of Chicago that “if possible—and I strongly advise you as a friend—stay away from all community relations [intrigues]—I too, does it not surprise you?, consider relieving myself of them as soon as possible.” In March 1859, Mayer mentioned the secretive manner of the “Portuguese” (the old families) in Charleston who fought battles over “old and new prejudices. . . . It is for this reason [and my health] that I will leave

as soon as possible for wherever I might find a suitable position which I find acceptable."⁴⁹

During the second half of 1857 unrest unfolded in KKBE, though not necessarily with the rabbi in the center. In August, the organist, Mr. Greatorex, was reminded to "comply fully and strictly to the stipulations of his agreement" or be fired. The board hedged, following legal advice. In November, the board threatened congregants with lawsuits if they failed to pay their dues. Arrears of six hundred dollars had accumulated. The keeper of the synagogue, Samuel Bennett, resigned in June, and the fire loan debt was met through subscriptions. The Society for the Religious Instruction of Jewish Youth and the Ladies Sabbath School Society

*From the minutes of Congregation Kahal Kodesh Beth Elohim,
June 10, 1858, showing the passage quoted on the facing page.
(Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.)*

had to keep the congregation afloat by donating five hundred dollars each. At the same time, Mayer was criticized for "making frequent personal allusions . . . on doctrinal points [which] have been in conflict with the cherished principles of some of the members."⁵⁰ His conduct thus further contributed to the pitiful

financial situation. The paucity of funds (soon solved through selling property in the city), the numerous resignations of members, and the strained relations with the rabbi illustrate a congregation close to collapse.

To prevent Mayer from his "impulses" in regard to doctrinal points, the board asked him to submit to censorship.⁵¹ Given the descriptions of Mayer's brusque personality, he likely did not conduct his rabbinic behavior with diplomacy. Rather than comply, Mayer offered his resignation. The board immediately backpedaled, allowing Mayer to achieve his one victory in this struggle over authority. On June 6, 1858, however, the board strongly condemned the rabbi for studying law and expressed their "serious disapproval" of Mayer testifying in court under oath while bareheaded. The board considered his behavior to be against "the established usage of our holy religion and . . . inconsistent with the dignity of a Jewish Minister."⁵² Mayer promptly replied that the

opposition [has] manifested against me for the last year. . . . I cannot conceive how a Board of Trustees consisting of Laymen, should take it upon themselves, to teach their minister the laws and usages of his religion. Therefore, it must not astonish you when I maintain that upon this point, I do place my opinion in competition with, or rather above yours. I should think that, with all due respect, I might be the only person to decide upon what is [Jewish] Law, or what is not.⁵³

The board deemed his letter a matter for a general meeting of the congregation. Eventually, Mayer offered to withdraw the letter (an offer the board accepted) and promised to end his studies and to keep his head covered when under oath. Only three board members voted against forcing the rabbi to do so, among them Mayer's brother-in-law Jacob Ottolengui.⁵⁴ Mayer does not appear in the minutes again until August 16, when he informed the board of his decision to take an indefinite leave.

In the decades before and after Mayer, none of its rabbis had departed KKBE unblemished or voluntarily. Under Poznanski, the "father of reforms in America," the congregation suffered rupture. Following Poznanski's appointment for life as rabbi (apparently

never a good sign in Charleston during this era), he repeatedly resigned over various controversies. Traditionalist Julius Eckman, who arrived in 1850, left just a year later after a petition urged him to do so for his "own self-respect. . . . He will no longer retain an office, that places him in opposition to so many of his congregation, and renders him an obstacle to their peace and harmony." The Reform-minded Mayer was at least publicly appreciated after his resignation and not verbally abused the way Eckman had been.⁵⁵ After the Civil War, Joseph H. M. Chumaceiro, who served between 1868 and 1874, resigned repeatedly when his authority was questioned. Apparently Mayer fell victim to the same unrest that ended the terms of many predecessors and successors. None of the rabbis seemed to be able to satisfy the majority of the congregation for a longer period. The congregation was divided into factions on its path to Reform, and board control dominated over rabbinic authority. Mayer's position in relation to abolitionists and the abolitionist movement played no role in his dismissal from KKBE.

Mayer, Charleston, and American Judaism

As a rabbi, Mayer did not devise original Reform concepts. His merits lay in bridging German and American Judaism and Jewry. David Einhorn wrote in the *Sinai* in 1856: "American Jewry might possess no more than about ten German theologians full of energy, dedication and thorough education. They have progressed further in five years than Germany has in half a century."⁵⁶ Undoubtedly, Einhorn counted Mayer among those "ten German theologians." Yet Mayer, unlike Einhorn, was a German Reformer who had spiritually arrived in America. As a rabbi he was first and foremost a politician for American values in Jewish affairs.

Although Mayer considered Einhorn to be the "leader of the party of progress" in America, the two men differed greatly when it came to German language and culture.⁵⁷ For Einhorn these provided the essence of Reform Judaism; thus Reform Judaism was in fact *German* Judaism.⁵⁸ Mayer was far more nuanced than Einhorn. He promoted or implemented German Reform elements in

Charleston and emphasized that he “honor[s], love[s] and support[s] everything which is truly German, i.e., purely *gemütlich*, honest, and true.” On another occasion he wrote, “Truth, openness, and German honesty have always been my principles.” Mayer criticized those Germans who “take considerable effort to disguise their German nature to such a degree that they even converse with their compatriots only in the English language.”⁵⁹

Mayer saw German Reform as a crown of Judaism, but one that had to be made accessible to all Jews and under American conditions. During his career Mayer translated some ten works of German Reformers and other Jewish publications from German into English. His work, however, transcended immediate access to German Reform thought. Mayer presented an *American Reform* that was not just a mirror of its German counterpart. Einhorn’s version of Reform excluded anybody incapable of understanding German, a group that included the majority of American-born Jews. In his approach to language, Mayer was closer to Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise, both champions of the English language as a link for American Jews. Mayer perceived it as a necessity, as a translator and rabbi, “to bring [German ideas] closer to the English-speaking audience—Jewish and Christian—as it is rather backward in matters of Judaism.” In 1859 he strongly advised Chicago’s Bernhard Felsenthal to put English in the foreground when dedicating the *Jüdischer Reformverein* “so that the congregation can present its true position and intent to the general audience.” When Leo Merzbacher, rabbi of German-speaking Temple Emanu-El in New York, died in October 1856, Mayer was one of four rabbis to speak at his grave. Unlike the others, he did so “in English with an eloquent tongue.”⁶⁰

Mayer’s authority within American Judaism as rabbi of KKBE has to be seen as the basis for his political writings in American and German periodicals. Through his busy correspondence to the German *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, notice of the Jewish South reached Europe with a clear political purpose. Within American Judaism he acted as a leader in the opposition to Orthodox Judaism and served among the champions of radical Reform, whose framework of tradition he outlined in his German-

*Some of Mayer's rabbinical colleagues, rivals, and correspondents.
 Left to right: Isaac Mayer Wise, Bernhard Felsenthal, and David Einhorn.
 (Felsenthal from Morris A. Gutstein, A Priceless Heritage.
 Wise and Einhorn from Wikimedia Commons.)*

language "History of the Religious Turn among the Israelites of North America," published in Einhorn's *Sinai*. In this article, he alluded to a felt obligation to become American Reform's spokesman during the Cleveland debates (described below) because he was rabbi of the "congregation [that] is for America what the Temple of Hamburg is for Germany [i.e., the cradle of Reform]." ⁶¹ Mayer believed that Isaac Mayer Wise had forfeited this position by his support for the Cleveland plan of union and his willingness to sacrifice essential Reform creeds for it. Mayer gladly deferred the leadership to Einhorn as soon as the latter reached America.

Almost all of Mayer's contributions appeared during his time in Charleston, whereas he published almost nothing before or after with the exception of one timid argument in support of Reform Judaism in 1853. ⁶² Despite Mayer's furthering reforms at KKBE, his correspondence demonstrates that he was a politician rather than a theologian. With few exceptions, his publications focused on the defense of the freedom of the individual and the society at large from the interference of doctrinal, religious-based influences, either Christian or Jewish. ⁶³

One of Bernhard Illowy's more colorful criticisms of Mayer: "I call Dr. Mayer himself as eyewitness that the wife of a local Jewish preacher, while on vacation [and] in the presence of her husband, has had lunch in a Christian restaurant of nothing but forbidden dishes. I call the wife of Dr. Mayer as witness that a Jewish preacher of one of this country's largest and oldest congregations, while on vacation [and] in the presence of his wife, has had lunch in a Christian restaurant consisting of nothing but forbidden dishes. (Jeshurun, Nissan 5618 [April 1858].)

From Charleston, Mayer actively participated in the mid-nineteenth century struggle over Judaism's future in America, including its constant personal attacks and counterattacks among rabbis. Periodicals printed quarrels involving rabbis such as Leeser (called the archenemy of Reform), Solomon Jacobs of Charleston's Orthodox Shearit Israel, and even Bernhard Illowy, a fellow Forty-Eighter then in New York, in the German Orthodox newspaper *Jeshurun*.⁶⁴ In 1857, Mayer affirmed that "what we have to fight first and foremost is modern Phariseeism: alias, Neo-Orthodoxy."⁶⁵

It was Mayer's and the American rabbis' tendency to attack one another in European papers that accounted for Ludwig Philippson's outburst against them. Philippson, the editor of the German *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, who was a Reformer himself, berated American Judaism and Jewry as "a mere nobody" for the progress of Jews in general. Out of the harbor of American social and political equality, these ever-quarreling American rabbis, it seems, appeared to German Jews as too distracted by this public *Effekthascherei* (playing to the gallery) to support others in their struggle for the same equality. Without limiting his scorn to Mayer, Philippson added to one of Mayer's correspondences in 1857 that

this fishing for applause for the sake of personal ambitions, these *small* men giving themselves airs, . . . this hypocritical and sophisticated play with theology . . . is despicable. . . . If you [i.e., American rabbis], who have styled themselves the leaders of Judaism and Jewry—in America, if you present nothing else than fussiness and striving for pettiness—so the sponge of oblivion will come over you sooner than you think.⁶⁶

Mayer, however, neither "fished for applause" nor "play[ed] with theology" as Philippson implied. Mayer quarreled and argued for political reasons with the aim of strengthening the Reform side in its infancy in America.

To Mayer, Isaac M. Wise was likely America's least acceptable pulpit leader. Wise, for his part, minimized Mayer's memory some three decades after his death. Wise once briefly mentioned in his *Reminiscences* a "Dr. Moritz Mayer, a teacher in [Max] Lilienthal's school [in 1851]," and thus blotted out Mayer's rabbinate in Charleston and his translations. It is telling that Wise mentions Mayer as a teacher, especially considering their collaboration on Wise's *Hymns, Psalms & Prayers, In English and German*, published in 1868, one year after Mayer's death. Mayer had characterized Wise as a false leader of Reform and battled Wise's version of it. Mayer had declined an offer from Wise to work for the *Israelite* because he had identified plagiarism in the periodical. Mayer asserted his unwillingness "to dishonor my quill and paper with works for this newspaper."⁶⁷ An *Israelite* writer, in turn, publicly

questioned Mayer's ability as a translator.⁶⁸ These Reform leaders obviously did not stand on the best terms, although Mayer's positions on American identity and abolitionism closely resembled those of Wise.

The Cleveland Conference in 1855 apparently instigated Mayer's fierce defense of Reform through his public quarrels on behalf of Reform Judaism in America and Germany. He strongly rejected the central authority over American Judaism, or *beth din*, which Leeser and Wise sought to establish, as incompatible with the American concepts of voluntarism and individual freedom. Mayer initiated an American and European campaign against the "Cleveland Folly" and against the "misdeeds of the suicidal key players," Wise and Leeser. Mayer "was convinced of the impossibility of a union of Orthodox and Reformers." He presented Wise as surrendering his Reform convictions for the sake of forming such a union.⁶⁹

In sermons and communications to the board, he urged his congregation in Charleston to support his position because "the result of [this struggle] will prove, whether we have a right to exist or not." To the German audience, he explained that the conference primarily sought to "halt the further spreading of reforms [and] to destroy everything which has been achieved so far." Mayer concluded that the affirmation of the divine origin of Torah *and* Talmud especially had caused "Schadenfreude and triumph on the one [Orthodox] side and consternation as well as shock on the other [Reform]."⁷⁰ This plan of union ultimately failed.

Beginning with his arrival in the United States, Mayer sought to link American and German Jews in fact on the two continents and in spirit on American soil. He consistently based this endeavor on his quest to defend American freedom of conviction and to reject any doctrinal interference. When plans were formulated for a central Jewish authority in America in 1855, Mayer drew on his authority as the rabbi of the oldest Reform congregation in America to oppose the initiative. His struggle against the conference emphasized Mayer's principles. The very concept of union, Mayer believed, endangered Reform Judaism as it was flourishing on

American soil. His resistance was further based on his belief in religious freedom for American Jews. A *beth din* on the European model would have created an *Einheitsgemeinde* (unified congregation) and thus would have eliminated the American tradition of congregational self-determination in religious matters and replaced it with a quasi-European model. Again, Mayer presented the same convictions by which he had lived during the German revolution: personal and religious freedom.

The Southerner

Ironically, the congregational authority Mayer supported provided the structure of his conflict within KKBE, and, as a result of his quarrels with the congregation, Mayer affirmed that he did not want another rabbinical position. He was not primarily a pulpit rabbi either by training or inclination. First and foremost he was an advocate and politician within Judaism and for Jews' rights within the society at large. Mayer's rejection of abolitionism can be understood best within this context.

On the occasion of the centennial of the revolution, Bertram Korn concluded that most "of the Jewish 'Forty-Eighters' . . . maintained their devotion to liberal principles in America. (Some became outspoken adherents of abolitionism almost as soon as they reached America.) . . . Even if abolitionism did not draw them to its banners, most of [them] became ardent supporters of the Republican party." Other documents seemingly confirm Korn's conclusion. In its obituary for Mayer, the *Charleston Daily News* attested to his liberal religious and political convictions.⁷¹ The history of congregation Beth Emeth of Albany, New York, observes that in 1862, "after the outbreak of the Civil War, an abolitionist, *Rabbi Moritz Mayer*, forced to leave Charleston, South Carolina because of his views, came to the pulpit at Anshe Emeth."⁷² Contrary to these descriptions, neither Mayer's political liberalism nor his abolitionism contributed to his departure from KKBE. Mayer did not support abolitionism or the Republican Party. He was well integrated into southern society.

He came to the most prominent slaveholders' bastion in the United States after only two years in the country, and after mov-

ing to Charleston in 1852 he apparently became a southerner with southern convictions. In 1853, Mayer married Rachel Ottolengui, the daughter of Abraham and Sarah Ottolengui, and thus into a “real, old-Portuguese family,” in Mayer’s words.⁷³ This family both accepted and practiced slavery. Abraham Ottolengui owned seventeen slaves in 1850, the year of his death. His sons Jacob and Israel, Mayer’s brothers-in-law, owned seven slaves in 1860.

Marriage announcement. (Occident, 1853.)

Marrying into the Ottolengui family facilitated his transformation from an observer of the southern version of American liberty into an adherent of the southern ethos. Mayer’s personal acculturation to America included support of the southern side from the flawed Compromise of 1850 onward through the simmering conflict between North and South. Mayer likely did not own slaves, but a fellow Forty-Eighter from the Palatinate, Lazarus Straus, who lived in Talbotton, Georgia, did own one in 1860.⁷⁴

In 1855, when Mayer’s busy correspondence to the German *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* had commenced, he wrote:

[As] I live in North America’s main slave state [I] likely have some knowledge in the matter. Yet I wish to ignore [it] as it is

not relevant to the core of Jewish interest. Just that much might be mentioned: If the Europeans were to judge by their *own* experience and not by adopted or concocted prejudices, or by slanderous claims of the northern fanatics [abolitionists], they surely *would have to* express and admit to different opinions. The institution of slavery, as much as it may be attacked on the basis of principle and as much as it is attacked out of a misguided philanthropy, is a *charity*. At least the “southern provinces of North America” do not know the pauperism under which our North as well as Europe suffer so miserably.⁷⁵

Thus Mayer did not display a disdain in his correspondence for the institution of slavery in general, although he conceded that it “may be attacked on the basis of principle.” His defense of slavery against “misguided philanthropy” demonstrates a Jewish paternalism grounded in his acculturation to southern mores.

The article is a rare example of Mayer discussing slavery — albeit not abolitionism — as a concept. Apparently none of Mayer’s correspondence to American papers treats the subject. Mayer’s stance, only identifiable in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, apparently had a specific purpose. He wrote in response to Ludwig Philippson’s editorial, “Some Troubling Signs from beyond the Ocean.”⁷⁶ Philippson had described slavery and, by implication, the South that continued to support it, as one of the greatest threats to American liberty. Mayer utterly disagreed. Almost all of his letters to Germany concerning Charleston and southern society emphasized the opposite.

In his notes to the *Allgemeine* discussing the South, blacks and slavery played a minor role but further reveal Mayer’s stance on the issues. When he reported the case of Billy Simons in Charleston in 1857, he presented the curiosity of a black Jewish congregant, a symbol of southern and particularly Jewish tolerance. In another letter to the *Allgemeine*, Mayer wrote of “an act of the highest tolerance among the Christians of this community [Charleston]” when he was invited to preach at the orphanage’s house of worship in the city along with representatives of the Christian churches, thus as an equal. He concluded his report on Simons: “Whereas blacks and colored people in the South as well as in the *free* North are segregated in every public place, church,

theater etc., our Uncle Billy takes his seat among his white coreligionists in the temple.”⁷⁷ Mayer did not ponder the implications for Simons that his coreligionists at KKBE were slave owners. His was a political, not a moral defense of slavery, as his other publications show.

In 1859, *Russell's Magazine* in Charleston published “The Slave Law of the Jews, in the time of Jesus and the Apostles.” Historians Elizabeth Fox Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese assume that the anonymous author—“a Jewish scholar of this city of high standing,” according to the magazine—was Mayer. His authorship cannot be proven but seems apparent given the time, subject, style, scope, and references to, among other things, German legislation. The article systematically undermines the Christian underpinning of abolitionism by emphatically rejecting any biblical antislavery tradition “upon which the opponents of the ‘peculiar institution’ set such great value.” Whereas Rabbi Morris Raphall’s defense of slavery in January 1861 emphasized its theological basis in Judaism, Mayer’s article offers an excursion into the historical “Slave Law of Judea.” Its structure follows Judge John Belton O’Neill’s *The Negro Law of South Carolina* (1848) in order to “show the striking similarity between the two systems.” Mayer emphasized, for instance, that the development of “Biblical Law [led to enactments that] vastly resemble the Fugitive Slave Law of our country.” The article constructs a sociohistorical, legal framework for the founders of Christianity as based on Jewish heritage. It concluded, “we never find [that Jesus and the Apostles] condemn the Slave Law as it existed in their time.” Moreover, “whenever they refer to slavery, as far as we can perceive from the New Testament . . . they certainly enforced the existing laws [concerning it].” The article draws an image of Jewish tradition promoting slavery for the benefit of the enslaved and thus justifies southern paternalism from a Jewish (and thus consequently Christian) perspective.⁷⁸

Why should Maurice Mayer, a champion of liberty in 1849, attack the foundation of Christian abolitionism by deconstructing its Jewish roots a mere decade after he fled Germany? In his “Anus Mundi 5615 [1855],” Mayer’s review of the year’s events for

the *Occident*, he discusses “our own beloved, glorious home, the *United States of North America*. . . . Here we are free — . . . ; here we are Americans before the law and that great Magna Charta of 1787, a rock, we hope, on which all attempts of religious fanaticism and intolerance will wreck beyond recovery.”⁷⁹

Mayer’s depiction of the Constitution as a “rock . . . [to wreck] all attempts of religious fanaticism and intolerance” was a declaration of creed that went beyond a commonplace. In his correspondence to Germany, Mayer especially considered the rising “fanaticism of abolitionism” in the debates over slavery in the 1850s as “exceedingly more intolerant than the nativist [Know-Nothing] fanaticism had been” and “harboring dangers for Jews.” The dangers were not grounded in the personal freedom of blacks but in the interference of religion with politics of which Christian abolitionism was the most apparent form in Mayer’s time. In Mayer’s estimation, as Christian abolitionism established a foothold in the North, the South, ironically, more fully embodied his convictions concerning the German revolution, despite the existence of slavery. Mayer sarcastically referred to the “*free North*” when presenting the case of Billy Simons. This became a recurring feature in his correspondence. When discussing the influence of religion in American politics, Mayer noted that the trains of “the (so-called *free*) states” halted on Sundays. Yet, he added, “Here in the south as well, i.e., in the despised slave states, the same has been attempted, but to no avail.”⁸⁰

The failed German constitution that Moses Maier had defended foresaw the separation of church and state. For Maurice Mayer, the South emerged as the protector of the First Amendment, guarding the same principle in America. In 1857 he observed that since

political fanaticism attempts to take possession of power in this glorious Union—and [it] has not given up since—it cannot be of no importance to us Jews which party may win. It does not take a prophetic clairvoyance to claim that Jews will never be the last chosen as fanaticism’s victims once it prevails. This is regardless of the shape it takes, be it political or religious and whatever name it might bear—fanaticism of slavery [abolitionism, the Re-

publican Party] or nativism [the Know-Nothing, or American Party] – it will always threaten the Jews.⁸¹

Mayer concluded that the abolition of slavery was conceptually a “demonstration of a Christian-national necessity” since it was based on the intertwining of a sociopolitical project (abolitionism) with Christianity. Mayer concluded, “The American Jews are fortunate that the old, conservative Democratic Party was victorious in the last [1856] presidential election and has chosen James Buchanan, the old statesman, as head of our Republic for the next four years.”⁸² German historian Werner Steger sees the attraction of the conservative Democratic Party for immigrants in the party’s refusal to regulate social or economic matters in contrast to the Whig, Republican, and the American Parties. The Democratic Party position stood in striking contrast to the overregulation of German autocratic governments in the years following the revolution for self-determination. Mayer viewed the Democratic Party and the slaveholding south as bulwarks of Jewish equality. He added in the same letter to the *Allgemeine* in 1857: “It is a curious fact that every fanaticism yet in existence in America has originated and flourished in the North, [but] has been crushed in the slave states. The Know-Nothingism (the fanaticism of nativism) received its first fatal blow in Virginia, and was entirely disregarded

President James Buchanan, “the old statesman,” c. 1860. (Photograph by Matthew Brady, National Archives and Records Administration. Wikimedia Commons.)

in Charleston.” Threats to Jews’ constitutional rights, or “fanaticism” in Mayer’s words, rushed like waves from the North to be broken at the Mason-Dixon Line. He apparently saw the South first as a bulwark against nativism, then against abolitionism. In his juxtaposition of North and South, Mayer never hinted at the fact that nativists and abolitionists failed to enjoy universal acceptance in the North but were rather perceived by many northerners also as radicals.⁸³

Where southern practices did not meet the promise of preserving the barrier between politics and religion, Mayer pointed to incompatibility with the American or South Carolinian constitutions. For instance, in 1855 Mayer observed that South Carolina’s college students had to attend public worship on Sundays and study William Paley’s *Evidences of Christianity*.⁸⁴ He concluded that the trustees of the colleges “usurp[ed] a right against the very letter of the constitution of South Carolina.” He opined that the “secular literary institutions [the colleges] when tinctured with sectarianism are but the seminaries of the doctrines of ‘Christian State’ and the like.” He called on the legislature to strive against any such “tincture with sectarianism.” Mayer also opposed the Swiss-American treaty of 1850 (which went into effect in 1855) because of discrimination against Jews by Swiss cantons. His letters to American and European periodicals reflected that he did so in opposition to Swiss antisemitism but especially to American acceptance of the cantons’ political discrimination on the basis of religion—another “tincture with sectarianism.” The rabbi discussed all of these issues in his sermons and in the press. According to historian James Hagy, his references to political matters fostered unrest in his congregation.⁸⁵

Other Forty-Eighters, as historian Jayme Sokolow observes, were involved in the Republican Party but disregarded abolitionism, often as a response to the antisemitism some of its adherents exhibited. Others, like Michael Heilprin, became abolitionists but lived on northern soil. Sokolow concludes: “Only German Reform rabbis and Reform Jews became avowed abolitionists . . . because the issues surrounding abolitionism seemed related to the problems Reform Judaism faced in the mid-nineteenth century.” Other

rabbis of Mayer's German Reform circle, including Einhorn and Felsenthal, fit this pattern and compared the freedom of Jews to that of African Americans.⁸⁶ In contrast, Mayer was a radical Reformer who provides an example of southern acculturation. Seemingly the abolitionists' antisemitism was less critical for him than their pronounced Christianity. Whereas other Forty-Eighters strove for freedom in general, Mayer advocated freedom from religious interference. For Mayer, the Christian emphasis and background of many abolitionists threatened the separation of church and state.

Mayer's first book-length translation in Charleston was Isidor Kalisch's *Guide for Rational Inquiries into the Biblical Writings* (1857), which dealt directly with Judaism and Christianity. In his preface to the work, the only one he wrote for any of his translations, Mayer indirectly referred to his involvement in the German revolution:

It can not be denied, unless we are determined to offer a deaf ear to the loud preaching and proclamations of history, that the great political bankrupt [*sic*] under which the Monarchies and sham Republics of Europe have been, and still are suffering, and which has led to oppression and persecution, to revolutions and reactions, and their most melancholy results for the people of that continent, has been caused by that unfortunate "*Union of State and Church*," and its mother, that most absurd of all doctrines, the doctrine of "*Christian State*."⁸⁷

For Mayer, any project ostentatiously conceived through the Christian religion, including abolitionism, harbored the threat of intertwining politics and religion in America, Mayer's dreaded Christian State.⁸⁸

Although a true Forty-Eighter struggling against abolitionism may seem peculiar, his stance was in accord with the rejection of other Christian projects by his Jewish contemporaries. Historian Marni Davis, for example, demonstrates in her discussion of the Jewish stance on the nineteenth-century temperance movement that Jews did not reject it out of a defense of alcohol as such but rather for its sociopolitical implications. She observes that American Jews

were also looking beyond their own interests. They insisted that the anti-alcohol movement sought to undermine the constitutional rights of all Americans. . . . Their Jewish identity, as they understood it, did not isolate them from the broader political culture; rather, it positioned them to defend the Constitution, and the national body as a whole.⁸⁹

Resistance to perceived Christian causes, including abolitionism and prohibition, was based partly on the issues themselves but even more on opposition to their underlying philosophy. Although Mayer and Wise had their differences, here they apparently concurred. Historian Sefton Temkin finds that Wise partly remained silent on the issue of abolition because he “appears to have suspected some of the Abolitionists of a disposition to tamper with the guarantees of liberty and equality.” Wise “suspected the political parsons of trying to inject Christianity into the Constitution.” Two decades later during the temperance movement, Wise “believed [prohibition] to be a fight between religious tyrants and defenders of the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution,” according to Davis.⁹⁰

Unlike Wise, Mayer suspected abolitionists of more than just “tampering” and attacked them outright for what he perceived as the potential danger they posed to constitutional freedoms. Because he died before the height of the temperance movement, Mayer did not take a stance on the issue, but his position would have likely mirrored Wise’s. Mayer’s failure to condemn slavery stemmed from his belief in a political and social equilibrium rather than a true conviction supporting the institution. A successful Christianity-based abolitionism would have threatened the Jews’ position as equals by challenging the secular nature of the Constitution. Thus, for Mayer, it would have provided the threshold to a Christian America. In the end, the abolition of slavery came as a war measure during the Civil War and was not the outcome of a Christian project. Mayer’s fears thus remained untested.

Oddly, as a busy correspondent and the only Forty-Eighter rabbi in the south, Mayer failed to comment on the second great revolution in his life, the one for southern independence. The Civil War never seems to have played a role in Mayer’s writings during

his northern exile. The only reference in his extant correspondence was the mere allusion in a letter to Felsenthal that "in matters of religion I hate and fear secession! I believe in reunion there!"⁹¹ Here, in 1864, he was remarking about religious divisions in Felsenthal's Chicago congregation. Whether he believed in political reunion as an outcome of the war remains unclear. An ardent opponent of slavery, Felsenthal was probably not the best addressee for Mayer's convictions. Mayer may have been unwilling to share beliefs that may or may not have been marked by his life in South Carolina and his wife's southern heritage.

The Mayers remained southerners in Union territory during the Civil War and were strongly affected by the Confederacy's struggle for independence and its eventual collapse. In 1861 Mayer served as the legal counsel for the lone German defendant when the crew of the schooner *Savannah* came to trial in New York for piracy. The trial would determine whether Confederate seamen would be granted the status of prisoners of war. Thus the essence of the dispute was a legal definition of the war itself as the suppression of a rebellion or conflict between nations. Mayer argued along with the other defense counsels that the Confederate States of America was a de facto nation.⁹²

An investment of the Mayers' entire property in Charleston in Confederate bonds during the war by their trustee Benjamin Mordecai left them impoverished after 1865. Winning a suit against Mordecai in the South Carolina Supreme Court in 1869 did not change this fact, since they could not recover their losses from the defendant.⁹³

Conclusion

Mayer's rejection of abolitionism did not necessarily make him an ardent defender of slavery in betrayal of his earlier creed. As indicated, rejecting abolitionism on the grounds that it infused politics with religion was compatible with Mayer's previous revolutionary convictions and deeds in Germany. Ironically, Mayer apparently found in the Christian South a society free of a larger political religious zeal in opposition to what he perceived as fanaticism. His favorable depiction of the South for a German Jewish

audience has to be seen in this light. Mayer never corresponded publicly on the subject of the Civil War, and any other references to it are extremely rare. This may demonstrate Mayer's struggle with the fact that after his claim that Christian abolitionism threatened the American constitutional framework, this southern polity now threatened it more gravely through a war for the preservation of slavery and independence. In the words of Wise's *Israelite* on South Carolina's secession in December 1860: "The fanatics in both sections of the country succeeded in destroying the most admirable fabric of government."⁹⁴

Rechtskandidat Moses Maier was a fighter in the German revolution for liberty in 1849. He struggled against autocracy and for a republic. For his convictions, he was sentenced to death and sacrificed his European life by escaping to America. The Reverend Dr. Maurice Mayer of Charleston, South Carolina, became a southerner by acculturation and marriage. As rabbi of the American "cradle of Reform," he struggled against a central authority for American Judaism. As a southern Jewish Reformer he fought abolitionism. Mayer's German and American biographies seem contradictory and incompatible yet were not: his European revolutionary convictions remained the same on American soil throughout his political endeavors within Judaism and in the society at large.

The republican revolution Maier had supported in Germany had failed partly because it lacked traditions on which to rely. In Charleston, Mayer fought for the preservation of the political traditions of the American republic. At the core of both was his belief in the freedom of conscience from interference under either a Christian or a Jewish name. The German constitution of 1849, whose defense was apparently Moses Maier's reason for participating in the revolution, would have granted the separation of church and state. Maier's ideal of a German republic would have perfected the concept. After his flight to America, Maurice Mayer found the ideal lived. Becoming a southerner, he defended the American concept of separation of church and state by denouncing Christian abolitionism. By disentangling politics and religion, the American Constitution had done justice to Jews to a degree

unheard of in Europe while cementing social injustice for African Americans. Mayer was apparently unwilling to sacrifice the first for a remedy of the second, since both were part of the same Constitution. His correspondence to Germany has to be seen as presenting this southern, different, and most un-European version of society: a democratic society granting the desired freedom of conscience but based on slavery. Mayer was a political and social advocate of the South in his correspondence to German periodicals. As such, he answered German Jewish accusations that his adopted region threatened the American concept of political equality for Jews by perpetuating inequality in the form of slavery. However, he understood the separation of church and state as the basis for any Jewish equality in America. He professed instead that the South was the region true to American ideals by denying such intertwinement of politics and religion. His constant references to the political and social dangers for Jews embodied in nativism and abolitionism, with their northern origins and their rejection in the South, highlighted his argument.

Moses Maier had been born and raised as an outsider in a society intrinsically interwoven with faith-based convictions and had struggled against it. Maurice Mayer may have rejected slavery for moral reasons, as he wrote, but he resisted its abolition for political reasons because he perceived abolitionism as based on the Christian faith. The success of abolitionism as a Christian project would have weakened the dam between church and state that the Constitution and Bill of Rights had constructed. Mayer repeatedly voiced his fear of this possibility. Abolition would test American republican traditions with uncertain results for Jews when based on the Christian religion. When Mayer saw the future of Judaism "in the west," it was modernity he referred to. He aimed not merely for Reform Judaism but for the concept it represented to him: modernity granted a new conception of society that allowed the individual to thrive without doctrinal interference.

*Translation by Maurice Mayer of Abraham Geiger's
Judaism & Its History, 1866.
(Courtesy of internetarchive.org.)*

Appendix

Selected Works by Maurice Mayer⁹⁵

As Contributor

Wise, Isaac M., et. al. *Hymns, Psalms & Prayers, In English and German*. Cincinnati, 1868.

Translations by Maurice Mayer

Adler, Samuel. *A Guide to Instruction in the Israelitish Religion*. New York, 1860. Five editions until 1884.

Geiger, Abraham. *Judaism & Its History*, Volume 1. New York, 1866. Multiple editions.

———. "The Origin and Development of Christianity." *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 22 (1864): 309-315; 22 (1865): 351-358, 417-424, 468-474, 504-509, 551-557; 23 (1865): 22-29, 72-79.

Hecht, Emanuel and Samuel Adler, eds. *Biblical History for Israelitish Schools, with a Brief Outline of the Geography of Palestine*. New York, 1859. Ten editions until 1881.

Kalisch, Isidor. *A Guide for Rational Inquiries into the Biblical Writings: Being an Examination of the Doctrinal Difference between Judaism and Primitive Christianity, Based upon a Critical Exposition of the Book of Matthew*. Cincinnati, 1857. Multiple editions.

Munk, Salomon. "On the Philosophy and Philosophical Writers of the Jews." *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 11 (1853): 248-256, 289-299; 13 (1855): 263-273. Follows the German translation of Bernhard Beer from the French original.

[Neuda, Fanny]. *Hours of Devotion: A Book of Prayers and Meditations for the Use of the Daughters of Israel, During Public Service and at Home: For all Conditions of Woman's Life*. New York, 1866. Five editions until 1900.

Philippson, Ludwig. *The Crucifixion and the Jews*. Preface by Isaac Leeser. Philadelphia, 1866.

———. “Did Indeed the Jews Crucify Jesus?” *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 23 (1866): 541–546; 24 (1866): 27–32, 59–65, 116–124, 164–172, 213–221.

Zunz, Leopold. “History of Jewish Literature” [excerpts]. *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 19 (1862): 471–476, 547–551; 20 (1862): 7–10.

NOTES

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¹ “Germany” here and below refers to a sociocultural concept rather than a political unit. A truly unified German state did not exist until 1871. One of the first to speak of a German nation in the modern sense was Madame de Staël in her *De l’Allemagne*, published in 1813. It is the description of a nation-state in the making, comparable to Tacitus’s *De Origine et situ Germanorum* in its scope and intention. See Anne Germaine de Staël, *Über Deutschland: Vollständige und neu durchgesehene Fassung der deutschen Erstausgabe von 1814*, trans. Friedrich Buchholz, ed. Monika Bosse (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), 26.

² Bertram Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences: Studies in Nineteenth Century American Jewish History* (Cincinnati, 1954), 20.

³ “Gedenkrede auf Dr. Moritz Mayer, gehalten in der Ramahloge zu Chicago am 4. September 1867, von Dr. B. Felsenthal,” *Hebrew Leader*, September 1, 1867. Records of a legal matter in Dürkheim in 1846 show that Moses Maier (Moritz Mayer) was the son of Simon Maier and Sara Dosenheimer. He had three younger sisters—Johanna, Rosalia, and Gertrude—for whom Mayer and his widowed mother were joint guardians. *Beilage zum Amts- und Intelligenzblatte für die Pfalz* (Speyer), March 26, 1846, 318; Klaus-Dieter Alicke, *Lexikon der jüdischen Gemeinden im deutschen Sprachraum* (Munich, 2008), 1:218.

⁴ “Jahresbericht über den Stand der Lateinischen Schule und den Realcursus zu Dürkheim an der Haardt im Schuljahre 1836/37,” *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* (Munich),

accessed September 12, 2013, www.Bsb-muenchen-digital.de; "Jahresbericht über das Königl. Bayer. Lyceum, Gymnasium und die Lateinische Schule zu Speier in der Pfalz: für das Studienjahr 1840/41," *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*, accessed September 12, 2013, www.Bsb-muenchen-digital.de; *Verzeichniß des Lehrer-Personals und der sämtlichen Studirenden an der königl. Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität München in den beiden Semestern des Studienjahres 1844/45* (Munich, 1845), 27; *Verzeichniß des Lehrer-Personals und der sämtlichen Studirenden an der königl. Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität München in den beiden Semestern des Studienjahres 1846/47* (Munich, 1847), 28; Gustav Toepke, *Die Matrikel der Universität Heidelberg* (Heidelberg, 1904), vols. 5 (1807–1846) and 6 (1846–1870). The doctorate may have been the result of typical German "self-aggrandizement" upon arrival in America, as Philip Cohen suspects for "Dr." David Einhorn. See Cohen, "The Problem of Paganism and its Solution in the Theology of David Einhorn," in *Textures and Meanings: Thirty Years of Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst*, ed. Leonard H. Ehrlich et al. (Amherst, MA, 2004), accessed January 12, 2014, www.umass.edu/judaic/anniversaryvolume.

⁵ See Roland Paul, "Pfälzische politische Flüchtlinge 1849 in der Schweiz—zwischen Rückkehr und Übersee-Emigration," in *Die Pfalz und die Revolution 1848/49*, ed. Hans Feneks, Joachim Kerman, and Karl Scherer (Kaiserslautern, 2000), 2:263–288. Paul identifies some nine hundred refugees from the Palatinate (p. 269).

⁶ *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* 9 (1851): 104–105 (hereafter cited as *Occident*). See also Hans Günther Reissner, "The German-American Jews (1800–1850)," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 10 (1965): 105; Korn, *Eventful Years*, 5.

⁷ After 1859, Mayer apparently resumed his lectures. In 1861, for instance, he lectured on the biography of Isaac Marcus Jost. *Occident* 19 (1861): 12–16, 58–65. On the library, see Julius Bien, "B'nè B'rith: History of the Independent Order," *Menorah* 3 (July–December 1887): 246–249.

⁸ *Occident* 20 (1862): 47; 23 (1865): 95; *Jewish Messenger*, September 6, 1867; "Gedenkrede auf Dr. Moritz Mayer," *Hebrew Leader*, September 1, 1867; "Our History," *Congregation Beth Emeth* (Albany, NY), accessed August 12, 2013, http://bethem.pmhclients.com/images/uploads/updated_history.pdf. There is, however, but one reference to Maurice Mayer in the minutes of Emanu-El: "On account of services rendered to the Congregation on various occasions by Doctor M. Mayer, the amount due by him was remitted and the President was authorized to permit him to occupy the same pew he has for the coming year." The rabbi then was Samuel Adler. Congregation Emanu-El Minute Book, April 2, 1865, 103; Congregation Emanu-El archivist Frances A. Hess, e-mail to author, March 27, 2014.

⁹ Moritz Mayer to Bernhard Felsenthal, January 14, 1862, Bernhard Felsenthal Papers, MS-153, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter cited as Felsenthal Papers). The pair of dashes appears in the handwritten original. See also the original letters: Bernhard Felsenthal Papers, P-21, American Jewish Historical Society, New York. On offers from Curaçao, see Mayer to Felsenthal, August 18, 1864, Felsenthal Papers.

¹⁰ See, for instance, "Gedenkrede auf Dr. Moritz Mayer," *Charleston Daily News*, September 2, 1867.

¹¹ His company was at 112 Broadway, and he lived at 108 E. 14th Street. H. Wilson, *Trow's New York City Directory* 78 (New York, 1864).

¹² Samuel Hirsch, *Gedächtniß-Rede auf den verewigten Dr. Moritz Mayer, gehalten in der Synagoge der Ref. Gem. Keneseth-Israel zu Philadelphia, am Sabbath, den 7ten September 1867 (7. Elul '27)* (Philadelphia, 1867), 4, 5; Diaconus, "My Conversations with Jacobs xix: Mayer is dead," *Jewish Messenger*, September 6, 1867.

¹³ Hirsch, *Gedächtniß-Rede*, 4, 5; *Jewish Messenger*, September 6, 1867; Mayer to Felsenthal, June 20, 1866, Felsenthal Papers; Moritz Mayer, "Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges unter den Israeliten Nordamerika's," *Sinai* (Baltimore) 1 (1856): 101-107, 171-181, 197-205, 241-245. See also "Annus Mundi 5615," *Occident* 13 (1855): 282-297, 330-340, 382-396.

¹⁴ "Gedenkrede auf Dr. Moritz Mayer"; Reissner, "The German-American Jews," 100; *Occident* 17 (1859): 150; *Jewish Messenger*, September 16, 1868; Tobias Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (Chicago, 2012), 75.

¹⁵ The others were Isidor Kalisch (b. Krotoschin, Posen, d. Newark, NJ), Henry Hochheimer (b. Bavaria, d. Baltimore), Benjamin Szold (b. Nemiskert, Hungary, d. Berkeley Springs, WV), Adolph Huebsch (b. Liptoszentmiklas, Hungary, d. New York), and Bernard Illoway (b. Kolin, Bohemia, d. Cincinnati). The seventh was Wolf Schlessinger, who, facing arrest in Sulzbach, Bavaria, escaped to New York where he remained only until 1850 when he returned to Sulzbach. His birth and death locations are unknown. Korn, *Eventful Years*, 19; Bertram Korn, "Jewish 48'ers in America," *American Jewish Archives* 2 (1949): 18.

¹⁶ Korn, "Jewish 48'ers in America," 6.

¹⁷ The following relies on Ulrich Speck, *1848: Chronik einer deutschen Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998).

¹⁸ See Gerhard Nestler, "Die pfälzische Presse in den Revolutionsjahren 1848/49," in Feneks, Kerman, and Scherer, *Die Pfalz und die Revolution*, 2:89; Speck, *1848: Chronik einer deutschen Revolution*, 137.

¹⁹ *Anklag-Akte, errichtet durch die K[önigliche]. General=Staatsprokuratur der Pfalz, nebst Urtheil der Anklagekammer des k. Appellationsgerichts der Pfalz in Zweibrücken vom 29. Juni 1850, in der Untersuchung gegen Martin Reichard, entlassener Notär in Speyer, und 332 Consorten, wegen bewaffneter Rebellion gegen die bewaffnete Macht, Hoch- und Staatsverraths &c.* (Zweibrücken, 1850), 15-16. See the individual paragraphs in *Die fünf französischen Gesetzbücher in deutscher Sprache nach den besten Übersetzungen*, vol. 3, *Strafgesetzbuch* (Zweibrücken, 1832), 10, 15, 16. The French penal legislation was still valid in the Palatinate as a result of the previous French occupation under Napoleon.

²⁰ Bernhard Kukatzki, *Brave Männer und rote Republikaner: Pfälzische Juden und die Revolution 1848/49* (Landau, 1999), 15. See also Bernhard Kukatzki, "Die pfälzischen Juden und ihre Beteiligung an der Revolution 1848/49," in Feneks, Kerman, and Scherer, *Die Pfalz und die Revolution*, 2:193-220.

²¹ Bertram Korn identified Mayer as working with the “Ministry of Justice before the Revolution in Bavaria failed.” Korn, *Eventful Years*, 19.

²² *Anklag-Akte*, 15–16, 75; Otto Fleischmann, *Geschichte des pfälzischen Aufstandes im Jahre 1849: nach den zugänglichen Quellen geschildert* (Kaiserslautern, 1899), 241.

²³ *Anklag-Akte*, 16, 75.

²⁴ Ludwig Bamberger, *Erlebnisse aus der Pfälzischen Erhebung im Mai und Juni 1849* (Frankfurt am Main, 1849), 71, 80; Friedrich Engels in *Karl Marx – Friedrich Engels – Werke*, vol. 7, *Die deutsche Reichsverfassungskampagne* (Berlin, 1960), 146.

²⁵ Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 17.

²⁶ Collection J1, number 114, folios 168–169, Landesarchiv Speyer, Rheinland-Pfalz; Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 5, 18.

²⁷ Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 17.

²⁸ See, for instance, Reinhard Rürup, “The European Revolutions of 1848 and Jewish Emancipation,” 1–54, and Werner E. Mosse, “The Revolution of 1848 – Jewish Emancipation in Germany and its Limits,” 389–402, both in *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, ed. Werner E. Mosse (Tübingen, 1981).

²⁹ Section VI, Article V, German Constitution of 1849. “Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 28. März 1849 (Paulskirchenverfassung),” *Die Verfassungen in Deutschland (seit 1806)*, accessed January 2, 2014, verfassungen.de/de/de06-66/verfassung48-i.htm.

³⁰ *Anklag-Akte*, 16, 75; Timothy M. Roberts, “Diplomatische Reaktionen der Vereinigten Staaten während der Revolutionsjahre 1848/49,” in *Achtundvierziger/Forty-Eighters: Die deutschen Revolutionen von 1848/49, die Vereinigten Staaten und der amerikanische Bürgerkrieg*, ed. Wolfgang Huchdruck, Ulrich Bachteler, and Henning Zimmermann (Münster, 2000), 29–41.

³¹ Hannes Ziegler, “Gebremste Reaktion – Die Antwort der bayerischen Regierung auf die Pfälzer Mairevolution von 1849,” in Feneks, Kerman, and Scherer, *Die Pfalz und die Revolution*, 2:234.

³² Fleischmann, *Geschichte des Pfälzischen Aufstandes*, 359, also quoted in Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 17.

³³ Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 15, 17; Collection H1, number 1975, folio 96f, Landesarchiv Speyer.

³⁴ Before his arrest, he hid with his relatives in Weißenburg/Wissembourg in the French Alsace for two weeks. The mayor of Wissembourg vouched for Mayer’s good conduct in writing by stating that he had been in the city “for the past fourteen days and that his behavior always had been impeccable.” As it was not addressed to anyone in particular, it seems likely that Mayer had asked for this before turning himself over to the Bavarian authorities. “Verzeichniss der am 30. Juni 1849 in das Bezirksgefängniß Landau abgegebenen Gefangenen,” Collection J1, number 114, Landesarchiv Speyer; Letter of mayor of Wissembourg [no addressee], Département du Bas-Rhin, June 27, 1849, *ibid.*

³⁵ Collection J1, number 114, folio 170, Landesarchiv Speyer; Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 27–28.

³⁶ *Anklag-Akte*, 75.

³⁷ Kukatzki, *Brave Männer*, 29; Frank Lorenz Müller, *Die Revolution von 1848/49* (Darmstadt, 2002), 138.

³⁸ Advertisement published in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* (Leipzig) (hereafter cited as *Allgemeine*), the *Archives Israélites* (Paris), the *Jewish Chronicle* (London), the *Asmonean*, and the *Occident*; Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Congregation minutes, December 21, 1851, February 2, 1852, and April 4, 1852, Special Collections, College of Charleston (hereafter cited as KKBE Minutes).

³⁹ Mayer, “Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges,” 179; *Occident* 10 (1852): 224. For evidence of Leeser’s endorsement, see Mayer’s obituary in *Occident* 25 (1867): 359.

⁴⁰ Poznanski had married Maurice and Rachel Mayer and was initially appointed as trustee for their property in Charleston when they relocated to New York after Mayer’s resignation in 1859. Rachel M. Mayer v. Benjamin Mordecai and Others, *Reports of Cases Heard and Determined by The Supreme Court of South Carolina* (Columbia, SC, 1871), 1:396.

⁴¹ Korn, *Eventful Years*, 20; Mayer to Felsenthal, March 28, 1859, and June 23, 1856, Felsenthal Papers.

⁴² Mayer, “Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges,” 180; *Hymns Written for the Use of Hebrew Congregations* (Charleston, SC, 1856). Despite later references in his obituaries, Mayer denounced the idea that he had introduced his own German-based prayer book at KKBE. The *Jewish Messenger* of September 6, 1867, also mentioned, “The prayers [*sic*] book used in nearly all German [Jewish] congregations were prepared by him.” See the earlier rectification in *Jeshurun* (Frankfurt am Main) 4 (1858): 396.

⁴³ Mayer, “Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges,” 180; *Sinai* 1 (1856): 59, 192, 258. Mayer had sent the book of hymns to Chicago in 1859 at Felsenthal’s request. Any references to Charleston’s hymns in Chicago need to be researched. See Mayer to Felsenthal, March 28, 1859, Felsenthal Papers.

⁴⁴ *Der Israelitische Volkslehrer* (Frankfurt am Main) 7 (1857): 166. See also the Letter of Acceptance by Maurice Mayer, April 1, 1857, KKBE Minutes.

⁴⁵ *Allgemeine* 20 (1856): 104, 105.

⁴⁶ Mayer to Felsenthal, August 16, 1858, Felsenthal Papers; September 5, 1858, KKBE Minutes.

⁴⁷ September 5, 1858, KKBE Minutes; Mayer to Felsenthal, October 29, 1858, Felsenthal Papers; *Report of the Committee of the City Council of Charleston, upon the Epidemic Yellow Fever, of 1858* (Charleston, SC, 1859), 67, 68. See also *Occident* 16 (1858): 409.

⁴⁸ March 6, 1859, April 3, 1859, September 5, 1859, October 2, 1859, and November 23, 1859, KKBE Minutes; Mayer to Felsenthal, March 28, 1859, and July 5, 1859, Felsenthal Papers.

⁴⁹ Mayer to Felsenthal, October 29, 1858, and March 28, 1859, Felsenthal Papers. By that time, Mayer had concluded all correspondence with the *Allgemeine*.

⁵⁰ June 15, July 20, 1857, November 15, 1857, January 3, 1858, April 4, 1858, May 2, 1858, and June 6, 1858, KKBE Minutes.

⁵¹ James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 268–269.

⁵² January 6, 1858, and June 6, 1858, KKBE Minutes.

⁵³ June 10, 1858, KKBE Minutes.

⁵⁴ June 13, 1858, and July 4, 1858, KKBE Minutes. The others were Joseph Oppenheim and Isaac DaVega. DaVega apparently was a friend and partner. They collaborated on the *Savannah* defense counsel, and Mayer's widow lived in DaVega's New York household in 1870. See Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, New York, New York.

⁵⁵ Mayer, "Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges," 198; May 4, 1851, KKBE Minutes; "The Rev. Dr. M. Mayer," *Occident* 17 (1859): 200. On Eckman's roving career, see Joshua Stamper, *Pioneer Rabbi of the West: The Life and Times of Julius Eckman* (Portland, OR, 1988).

⁵⁶ *Sinai* 1 (1856): 258.

⁵⁷ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 282.

⁵⁸ See Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988), 248; Robert Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York, 1986), 80.

⁵⁹ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 295, 296; Mayer to Felsenthal, June 23, 1856, Felsenthal Papers.

⁶⁰ Mayer to Felsenthal, June 20, 1866, and March 28, 1859, Felsenthal Papers; *Sinai* 1 (1856): 324. In 1861 the *Jüdischer Reformverein* organized Sinai, Chicago's first Reform congregation.

⁶¹ Mayer, "Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges," 197.

⁶² "The Occident's Sins against Reformers," *Occident* 11 (1853): 156–161.

⁶³ Exceptions include "Curious Discovery—The Original Melodies of the Psalms Restored," *Occident* 13 (1855): 373–376, "An Ancient Hebrew Drinking Song," *Occident* 24 (1867): 466–469.

⁶⁴ *Allgemeine* 20 (1856): 102; Mayer, "Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges," 243; See "Life and Orthodoxy," *Occident* 13 (1856): 431–440, 476–485, 542–549, 580–585; *Occident* 14 (1856): 10–17; 57–65, 114–122, 215–229; *Jeshurun* 4 (1858): 392–398, 590–601. Note the surprising speed with which two American rabbis quarreled in a European paper at the time: Illowy charged Mayer with literary dilettantism in the April 1858 edition of *Jeshurun*. Mayer indicated that he received this issue through his book dealer in Charleston and contacted Illowy in New York at the end of that same month. By mid-May, Mayer received Illowy's reply in Charleston through the mail. He published his open letter in Cincinnati's *Israelite* and sent a copy of the letter to the *Jeshurun* in Germany. Illowy answered the letter in the *Israelite* by the end of June and mailed his reply to the *Jeshurun* in time for both men to have their opinions published in that periodical's August issue.

⁶⁵ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 133.

⁶⁶ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 297. Mayer's extremely unfavorable review of *Deutsch-Amerikanische Skizzen: Für jüdische Auswanderer und Nichtauswanderer* (German-American Sketches: For Jewish Emigrants and Non-Emigrants) that appeared in 1857 in Philippson's *Israelitische Volksbibliothek* apparently caused the rupture in the relationship. Philippson's outburst immediately followed Mayer's review.

⁶⁷ Mayer to Felsenthal, March 28, 1859, Felsenthal Papers. Attacks and counterattacks were selective. Mayer's privately voiced complaints of Einhorn's censorship in the *Sinai* never reached the public. See Mayer to Felsenthal, October 29, 1858, Felsenthal Papers.

⁶⁸ "Dr. Mayer vs. The Israelite," *Occident* 18 (1860): 221–222.

⁶⁹ See Cornelia Wilhelm, *Deutsche Juden in Amerika: Bürgerliches Selbstbewusstsein und jüdische Identität in den Orden B'nai B'rith und Treue Schwestern, 1843–1914* (Stuttgart, 2007), 122; Mayer to Felsenthal, June 23, 1856, Felsenthal Papers; *Allgemeine* 20 (1856): 88, 102.

⁷⁰ Mayer to Board of Trustees of KKBE, December 13, 1855, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Papers, Special Collections, College of Charleston; *Allgemeine* 20 (1856): 88–89.

⁷¹ Korn, "Jewish 48'ers in America," 11; *Charleston Daily News*, September 2, 1867.

⁷² "Our History," *Congregation Beth Emeth*. Anshe Emeth had merged with Beth El in 1885 to form Beth Emeth.

⁷³ "Married," *Occident* 11 (1853): 476; *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 296.

⁷⁴ Jacob Ottolengui owned five and Israel two slaves in 1860. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 93, 386; *List of the Taxpayers of the City of Charleston for 1860* (Charleston, SC, 1861), 214; Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (Berlin and Boston, 2013), 326–327. On Forty-Eighters who moved to the South and supported slavery, see Werner Steger, "Das andere 1848: Deutsche Immigranten in den Südstaaten der USA," in *Achtundvierziger/Forty-Eighters*, 85–97.

⁷⁵ *Allgemeine* 19 (1855): 450, emphasis in the original.

⁷⁶ "Einige schlimme Anzeichen von jenseits des Oceans," *Allgemeine* 19 (1855): 278.

⁷⁷ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 339, 521. See also Bertram W. Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 50 (March 1961): 175–176; Ralph Melnick, "Billy Simons: The Black Jew of Charleston," *American Jewish Archives* 32 (1980): 3–8; Jacob S. Dorman, *Chosen People: The Rise of American Black Israelite Religions* (Oxford, 2013), 66.

⁷⁸ "The Slave Law of the Jews, in the time of Jesus and the Apostles," *Russell's Magazine* 5 (1859): 97, 98, 100, 105, 108; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge, 2005), 526, 756; John Belton O'Neill, *The Negro Law in South Carolina* (Columbia, SC, 1848).

⁷⁹ [Maurice Mayer], "Annus Mundi 5615," *Occident* 13 (1855): 391.

⁸⁰ *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 276–277, 278.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 276.

⁸³ Steger, "Das andere 1848," 86; *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 278; Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought*, rev. ed. (Knoxville, TN, 1995).

⁸⁴ William Paley, *Evidences of Christianity* (London, 1851).

⁸⁵ "South Carolina Colleges," *Occident* 12 (1855): 605–607. For Mayer's quest against the Swiss-American treaty, see *Allgemeine* 21 (1857): 617–618, 23 (1859): 365, and Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 87–88.

⁸⁶ Jayme A. Sokolow, "Revolution and Reform: The Antebellum Jewish Abolitionists," in *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn (New York, 2010), 127–131, 137.

⁸⁷ Maurice Mayer, preface to Isidor Kalisch, *A Guide for Rational Inquiries into the Biblical Writings: Being an Examination of the Doctrinal Difference between Judaism and Primitive Christianity, Based upon a Critical Exposition of the Book of Matthew*, trans. Maurice Mayer (Cincinnati, 1857), iii. The "sham republic" likely was Switzerland.

⁸⁸ Louis Ruchames, "The Abolitionists and the Jews: Some Further Thoughts," in Sarna and Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War*, 145–156.

⁸⁹ Marni Davis, *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* (New York, 2012), 52–53.

⁹⁰ Sefton D. Temkin, "Isaac Mayer Wise and the Civil War," in Sarna and Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War*, 168; Davis, *Jews and Booze*, 51.

⁹¹ Mayer to Felsenthal, August 18, 1864, Felsenthal Papers.

⁹² See Mayer's arguments in *Trial of the Officers and Crew of the Privateer Savannah, on the Charge of Piracy* (New York, 1862), 164–169; John D. Gordon, III, "The Trial of the Officers and Crew of the Schooner 'Savannah,'" *Supreme Court Historical Society Yearbook* (1983): 31–45; Burrus Carnahan, *Act of Justice: Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the Law of War* (Lexington, KY, 2007), 65–66.

⁹³ *Mayer v. Mordecai*, 393–399. For an abridged representation of the case, see *Mayer v. Mordecai* in *The American Reports containing All Decisions of General Interest Decided in the Courts of Last Resort of the Several States*, ed. Isaac Grant Thompson (Rochester, NY, 1912), 7:26–33.

⁹⁴ *Israelite*, December 28, 1860, 205, quoted in Temkin, "Isaac Mayer Wise and the Civil War," 165.

⁹⁵ In his compilation of Mayer's works, Korn attributed to Mayer the editorship of Ben Sirah's *Volksbuch über Moral und Sittenlehre* (New York, 1850). Apart from a few indirect references, this work is largely unidentifiable. According to Cyrus Adler, it was published in New York in 1840 while Mayer was still in the Palatinate. Isaac Mayer Wise refers to it as having appeared in New York in 1850 and been prepared by "Dr. Mayer, of Hartford, Conn." Cyrus Adler, *Catalogue of the Leaser Library* (Philadelphia, 1883), 7; "Translations by Maurice Mayer," Bertram Korn Papers, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio; I. M. Wise, "Reformed Judaism," in *Selected Writings of Isaac M. Wise*, ed. David Philipson and Louis Grossmann (Cincinnati, 1900), 351.

A Certain Ambivalence: Florida's Jews and the Civil War

by

Daniel R. Weinfeld*

Morris Dzialynski was proud of both his Jewish heritage and his service in the Confederate army. He emigrated with his family from the Prussian province of Posen in the mid-1850s while in his early teenage years.¹ After a brief stay in New York, the Dzialynskis settled in Jacksonville, Florida. By 1860 Morris had moved to the interior hamlet of Madison, Florida, where his older brother, Philip, had established a general merchandise store. Morris was still living with Philip when the nineteen-year-old, stirred by the war fervor sweeping the South in the months following the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, enlisted in the Madison Grey Eagles, later Company G of the Third Florida Infantry. The Third Florida marched in General Braxton Bragg's invasion of Kentucky and engaged in heavy fighting at the battle of Perryville, Kentucky, on October 8, 1862, where Morris was severely wounded. Undaunted, he returned to his unit after two months' recuperation in time to fight in the battle of Murfreesboro, Tennessee (Stones River).²

As the war dragged on into its third year, Dzialynski's martial fervor began to waver. The Third Florida had suffered great losses, forcing its consolidation with the First Florida regiment. In early 1863, Dzialynski furnished a substitute, an option then open for those who could pay the substitute soldier's hefty fee to gain exemption from military service. Morris,

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however, reconsidered and soon reentered the ranks. Later in 1863, Dzialynski was reported sick: one note in his service file even erroneously reported his death in an Atlanta hospital.³

Morris's medical condition left him "unfitted to remain in the field." According to accounts composed three decades later, Confederate authorities then detailed Morris to "blockade running service between the Indian river and Nassau." Morris may have run the Union blockade to supply the Confederacy, but a naturalization certificate filed in New York City dated October 26, 1864, suggests that he also seized the opportunity to cross Union lines. In May 1865 Morris was still in New York City, where he married Rosa Slager, daughter of Charles Slager, a Jewish merchant who had left his Ocala, Florida, home for Union-held territory early in the war.⁴

Morris Dzialynski, c. 1900. (From the collections of the Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU, originated by Marcia Jo Zerivitz, Founding Executive Director.)

The contradictions found in Morris Dzialynski's war record—courageous service for the Confederacy and wartime relocation to New York—reflect the varying responses of Florida's Jewish community to the Civil War. Like Dzialynski, a number of young Jewish Floridians demonstrated their zeal by rushing to enlist at the start of the Civil War. Many others, however, manifested reluctance by signing up only when prompted by the threat of conscription. A number of Jewish Floridians avoided the dislocation, rigors, and high mortality rates of regular army units by volunteering for limited service in home guard militias near their families and businesses. Some managed to avoid service entirely while remaining in the South. Still others departed the region. Some of these men returned after the surrender while others closed their businesses and moved permanently to the North or West.

Scholars have traditionally described Civil War-era southern Jewry as "overwhelmingly, almost unanimously" loyal to the Confederacy. Over fifty years ago Bertram Korn wrote, "Southern Jews had no doubts about fighting for what Rabbi James Gutheim [of New Orleans] called 'our beloved Confederate States.'" Robert Rosen, an expert on Jewish Confederates, echoed Korn when describing southern Jews as "committed to the cause of Southern independence" and "flock[ing] to the Confederate banner."⁵ Recent scholarship that examines military service has started to question the "almost unanimous" loyalty to the Confederacy by pointing to conscription and military service avoidance. Historian Anton Hieke, for example, argues that Confederate army service is "an invalid litmus test for Southern identity."⁶

The wartime decisions of Morris Dzialynski and other adult Jewish Floridians challenge the premise of unstinting loyalty to the Confederacy. This study examines the neglected stories of Dzialynski and Florida's other Jewish Civil War soldiers to reveal their varied and nuanced responses to the Confederate cause and military service on its behalf. Furthermore, choices some Jewish men made during the Reconstruction era defy the impression of Jewish submission to a southern consensus formed around white racial and political solidarity. This evidence in turn

supports recent studies that question the degree to which southern Jews should be viewed as fully embracing southern white identity and as distinctive from other American Jews.⁷

Profile of Florida Jews in 1860

Generally overlooked by historians of the Jewish South, Florida presents a fresh and promising field for research into Jewish participation in the Civil War. Jewish settlement in Florida began when the British took the territory from Spain in 1763. After the return of Spanish rule a few years later, some Jews continued to dwell in Pensacola and St. Augustine. During the four decades from 1821, when the United States took control of the territory from Spain, until the Civil War, the Jewish population grew steadily, but, like the Florida population generally, remained quite small and dispersed in coastal towns or villages and hamlets scattered across the long northern belt that stretched between Jacksonville and Pensacola.⁸

By 1860 few Jews had yet planted roots with the intention of permanent settlement in Florida. Only Fernandina, Tallahassee, and Pensacola could claim as many as twenty Jewish residents. The majority of Florida's Jews lived in smaller, scattered groupings, often just a pair of shopkeepers, or one or two families. Prior to the Civil War, with the sole exception of a cemetery dedicated in Jacksonville in 1857, such microcommunities did not have concentrations of population sufficient to establish and sustain communal institutions.⁹

No serious effort to survey Florida's entire nineteenth-century Jewish community exists. Consequently, the first hurdle in studying the Civil War experience of Florida's Jews is identifying Jews among the state's population.¹⁰ A precise tally is impossible, if only because the researcher confronts the ambiguity of the Jewish identity of particular individuals. Certain assumptions, however, focus the search. For example, the majority of adult southern Jews in 1860 were immigrants from central and eastern Europe, primarily arrivals from the German states, Prussia (including its Polish provinces), and Russian Poland.¹¹ The 1860

United States census shows five hundred Florida residents born in central or eastern Europe (CEE).¹²

Jews can be identified by cross-referencing each individual with markers of affiliation such as membership in synagogues, B'nai B'rith chapters, and Hebrew benevolent societies, once those groups were formed, as well as social items in Jewish regional newspapers and burial lists from Jewish cemeteries. Finally, invaluable assistance came from tracing family connections through Anton Hieke's database of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina Jews.¹³

In 1860, two hundred Jews lived in Florida: about 120 adults and 80 minors under the age of eighteen. The adults were almost all immigrants, with 54 percent from the German states and 39 percent from Prussia (including its Polish provinces), Russian Poland, and a few other European locations. Only 7 percent of the adults were born in the United States, whereas nearly 80 percent of the minors were American-born.¹⁴ Not surprisingly for an immigrant community in a frontier location, Florida's adult Jewish population in 1860 was over 70 percent male. Almost every adult woman was married or widowed. Men older than thirty were also typically married (81 percent), whereas 85 percent of men between the ages of eighteen and thirty were single.

The 1860 census taker reported occupations for all adult Jewish men (in contrast with only four women listed as working outside the home). Nearly 90 percent were involved in trade as merchants, clerks, bookkeepers, and salesmen. The title of merchant was probably grandiose for many younger men whom the census taker found had little in taxable assets or property. Most were probably peddlers, but only one man described himself as such. In contrast with other Floridians and non-urban Americans, just one Jewish Floridian listed his occupation as farmer. Three men toiled simply as laborers. Single individuals described themselves as druggist, watchmaker, butcher, saddler, artist, and physician.¹⁵

In addition to being recent arrivals to the United States, Florida's Jews in 1860 were, like their non-Jewish neighbors, also newcomers to the state. Florida's white population grew rapidly

from 27,943 in 1840 to 77,747 in 1860 but included only 7,300 (9.4 percent) Florida-born adults on the eve of the Civil War. The Jewish population was even more transient: fewer than ten Jews living in the state in 1860 had resided in Florida in 1850, and only one Jewish child over the age of ten in 1860 was born in the state.¹⁶

After identifying Florida's Jews, I sought those who joined the locally raised militias. In theory, every "able bodied free white male inhabitant" in the state between the ages of eighteen and forty-five was required by law to join and drill with militias. By the 1850s, however, the militia system was in disarray and few men, immigrants or otherwise, participated.¹⁷ Some Jewish men may have taken part in the Seminole Wars, but the approach of the Civil War presented the first opportunity for most to join their non-Jewish neighbors in military activities.¹⁸

*Florida's Jews and Service in the
Confederate Military*

Florida militias began to reform in earnest with the secession crisis fomented by the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860. Immigrants enlisted in many of these reinvigorated companies. Those who joined the Fernandina Volunteers included Jacob Gardner, a Prussian-born seventeen-year-old living at home; Dr. Jacob Cohen, a South Carolina-born physician; and merchants Edward Robinson and Adolphus Rosenthal. In Jacksonville, Tobias Brown, Julius Herrman, Isaac Ehrlich, and Gabriel Hirsch signed up with the town's Light Infantry Company in winter 1861. Jacob Burkheim reenlisted in the same militia unit that he had joined two years earlier.¹⁹

Most Jewish Floridians, however, like their neighbors, did not enlist until after the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861. The vast majority—possibly in excess of 90 percent—of southern white men born between 1814 and 1847 eventually served in the Confederate military in some capacity. Approximately fifteen thousand of the state's more than seventeen thousand white men of military age served.²⁰

Ninety Jewish adult men lived in Florida in 1860 whose ages would subject them to military service in support of the

Confederacy during the war's four years.²¹ Forty-five eventually enlisted; another eleven who did not appear in the 1860 census also joined Florida-based regiments. These fifty-six men included two commissioned officers (Elias Yulee and Marcus Lyons) and a teenager, Rodolph Lyons, who joined the Confederate navy. Thirteen served exclusively in home guard forces or local militias. Thirty-six Jews enlisted in regular Confederate Florida army units (i.e., infantry, artillery, or cavalry), with four additional soldiers serving in neighboring states.²²

Comparing the Confederate military service rates of Jewish Floridians with their non-Jewish peers is problematic. No reliable numbers about southern military service during the Civil War exist. Defining "service" presents another difficulty. For example, 50 percent of military-aged Jewish men living in Florida in 1860 performed some sort of Confederate military service, but more than one-quarter served in home guard or militia units, some of which disbanded after the war began. Excluding the home guard enlistees reduces the Florida Jewish military service rate to 37 percent.²³

Examining the service rates of Florida's non-Jewish CEE immigrants gives context to Jewish service rates.²⁴ The 270 immigrants of military age residing in Florida in 1860 (who included thirteen U.S. soldiers and sailors stationed at Pensacola) did not enlist in numbers close to the generally accepted estimates for Confederate military service across the South. Cross-referencing Florida's CEE-born adult men, including CEE-born Jews, with the rosters of Florida's Confederate soldiers shows that 26 percent of these immigrants enlisted in regular (i.e., non-home guard) Florida-based units. But if CEE-born Jews are removed, the rate of non-Jewish CEE-born military service in Florida falls to 22 percent. There is no apparent explanation why CEE-born Jews served at higher rates than their non-Jewish CEE-born peers.

Florida's CEE-born immigrants certainly served in much lower percentages than their American-born neighbors. Several reasons for this are plausible. These immigrants, mostly merchants, settled disproportionately in coastal villages whose waters were controlled by the Union navy. For example, among

CEE immigrants living in Pensacola, Milton, or Apalachicola, only five of almost seventy adults joined the state's regular army regiments.²⁵ CEE immigrants may have simply lacked the commitment to the region and social structure that motivated American-born men to fight to preserve the southern way of life.²⁶

Florida's few American-born Jews enlisted like other native-born Floridians. Six of these seven adults served in regular army units. Moses Lyons from Pensacola, who was still a teenager when the war ended, was the only American-born Jew of conscription age not to have a military service record.²⁷

Florida's Jews and Enlistment

When evaluating allegiance to the Confederacy through military service, one significant factor is the timing of enlistment. About 43 percent of all military-aged southerners—and 39 percent of Floridians—joined the Confederate forces during the war's first year. In contrast, only 11 percent of military-aged Jewish Floridians enlisted during that time.²⁸

Opposite: *Muster roll of the Fernandina Volunteers, c. 1860–1861.*

The first paragraph reads: "We, the undersigned residents of Nassau County, in the State of Florida, do solemnly promise and agree, that we will, on five days [sic] notice, or in less time, if practicable, repair to any place of rendezvous which may be lawfully designated, and there be mustered into the service of the State, subject to the Articles of War of the State of Florida, and so continue for a period not exceeding six months."

The names of Adolphus Rosenthal (entry #8), J. Cohen (#10), Jacob Gardner (#23), and E. J. Robinson (#24) are included.

(Courtesy of the Division of Recreation and Parks, Fort Clinch Exhibit Materials, Florida Division of Library and Information Services.)

Nine of the ten Florida Jews who enlisted in 1861 were single young men with an average age of twenty-two. The youngest soldier, Samuel Herman, a Bavarian-born clerk, had immigrated in 1858. The exception to this youthful demographic was forty-two-year-old Mordecai Hyams, a pharmacist whose special skills as a botanist drew the attention of Confederate officials. After serving nine months, Hyams was discharged from the Second Florida Infantry and sent to North Carolina to collect and compound medicinal plants.²⁹

It can be surmised that Jewish Floridians enlisted in 1861 for the same motives that scholars have debated for more than a century: patriotism, war fever, protection of home, defense of slavery, to impress young women, peer pressure, etc. The majority of these young men had little or no reported property and may have found enlistment bounties and the pay of eleven dollars per month for Confederate privates “an appealing prospect.”³⁰

A greater number of Jewish Floridians enlisted during the war’s second year. In December 1861 the Confederate legislature hoped to induce 1861 enlistees who had signed up for twelve months to reenlist. It also wanted to tempt previously hesitant men to enter the ranks by authorizing a fifty-dollar bounty to those who committed to three years of service. Simon Fleishman, Marcus Brendt, and William Wolf enlisted soon after. Leopold Adler, who did not appear in the 1860 census, joined up in early 1862, and Jacob Triest entered a Georgia cavalry unit. These five were young (Adler was the oldest at twenty-six) and unmarried, and only Brendt, a Hamilton County merchant, reported possessing substantial property.³¹

In April 1862 the Confederate Congress passed a conscription law that required white male “residents of the Confederate States” between eighteen and thirty-five to serve for three years.³² This first draft in American history prompted many southern men to sign up to avoid the humiliation of conscription. Eleven more Florida Jews enlisted between April and June 1862. The 1862 Jewish enlisters, with an average age of twenty-six, were older by four years than the 1861 cohort.

As the war dragged on and casualties mounted, the Confederacy expanded its conscription pool. A second conscription act in September 1862 extended the upper age limit to forty-five. Service records of many late-war enlistees suggest little enthusiasm for fighting for the southern cause. In the early months of 1863, Jacob Burkheim, a thirty-year-old merchant, married with children, enlisted at Madison County. Burkheim had joined the Jacksonville Light Infantry prior to secession but did not remain with that unit after it entered the Confederate army in summer 1861. Burkheim spent the war detailed as a tailor and did not leave the state with his regiment. David Greenfield, a Marion County merchant, signed up a few months later but deserted within the year. In summer 1863 Gustave Gump of Apalachicola and Simon Einstein of Micanopy found six-month stints in Georgia-based home guard units.

Increasingly desperate, the Confederate government passed yet another conscription law in February 1864 that required men "between the ages of seventeen and eighteen and forty-five and fifty" to enroll in state reserve units. In addition, exemptions were revoked for men who had previously furnished substitutes.³³ The new law drew a few more Florida Jews into service. Henry Rothschild, at the age of forty-five, joined the Marion Light Artillery in spring 1864. Forty-one-year-old Abraham Forcheimer of Pensacola entered a Mobile, Alabama-based reserve unit for older men. Aron Davis, listed as a Jackson County laborer, enlisted as late as April 1864 at the age of twenty-two and deserted before the end of the year.

As previously indicated, the April 1862 conscription act authorized the controversial practice of permitting the potential draftee to obtain release from service by presenting a substitute. The substitutes were recruited from among men outside the conscription age range. The prospective soldier and the potential substitute privately negotiated the price. Over time, as a brokerage market evolved, the fees demanded by substitutes escalated, leaving this exemption available only to the wealthy. The pool of potential substitutes shrank in 1862 when

Confederate conscription law of April 16, 1862.
(Public Laws of the Confederate States of America,
ed. James M. Matthews, 1862.)

the Confederate Congress raised the age limit for conscription from thirty-five to forty-five.

Nine Jewish Floridians, along with seventy thousand southern men, presented substitutes to their regiments.³⁴ Six of the Jewish Florida men (Joseph Blumauer, Simon Katzenberg, Morris G. Joseph, Philip Fleishman, Ferdinand Fleishman, and Moses Strause) were merchants with substantial real and personal property, confirming the suspicion that furnishing substitutes was a privilege reserved for the prosperous. The others were young men presumably financed by well-to-do relatives, such as Jacob Gardner, son of Lewis Gardner, a prosperous butcher, and Jacob Triest, son of Myer Triest, a successful merchant. Herman Burgheim lived with Julius ("John") Burgheim, a wealthy Starke merchant, who was probably a brother or cousin.³⁵

Merchants and tradesmen who furnished substitutes, served in home guard units, or found ways to avoid service often continued to conduct business with the Confederate military. At least seventeen Jewish merchants listed in Florida's 1860 census sold beef, hides, leather, and a wide range of equipment sought by the Confederate authorities. Simon Katzenberg, in particular, engaged in extensive trade with the army.³⁶

The War Experience

For those Florida Jews who did enlist, service records reflect the full range of possible wartime experiences. Twenty-year-old Samuel Grant fell in action at Perryville in October 1862. Captured at Chattanooga, Leo Kleinbauer died on a Union surgeon's operating table. Simon Fleishman and Simon Straus were captured at the battle of Missionary Ridge, Tennessee, in November 1863 and languished in northern prisons until the Confederate surrender. Seligman Davis, who rose in the ranks from private to second lieutenant, was also taken prisoner, but his northern captors positioned him outside Charleston as a human shield.

Not all soldiers compiled glorious records. Many defied the narrative of universal Jewish patriotism and sacrifice constructed by Simon Wolf and other early historians. In an army rife with

*The battle of Perryville, Kentucky, October 8, 1862, where Morris Dzialynski was wounded and Samuel Grant was killed.
Lithograph by H. Mosler. (Harper's Weekly, November 1, 1862.)*

desertion, several Florida Jews took the “French leave.” Others, after capture, willingly took an oath of loyalty to the Union.³⁷

Men with families were much less likely to risk their lives for the Confederacy. The reluctance of such Jewish men to serve in the military is striking. Only four of twenty-five military-aged Jewish Floridians identified in the 1860 census as married men with children enlisted in regular regiments; three of them furnished substitutes. The fourth, Mordecai Hyams, was discharged from his unit in April 1862 to work as a military pharmacist.³⁸ Although there are no figures for the percentage of married men with children from the South enlisting overall, a sense that substantial numbers of them did enlist is evident from the statistic that 31 percent of Army of Northern Virginia (ANV) soldiers had children.³⁹

Although most were recent immigrants, Florida’s Jewish soldiers enjoyed a surprisingly high level of financial security. Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) accumulated sufficient resources

Fort Clinch, Fernandina, Florida, c. 1861, where the Fernandina Volunteers were inducted into military service. (Library of Congress.)

to reach the threshold of \$4,000 combined real and personal property that Joseph Glatthaar designated as a cutoff for the wealthy or upper class.⁴⁰ But even the wealthiest Floridian Jew to enlist, South Carolina-born Dr. Jacob Cohen of Fernandina, did not approach the level of southerners whose fortunes rested on cotton plantations and slaves. This relatively affluent group was older than their less prosperous fellow Jews, with an average birth year of 1827, and did not have particularly distinguished service records. Five men furnished substitutes, and five more served only in home guard or militia units. Other wealthy men included Henry M. Rothschild—the last Jewish man to enlist in a Florida unit—and Elias Yulee, the oldest to enlist, who resigned his officer's commission in September 1862. One wealthy soldier, Adolphus Rosenthal, died from wounds received in combat.

Fourteen soldiers (25 percent) belonged to the middle class, with \$800 to \$4,000 of property. This group was seven years younger on average than the wealthier class and included more men who remained in Florida after the war. Like the wealthy group, the middle class supplied one man who died in combat.

Ostensibly the remaining soldiers (52 percent) were without property, but fourteen of these "poor" men resided in wealthy Jewish homes, and an additional six lived in middle-class households.⁴¹ Overall, 48 percent of Florida's Jewish soldiers were wealthy or lived in wealthy households compared to 19 percent of the general United States population. Twenty-eight percent lived in poor households, in contrast to 51 percent of all Americans.⁴²

The reasons why Jewish service rates were lower than those of non-Jewish, American-born southerners are open to speculation. Civil War historians have increasingly emphasized the defense of slavery as the heart of the secessionists' cause and as a leading motivation for Confederate soldiers.⁴³ Yet Morris Joseph, who furnished a substitute after a few months' service, was the only Florida enlistee who owned slaves. Henry Rothschild, a Savannah, Georgia, resident who joined a Florida regiment, owned one slave. In contrast, 14 percent of soldiers in Lee's army held slaves. Although 16 percent of Jewish soldiers from Florida owned or lived with family members who owned slaves, almost 40 percent of soldiers in Lee's ANV lived in slave-owning households.⁴⁴ Jacob Triest, Herman Burgheim, and brothers Marcus and Rodolph Lyons offer examples of Jewish soldiers whose parents owned slaves.⁴⁵

Historians have traditionally considered Jews of the antebellum South too quiescent to publicly oppose slavery, but anecdotal evidence exists of principled opposition to slavery among Florida Jews.⁴⁶ Emmaline Oentz Miley, of Hillsborough County, mother of soldiers David and Samuel Miley, is reported to have banned slavery from her household as a condition of her marriage to William G. Miley, a non-Jew. Max White (born Weiss), who worked in stores in Tampa and Key West on the eve of war and who did not enlist, recalled in his memoir that he "did not like the Slavery of the black people in the South." Writing decades later, White reported, "I expressed myself in favor of Emancipation of Slavery so I got myself in great trouble I almost got killed for it before I found out how strong they were for Slavery of the Negro."⁴⁷ German immigrants living in the

South generally had a reputation for opposition to slavery, and some were persecuted for these principles.⁴⁸

Battle eventually claimed the lives of five, and possibly six, of Florida's Jewish Confederate soldiers. This roll of honor corresponded to the combat-related death rate of 12 percent estimated for American-born Confederates. German-born Abraham Ellinger, the first Jewish Floridian to perish, lived in Lake City, Florida, where he was remembered as a saloon keeper and "social, jovial, fellow of convivial habits who had the goodwill of everyone in town." Ellinger enlisted in July 1861 in the Second Florida Infantry and received a promotion to first sergeant. He was killed at the battle of Williamsburg, Virginia, on May 5, 1862.⁴⁹

Ellinger's death was followed five months later by the combat death of twenty-year-old Corporal Samuel Grant at the battle of Perryville. Leopold Adler died at Chickamauga, Georgia, in September 1863. Corporal Leo Kleinbauer was shot in the chest at Chattanooga. Adolphus Rosenthal had worked with his brother Joseph in a Fernandina store before the war. Shot in the foot at the battle of Spotsylvania Court House in Virginia on May 12, 1864, Rosenthal was taken to the home of a Jewish family in Richmond, Virginia. He refused to allow a surgeon to amputate his foot and soon showed signs of blood poisoning. The Semon family daughter, Rachel, wrote that she and Adolph intended to marry after his recovery, and in a series of poignant letters she described Adolph's suffering. Following the Jewish folk custom, Adolph was given a new name to ward off the angel of death, but he passed away on May 27, 1864. Rachel assured his brother Joseph that Adolph "died a good Jew."⁵⁰

Seven Jewish Floridians survived battle wounds, and seven more were hospitalized for illness. Only Samuel Leopold, who died in a Virginia hospital from typhoid fever early in the war, is reported to have succumbed to disease in military service, compared to more than 12 percent of ANV soldiers. Three men were discharged for health reasons. Harris Berlack received a surgeon's certificate of disability in February 1862, five months after enlisting in the Second Florida Cavalry. Marcus Lyons

*Florida State Monument, Chickamauga National Battlefield, Virginia,
This monument was erected in 1913 to honor Florida soldiers who died there on
September 19–20, 1863. There were probably more Jewish soldiers from Florida
present at Chickamauga than at any other Civil War battle.*

One, Leopold Adler, was killed there.

(Photo by user Lat34North, www.waymarking.com.)

resigned his officer's commission because of chronic ill health but reenlisted in an Alabama unit late in the war. Carl M. Yulee, son of Elias Yulee and nephew of Senator David Yulee, was discharged for insanity in late 1862 and confined to an asylum.⁵¹

Desertion was common in the Confederate military and more pronounced among foreigners than among American-born soldiers. Glatthaar reports that foreigners deserted Lee's army at a rate of 26 percent compared to 14 percent for American-born southerners. This statistic provides strong evidence of foreigners' more complicated motivations and weaker commitment to risking their lives for the Confederacy. Seven or eight Florida Jews (no more than 19 percent) deserted their units.⁵² Sometimes desertion was consistent with the soldier's previous signals of reluctance to fight. In 1860 Aaron Davis, born in Prussia in 1842, was a laborer living in the Jackson County home of Jewish merchant Aaron Barnett. Davis resisted enlisting until he joined Company E of the Fifth Battalion Florida Cavalry on April 1, 1864. He deserted eight months later. Aaron Barnett deserted a Columbus, Georgia, home guard unit in Memphis. David Greenfield delayed enlistment until he joined the Fourth Battalion of Florida Infantry in May 1863 and then deserted at Tallahassee in February 1864.

Twenty-six percent of Florida's Jewish soldiers were taken prisoner by the Union during the war, compared to fewer than 5 percent of ANV soldiers. Many Florida Jewish soldiers, however, served in the western theater, and the ANV numbers may not be a reliable comparison. Captivity ended the war for these ten Jewish prisoners, including five men captured at the battle of Missionary Ridge in November 1863.⁵³

Several Jewish prisoners of war sought release from captivity in northern prisons by offering to pledge allegiance to the United States and even volunteering to fight for the Union. After enduring years of combat with the Fourth Florida Infantry and extended illness, Samuel Herman was captured in Georgia in May 1864. Herman tried to win an early exit from prison by offering to join the Union army. Rejected, he took the oath of allegiance and gained release in late October. After surviving combat, wounds, and the horrors of Civil War hospitalization, Hermann Hirsch was

captured in September 1864. He applied for release by claiming that he was loyal to the Union but had been conscripted—a lie considering Hirsch’s early date of enlistment. Hirsch, too, took an oath of allegiance and gained early release from prison. After eighteen months with the Sixth Florida Infantry, Simon Straus was shot and captured at the battle of Missionary Ridge. Straus argued that he should be released on the grounds that his home was in the North and that he was the sole support of his widowed mother. Straus’s plea was rejected, but he settled in Chicago after the war.⁵⁴

Like Simon Straus, many of Florida’s Civil War-era Jews demonstrated that their ties to the South were weak or temporary. More than 90 percent of Jewish Floridians were immigrants, most of whom had arrived in New York and had spent time in the North before moving to Florida. As Anton Hieke verifies, mid-nineteenth century Jews came to the South—and Florida—from all over the United States for business opportunity or to follow family members who had arrived earlier. After settling in the South, Florida’s Jews continued to maintain strong family and business ties to the North. Merchants visited New York regularly to purchase stock or arrange financing. Several men claimed northern residences in various documents. Others had connections to more distant parts of the United States. For example, Robert Williams and Joseph Blumauer had lived on the West Coast before settling in Florida. Hieke refers to this pattern of movement as “trans-regional mobility” and argues for taking it into consideration when discussing southern and Confederate identity.⁵⁵

As merchants with mobile stock, unencumbered by acres of land or numerous slaves, many Jews—unlike their farmer neighbors—could contemplate closing their shops, selling their stock, and leaving the South, an often-voiced criticism at the time.⁵⁶ Bavarian Samuel Fleishman, for example, arrived in the Apalachicola River valley in the early 1850s and eventually established stores and owned property in various locations in that area. He became subject to conscription after the age ceiling was raised to forty-five in late 1862. His relatives in nearby Gadsden

County, Ferdinand and Philip Fleishman, had furnished substitutes, but Samuel Fleishman was either unwilling or unable to take advantage of that exemption. Nor did he enlist like family members Benjamin and Simon Fleishman, who both compiled distinguished war records. Instead, Samuel Fleishman transferred title to some of his property to his wife and then, in late 1862 or early 1863, departed for New York City, where he worked in his in-laws' lower Broadway shop. Fleishman returned to Florida and his family after the war.⁵⁷

Several others left the wartime South under various circumstances. Lewis Kohn, likely a peddler plying routes in Alabama and Florida, enlisted in September 1862. Assigned to duty at the Tallahassee hospital, Kohn deserted in early 1864, determined "to go to New York to his relations." A letter of introduction addressed to an army officer in Union-occupied Key West, Florida, described Kohn as "an exemplary young man . . . unfortunate enough to reach Apalachicola just before the commencement of the war."⁵⁸ Isaac Ehrlich, a Prussian immigrant, joined the Jacksonville Light Infantry during the secession crisis but managed to avoid further service. Ehrlich moved to Madison County, Florida, where he married in March 1863. When conscripted, he left for Savannah and in June 1864 "escaped into the lines of the Union army."⁵⁹ Decades later, Harris Berlack recalled having tired "of the way things were going" during the war and leading his family through Virginia and on an adventurous crossing of the Potomac River to get to New York. Charles Slager, a prominent merchant from Ocala, spent most of the war trading with the federal army behind Union lines in Beaufort, South Carolina. Teenager Jacob Dressner survived a dramatic escape to Union ships off the coast of New Smyrna, Florida, that took him to New York. Tallahassee merchant Newman Leopold arrived in Union-controlled Key West after his schooner was taken by a Union ship in July 1862. Leopold promptly swore an oath of allegiance and applied for a permit to go to New York. Merchants Joseph Isenburg and Emanuel Schwarz and clerk Henry Landecker settled permanently in the North during the war.⁶⁰

One man who departed for the North met a tragic end. Twenty-seven years old when the war started, Ferdinand Fleishman was already a successful merchant in Quincy, Florida, where he and Philip Fleishman opened a store supplied with stock purchased from Samuel Fleishman. Ferdinand traveled regularly between Florida and New York, where he filed a passport application in June 1861. He then returned to his wife, children, and business in Quincy. Ferdinand presented a substitute in May 1862 and again departed for the North, escaping via Key West. Fleishman complained that he received little help from his New York family and connections. He ended up in Cincinnati, where the *American Israelite* reported his suicide in July 1864.⁶¹

Antisemitism in Civil War Florida

The perception of low enlistment by German and Jewish immigrants drew the attention and ire of Florida officials. In 1860 attorney Robert Hilton roomed in the Tallahassee home of Abraham Feuchtwanger, sharing the household with Lewis Ohlman and William Wolf, both young German immigrants. Elected to the Confederate Congress, Hilton followed a colleague's harangue against Jews on the House floor with his own complaints about "foreigners [who] should be dragged in military service." He blamed price inflation and currency devaluation on Jews "who flocked as vultures to every point of gain." Since two of his former housemates, Feuchtwanger and Wolf, served the Confederacy at the time of Hilton's speech, Hilton apparently spoke more from preconceived prejudice than from actual observation.⁶²

Hilton was not alone among Florida officials in his suspicions of Jewish commitment to the Confederate cause. Commenting on the phenomenon of blockade-runners trading cotton in league with northern business interests, Florida's Governor John Milton complained that "southern partners—men of northern birth or vile Jews professing to supply the people of the South" were corrupting guileless southerners. Later, Milton did not specifically mention service-evading Germans and Jews but probably had

these groups in mind when he urged state legislators to organize new units consisting of those not already in the Confederate service, including “those who have resided in the state five days, those who are or may be in it one hour for the purpose of speculation, and not excluding those who may claim to be aliens.”⁶³

Milton, a prosperous plantation owner from Jackson County in the Florida Panhandle, would have known many of the nineteen German-born adult men living and working in the Apalachicola River valley. His possible awareness that only six of these immigrants enlisted may have contributed to the governor’s resentment of “aliens.” Among these six, however, Jewish merchants Benjamin and Simon Fleishman, watchmaker Simon Straus, and clerk Seligman Davis compiled impressive military records.

The criticism and insinuations coming from Milton and Hilton echoed typically “covert” southern antisemitism and suspicions about Jewish fidelity to the South. Evidence of such attitudes is found in the R. G. Dun & Co. reports, which offered a confidential assessment of Jewish merchants’ character and creditworthiness. Dun’s Florida correspondents filled their Civil War and Reconstruction-era reports with snide and denigrating descriptions of “tricky,” “shrewd,” and undependable “wandering Jews.” Dun reports repeatedly implied that should business falter, Jewish merchants, with few ties to their Florida communities, might abruptly disappear and defraud creditors. Despite this atmosphere of mistrust and muted hostility, there exists no record of violence or retribution against Jewish or German immigrants in Florida during the Civil War.⁶⁴

*After the War: Florida’s Jews
and Reconstruction*

The war ended for Florida with the surrender of Confederate forces at Tallahassee on May 10, 1865, one month after Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox. The experiences of Florida’s Jewish Civil War soldiers in the years immediately following the war were as varied as their service records during the conflict.

Some returned to Florida to rejoin or establish new families and rebuild or found new businesses. Several fostered the nascent Jewish institutions in postwar Florida. After his service discharge for disability in 1862 and his wartime flight north, Harris Berlack moved back to Jacksonville, where he helped found Congregation Ahavath Chesed. Jacob Burkheim married Dora Dzialynski. The Burkheims' large family lived in various places throughout Florida, including Tallahassee, where Burkheim taught Sunday school, and later Jacksonville. After his discharge from the army, Julius Slager entered into a business partnership with Philip Dzialynski in Savannah. Slager soon returned to Jacksonville, married, and worked as an insurance agent and auctioneer. In the 1880s Slager was president of Ahavath Chesed and secretary of the Jacksonville B'nai B'rith lodge. Robert Simon Williams, married to yet another Dzialynski, Helena, carried a Torah scroll to Tallahassee, where he remained a pillar of the organized Jewish community for years.⁶⁵

*Simon Fleishman's headstone
in Chicago's Zion Gardens
Cemetery indicates his
service in Company B of
Florida's Sixth Regiment.
(Contributor SixthSense,
www.findagrave.com.)*

Economic opportunity and family ties continued to motivate returning soldiers and deserters to return to or depart from Florida. Lewis Kohn, who fled to New York, became a successful businessman in Pensacola. Simon Fleishman returned from wartime captivity to Gadsden County, where he became a promi-

ment businessman with his own building on Quincy's town square.

Several Jews who left Florida became successful businessmen in neighboring southern states. David Greenfield became a wealthy Albany, Georgia, merchant and real estate investor.⁶⁶ Samuel Herman founded the Herman Coal and Wood Co. and an auction commission business in Savannah. Aaron Davis turned up as a merchant in Bainbridge, Georgia, in 1870 and, after his 1870 wedding in Eufala, Alabama, returned to Florida before taking his wife and four children to Texas. Jacob Kazminski and his wife Bertha moved to Richmond, Virginia, where they operated a restaurant. Herman Hirsch remembered the attractive Jewish daughters of the Lehman family in whose Mobile, Alabama, home he recuperated from wounds suffered at Murfreesboro. Captured at Jonesboro, Georgia, and then obtaining an early release in December, Hirsch returned to Mobile to find Caroline, his favored Lehman girl, already married. He then married Caroline's sister, Eliza, and settled in Albany, Georgia, where Hirsch prospered as a merchant.⁶⁷

Other veterans left Florida for the North or West Coast. Abraham Feuchtwanger settled his family in Michigan, where he died in 1891. Philip Fleishman, a prosperous merchant who had supplied a substitute, moved to New York City after the October 1869 murder of his relative Samuel Fleishman. Joseph Blumauer had lived in San Francisco before coming to Florida. Following brief military service, Blumauer returned with his family to the Pacific Northwest, where he joined his four brothers. The Gump brothers of Apalachicola moved to San Francisco, where they established the luxury goods store whose catalog still bears their family name. Herman Burgheim worked at making cigars in Cincinnati.

Just as many Florida Jews had not fully embraced the cause of the Confederacy, those who remained in the state often deviated from the Democratic Party and from southern white racial and political solidarity after the war. Morris Dzialynski, who won a seat on the Jacksonville City Council in 1868, may have been the only Florida Jew elected to public office as a Democrat during the

period of Republican control over Florida from 1868 through 1874. Florida's Jewish Reconstruction-era officeholders often affiliated with Florida's new Republican Party, which was dominated by "carpetbaggers" from the North and newly enfranchised blacks. Many encountered violent reactions from other whites. Simon Katzenberg became an active Republican, culminating in his 1868 election as a "scalawag" state senator for Madison County. He also received the federally controlled appointment as Madison County postmaster and served as chairman of the county board of education. Katzenberg's store burned in 1868, allegedly set on fire "by arsonists who disagreed with his policy of selling goods to local Negroes."⁶⁸

Although a Confederate veteran, Marcus Brendt received an appointment as a federal cotton tax inspector in Hernando County. Brendt uncovered collusion between white planters and freedmen who attempted to evade the cotton tax. He was murdered on July 5, 1868, at his store, "his head split open by an axe."⁶⁹ Isidore Blumenthal, a Union army veteran, established several businesses in the Tampa area, including a sawmill. The Grant administration appointed Blumenthal to the coveted post of collector of customs at Cedar Keys, Florida, in October 1873. Embattled by local opponents who sought to drive him from office with accusations of financial impropriety, Blumenthal reminded the Grant administration that since his arrival in Florida he had been a member and "special agent" of Florida's Republican Party executive committee. Blumenthal resigned his post at Cedar Keys in November 1874 but soon received the position of collector of customs at St. Marks, Florida, replacing Herman Levy.⁷⁰ Samuel Fleishman never held office, but he was shot in October 1869 for his association with the Freedmen's Bureau and Jackson County Republicans. Regulators had accused Fleishman of urging blacks to retaliate violently against whites.⁷¹

Other Jewish Republican appointees in Florida enjoyed less turbulent tenures. Veteran Benjamin Fleishman returned from captivity in May 1865 to resume business activities in the area of Gadsden and Jackson Counties. He served briefly as a county treasurer, evidence that he associated with Republicans during

Reconstruction. Jacob Burkheim became an officer in Jacksonville's "White Republican" political clubs, taking a different political path from his brother-in-law Morris Dzialynski.⁷² Charles Slager, who had left for the North during the war, was appointed postmaster at Tampa in 1871, an office he had held before the war at another Florida location.

There are no reports of Jewish Floridians participating in the KKK-like Regulator cells that sprouted across Reconstruction Florida. With few exceptions, Jewish Democratic officeholders began to surface only in the years after white "redemption" of the state. The Dzialynski brothers received appointments from Governor G. F. Drew when the Democrats took back the statehouse in 1877. Several Jewish newcomers to Florida were elected to local office as Democrats, including Henry Brash and Herman Glogowski as mayors of Marianna and Tampa, respectively.⁷³ Louis Witkovski, a one-armed veteran of the famed Louisiana Tigers regiment, moved after the war to Starke, Florida, where he won election as mayor and as a Bradford County commissioner. Jacob Burkheim may have allied with the Republicans, but his daughter and Dzialynski in-laws fully embraced the Democratic Party and "the Lost Cause." Burkheim's daughter joined the Gainesville United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), volunteering for a committee in 1905 to decorate the graves of Jewish veterans. Gertrude Dzialynski, daughter of Philip Dzialynski, also was active in the UDC, despite her father's having no known Confederate service record. Morris Dzialynski joined a committee of Jacksonville veterans and sons of veterans established to raise funds for a proposed memorial "to the Women of the Confederacy."⁷⁴

Wartime hesitation and veiled insinuations of disloyalty did not haunt Florida's Jewish community. After the war, the community enjoyed economic and social cooperation with their non-Jewish neighbors and suffered from the same suspicions that had characterized their prewar experience. The composition of the community, however, changed rapidly. Fewer than 20 percent of the Jews living in the state in 1860 can be identified in Florida in

1870 or after, including just fourteen of the Jewish Confederate soldiers. The percentage of Jews remaining in Florida, which is lower than Hieke's figures for Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, supports Hieke's findings of a general internal migration pattern. As Florida's Jewish population grew rapidly – doubling to four hundred in 1870 and rising to six hundred by 1880 – Jewish Florida continued to be comprised largely of newcomers to the state and recent immigrants from Europe.⁷⁵

By 1880 Morris Dzialynski's wartime interlude in New York was unknown, forgotten, or deemed inconsequential in rapidly evolving Jacksonville. After their wedding, Morris Dzialynski and his wife Rosa returned to Florida and settled in Jacksonville, near fellow Jewish Confederate veterans and relations Harris Berlack and Julius Slager. Morris Dzialynski prospered as a merchant and busied himself with religious and secular communal affairs. He helped found Congregation Ahavath Chesed and served as its first president. He also made significant contributions to the development of Jacksonville, organizing the fire department and holding the offices of president of the city council and county treasurer. He won election as mayor of Jacksonville as a Democrat in 1881 and 1882. For the last dozen years of his life, Dzialynski served as a municipal judge, enjoying a reputation for integrity, sound judgment, and bonhomie. He died on May 5, 1907, after a stroke suffered at a baseball game. He was sixty-five years old and had survived his wife, Rosa, by two years. Dzialynski's body lay in state in Jacksonville's city hall, and both Jews and Christians attended the memorial service at the synagogue he had led. Obituaries recalled Dzialynski's public service, "noble deeds and loving kindnesses," and, not least, his "record as a Confederate veteran."⁷⁶

Conclusion

The prosperity and acceptance enjoyed by Morris Dzialynski and the Jewish businessmen and small-town officeholders of Gilded-Age Florida belie the ambiguity of the Jewish situation during the Civil War and Reconstruction eras. Almost all immigrants, Florida's Jewish men were forced into choices about

loyalty and identity when expected to sacrifice for a cause many could not perceive as their own. While a number of Jewish men enthusiastically joined Confederate regiments, others made the logical, reasoned, and understandable choice to defer military service or avoid enlistment, even going so far as leaving their homes and businesses in the South. Jewish volunteers served valiantly, but many, like their southern-born comrades, grew disillusioned and war-weary over time.

Jewish researchers and scholars, often filiopietistic or insecure in the face of southern white solidarity and Lost Cause ideology, have simplified the complexities of the southern Jewish situation to present a narrative of Jewish embrace of the Confederacy. In truth, many Florida Jews defied wartime southern expectations of conformity. Christian neighbors, in turn, continued quietly to question Jewish immigrants' commitment to their state and region during and immediately after the Civil War. Collectively, these findings raise questions about the degree to which nineteenth-century Florida Jews developed a distinct southern Jewish identity. As the Civil War sesquicentennial draws to its close, the time has arrived to examine and reassess the complex and nuanced Jewish response to the Confederacy and its cause.

NOTES

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¹ The provinces of Posen and West Prussia had a largely Polish population and were joined to Prussia with the partitions of Poland in the late eighteenth century. To avoid confusion with the modern Polish city of Poznań, I am using the German name for the Polish province, Posen.

² Canter Brown, Jr., "Philip and Morris Dzialynski: Jewish Contributions to the Rebuilding of the South," *American Jewish Archives* 44 (1992): 519, 522; "Morris Dzialynski," Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers, National Archives, RG 109 (hereafter

cited as CSR), www.fold3.com, accessed April 15, 2014. For the history of Florida regiments serving in the Civil War's western theater, see Jonathan C. Sheppard, *By the Noble Daring of Her Sons: The Florida Brigade of the Army of Tennessee* (Tuscaloosa, 2012). The story of Florida regiments in the Virginia theater is ably told in Zack C. Waters, *A Small but Spartan Band: The Florida Brigade in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia* (Tuscaloosa, 2010).

³ Sheppard, *Noble Daring*, 90, 96, 107.

⁴ Brown, "Dzialynski," 522; J. J. Dickison, *Confederate Military History* (Atlanta, 1899), 11:258; Rowland Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida* (Atlanta, 1902), 1:520. Although Dickison and Rerick published biographical profiles of Dzialynski within three years of each other and during Dzialynski's lifetime, their accounts are contradictory about the extent and success of Dzialynski's blockade-running service. Dickison notes five successful blockade runs, whereas Rerick identifies none. Remaining in New York, Dzialynski does not appear to have been a "land blockade runner" making clandestine trips north to bring back goods to sell in the South. In contrast, see the story of Heyman Herzberg in Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 26.

⁵ Bertram W. Korn, "The Jews of the Confederacy," *American Jewish Archives* 13 (1961): 4; Robert Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC, 2000), xi, 14, 47–48. Ella Lonn claimed that southern Jews were "foremost among all the foreign element in advocacy of secession" and had entered the Confederate military with "alacrity and cheerfulness" demonstrating "the sincerity of their devotion to the Southern cause . . . favorably noted" by their gentile neighbors. Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, rev. ed. (1940; Chapel Hill, 2002), 36. Adam Mendelsohn explains that starting in the late nineteenth century Jewish writing about the Civil War was motivated by a defensive insistence on proving to non-Jews as well as to members of the Jewish community that American Jews were patriotically committed to the Union or the Confederacy, depending on their region. After the sectional reconciliation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, writers presented the service of Jewish Johnny Rebs as further evidence of Jewish American patriotism equally deserving of celebration as the contributions of Jewish Billy Yanks. Research into Jewish Civil War participation became more scholarly and attracted academically trained historians only after War World II. Adam Mendelsohn, "Introduction," in *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn (New York, 2011), 2–17. For trends in southern Jewish historiography, see Mark K. Bauman, "A Century of Southern Jewish Historiography," *American Jewish Archives* 59 (2007): 3–77.

⁶ Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (Boston and Berlin, 2013), 182.

⁷ Mark K. Bauman, *The Southerner as American: Jewish Style* (Cincinnati, 1996), 5–30, argues that "Jews in the South were influenced by the regional subculture in a relatively marginal fashion." See also Hieke, *Jewish Identity*, 2, 197–200, 307–308.

⁸ For the history of early Jewish settlement in Florida, see Henry Green and Marcia K. Zerivitz, *Mosaic: Jewish Life in Florida, 1763–1990* (Miami, FL, 1991), 9–12; Samuel Proctor, "Pioneer Jewish Settlement in Florida, 1764–1900," *Proceedings of the Conference on the Writing of Regional History in the South* (New York, 1956). Other scholarly works that devote

substantial attention to Florida's mid-nineteenth century Jewish community, excluding those devoted primarily to Moses Levy or his son David Yulee, are Canter Brown, Jr., *Jewish Pioneers of the Tampa Bay Frontier* (Tampa, FL, 1999); Canter Brown, Jr., "Philip and Morris Dzialynski: Jewish Contributors to Rebuilding the South," *American Jewish Archives* 44 (1992): 517-540; Brown, "A Prussian-born Jewish Woman on the Florida Frontier: Excerpts from the Memoir of Bertha Zadek Dzialynski," *Southern Jewish History* 7 (2004): 109-154; Mark I. Greenberg, "Tampa Mayor Herman Glogowski: Jewish Leadership in Gilded-Age Florida," in *Florida's Heritage of Diversity*, ed. Mark I. Greenberg, William Warren Rogers, and Canter Brown, Jr. (Tallahassee, FL, 1997); Rachel Heimovics and Marcia K. Zerivitz, *The Florida Jewish Heritage Trail* (Tallahassee, FL, 2000); Richard E. Sapon-White, "A Polish Jew on the Florida Frontier and in Occupied Tennessee: Excerpts from the Memoir of Max White," *Southern Jewish History* 4 (2001): 93-122; and Daniel R. Weinfeld, "Samuel Fleishman: Tragedy in Reconstruction-Era Florida," *Southern Jewish History* 8 (2005): 31-76.

⁹ In December 1860, a correspondent for the *American Israelite* reported finding fifteen Jews in Tallahassee and others "in Apalachicola, St. Augustine, Aspalaga, Jacksonville, Lake City, Madison, Pensacola, Quincy, Monticello, Ridderville (Liberty County), Campelton [sic], Fernandina, Tampa Bay, Hawkinsville, Chattahoochee and several other small places." Yael Herbsman, *Index to Florida Jewish History in the American Israelite, 1854-1900* (Gainesville, FL, 1992), 20; Green and Zerivitz, *Mosaic*, 12.

¹⁰ Samuel Proctor correctly estimated that the entire Jewish population of Florida on the eve of the Civil War was approximately two hundred. Samuel Proctor, "Foreword," in Herbsman, *Index to Florida Jewish History*, ix.

¹¹ This classification according to origin largely follows Hieke's method in *Jewish Identity*. Hieke's investigation shows that in 1860, the 862 adult Jews in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia were comprised of 303 German immigrants (35 percent); 325 non-German immigrants, primarily from Prussian and Russian Poland (38 percent); and 234 U.S.-born (27 percent). The last number is skewed by the large American-born Jewish population in Charleston. Florida's Jewish community closely resembled the similarly small Jewish community of North Carolina. Hieke, *Jewish Identity*, 33-37.

Few attempts have been made to identify the Jewish population of entire states through census material. The definition of "German Jews" and "Polish Jews," which is essential for the study of mid-nineteenth-century Jewish immigration, relies on places of birth as presented in census returns. For historical and cultural reasons outlined in the most recent comparable study available, this article follows Hieke's definition: "'German Jews' [are] those who were born in later member states of the (lesser) German Empire [since 1871] with a German majority population." In Prussia, some 40 percent of all Jews lived in the formerly Polish provinces of Posen and West Prussia. They are defined as "Prussian Polish." In cases when it is impossible to identify the origin more specifically than "Prussia," immigrants might either be from German-language territories or Polish ones. For this reason, they were not considered as Germans but are shown in a separate classification as "Prussians." Immigrants from Prussian Poland or Russian Poland often

stated "Poland" as their origin in the census returns, even though no such political entity existed at the time. Thus "Germany" and "Poland" as used here refer to sociocultural entities, not political units. See Hieke, *Jewish Identity*, 17–22.

¹² For purposes of this article, eastern and central Europe are limited to the German states, Austria, Poland, Russia, and Hungary. Both Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org allow filtering of 1860 census data by location, year, and place of birth.

¹³ Author's correspondence with Anton Hieke, 2013–2014. Herbsman's index of Florida references in the *American Israelite* is an essential resource for tracing late-nineteenth-century Jewish communal affiliation and social relationships in Florida.

¹⁴ By 1860, Florida's handful of Sephardic families retained a tenuous connection to Florida and to their religion. The Moses family had left Apalachicola in 1850 after a decade of settlement on the Panhandle coast and prospered in Civil War-era Georgia. Morocco-born Moses Levy, the most famous Jew in territorial Florida, was devoted to his faith. After Levy's death in 1854, however, his two sons, Senator David Yulee and Elias Yulee, shed any public identification with their Jewish heritage. Older brother Elias embraced the Christian Swedenborgian sect. David Yulee may not have been baptized, but he "attended church and adhered to Christian religious dogma, married a Christian woman and allowed his children to be raised as Christians." Hieke, *Jewish Identity*, 18–19; Chris Monaco, *Moses Levy of Florida: Jewish Utopian and Antebellum Reformer* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2005), 143–44; Maurice I. Wiseman, "Railroad Baron, Fire-Eater, and the 'Alien Jew': The Life and Memory of David Levy Yulee" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 2011), 78–79.

¹⁵ These findings largely correspond with Hieke's identification for Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Hieke, *Jewish Identity*, 89–99.

¹⁶ For Jewish mid-nineteenth-century "transregional mobility," see Hieke, *Jewish Identity*, 65–69, 182–194; Anton Hieke, "The Transregional Mobility of Jews from Macon, Ga., 1860–1880," *American Jewish History* 97 (2013): 21–38.

¹⁷ Governor M. S. Perry wrote on November 22, 1858, that "[with] the exception perhaps of one or two volunteer companies, there is no organized militia in this State." Jacob Burkheim appears among the members of the Jacksonville Light Infantry militia company organized in April 1859. *Journal of the Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of Florida, at its Ninth Session* (Tallahassee, FL, 1858), 27; Thomas F. Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville* (Jacksonville, FL, 1911), 141. See also Richard Martin, "Defeat in Victory: Yankee Experience in Early Civil War Jacksonville," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 53 (July 1974): 4n13, which corrects Davis's error in the militia's founding date.

¹⁸ More attention has been paid to Jewish soldiers, such as South Carolina's Col. Abraham Myers, who participated in the Seminole Wars in Florida, than to Florida's Civil War soldiers and their families.

¹⁹ The Fernandina Volunteers militia unit was organized in December 1860. A Fernandina newspaper reported that the unit "embraces among its members many of our oldest and most influential citizens. . . . We learn that their services have been tendered

unconditionally to the Governor. They are ready and await the word." The Jacksonville Light Infantry was noted for its elaborate uniforms and "silk battle flag bearing the slogan 'Let Us Alone.' Muster Roll of Fernandina Volunteers, c. 1860-1861," http://www.floridamemory.com/exhibits/floridahighlights/fort_clinch, accessed April 4, 2014; Sheppard, *Noble Daring*, 18-19.

²⁰ To encompass the full range of ages subject to Confederate conscription by war's end, military age is defined here as men ranging from thirteen to forty-six years old in the 1860 census. While Florida's military-aged population is based on census data, the accuracy of the estimate of fifteen thousand Florida soldiers is open to question. The number is first found in an 1890 letter from Florida's Adjutant General David Lang to the United Confederate Veterans, without supporting documentation or further details. Lang did not state whether his estimate included home guard units or the thousand or more Floridians who joined Union regiments. Thomas Livermore, however, concludes that "substantially the entire military population of the Confederate States not exempted by law were enrolled in the army." Considering that about 8 percent of military-aged men received exemptions, Livermore's calculations support the argument that more than 90 percent of southern men of military age served. *Minutes of the Third Annual Meeting and Reunion of the United Confederate Veterans* (New Orleans, 1892), 139; Thomas L. Livermore, *Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America, 1861-1865* (Boston, 1900), 20-21, 23, 25. See also Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 2007), 2. Sheehan-Dean calculates that Virginia mobilized 90 percent of its men living in areas controlled by the Confederacy. For Florida Civil War soldiers generally, see David Coles and David Hartman, *Biographical Rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers 1861-1865* (Wilmington, NC, 1995).

²¹ Simon Wolf identified only two Floridians in his compilation of Jewish Civil War soldiers: Gus Cohen of the Milton Artillery and M. Daniel of Company A of the First Florida Infantry Regiment, reported to have died in captivity at the Elmira, New York, prison camp. German-born Gustave M. Cohen, who lived in Apalachicola in 1860, later lived in Pensacola. No Cohens served in the Milton Artillery, however, or in any Florida-based military unit, although a Gustavus A. Cohen served in several South Carolina units, including two artillery companies. No evidence exists that M. Daniel was Jewish. Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* (Philadelphia, 1895), 128.

²² Military age is defined per Livermore: men born from 1814 through 1847. I extended the range to 1848 to incorporate Rodolph Lyons's birth year. Livermore, *Numbers and Losses*, 20-21.

²³ In calculating military participation rates, I did not include the eleven Jewish men not appearing in the 1860 census or listed as residing outside of Florida in 1860 who joined Florida regiments, because it is impossible to determine how many nonenlisting Jewish men moved to Florida during the war or were omitted in the 1860 census.

²⁴ The initially ambiguous legal status of noncitizen immigrants in the new Confederate nation seems not to have impacted many CEE men in Florida. In summer 1861, the Confederacy conferred the rights of citizenship on noncitizens who served in the military

and allowed them to be naturalized upon taking an oath and renouncing former allegiances. At the same time, an act of banishment ordered male citizens of hostile nations, including the Union, to leave or swear allegiance to the Confederacy. Abraham Friedenburg, a German-born, thirty-four-year-old merchant living in Alachua County, departed for New York with his northern-born wife early in the war, but it is unclear if he or other immigrants left in response to Confederate legislation. Julius Slager was discharged from the Second Florida Infantry regiment in September 1862, after fourteen months of service that included suffering wounds at the battle of Seven Pines in Virginia, for lack of domicile, indicating that Slager was considered a noncitizen without settled residency. Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 385. U.S. Passport Applications, Ancestry.com; CSR, www.fold3.com, accessed April 15, 2014.

²⁵ Service percentages rise slightly when adding in CEE-born men, particularly those from the Pensacola region, who served in Alabama or Georgia regiments.

²⁶ For German immigrants' antipathy to slavery, see Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 33–35.

²⁷ This calculation of the number of American-born Jewish soldiers does not include two combat veterans, David and Samuel Miley, who were born to a Jewish mother but showed no signs of affiliation or identification with Judaism during their lives. Mark Greenberg found that southern-born Jews "demonstrated stronger ideological dedication to and leadership in the fight for Southern rights." Mark I. Greenberg, "Becoming Southern: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia, 1830–70," *American Jewish History* 86 (1998): 65.

²⁸ Fifty-four percent of southerners who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War enlisted in 1861. Based on a conservative estimate that 80 percent of all southern men were mobilized by the Confederacy, it follows that about 43 percent of military-aged southern men enlisted in 1861. The percentage of 1861 enlistees rises if adjusting to reflect age eligibility over the course of the war. Eighty percent of the foreign-born soldiers who served in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia volunteered in 1861. In 1860, Florida had 17,273 men who would have been eighteen years or older up to the later conscription birth year limit of 1814; 6,772 Floridians enlisted in 1861. The "most motivated men" enlisted early in the war. Kenneth W. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 2, 7; Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 2011), 62; William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (Gainesville, FL, 1964 [1913]), 94.

²⁹ Three Jewish men who did not appear in the 1860 Florida census also enlisted in Florida units in 1861, and Elias Yulee, brother of U.S. Senator David Yulee, left his patent office position in Washington, DC, to accept a commission as commissary officer for the Eastern and Middle Departments of Florida. Another five men joined the Jacksonville Light Artillery and Fernandina militias during the secession crisis of 1860–1861 but did not have further military service. Two militiamen did reenlist in 1862. CSR, www.fold3.com, accessed April 15, 2014.

³⁰ Glatthaar, *Soldiering*, 62. For a discussion of the various motives of Jewish Confederate soldiers, see Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 48–54, 165; Korn, "Jews of the

Confederacy," 4. For an excellent summary and analysis of the "what they fought for" debate among historians of the Confederacy, see Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 3–6.

³¹ Marcus Lyons of Pensacola was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the First Confederate Battalion organized in Mobile, Alabama, in early 1862. Lyons was promoted to first lieutenant a few months later but resigned in November of the same year due to illness.

³² "The Statutes at Large of the Confederate States of America," <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/statutes/statutes.html>, accessed February 1, 2014.

³³ "Conscription Law: An act to organize forces to serve during the war," February 17, 1864, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/lawsofcong/lawsofcong.html>, accessed May 16, 2014.

³⁴ Substitutes comprised 7 percent of all Confederate soldiers. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 2, 113–114.

³⁵ Jacob Gardner had served in the presecession Fernandina Volunteers militia and then for six weeks in a cavalry unit before offering his substitute. Gardner appears to be the only man who had previously found a substitute to later reenlist.

³⁶ Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens or Business Firms, National Archives Microfilm Publication M346, www.fold3.com, accessed March 2013 through April 2014. Seligman Davis was one of the "immortal six hundred" Confederate officers placed by Union forces in the range of cannon fire in retaliation for Confederate mistreatment of Union prisoners held in Charleston.

³⁷ I have been unable to identify Jewish men among the thousand Floridians who joined the Union regiments organized in the state. William Watson Davis estimated that "Union sympathizers and deserters never exceeded one-fifth of the [Florida] adult white population." Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 266.

³⁸ Only one married man with children, tailor Jacob Burkheim, was listed as active on a regular army roster as late as 1863. Burkheim did not appear in the 1860 census.

³⁹ Glatthaar, *Soldiering*, 127; Hieke, *Jewish Identity*, 192–193.

⁴⁰ Glatthaar, *Soldiering*, 140.

⁴¹ Three of these "poor" men from wealthy homes lived with their fathers; the Lyons brothers lived with their mother; four lived with brothers or cousins; and five lived with Jewish men, possibly employers, where the relationship is not known.

⁴² ANV soldiers came from families more prosperous than those of Americans in general. Thirty-five percent came from wealthy families, 23 percent from the middle class, and 42 percent from poor households. Florida's Jewish men listed in the 1860 census who did not serve were even more prosperous: over 50 percent lived in wealthy households. Glatthaar, *Soldiering*, 140–141.

⁴³ "Confederate soldiers' personal attachment to slavery was a powerful motivation in their military service. It was a building block upon which they forged a sense of mission and a spirit of camaraderie." Similarly, ANV soldiers who lived in slave-owning households "incurred higher casualties, deserted less frequently, and suffered more for their slaveholding Confederacy than the troops who did not own slaves." Glatthaar, *Soldiering*, 154, 165. For a summary of the debate among historians as to the primacy of

preserving slavery among Confederate soldiers' motivations, see Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 44–46.

⁴⁴ Glatthaar, *Soldiering*, 61.

⁴⁵ Excluding David Yulee, Florida's remaining eight Jewish slave owners in 1860 held fifteen slaves. Julius Burgheim and Morris Joseph each owned two slaves. Jacob Triest's father, Myer, owned one slave, and the Lyons brothers' mother, Sophie, owned three. Three Jewish slaveholders served in home guard or militia units: Abraham Forcheimer of Milton (four slaves), Jacob Cohen (one slave), and Henry Wurzburg (one slave). Lewis Marx of Escambia County, owner of one slave, was the remaining Jewish slaveholder in Florida in 1860. Abraham Friedenburg's American-born, presumably non-Jewish wife, Catherine Frances, owned one slave, who was left behind when the Friedenburgs moved north early in the war. Widow Johannah Burgheim claimed the Friedenburgs' slave in an 1863 legal dispute. Burgheim and Adeline Gardner either traded or acquired slaves during the war. Approximately one-third of all Florida families owned slaves in 1860 (5,152 slaveholders out of 15,090 families). Almost 22 percent of Florida's Jews (forty-three individuals) lived in households with slaves: the Triest and Marx families, holding one slave each, accounted for sixteen of the Florida Jews living in slaveholding homes. The extent of David Yulee's slaveholding is unclear. The 1850 census lists him as owning thirty-seven slaves in Hernando County, although by 1860 he may have owned or leased many more slaves sent to toil on his plantations and railroad projects. Digital Library on American Slavery, Petition 20586307, <http://library.uncg.edu/slavery/details.aspx?pid=4773>, accessed April 22, 2014; Alachua County Clerk of the Court, Ancient Records, Bills of Sale A (1846–1889), <http://www.clerk-alachua-fl.org/Archive>, accessed April 22, 2014; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Hernando County, Florida.

⁴⁶ Bertram W. Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865," in Sarna and Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War*, 110–111, 114–115; Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 37.

⁴⁷ Brown, *Jewish Pioneers*, 8–11; Sapon-White, "A Polish Jew." For the abolitionism of Moses Levy, a Jewish pioneer in antebellum Florida and the father of proslavery senator David Yulee, see Monaco, *Moses Levy of Florida*.

⁴⁸ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 417.

⁴⁹ James M. Denham and Canter Brown, Jr., eds., *Cracker Times and Pioneer Lives* (Columbia, SC, 2000), 3–6.

⁵⁰ A sixth possible fatality is Lewis Blumauer, who enlisted in Company I of the Third Florida Infantry in summer 1861 and disappeared from the historical record in mid-1862, probably perishing in a Union prison camp. Joseph Rosenthal participated in a "Meeting of German Jews" convened in Savannah on September 13, 1862, to prepare resolutions protesting the banishment of German Jews from Thomasville, Georgia, and the slander of Jews by local newspapers. "The Jews of the Confederacy," *American Jewish Archives* 13 (1961): 58–59.

⁵¹ C. M. Yulee, CSR, www.fold3.com, accessed April 17, 2014.

⁵² Glatthaar, *Soldiering*, 64.

⁵³ Ibid., 65; CSR, www.fold3.com, accessed April 17, 2014.

⁵⁴ Robert Rosen dismissively refers to “‘Galvanized Yankees’—that is, Confederate soldiers recruited in Federal prisoner-of-war camps”—in the context of a brief discussion of “shirkers, deserters, and cowards.” Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 204–206.

⁵⁵ Hieke, *Jewish Identity*, 65–82, 106–107.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 157.

⁵⁷ Benjamin and Morris Altman later built their shop into the famed B. Altman department store. Weinfeld, “Samuel Fleishman,” 38–39.

⁵⁸ A. N. Murphy to Capt. Bowers, Adj. General, March 8, 1864, www.fold3.com, accessed February 1, 2014.

⁵⁹ U.S. passport applications on Ancestry.com, accessed February 1, 2014.

⁶⁰ For Berlack’s account of leaving the South, see *Florida Times Union*, January 22, 1894. For Dressner’s eventful escape and journey, see Alice Strickland, “Blockade Runners,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 36 (1957): 85, 90; Union Citizens File, www.fold3.com, accessed April 22, 2014.

⁶¹ *American Israelite*, July 22, 1864.

⁶² Bertram Korn offers a contrasting interpretation of “latent” southern antisemitism during the war, arguing that such prejudice arose from Jews’ “concentration in petty trading” and scapegoating of Jews “for the Confederacy’s economic troubles.” Korn, “Jews of the Confederacy,” 6.

⁶³ John Milton to [Captain] Randolph, June 25, 1862, in Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 199. Milton got his wish in late 1864 when, in a move of desperation, Florida’s Confederate legislature required “that every able-bodied white male inhabitant in the State, between the ages of sixteen and fifty-five years” not already in the Confederate forces be “enrolled and liable to perform Militia duty in the Militia forces.” *Acts and Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly of Florida, at its Thirteenth Session* (Tallahassee, FL, 1865), 10.

⁶⁴ R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA. For an in-depth discussion of “covert” antisemitism in the Reconstruction-era South, see Hieke, *Jewish Identity*, 148–164. For attacks on German immigrants in Texas, see Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 417–438.

⁶⁵ David Greenfield was president of his B’nai B’rith chapter and helped found a congregation in Albany, Georgia. Samuel Herman participated in several Jewish communal organizations in Savannah. Louis Kohn (or Kahn) may not have founded Pensacola’s Jewish institutions, but after his death from meningitis in 1880, he was “esteemed for his probity of life by everyone, but more particularly was he known and loved by the Hebrews of our city, to which class he was connected by ties of affinity and consanguinity.” Robert Williams’s Torah rests in the ark of Temple Israel in Tallahassee. Temple Yearbook, Congregation Ahavath Chesed, 75th Anniversary, <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00010717/00001/1j>, accessed April 10, 2014; [Fernandina] *Florida Mirror*, October 2, 1880; Heimovics and Zerivitz, *Florida Jewish Heritage Trail*, 7–8.

⁶⁶ Simon Fleishman was buried in Chicago, Illinois, in 1908, where his grave marker defiantly proclaims his Confederate army service. "Simon Fleishman," <http://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=20084677&Pipi=6565404>, accessed April 7, 2014; Abram Vossen Goodman, "David Greenfield and the Albany, Georgia He Knew," Robert N. Rosen Papers, Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

⁶⁷ Michael B. Dougan, "Herrmann Hirsch and the Siege of Jackson," *Journal of Mississippi History* 53 (1991): 19–33; Coles and Hartman, *Biographical Rosters*, 341.

⁶⁸ Brown, "Dzialynski," 530; Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet, Florida in the Era of Reconstruction: 1863–1877* (Gainesville, FL, 1974), 128. According to Adam Mendelsohn, "Aside from the canard of the Jewish carpetbagger, we know little about Jews and Reconstruction." In contrast to the Republican membership noted here in Florida, North Carolina Jews involved with politics during the post-Civil War decades "generally identified with the Democratic Party," with few exceptions. Mendelsohn, "Introduction," in Sarna and Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War*, 19; Leonard Rogoff, "A Tale of Two Cities: Race, Riots, and Religion in New Bern and Wilmington, North Carolina, 1898," *Southern Jewish History* 14 (2011): 42, 68; Stuart Rockoff, "Carpetbaggers, Jacklegs, and Bolting Republicans: Jews in Reconstruction Politics in Ascension Parish, Louisiana," *American Jewish History* 97 (2013): 39–40.

⁶⁹ A newspaper account described Brendt's killers as "two negroes." Brown, *Jewish Pioneers*, 25–26; *Memphis Daily Appeal*, August 2, 1868.

⁷⁰ Blumenthal had previously solicited President Grant for a West Point appointment for his nephew, Fernandina resident Max Blumenthal. John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (Carbondale, IL, 2000), 24:98–100; 19:455; Shofner, *Nor is it Over Yet*, 234–235.

⁷¹ Weinfeld, "Samuel Fleishman," 51–52.

⁷² Benjamin Fleishman died at a young age during the Reconstruction era. *Titusville Florida Star*, February 15, 1901; *Gainesville Daily Sun*, April 10, 1905. For Gertrude Dzialynski's career in government, see Canter Brown, Jr., "Gertrude Dzialynski Corbet, 1874–1931," in *The Varieties of Women's Experiences*, ed. Larry E. Rivers and Canter Brown, Jr. (Gainesville, FL, 2010), 215–235.

⁷³ A different Henry Brash lived in Apalachicola and was a Civil War veteran but is outside the scope of this study, because he served in a non-Florida regiment and came to the state only after the war.

⁷⁴ In 1877, Governor Drew appointed Philip Dzialynski as Polk County commissioner and Morris Dzialynski as Duval County treasurer. Louis Witkovski was murdered by a Gainesville attorney under convoluted circumstances in 1889. Brown, "Dzialynski," 527, 530; *Atlanta Constitution*, December 15, 1889; *Waycross (GA) Herald*, March 30, 1895, April 6, 1895; *Ocala Banner*, March 17, 1905.

⁷⁵ Lower numbers of Jews remaining in Florida might be the result of Florida's lesser state of development than Georgia and the Carolinas. Compare to Hieke, *Jewish Identity*, 38–44, 316–317. In 1870, Florida's two hundred Jewish adults consisted of thirty-two (16 percent) American-born (including only two Florida-born adults); forty-nine (25 percent)

from German states, including thirty-five from Bavaria; one hundred (50 percent) from Prussia (including its Polish provinces) and Russian Poland; the remainder were from western Europe and various other nations. The percentage of Jewish minors rose from 40 percent in 1860 to over 50 percent ten years later.

⁷⁶ Dzialynski was also remembered as a “gallant Confederate soldier, a model citizen, an upright and merciful judge, . . . an exemplar for the youth of his beloved Florida.” He is buried in the Old Jewish Center Cemetery in Jacksonville. Brown, “Dzialynski,” 532; *Pensacola Journal*, May 7, 1907; *Tallahassee Weekly True Democrat*, May 10, 1907 and May 17, 1907; “Morris A Dzialynski,” <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=76654975>, accessed April 11, 2014.

An Interview with Bernard Wax

by

Adam Mendelsohn*

In 1976 Bernard (“Bernie”) Wax acted as one of the midwives in the rebirth of the Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS). Although the society had been founded two decades before—born in the burst of enthusiasm for American Jewish history that accompanied the celebration of the three-hundredth anniversary of the first permanent Jewish settlement in America—it was all but moribund by 1970. Working with Saul Viener and Melvin I. Urofsky, Wax, the director of the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), mobilized support from his organization and several others to stage a conference on southern Jewish history in Richmond, Virginia. The rest is history. The society has flourished, and Wax has been a stalwart member, long-serving officeholder, AJHS representative at its meetings, installer of SJHS officers, and proof-reader of its publications ever since. Even as Wax’s early and instrumental role has been described within the pages of this journal, little has been written about his background and his affinity for the field of southern Jewish history.¹ This brief article, aimed at filling these lacunae, is based on an oral history interview conducted over two sessions in 2007.²

Wax was born into what was, in his words, “essentially an immigrant family.” His parents settled in Philadelphia after leaving the Ukraine in the 1910s. His brother Nelson, thirteen years his senior, spoke only Yiddish until kindergarten. His mother could

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write little more than her name in English. "In a way," Wax remembers, he "had three parents" for the first seven years of his life, until his brother left to study at Ohio State University in 1937. Ten years later Wax, too, left home for college. He had wanted to become a "scientist, or a mathematician" (his brother later became a professor of electrical engineering at the University of Illinois) but was "waylaid at the University of Chicago." Since he placed out of mathematics completely as an entering freshman, he was not required to take additional math courses to graduate. And so he "became interested in history via the backdoor," inspired by classes on American history taught by Walter Johnson.

Wax graduated with both bachelor's and master's degrees in the early 1950s, during which time both his parents died and he married. He was drafted into the army as the Korean War was entering its latter stages. Days after his wedding to Dolly Nemchek in March 1953, Wax was inducted into the army. His two years of service provided unexpected preparation for his later career. Originally ordered to Austria—an assignment cancelled because of the death of his father—Wax instead spent most of his enlistment at Fort Meade in Maryland, within driving distance of his wife's family in Philadelphia, as a dayroom orderly and supply records management specialist. With ample time on his hands, he "became the best read private in the U.S. Army."

After his discharge in 1955, Wax applied to graduate school and was accepted into the University of Wisconsin's prestigious doctoral program in American history. He remained there as a student for several years, but, under financial strain as a father of two children and uncertain about when he would complete his degree, he "decided it wasn't going to work out." He initially pursued several alternatives, including working for the State Department, but he settled instead on a position to which his expertise in American history and organizational skills were well suited. Wax spent seven years (1959–1966) at the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield (now the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library), first as the field services representative and then as the field services supervisor.

*Wedding portrait of Bernard and Dolly Nemchek Wax,
March 21, 1953, Conshohocken, Pennsylvania.
(Courtesy of Bernard Wax.)*

During his tenure at the research library he met several people involved with the American Jewish Historical Society. In 1965, amid a turbulent and transitional time in that society's history, he was invited to apply for the position of director. He took the reins in August 1966 after a period of "internecine battle" over the future of the society. Ironically, the feuding was the legacy of a substantial bequest left by Lee Max Friedman in 1957 that transformed the fortunes of an organization that had long struggled financially. The bequest enabled the society to become more professional by hiring staff with academic training, including Dr.

Nathan Kaganoff as its librarian, and systematizing its book and manuscript collections.³ The bequest also encouraged the society to plan a facility of its own. For several decades the society had occupied a “small suite of rooms” at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City and in an office building that doubled as library and work space for the society’s staff. Many of its treasures had long sat uncatalogued and unused in storage for want of space and attention.⁴ Now the society could finally afford to think of a future elsewhere. The leadership of the society splintered into three factions—there were “tough personalities involved”—each promoting a rival city: New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. The debate was prolonged, “heated,” and “acrimonious,” and eventually the relocation was challenged in court. By the time Wax was hired, the society had decided on Waltham, Massachusetts, where it had been invited to relocate at the invitation of Abram L. Sachar, the president of Brandeis University. The society moved its archives and offices from New York, its home since its founding in 1892, to a new site that it purchased on the university’s campus.⁵

After his appointment as director of the AJHS, Wax relocated to New York, commuting between there and Boston to supervise the move and the construction of a new building that was completed in May 1968. The latter soon housed a collection of thirty-five thousand books and one million manuscript pages, indexed for the first time in a comprehensive catalog. The collection, open to visitors as never before, began to attract a steady stream of researchers and aided the dramatic growth of American Jewish history as a field of academic inquiry in the 1970s by making primary sources accessible to scholars.⁶ Wax’s style of leadership—he “tried to do things by diplomacy rather than by atomic bomb weaponry”—soothed some of the “bitter” divisions that preceded his appointment. Several individuals, including Saul Viener, had left the society’s board in protest of the relocation, but Wax was able to lure some back.

Initially much of Wax’s time was taken up with establishing the society in its new home: organizing public lectures, recruiting members in New England, hiring a small staff, and processing

collections that had never been properly organized. As the society developed local roots, it expanded its offerings, hosting exhibitions of Yiddish theater posters, colonial Jewish portraits, and synagogue architecture, among others; preparing a traveling show on the history of Boston Jewry (*On Common Ground*); and increasing its support for publications on American Jewish history. *Turn to the South*, for example, edited by Nathan Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky, was a collection of essays that were originally presented in October 1976 at the Richmond conference that relaunched the SJHS. The volume was published under the auspices of the AJHS in 1979 and is often credited with reviving academic interest in the field of southern Jewish history.⁷ The capstone of the AJHS publishing initiative was a five-volume survey of American Jewish history completed at the end of Wax's tenure at the society.⁸ The society also expanded its reach by organizing meetings in Chicago, Los Angeles, and other cities where it had not held meetings before in an effort to be a truly national historical society. Even farther afield, the society collaborated with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the *New York Times* over a fifteen-year period to publish books, reprint older volumes, and organize conferences on the connections between America and the Holy Land, including one at the U.S. National Archives.

Under Wax's direction, the society actively added to its collections. Wax saw his role as one of "curator, or gatekeeper for the future," saving those historical sources that would be valuable to later generations. At times this involved "seizing upon events that were taking place that seemed to have a historic resonance." In 1967, for example, the society was the only Jewish institution collecting material relating to American responses to the Six Day War. He "took this [work] personally." His responsibilities included everything from visiting the actress Molly Picon to encourage her to donate her papers to the society, to loading and driving the truck that collected the papers of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

Wax served as director until first "retiring" in August 1991, but he continued to serve in a variety of senior capacities until

his “second retirement” in 2004. His early career at the AJHS informed how he thought about efforts to relocate the society to New York and to house it at the Center for Jewish History. The society’s move to Boston had offered opportunities to rebuild and reconfigure. This second move provided a chance to reimagine the AJHS. While the benefits of being on a university campus were clear in the 1970s, the society had not “reached its potential” in Boston. He supported the planned relocation as long as the society retained a presence in the Boston area, something it had initially done with its library on the campus of Hebrew College in Newton. Once again he was responsible for supervising the moving of the society’s books and manuscripts. The society ultimately relocated its Boston-area activities yet again to the New England Historic Genealogical Society, its current location.

As director of the AJHS, Wax took a proprietorial interest in the growth of local and regional Jewish historical and genealogical societies. But why did the SJHS, of all the societies that blossomed in the 1970s and after, win and keep his allegiance even after he had retired from his role as AJHS director? Wax ascribes his abiding interest to the nature of SJHS annual meetings. When he was AJHS director, SJHS annual meetings were a professional obligation, but once retired, he recalls, they were like “taking a professional vacation.” The dynamics of his extended family also played a part. Wax jokes that he and his son-in-law, raised in Montgomery, Alabama, do not see eye-to-eye on southern history, particularly when it comes to the Civil War. Given his early career in Springfield and his expertise in matters relating to Lincoln, Wax thought it important that he “understand the other side of the coin” when it came to how the South interpreted its past. Tongue heavily ensconced in cheek, he described wanting to “protect” his “grandchildren” from their father’s historical “vagaries.”

Although his “dream” of reeducating his son-in-law has “not materialize[d],” the SJHS is all the richer for Wax’s contributions. A native Philadelphian, a graduate of Chicago, a student of Springfield, and a resident of Brookline, Massachusetts, Wax’s commitment to spreading the story of southern Jewish life has surely also earned him the status of honorary southerner.

At the SJHS 10th annual conference, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, 1986.

From left, Stephen Whitfield, Janice Blumberg, Bernie Wax.

(Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.)

Selections from the Interview

MENDELSON: What was the state of the collections when you first arrived at the American Jewish Historical Society in 1966? What were the strengths? Where were the gaps?

WAX: We didn't know. We really didn't know. We only knew what had been listed, but we didn't know the contents of what had been listed. Dr. [Isidore] Meyer had a very possessive nature.⁹ He had devoted his professional life to the society for a long period of time, from the late 1930s on. It had been run primarily by lay personnel—volunteers—when he was hired. And so he tried to maintain some control when Dr. [Nathan] Kaganoff came; I think there was some reluctance to let go of the keys. I had never been a confrontational type of person so we had lunch one day and I explained the situation—what we were trying to do—and by the end of the lunch he handed me the keys, and I then handed them

to Dr. Kaganoff. And no bitterness or anything of that nature [persisted] that I can recall. They were very civil in their relationship.

And it was only in that particular period of time that we knew what we had. Portraits, yes. Sometimes there had been exhibitions of various manuscripts. But for anything detailed we didn't have a clue. Everything was located in several big rooms on the eighth floor of an office building in New York City on Fifth Avenue and Twentieth Street. We were going to move, and the only way to move properly was to know what we had.

MENDELSON: How did the society's move to the campus of Brandeis University affect your early tenure?

WAX: The battle [over the future home of the society] became quite heated [before I started in 1966], and I think in fact there were some fisticuffs during some of the meetings. The meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, which was held in 1965, was the most acrimonious. I think there were personalities, really tough personalities, involved. There may well have been a Reform-Conservative-Orthodox tinge to some of this also. I remember a lot of people who were unhappy with us being at Brandeis University. And I can't really attest to it, [but some people were] unhappy with Abe Sachar being involved, [they feared the society] being subsumed by the university, which we tried to fight by having the society build [its new building] on a separate piece of land which we purchased from the university. We didn't tell anybody that the university gave us back money each year to pay for that purchase. We had a separate address so that our rear end was on campus and our front door on Thornton Road. "Theoretical" Thornton Road, because there was a gate that cut it off, but it was still Thornton Road. And I think our mailman came through the gate as opposed to cutting through the [campus]. I mean, it was subterfuge, if you will. I think there were a whole host of reasons [for the acrimony], and there were some very strong personalities, very strong personalities. Sometimes I wonder why I was even chosen [for the job] as a result of that; I guess I was the least threatening to anybody. But you know, as I described in my relationship with Dr. Meyer, I tried to do things by diplomacy rather

than atomic bomb weaponry, and fortunately most of the time I was successful.

MENDELSON: What were your early challenges and disappointments?

WAX: I had really been interested at one point in fostering a greater emphasis in the historical society on Yiddish and the eastern European community. However, YIVO [the New York-based institute of Yiddish scholarship] was in existence at that time. Also I think that the thrust of much of the leadership for a long, long time at the American Jewish Historical Society was Reform-oriented. So my gut feeling was that most of the officers were not really oriented toward [Yiddish and the immigrant community].

Then the National Yiddish Book Center and [its founder Aaron Lansky] became something. My predilection toward this moved away. It just didn't seem to be necessary. And there were a whole host of local societies that were now coming into existence. That was one of the things that I had really hoped that the historical society would foster. And then the genealogical movement took off, which initially I must admit I looked at askance. Because having worked in Wisconsin when I was a graduate student at the State Historical Society [of Wisconsin] and then when I worked at the Illinois State Historical Library, all I could picture in my mind was little old ladies with white sneakers running around trying to determine whether or not they were members of the Daughters of the American Revolution or the Sons of the American Revolution. And my orientation was not for *yichus*, it was for knowledge, so basically I came up very surprised at the approach that Jewish genealogy had.

In fact I spoke one time at a meeting in Philadelphia and gave a mea culpa because I had misjudged what Jewish genealogists would be doing. They were really seriously interested in learning the histories of their families, particularly those people that were Holocaust survivors. They were interested in the Holocaust, or American Jewish history, or other forms of history, which would tell them more about the story of those Jews, not the inheritance of those Jews as far as their status was concerned. By the time I retired there must have been close to sixteen local Jewish historical

societies and genealogical societies, not that I had much to do with any of them. I know I helped start a few, but most of these were indigenous.

MENDELSON: What was your relationship with your board?

WAX: [It is difficult to compete with other cultural institutions] without essentially gathering two dozen extremely wealthy individuals and having them deeply involved and concerned about the society and doing more than just giving money. We had several [wealthy board members] but nothing, nothing in terms of two or three dozen people whose commitment is solely to that. Many of the people we have or were on the board also committed to other institutions; [they'd give us] twenty-five thousand dollars, whereas the other [gift] is a million dollar one.

For the most part I had a lot of latitude [as director], but my problems arose from the monetary aspect, from when there wasn't a great deal of money. And there was a lack of recognition, I feel, on the part of the board, that they should be out there getting money. Even when I asked them, "OK, let me go [raise money]. If you're not going to do it, here I'll go out [and do so]," and there was some reluctance on that because they were concerned I'd be spending money, and so what's going to happen because [they feared] nothing would come in. And what was important, is [that] a lot of these people were businessmen, and they'd do things [as board members that] they would never have done in business. They'd do [things] at the historical society, taking risks, or believing that a certain approach would work, but if they'd thought about it, if they were going to do this in their particular business or their law firm, they'd see it was crazy. [For example,] the concept of holding a big [fundraising] meeting some place without inviting certain people who you need to make sure it's successful. Make sure there are people there who will be shills, who'd say [publicly], "OK, I'll give some [money]," and then by the end of the meeting you'd have [encouraged other contributions]. That only occurred once during my entire tenure. It occurred just at the time that I told you about, the last board meeting prior to the final [completion of the] construction of the building [in Waltham], and we were walking through the building and people were so

amazed by how well it looked, and people sat down and within ten minutes we had two hundred and fifty thousand dollars raised.

MENDELSON: Who else, beyond those who are frequently credited, were active during the early stages of the Southern Jewish Historical Society?

WAX: Someone whom people haven't heard of, because he stepped away, was Louis Schmier. He was at Valdosta State University. Louis played a very important administrative role, as well as an inspiring role. Here was a guy who came from New York, [lived] in the South, became interested in southern Jewry, published a couple of books, a number of articles, was very active in our organizational efforts at the very beginning. I think he in many ways held the society together because of that. Somehow he managed to fall off a number of years ago, and I haven't been in touch for quite some time. He hasn't come to conferences in quite some time. Another would be Sol Breibart of Charleston. Sol was also very, very important. He edited the original newsletter, although there was [also] a David Goldberg in Charleston who handed out sheets, summaries at one point. I had tried very hard at the American Jewish Historical Society to compile every single thing that was published about or from the SJHS and I had kept it in our ephemeral collections, which have now become ephemeral: we have no idea where they are. It's a tragic loss. Nathan Kaganoff, who was our librarian, tried very, very hard to maintain this kind of material, because it is ephemeral. You know that things like this simply don't last, and if an institution like ours makes it a point to collect it, it would be retained. I have no idea what happened to it.

Abe Kanof, who was the former president of the AJHS and was a very prominent physician in New York City, wrote about Uriah P. Levy in a wonderful article. He had moved from New York to Raleigh, North Carolina, [when] he retired and became interested in southern Jewish history and in helping create a section of the [North Carolina] Museum [of Art] in Raleigh with a Jewish component. Both he and his wife were very generous to the AJHS and the SJHS. Saul Rubin, the rabbi in Savannah,

Georgia, also was a key player at one time. A gentleman from Jacksonville, Florida, named Jack Coleman played an important role for a number of years [and] was also a public relations oriented person, so he helped the organization with getting membership.

MENDELSON: Who were the dominant personalities in the early years of the society?

WAX: Other than Lou Schmier? Rachel Heimovics was president and then editor [of the journal]. Mark Bauman has never become a formal head, but in his role as [journal] editor he has played a very dominant role, I think, very strong-willed. Janice Rothschild Blumberg was an early president, [and] she remains very much involved. [But] I don't think there was anybody who

*Bernie Wax at the podium at the 14th annual SJHS conference, Jackson, Mississippi, 1990. Society president Rachel Heimovics is at right.
(Courtesy of Rachel Heimovics Braun.)*

you could consider to be dominant. I think Sam Proctor, professor of history at the University of Florida, in his own quiet way was a very forceful personality. I dealt with him with great respect; he was a close personal friend of mine. But there was nobody that I can recall who in a sense could be called dominant. Even Saul

[Viener] in his own way could be hard as nails but was diplomatically very good about doing anything. Once, informally, he told me [his approach was to] “dress British but think Yiddish.” It was in a great sense a very democratically operated institution. Even I, having been the director of the AJHS, and having been treasurer [of the SJHS], and associated with the society from its very beginnings, I found that the organization has this special aura around it, and is such a democratically run kind of institution. Everybody can make an input and suggestions, but there’s nobody who’s controlling the purse strings. In a sense [as treasurer and longtime financial adviser] I do but I don’t, and I couldn’t, dominate what goes on. Sumner Levine probably has been in recent years the most attentive and involved in every single aspect of the society’s organization. But he’s very temperate about it.¹⁰

*Bernie and Dolly Wax at their sixtieth wedding anniversary,
March 2013. (Courtesy of Bernard Wax.)*

NOTES

¹ See Bernard Wax, "Ruminations about the SJHS," *Southern Jewish History* 10 (2007): 1-4, as well as the other essays on the early history of the society in the same issue. Urofsky headed the department of history at Virginia Commonwealth University and arranged to have the conference at that institution.

² Bernard Wax interview conducted by Adam Mendelsohn, 2007. The interview focused on Wax's career at the AJHS and role in founding the SJHS. Interview in the possession of the author. All uncited quotations in this essay were drawn from these interviews.

³ For a description of the difficulty of using the collections prior to the appointment of Kaganoff and the move to Waltham, see Abram Kanof, "Days of Stress—Days of Progress," *American Jewish History* 71 (June 1982): 488; Jeffrey S. Gurock, "The Society in Turmoil: A Steady Course for *Publications*," *American Jewish History* 81 (Winter 1993): 226. For histories of the society, see Nathan Kaganoff, "AJHS at 90: Reflections on the History of the Oldest Ethnic Historical Society in America," *American Jewish History* 71 (June 1982): 466-485, and the special issue of *American Jewish History* 81 (Winter 1993) devoted to the history of the society's journal. On Kaganoff, see Jonathan D. Sarna, "Nathan Kaganoff's Legacy," *American Jewish History* 81 (Spring-Summer 1994): 432-434.

⁴ Gurock, "Society in Turmoil," 226.

⁵ For a firsthand account of the rift and its consequences, see Kanof, "Days of Stress," 489-491. The most complete account is in Gurock, "Society in Turmoil," 228-230.

⁶ Jeffrey Gurock, "Quarterly, History or Heritage," *American Jewish History* 81 (Winter 1993): 245; on the expansion of the field in the 1970s, see 246-247.

⁷ Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky, eds., *Turn to the South: Essays on Southern Jewry* (Charlottesville, VA, 1979).

⁸ Henry L. Feingold, ed., *The Jewish People in America* (Baltimore, 1992).

⁹ Dr. Isidore Meyer was editor, librarian, and archivist at the AJHS from 1940 to 1968.

¹⁰ Sumner Levine, a long-time member and former president of the SJHS, passed away in June 2014.

Postscript: Reminiscences and Observations

by

Bernard Wax*

I have been fortunate to be present and to participate in the resurgence of interest and production of works in the field of American Jewish history on the national, regional, and local levels since 1966. Although there previously had been numerous studies, books, and exhibits on the subject, the numbers produced in almost fifty years have been astounding, as have the numbers of both amateur and professional historians. These have been accompanied by a steady increase in the number of museums of outstanding size and quality ranging across the nation, as well as the creation of local, state, and national genealogical societies. I should like to comment upon the changes that have transpired in the two institutions with which I have had the most intimate and knowledgeable experience, the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) and the Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS), each of which has been affected by the events that I have cited.

Since my retirement from the AJHS, that institution has moved from the campus of Brandeis University to New York City, its original home from 1892 to 1968. In my view, what had been essentially an archival, research, and publication institution geared primarily to serving the academic community and interested laypeople changed as a result. The governing body, which had been national in representation, became identified with New York City, whereas previously members had come from diverse

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areas such as Texas, California, Illinois, Michigan, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania, as well as New York. Annual meetings also took place in these states in order to “drum up” interest as well as financial support. The AJHS’s return to New York, where it has partnered with several other Jewish institutions under the aegis of the Center for Jewish History, has led to a less significant national presence in recent years and increased its economic needs. After the advent of the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, the AJHS’s prominence may have been diminished as well.

Other competing factors have also emerged, primarily the number of college and university publications now devoted to the field, as well as commercial publishers who have recognized the public interest in the subject. The role of academics, previously an integral part of society operations, also seems to have been diminished, perhaps because of these other “opportunities.” In essence this has resulted in less grassroots participation, not only from lay participants but also from professionals,’ although biennially scholars’ conferences highlighting particular themes designed primarily for academic participation meet in different communities. The topic of the last such meeting was “Jews and Judaism in the American World of ‘Difference.’” The major representation of scholars appears to be associated with the AJHS quarterly, *American Jewish History*, whose various editors, board members, and advisers number more than twenty.

Despite what I have described as a change from what I perceived as its original purpose—the collection and preservation of historical material—the AJHS in one aspect has returned to its roots with the establishment of the AJHS New England Archives at the New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston. This new entity is dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of the Greater Boston and New England Jewish communities by using, in part, digitization on an extensive scale.

In contrast to the founding of the AJHS, the SJHS’s roots were regional in nature and purpose. The original entity was formed during the 1954 tercentenary marking the arrival of the

first known group of Jews in what was to become the United States. The SJHS was rejuvenated during the period of the nation's bicentennial for the purpose of noting the contribution of southern Jewry to the nation's history and whose several hundred members come from a wide variety of states, including those in the North, like myself. Unlike the AJHS, the SJHS is completely run and staffed by volunteers, with a modest budget for publications, meetings, and awards for research, books, and exhibitions, nominations for which are actively solicited nationally and internationally. Annual meetings are held in different southern communities with both lay and academic participation and with local involvement in planning for and hosting attendees. Religious services are integrated into each meeting, with congregations involved in welcoming visitors and speakers invited to address jointly the members of the society and the host synagogue. The community element of the SJHS is perhaps best demonstrated by its newsletter, the *Rambler*, which contains news relating to the annual meeting, local southern Jewish historical societies, publications, events, and related stories. I cite all these activities because I feel that each has played a role in making southern Jewish history a popular and useful study for the ordinary citizen seeking information about the Jewish experience in the South, and it is to the credit of the society's leadership that these activities continue to be supported.

What seemed initially to be an organization with limited and narrow vision has, upon examination and reflection, turned out to be quite the opposite. The professionalism achieved by the SJHS is best demonstrated by its various activities and the results of its support for publications, research, and exhibits throughout its history. The broad program content for the 39th annual SJHS conference—held in Austin jointly with the Texas Jewish Historical Society and titled “Crossing Borders: Southern Jews in Global Contexts”—serves as an indication of the extensive professional advancement of the SJHS.

PRIMARY SOURCES

*In Southern States: Historical Texts from
the Arbeter Ring's Southern District
(English Translation from Yiddish)*

by

Josh Parshall*

**Leadership List, Arbeter Ring Southern District,
September 1949¹**

**Mitchell J. Merlin, "Left and Right in the Arbeter Ring,"
September 1949²**

The Arbeter Ring (Workmen's Circle) was founded in 1900 in New York City as a left-wing fraternal order for Yiddish-speaking immigrants. Developing out of a small precursor society, the organization provided similar mutual aid and educational opportunities as other groups, but under the rubric of a general labor or radical viewpoint without religious affiliation, Zionist orientation, or assimilationist pressure. By 1918 it boasted chapters across the country with total membership reaching sixty thousand.³ Although the organization is most often associated with heavily industrialized cities in the North, branches in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas sprang up starting in 1908. These branches organized a range of activities including charitable and fundraising endeavors, Yiddish education for children, and political and cultural events. Shortly after World War I, the branches in these states formed two regional districts, the Texas-Louisiana

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District and the Southern District, which ultimately merged in 1946.⁴

Arthur Liebman has written that Arbeter Ring membership “provided friendship, mutual aid, and moorings in a strange society” to recent Jewish immigrants with progressive and radical views, who had “found it difficult” to take part in “associations in which their politics were continually subject to challenge.”⁵ These motivating factors do not seem to have differed according to region or community size, but branches in the South—generally in smaller cities with less powerful labor movements—operated in different contexts than counterparts in New York City and other major urban centers. In the translated article below, Mitchell J. Merlin claims that the branches in his region were the only “radical organizations” in their cities and “did not have the help and sympathy of unions.”⁶

Members in northern cities were often wage laborers who belonged to unions and Socialist Party branches, and their local chapters existed within a vibrant network of left-wing and Yiddish cultural institutions. In these locations, branches often organized as *landsmanshaftn* comprised of immigrants from a particular city or region in eastern Europe.⁷ In the South, by contrast, many participants owned their own businesses, and Arbeter Ring branches had fewer organizational allies in cities with smaller Jewish populations and relatively weak labor movements. While branches in the South often included several members of one extended family, the lower Jewish population precluded separate branches organized around *landsmanshaftn*. Regardless of region, however, the organization faced opposition from already acculturated Jews who feared that these new arrivals would draw unwanted attention to the Jewish community, as well as from Orthodox institutions that objected to the group’s secular proclivities.

In regard to clashes between radical and moderate factions within the organization—the topic of the excerpt below—some sources suggest that branches in the South may have contained more than their fair share of hardline leftists, although the evidence for such a claim is far from conclusive. Liebman has

argued that Arbeter Ring chapters in less populated areas like the South were the only source of Jewish identity for members, that sharply drawn lines divided the group from other Jewish institutions in these communities, and that, because more isolated Arbeter Ring branches depended on official organizational publications for news and opinions, they were isolated from the increasingly moderate viewpoints of average members in larger cities.⁸ Although Merlin's account is neither impartial nor comprehensive, his closing comments suggest that a lack of moderate socialist organizations in southern cities strengthened the hardline leftists in the district, so the evidence presented here provides some support to Liebman's claims.

Historians of Jewish history in the South have not given sustained attention to Arbeter Ring branches and tend to characterize secular Yiddish life in the region as culturally rather than politically oriented. Mark Bauman, for example, has written, "identity with labor unions, socialism and communism . . . only took root in the South as an intellectual exercise and as reverence for Yiddish culture through such organizations as the Arbeiter Ring/Workmen's Circle."⁹ *In Southern States*, especially in the excerpt translated below, does reflect an organizational life centered on ideological debate and what many people would call cultural activities, but it also demonstrates engagement with global Jewish trends, national and local labor movements, and electoral politics. The journal provides a starting place, then, for a deeper exploration of Arbeter Ring's branches in the South that might, in turn, lead to a reappraisal of the organization's activities and legacies in the region.

While conducting oral history interviews for the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life from 2009 to 2013, I spoke with former students of Houston's Arbeter Ring school and other people connected to Texas Arbeter Ring branches and their members. In addition, a few interviewees shared documents: Henrietta Bell of Houston loaned me a copy of *In Southern States*, a journal that was distributed to delegates at the thirtieth conference of the Southern District of the Arbeter Ring in 1949 in Houston. This essay uses information from the

1949 journal to outline the history and activities of branches in the South in order to provide context for the extended excerpt that follows: an account by Mitchell J. Merlin, a grocery store owner and branch leader in Atlanta, of how vicious infighting between hard-line communists and more moderate members during the 1920s played out in the original Southern District of the Arbeter Ring.¹⁰

The Journal

The title, *In Southern States*, was not only used for the 1949 publication but also for copies of slimmer programs distributed at district conferences through 1950.¹¹ Fradle Pomerantz Freidenreich, for example, cites the Yiddish title, *In Dorem Land*, for the years 1928 and 1943, in her book *Passionate Pioneers: Yiddish Secular Education in North America, 1910–1960*.¹² A few of the conference programs, as well as the 1949 journal, can be found in the Joseph Jacobs papers in the Southern Labor Archive at Georgia State University.

The 1949 edition of *In Southern States* is a bilingual publication. Held with the binding to the right, it appears to be a Yiddish text, but when it is flipped over, the reader sees an English-language cover with the spine on the left. Behind each cover, a corresponding section includes its publication information and a contents page. The English portion has 48 pages of text, and the Yiddish side has 156. Joseph Duntov, assistant secretary of the district and a member of the Miami Beach branch, served as editor.

The English section includes a variety of information: a history of the Workmen's Circle; articles on the activities and potential of the organization; histories of the youth branches in Houston and Miami; proposals for more action by young members in the region; information on the Jewish Labor Committee, antisemitism in America and abroad, global socialism, and Jews displaced by World War II; updates on labor struggles in the United States and rising corporate profits; and data on Jewish immigration to the United States, national and local Jewish populations, and Workmen's Circle chapters by city.

*In Southern States, published by
the Arbeter Ring Southern District, 1949.
(Photo courtesy of Josh Parshall.)*

The Yiddish section is more extensive. It begins with names and addresses of district officials and branch secretaries (provided below in translation). Following the table of contents are a foreword and opening remarks by editor Joseph Duntov; lyrics to the "Arbeter Ring Hymn" and other songs of the Jewish left; a greeting from the organization's national executive committee to the state of Israel; commemorative texts on the Warsaw ghetto uprising and Nazi genocide; essays by national Arbeter Ring leaders; resolutions from the 1948 Arbeter Ring conference in Boston; histories of the district and individual chapters; photographs of district officers and local branches; a report on the 1948 district conference in Chattanooga; articles on Yiddish education, the socialist movement in the South, the Jewish Labor Committee, YIVO (the leading institution for Yiddish scholarship), and the Jewish Culture Congress; a table of figures for Arbeter Ring member dues, benefits, and assets from 1900 to 1948; memorial photographs and short biographies of deceased leaders of Southern District chapters; and greetings and congratulations from constituents and partner organizations. Of the Yiddish section's 156 pages, around 60 cover local and regional history of the Arbeter Ring. Another thirteen are devoted to the memories of late founders and leaders. Most of the information in this essay comes from the historical pieces.

Among the contributing authors in the journal, Merlin stands out for having written three pieces: a general history of the original Southern District, a description of the left-right split in the 1920s (translated below), and a cowritten history of Branch 207 in Atlanta. He is usually referred to in the text as M. J., but also appears as Mikhl, Michael, or Mitchell in other sources. Merlin was born around 1885 in Dubrovna in northwestern Russia (today, Belarus) and immigrated to the United States in 1905.¹³ At the time of the 1910 census, he lived with his widowed mother and three younger siblings in Atlanta. Shortly thereafter, he married Bessie (or Betsy) Yampolsky, the daughter of fellow branch-founder Samuel Yampolsky, with whom he had two daughters.¹⁴ Eventually eight Merlin brothers and a

sister settled in Atlanta, but not all of them joined the Arbeter Ring. Several of the Merlins held socialist or communist views, while the oldest brother, Lazar, "was so religious that he ran the only kosher restaurant in town and sold religious artifacts."¹⁵

The Southern District

The organizational life of the Arbeter Ring in the South began with the founding of the Atlanta and Dallas branches in 1908.¹⁶ According to Merlin, the first chapters were founded in isolation from one another. In the case of Atlanta, the founders were immigrants from Russia and Poland who hoped to start a local branch of the Socialist Party but settled for a chapter of the Arbeter Ring after reading about the organization in the *Jewish Daily Forward*.¹⁷ The early history of the Dallas chapter provides fewer details, but exclusion by the German Jews prominent in the downtown business district seems to have motivated the local founders.¹⁸

Twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Arbeter

Ring branch in Nashville, Tennessee, 1949.

(From In Southern States, photo courtesy of Josh Parshall.)

Branches in other cities followed quickly. By 1916, new chapters had appeared in Alabama (Birmingham), Florida (Jacksonville), Georgia (Savannah and Macon), Louisiana (Shreveport), Tennessee (Memphis and Chattanooga), and Texas (Galveston, Waco, Houston, and San Antonio).¹⁹ Many

started with a small group, often between ten and twenty young immigrants, but grew significantly over the first decade or so. According to the history written by Wolf Bell, Houston's chapter began with fifteen members in 1915 but reached ninety-four members at its peak. At the time of the 1949 journal, he reported that the group had shrunk to seventy-three.²⁰ In Shreveport, a smaller city, the group peaked at sixty members, only a handful of whom remained in 1949.²¹ It is not clear from the journal when membership attained its highest numbers, either generally or in specific cities, but chapters seem to have been most active in the 1920s and 1930s, and national membership peaked in the mid-1920s.²² The membership of a given chapter over time likely depended in part on the general growth of Jewish populations in each area. Galveston's branch, for example, started before Houston's and actually helped found the nearby chapter in 1915, but was soon overtaken in size as Houston experienced tremendous population growth.²³

In 1920 the Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee chapters organized into the Southern District to better coordinate their activities, especially lecture tours by prominent Yiddish authors. According to Merlin, leaders from the

two greatest cities in the Southern District, Atlanta and Memphis, corresponded about this matter (Comrade P. Block, currently the manager of the *Forward* in Boston, and Mitchell J. Merlin, the sec. of Atlanta Branch 207). The arrangements took a long time. We had no inkling what we would achieve or how it would work. We just decided that a conference should be called, and we would work out our plans there. The first conference, the first Sunday and Monday in September 1920, was held in Atlanta.

The first meetings with unknown people from other cities, yet with whom we had so much in common, placed new souls in all of us. It was a *yontifdike* mood that I cannot forget to this day. We saw then that we were only isolated within our cities, but we had brothers and friends in all the surrounding cities. We decided communally to work for our ideals. The largest cities should take on larger obligations, and the smaller cities

should benefit from them, as equal partners. This system still works today with great success.²⁴

Simultaneously, the Texas and Louisiana branches combined into another district, only to unify with the Southern District in 1946 as previously indicated. Annual conferences originally lasted for two days but were extended to a third in later years.²⁵

Activities

Branches raised funds for themselves and on behalf of outside organizations and established facilities known as "lyceums," often houses that had been converted for organizational use and served as spaces for meetings, social events, lending libraries, and Arbeter Ring schools. In addition to after-school Yiddish classes for children, branches coordinated lectures, concerts, and plays, and they participated in activism around labor struggles and politics. The details of these activities as well as their success varied between cities and over time, but cultural and educational endeavors seem to have taken precedence. In an article devoted to a general history of the original Southern District, Merlin describes how nearly every branch was able to obtain a building and open a school, but he adds, "I see that we achieved everything that we undertook, but one must acknowledge that while we have done much in the realm of culture, the organization-work has been neglected."²⁶

Arbeter Ring branches counted fundraising as one of their central missions. Members collected money for a range of organizations and causes, placing special emphasis on relief work for Jews affected by the wars in Europe, the advancement and preservation of Yiddish culture and language, and socialist and labor-oriented politics. Whereas members' work on behalf of left-leaning aid groups like the People's Relief Committee and the Jewish Labor Committee demonstrates a commitment to international Jewish causes, they also contributed to local labor struggles by collecting money for striking union members.²⁷ Additionally, although the organization was initially non-Zionist, chapters raised funds for the settlement of Jewish

refugees in Palestine and for other projects in what became the State of Israel.²⁸

Collecting money for international Jewish causes not only fulfilled ethical obligations and maintained connections with Jewish communities worldwide, but also earned chapters a place within local Jewish communities. According to Harry Sokol's history of Branch 303 in Birmingham, Alabama, the group faced strong opposition from both assimilated Reform Jews and the more recently arrived Orthodox population at the time of its founding in 1909. While observant Jews criticized the Arbeter Ring on religious grounds, more acculturated elites voiced political objections, perhaps out of a concern that Yiddish-speaking radicals would cause trouble for the Jewish community as a whole by fomenting antisemitism. Sokol recalls how Jewish leaders pressured him to leave town, warning that "in America, one does not start a revolution" and that it would be "a peril" for a new immigrant to do so.²⁹ Sokol adds, however:

Soon after that, as the "People's Relief" was being organized, our branch was the first and the only in our city which spoke up and organized money-collection for the good of the Jews on the other side of the ocean. Every Sunday morning our members used to go out from house to house with Arbeter Ring ribbons and collect money for the relief organizations. This made us very popular among the Jewish population, and we won acknowledgment and gratitude.³⁰

"People's Relief" refers to the People's Relief Committee, a left-wing organization that joined the recently formed American Joint Distribution Committee in 1915 in response to the devastating effects of World War I on European Jews.³¹ By Sokol's account, Arbeter Ring members' participation in such campaigns earned them acceptance in the broader Jewish community. Bryan Edward Stone notes a similar dynamic in San Antonio, where Hebrew teacher Alexander Gurwitz wrote disparagingly of labor Zionists and Workmen's Circle members for their lack of religion while commending their charitable activities.³²

Chapters initially met in members' homes or businesses but increasingly obtained their own lyceums after 1920.³³ Early on, local Jewish elites' objections to hosting socialist content (real or perceived) in Jewish education alliances, community centers, or YMHAs contributed to the need for Arbeter Ring branches to establish their own meeting places.³⁴

Although many Arbeter Ring schools in the South were short-lived, they were "the vital nerve of the whole Arbeter Ring organization." The commitment to teach Yiddish language and culture was often an impetus for a local branch to purchase or construct its own building, and the labor associated with operating after-school lessons and maintaining a facility drew participants together. Furthermore, Yiddish teachers trained in Yiddish pedagogy through the central Arbeter Ring offices in New York helped to invigorate local cultural and intellectual life for members.³⁵

The lending libraries that branches established held Jewish and general books in Yiddish.³⁶ When chapters did not have their own buildings, library collections were housed in private homes or Jewish educational alliances, referred to as "community centers" in the 1949 text.³⁷ In Galveston, the establishment of a library actually preceded the formal organization of an Arbeter Ring branch.³⁸ Merlin wrote of the libraries as central to the organization's missions of mutual help and self-education: "We founded libraries with Yiddish, and kept the library open every evening. Each one of us took for his enjoyable duty to come read in the hall (and meanwhile have a chat also), taking along books to read at home and prevailing upon acquaintances that they should set out to educate themselves."³⁹ In addition to the libraries' practical and communal value, they reflected many Arbeter Ring members' roots in the Bund—the common name for the General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, a Jewish leftist political party—as most Bundist circles had operated illegal libraries.⁴⁰

In line with their cultural and educational goals, branches arranged lectures, concerts, dramatic performances, and other events. They hosted speakers sent from the central office in

*Arbeter Ring Local 207, Atlanta. Above, the lyceum building.
Below, students at the Arbeter Ring school, c. 1920.
(Arbeter Ring Records, courtesy of the Cuba Family Archives for
Southern Jewish History of The Breman Museum, Atlanta.)*

New York, providing a rare chance for Yiddish speakers to hear a lecture in their native language and drawing audiences from outside the group.⁴¹ Prominent Yiddish thinkers like Chaim Zhitlowsky and Shmuel Niger toured the cities, giving talks on “politics, society, literature and, especially, Jewish subjects.”⁴² After the establishment of schools, teachers also served as lecturers. In the area of music, “Concerts with New York musicians became a must for each city and town.”⁴³ Branches also took advantage of local talent, organizing “Yiddish concerts, their own dramatic groups, and choirs.”⁴⁴ A drama troupe from the Houston branch even performed in other cities, including Waco, Shreveport, New Orleans, Galveston, and San Antonio.⁴⁵

*Yiddish drama group sponsored by the
Houston branch of the Arbeter Ring, 1949.*

(From In Southern States, photo courtesy of Josh Parshall.)

Although cultural and educational activities dominated the Arbeter Ring’s work in the Southern District, branches did participate in leftist politics and labor activism. Members collected funds for Jewish unions in the Northeast as well as for

local non-Jewish strikers.⁴⁶ According to Merlin, “we used to obligate ourselves to pay a set weekly amount for the strikers, and we earned the recognition of the local unions.”⁴⁷ They also belonged to local branches of the Socialist Party and supported socialist presidential candidates Eugene V. Debs and Norman Thomas in their numerous presidential campaigns between 1900 and 1948.⁴⁸ When Debs was imprisoned in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary from 1919 to 1921, the Atlanta branch met with his visitors from other cities and “was always represented in the visits in prison.”⁴⁹ In later years, “when Comrade Norman Thomas, the Socialist candidate for president, came to Atlanta or in other cities of our district, he was always the guest of Arbeter Ring, and in the lyceums he was received as one of our own.”⁵⁰

The Left-Right Split

The following excerpt is my translation of an article, “Left and Right in the Arbeter Ring,” that appears in the Yiddish section of *In Southern States*. From the vantage point of the original Southern District, author Mitchell J. Merlin describes conflicts between radical and more moderate factions within the group, a battle that raged in the national organization from 1921 to 1930.⁵¹ The regional debate was linked to a national struggle over whether the Arbeter Ring should be a Jewish fraternal organization with socialist leanings or a Yiddish-speaking subsidiary of the international communist movement. While devoted communists—“the Left”—hoped to align the Arbeter Ring with the Third International, others whom Merlin refers to as “loyal” members—“the Right”—wanted to maintain the organization’s status as an independent entity that accommodated a wider range of left-wing viewpoints.⁵² Because the moderate faction ultimately won nationally and in the South, its perspective tends to be better represented in organizational histories like *In Southern States*.⁵³

In his account of the decade-long battle between Left and Right in the region, Merlin alludes to national and international events that contributed to the struggle. Early on, he describes

the group's feelings about the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, which initially found support among many American Jewish leftists, especially those who had experienced czarist oppression firsthand.⁵⁴ Merlin also mentions "Palmerism," indicating the policies of United States Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, who led a wave of raids against communist and communist-sympathizing groups in 1919 and 1920.⁵⁵ Palmer's raids coincided with a rise in reactionary politics and nativism that raised the stakes for political radicals in the United States and pushed communist activities underground.⁵⁶ A third expression, "the famous twenty-one points," refers to the Conditions of Admission to the Communist International, a set of commitments that was established in 1920 and required for any group that wished to join the umbrella organization for global communism, known variously as the Communist International, Comintern, or the Third International.⁵⁷ While the issue of whether or not to join the Comintern was a significant element of internal conflict for American socialists, Jewish or not, most histories of the conflict do not stress the importance of the Conditions of Admission.⁵⁸

Merlin's recollections not only point to the historical circumstances for the split but also suggest that the conflict played out similarly in the South and other regions. Although the Arbeter Ring enjoyed strong membership through the 1930s, enrollment peaked during the years of conflict before losing both radical leftists discouraged by the organization's increasing moderation and neutral members who had simply tired of the endless debates.⁵⁹ According to Merlin and other contributors to *In Southern States*, the infighting had similar consequences in the South, where divisions within and between branches drained the group's energy and depleted membership.⁶⁰

The following translation and other histories from *In Southern States* provide important insights about Jewish life in the South in general and the Arbeter Ring's Southern District in particular, even as they raise new questions for further study. In keeping with recent scholarship on Jewish history in the South, these histories demonstrate once again how Jews in the

region, both as individuals and through Jewish organizational networks, interacted with major events and movements across the Jewish world. These histories also indicate that, as in other parts of the country, the Arbeter Ring provided opportunities for acculturation and “self-improvement,” but under conditions that fit with the sensibilities of their membership.⁶¹ Branches fostered an internal community that sustained elements of secular *Yiddishkeit* while also providing resources for prospering in America and, in these cases, southern society. Finally, the history of Arbeter Ring activities in the South raises issues for further study, especially regarding the role of women (many of whom are listed as branch and district leaders on the following page) in this ostensibly left-leaning organization and the extent of the members’ involvement in labor rights and racial justice causes.⁶²

*The Southern District Committee of Arbeter Ring, 1949.
Vice President Mitchell Merlin of Atlanta
is pictured in the top row, second from the right.
(From In Southern States, photo courtesy of Josh Parshall.)*

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**Leadership List, Arbeter Ring Southern District,
September 1949**

The Southern District Committee of Arbeter Ring

W. B. Bell, Houston <i>President</i> 212 Stratford St. Houston, TX	H. Applebaum, Savannah <i>District Secretary</i> 5 W. Perry St. Savannah, GA	H. Hoffman, Savannah <i>Treasurer</i> 409 W. Broad St. Savannah, GA	Louis Platt, Houston 2201 Truxillo St. Houston, TX
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Mitchell J. Merlin, Atlanta <i>Vice President</i> 413 Formwalt St., SW Atlanta, GA	J. Duntov, Miami Beach <i>Assistant Secretary</i> 2008 Alton Rd. Miami Beach, FL	Freida Weiner, Galveston 3790 Ave. R Galveston, TX	M. Gleiberman, Miami 1235 SW 6th St. Miami, FL
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Evelyn Weiner, Miami 1243 SW 6th St. Miami, FL	Boris I. Bell, Houston <i>Youth Secretary</i> P.O. Box 6013 Houston, TX
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The Southern District

Branch 207 M. J. Merlin 413 Formwalt St., SW Atlanta, GA	Branch 530 Joseph Kessler, <i>Sec'y</i> 2007 Ruth St. Houston, TX	Branch 692 J. M. Freedman 500 15th St. Miami Beach, FL
Branch 207B B. Merlin 413 Formwalt St., SW Atlanta, GA	Branch 530Y Boris I. Bell P.O. Box 6013 Houston, TX	Branch 641 S. Shymlock 1117 Jefferson St. Nashville, TN

Branch 303
[Birmingham]
M. Fierman
122 19th St.
Bessemer, AL

Branch 441
S. Carasik
421 W. 6th St.
Jacksonville, FL

Branch 94
Mrs. Anna Berniker
2224 General Talor St.
New Orleans, LA

Branch 495
J. Zawels
525 Palmetto St.
Chattanooga, TN

Branch 393
L. Weinberg
499 Hall St.
Macon, GA

Branch 427
H. Udansky
408 Warren St.
San Antonio, TX

Branch 234
I. Anders [Andres]
4719 Junius St.
Dallas, TX

Branch 312
J. Scheinberg
1225 McLemore
Memphis, TN

Branch 383
Harry Dun
36 Drayton St.
Savannah, GA

Branch 307
Mrs. F. Weiner
3709 Ave. R
Galveston, TX

Branch 699
Ch. Weintraub
11 Sidonia Ave.
Coral Gables, FL

Branch 415
B. Frumer
115 Texas Ave.
Shreveport, LA

Branch 1050
Kitty Laber
1243 SW 6th St.
Miami, FL

Branch 242
Ph. Stupack
1927 N. 6th St.
Waco, TX

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**Mitchell J. Merlin, "Left and Right in the Arbeter Ring,"
September 1949**

In the "good times" of the 1920s, the branches consisted entirely of socialists, *heymishe* socialists. The leadership consisted of such socialists who, even in the old country, were leaders of socialist circles. When someone suggested a member, one first asked him if he knew the candidate well, if the candidate had a socialist past and, if he was a laborer, if he was a union man. And when

one received [the candidate] in the end, the [branch] secretary asked him personally if he knew that the Arbeter Ring was a socialist organization and if he would submit to all of the obligations that were attached to a socialist organization. To this very day, I am familiar with a large number of *Yidn*, decent people, whom we once rejected because we were not certain in their socialist *kashres*.

I will here bring up one characteristic fact: a member from Atlanta's branch proposed an Arbeter Ring candidate who we were not sure was an appropriate person. Two members were selected to visit him at home, and one of them gave a report at a branch meeting. He told in detail how he visited the candidate at home, found out that he had no sickness in the family, that he made a very good living, that he was a wholly honest man, and he soon thought that he would be able to give a favorable report about [the candidate]. But here a good idea suddenly occurred to him; he asked the candidate what compelled him to become a member of the Arbeter Ring? Because the candidate did not give a satisfactory answer, the member did not recommend his acceptance!

And one must remember another thing when speaking of that time. It was just after the revolution in Russia. We were all inspired by the revolution. The enthusiasm lasted for years afterwards, even when we became disappointed in the behavior of the leaders of Soviet Russia. The arguments were that the revolution was still ongoing and that the bad practices were the fault of evil forces that fought against the revolution. If only the time of trouble passed, there would be socialist justice instead, which would be an example for the entire world.

I can mention myself as a defender of Soviet Russia. When someone threw all the ugly deeds of the Communist leaders in my face and I had used up all of my partisan arguments, I would shout with fervor: surely they will one day come to their senses, and we will have to reconcile with them, so let us not be so aggressive!

It was the time of Palmerism, of the greatest reaction that we can remember in our years in this country. The [reactionary politics] of Palmerism were generally despised in our Arbeter Ring

circles and especially because Comrade Eugene Debs happened to be in federal prison near us in the South, in Atlanta, which added an especially bitter taste to our mood. It is then no wonder that every revolutionary slogan appealed to us. Aside from the Arbeter Ring branches, we also had in the larger cities, in the background, [independent] socialist branches, and often the members of the purely socialist branches set the tone in the Arbeter Ring.

At that time—around 1920—the famous twenty-one points came to the Socialist Party branches, which one had to adopt as did the Jews at Mount Sinai.⁶³ You either took on all of the points and could have the honor of joining in the Third International, or—you could go straight to hell. The majority of the points were accepted without difficulty. When it came to the point that there must exist an underground organization that should be disciplined like an army, though, a diversity of opinions arose. We did not know of any reason for this. We had all been underground in Czarist Russia, because the government had not let us agitate openly for socialism. But we came to America, a land where all were free to agitate for their ideals. We could do it freely and openly, without plots and conspiracies. We did not, though, reject it right on the spot; we wanted a little time to think it over. A few individuals immediately recognized the danger of it. Conversely, others accepted it all with the style of “we will do and we will hear,”⁶⁴ and the *apikorsim*⁶⁵ were no longer invited to the meetings.

Those of us who did not adopt the twenty-one points never suspected that the struggle would transfer into the Arbeter Ring. Therefore, when the next elections came for officials of the branches and many members gladly accepted posts, we elected them with contentment. Then, and even years later, we did not know that they received orders from New York to capture all the offices.

When the Left became the authorities in the branches it ignited a fight. Each meeting became a battlefield. They used every demagogic tactic: appealing to justice, to brotherhood, and friendship. After this came the shrill cliché, that not taking their path negated the entire revolutionary past. The best device, though, was to bring new friends to the meetings, friends who did not un-

derstand for themselves and did a "favor" for one of their own, voting just as they were asked. The loyal members realized that fighting was the only means, and they had to organize and also mobilize their own crowd. But this strategy proved unsuccessful. The passive members could not tolerate the quarreling and fighting. The sheer fact is that they became bored of friends arguing and stopped coming to the meetings entirely. We could not stoop to tactics like coercing passive members into coming to meetings, would not even exploit feelings of kinship, and so forth. They, however, brought "hands" to the ballots at the meetings, and they won.

The time came for the big convention, the 25th anniversary, in 1925, in New York. The convention would decide if the Arbeter Ring would remain its own organization or if the Communist Party would take over. We in Atlanta prepared ourselves. We made a forty-eight-person committee that should see that the Arbeter Ring would not fall into communist hands in Atlanta and also to prevail upon the whole district that the delegates to the convention should be loyal Arbeter Ring members. There were passive members who had the intelligence to be leaders but who had stood to the side on account of the fight. [Abraham] Landau from Atlanta serves as an example, who agreed to become active if we assured him that he could act in a nonpartisan manner.⁶⁶ We were satisfied with this, knowing that he was a loyal member of the Arbeter Ring and he would therefore see that our side was correct. The other faction was also satisfied with him. They were sure that they would win him over to their side. Such impartial people were in all the branches. If they were only politically mature, they would have to realize that the Left was out to capture the Arbeter Ring for their party, while we only wanted the Arbeter Ring to remain an independent organization.

In the branches there were different elements from both sides. However, in the leadership of the district then, there were only loyal members from the Arbeter Ring. In those years the leadership of the district was chiefly in the hands of the district secretary and vice secretary. We had connections in every branch besides the branch secretary. Understand that we plunged into

*This and successive images contain the original text of Mitchell J.
Merlin, "Left and Right in the Arbeter Ring," from
In Southern States, 1949.
(Courtesy of Josh Parshall.)*



the struggle in preparation for the 25th convention. The result was that from all the branches there came only one leftist delegate, from Macon. In Atlanta itself the election passed with a very small majority to our advantage, but the delegate was a loyal member.

After the 25th conference, the fight brought about even greater bitterness in Atlanta. We had a large Arbeter Ring school [a supplementary school, not full-day], a lyceum, and led extensive activities. When we saw that we could not work together in one branch and they required a separate branch, we gave in. A distinct chapter was created for the leftists. The teacher in the Atlanta school, Comrade Lazarson—today one of the most loyal members of the Arbeter Ring and one of the best teachers—played a large role then.⁶⁷ He was a leftist then and did everything to defend the left wing.

The climax came at a conference in Jacksonville, where, besides the delegates, there were about ten teachers from all of our schools. Comrade Lazarson always held a distinguished place at the conferences. On behalf of and with the prestige of the Atlanta school, he exerted a very great influence on all the delegates. The leaders of the district were full of enthusiasm, because we brought the greatest number of teachers to the conference. As long as we could remember, they had been honorary delegates with voting rights, and they used to rule the conference in spirit. We, leaders from the branches, had to enhance their prestige, even when we sometimes opposed their actions or decisions. At that conference, delegates from the schools, youth-delegates, and child-guests were also represented.

The delegates from the newly founded leftist branch were the leaders of the left wing; some delegates were still under their influence, and a number were “impartial” on general principle. The air felt as if a “storm” could break out any minute. We found out that a caucus had decided that all the teachers should march out of the conference in demonstration at an appropriate moment, and that the signal would be given to them by the leader of the leftist branch in Atlanta.

This took place during my turn to be the district secretary. It was my duty to maintain the unity of Arbeter Ring. I became

upset at the teachers, who did not need to get mixed up with branch politics through their resolutions. In great anger, I interrupted the session in the middle and revealed the teachers' plot for the whole audience of delegates and guests. They did not have the audacity to reply with anything and stood as silent as schoolboys. Thus the moment caused a great upheaval. All the delegates, even the impartial ones, realized how they wanted to break the Arbeter Ring in general and the district in particular, and the Left lost any chance to rule the conference.

Still, though, the Left did not give in. They did not permit a vote. They took up the method of holding long speeches, making proposals without a reason in the world, and delaying the debate so that the conference would not be able to adjourn. The shouting was terrible. Each side would yell over the other. When I came home hoarse, a medical specialist took it for a cancer of the throat. For a few months, I could not speak a word. We had won the fight, though. Meanwhile, Comrade Landau became the district secretary. In his position, the once impartial one could not remain impartial long, when he saw that someone aimed to split the organization.

After Comrade Landau's term, I took the office of district secretary once again. The Left had already hinted that they would not remain in the Arbeter Ring much longer. Anyhow, the leaders already anticipated that they would not put up with us much longer. They would still seek to lure away anyone on whom they could have an effect. Because of this, I had loyal members in every branch who were prepared to take directives. Strong groups of the Left formed in Atlanta, Chattanooga, Memphis, and Miami. The Atlanta leftist branch also united with all the cities, but they did not have a strong following everywhere. In Memphis, Comrade Block paid good attention, and I did not need to give any instructions there. The same in Birmingham with brother Sokol at the head. The situation in Miami and West Palm Beach was entirely different. The great devotion of Morris Jacobs, who stood in service like a soldier, and the loyalty of Comrade Elkins should be mentioned here.⁶⁸ The branch in Miami did everything out of

spite. When they would not carry out a task from the national office or from the district, and I turned to Comrade Elkins to undertake the same task under the supervision of the district, it was done in the finest manner. The same with Comrade Jacobs; he abandoned his work in West Palm Beach and traveled wherever was required on missions from the district.

In Chattanooga we had Comrade Y. Press with a group that stood on watch. In Jacksonville there was the late Comrade Sovits, who stood on watch, often traveling to Atlanta to have a discussion. A unit of devoted leaders was formed, which was prepared for any call. Thus the moment finally came when the Atlanta branch suddenly left the Arbeter Ring. Instead of biweekly official letters, they were sent virtually daily. Separate instructions were sent to the secretaries and the devoted leaders about how to act in each given case. The time came that my letters, copies of which were always sent to the office, were suddenly printed in entirety on the front page of the *Forward* as very important news. Now, with a clean conscience I can assert that without the district we would not have an Arbeter Ring in the South today. Like a cancer, they invaded each branch. Were it not for the leaders of the district that cut it out in advance, the branches would not exist today.

Miami suffered the most. They bled heavily, and only a skeleton remained of the branch. Several years passed before they recovered. It is a delight for us that today the Arbeter Ring in Miami is a secure fortress. Today in Miami we have four branches, two branches of older members, one in Miami and one in Miami Beach, and they are the largest branches in the district. We also have two youth branches there, a blooming branch in Miami and a weak one in Miami Beach.

The leftists succeeded in founding branches in Atlanta, Miami, Chattanooga, and Memphis. In Atlanta, they even tried to establish a school, which did not last even a year. One does not hear any more from the former branches in Chattanooga and Memphis. Our Arbeter Ring branches have no connection with the Left.

Because of a lack of space I have entirely left out the emotional side of the history. It boiled the blood of both sides. It divided brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. It led to hatred in many cases. We, the Right, sought to emphasize that it was a fight over ideals and that personal attacks should not be used, but we could not convince the other side of this. This is already just the past, history—a piece of the life of our district—events that played out in a terrain where there were no other radical organizations and we did not have the help and sympathy of unions, as was the case in larger centers.

NOTES

¹ Membership List, *In Southern States: Issued on the Occasion of the Thirtieth Conference of the Southern District of the Arbeter Ring*, ed. Joseph Duntov (September 1949), 2, translated from Yiddish by the author.

² Mitchell J. Merlin, “Left and Right in the Arbeter Ring,” in *In Southern States: Issued on the Occasion of the Thirtieth Conference of the Southern District of the Arbeter Ring*, ed. Joseph Duntov (September 1949), 35–38, translated from Yiddish by the author.

³ Maximillian Hurwitz, *The Workmen’s Circle: Its History, Ideals and Institutions* (New York, 1936), 14, 18, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015009219703;view=1up;seq=1>, accessed February 17, 2014; Arthur Liebman, *Jews and the Left* (New York, 1979), 284–288.

⁴ Wolf Bell, “Memories of the Texas-Louisiana District,” in *In Southern States*, 42; Mitchell J. Merlin, “The Arbeter Ring in the South,” in *In Southern States*, 32. Although there were also branches in Virginia, they did not participate in district activities, and their histories are not considered here.

⁵ Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 285.

⁶ Merlin, “Left and Right,” 38.

⁷ Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 285–286. See also Daniel Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York, 1880–1939* (Detroit, 2001); Michael R. Weissner, *A Brotherhood of Memory: Jewish Landsmanshaftn in the New World* (Ithaca, NY, 1985).

⁸ Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 290–291. Liebman cites two works by Melech Epstein: *Jewish Labor in U.S.A.: an Industrial, Political and Cultural History of the Jewish Labor Movement* (New York, 1950), 311, and *The Jew and Communism: The Story of Early Communist Victories and Ultimate Defeats in the Jewish Community, U. S. A., 1919–1941* (New York, 1959), 145.

⁹ Mark K. Bauman, Introduction to Part V: Identity, in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark K. Bauman (Tuscaloosa, 2006), 354.

¹⁰ Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Fulton County, Georgia.

¹¹ The “journal-program” for the 1950 regional convention can be found in the Joseph Jacobs Papers, series III, box 36, folder 1, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

¹² Fradle Pomerantz Freidenreich, *Passionate Pioneers: The Story of Yiddish Secular Education in North America, 1910–1960* (Teaneck, NJ, 2010), 334, 284.

¹³ Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Fulton County, Georgia; Mitchell J. Merlin, “Merlin Family in America” (October 18, 1967; in Yiddish), item 05-049 V/F M, Cuba Archives and Genealogy Center, Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta. The document is also available in translation at <http://merlinfamilycircle.org/MFCfamilyHistory.pdf>, accessed March 28, 2014.

¹⁴ Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Fulton County, Georgia; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Fulton County, Georgia.

¹⁵ Joe Jacobs interview, quoted in Melissa Fay Greene, *The Temple Bombing* (Reading, MA, 1996), 129. Greene also quotes Lazar Aaron Merlin’s daughter, Sonny Epstein. Merlin, Yampolsky, and the Arbeter Ring also appear in Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 123.

¹⁶ Mitchell Merlin, Moshe Bloshtein, and David-Bear Faynshteyn, “The Arbeter Ring Branch 207 in Atlanta,” in *In Southern States*, 53; I. Andres, “Arbeter Ring Branch 234, Dallas, Texas,” in *In Southern States*, 65.

¹⁷ Merlin, “The Arbeter Ring in the South,” 29.

¹⁸ Andres, “Arbeter Ring Branch 234, Dallas, Texas,” 65.

¹⁹ A list of active chapters and dates of establishment can be found in *In Southern States*, 154.

²⁰ Wolf Bell, “The History of A. R. Branch 530, Houston, Texas,” in *In Southern States*, 67.

²¹ B. Frumer, “Arbeter Ring Branch 415, Shreveport, Louisiana,” in *In Southern States*, 95.

²² Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 288.

²³ Freida Weiner, “Arbeter Ring Branch 307, Galveston,” in *In Southern States*, 64; Joseph Keeper, “The Arbeter Ring Branches in Galveston and Houston,” in *In Southern States*, 96.

²⁴ Merlin, “The Arbeter Ring in the South,” 30–31.

²⁵ Bell, “Memories of the Texas-Louisiana District,” 42; Merlin, “The Arbeter Ring in the South,” 32.

²⁶ Merlin, “The Arbeter Ring in the South,” 31.

²⁷ Merlin, “The Arbeter Ring in the South,” 29. Y. Press, “Arbeter Ring Branch 495 in Chattanooga,” in *In Southern States*, 74. See also Selma Lewis, *A Biblical People in the Bible Belt: The Jewish Community of Memphis, Tennessee, 1840s–1960s* (Macon, GA, 1998), 99.

²⁸ Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 304; Press, “Arbeter Ring Branch 495 in Chattanooga,” 76.

²⁹ Harry Sokol, “The History of Branch 303, in Birmingham,” in *In Southern States*, 59.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

³¹ Michael Beizer, “American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee,” *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/American_Jewish_Joint_Distribution_Committee, accessed March 28, 2014.

³² Bryan Edward Stone, *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (Austin, 2010), 153. For more on Gurwitz, see Bryan Edward Stone, ed., *Memories of Two Generations: The Autobiography of Alexander Z. Gurwitz of Russia and San Antonio* (Tuscaloosa, forthcoming).

³³ Merlin, "The Arbeter Ring in the South," 31.

³⁴ Sokol, "The History of Branch 303, in Birmingham," 59. Mark K. Bauman describes the origins of the Jewish Educational Alliance of Atlanta in "The Emergence of Jewish Social Service Agencies in Atlanta," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 69 (Winter 1985): 505.

³⁵ Merlin, "The Arbeter Ring in the South," 31; Freidenreich, *Passionate Pioneers*, 114.

³⁶ Joseph Duntov, "Introduction," in *In Southern States*, 6.

³⁷ Sokol, "The History of Branch 303 in Birmingham," 59; Press, "Arbeter Ring Branch 495 in Chattanooga," 76.

³⁸ Weiner, "Arbeter Ring Branch 307, Galveston," 62.

³⁹ Merlin, "The Arbeter Ring in the South," 29.

⁴⁰ Ezra Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers' Movement in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge, England, 1970), 153; Viktor Shulman, "The 'Bund' in Lite," trans. Tina Lunson, <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/lita2/Lit092.html>, accessed January 12, 2014; Daniel Blatman, "Bund," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bund>, accessed March 28, 2014.

⁴¹ Merlin, "The Arbeter Ring in the South," 30.

⁴² Duntov, "Introduction," 6.

⁴³ Merlin, "The Arbeter Ring in the South," 31.

⁴⁴ Duntov, "Introduction," 6.

⁴⁵ Oscar Silbert, "The Yiddish Dramatic Group of Branch 530 Arbeter Ring, Houston, Texas," in *In Southern States*, 73.

⁴⁶ Merlin, "The Arbeter Ring in the South," 29; Lewis, *Biblical People*, 99.

⁴⁷ Merlin, "The Arbeter Ring in the South," 29.

⁴⁸ Debs ran for president in 1900, 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1920; Thomas in 1928, 1932, 1936, 1940, 1944, and 1948. Robert Constantine, "Eugene V. Debs: An American Paradox," *Monthly Labor Review* 114 (August 1991): 30; Raymond F. Gregory, *Norman Thomas: The Great Dissenter* (New York, 2008), 1, 80.

⁴⁹ Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana, IL, 1982), 93, 393; Merlin, "Left and Right," 34.

⁵⁰ Merlin, "Left and Right," 34.

⁵¹ Hurwitz, *Workmen's Circle*, 57–78.

⁵² Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 297–298, 300–302; Hurwitz, *Workmen's Circle*, 57–58.

⁵³ See, for example, Hurwitz, *Workmen's Circle*, 57–58.

⁵⁴ Merlin, "Left and Right," 36; Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 56–57.

⁵⁵ Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), 220. Liebman also points out that Palmer was assisted by J. Edgar Hoover, then "head of the Justice Department's alien radical division." Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 56.

⁵⁶ Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 220–221; Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 56.

⁵⁷ Robert Vincent Daniels, ed., *A Documentary History of Communism in Russia: From Lenin to Gorbachev*, rev. ed. (Hanover, NH, 1988), 44.

⁵⁸ Hurwitz, *Workmen's Circle*, 57–58; Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 217–227.

⁵⁹ Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 288, 302.

⁶⁰ Merlin, "Left and Right," 38; Phillip Stupack, "Arbeter Ring Branch 242 in Waco, Texas," in *In Southern States*, 73.

⁶¹ Merlin, "The Arbeter Ring in the South," 29.

⁶² Activist Don West, for example, remembers receiving support from leftist Jewish business owners in Chattanooga and Atlanta while conducting civil rights work during the 1930s. Interview with Don West by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, January 22, 1975, E-0016, Southern Oral History Program Collection #4007, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

⁶³ "*vi di yidn untern barg saynay.*" Merlin's biblical reference here is intentionally ironic.

⁶⁴ Merlin uses the Hebrew, "*na'aseh v'nishma,*" which comes from Exodus (24:7).

⁶⁵ "Heretics," from Aramaic. Used ironically.

⁶⁶ The memorial section of *In Southern States* features a photograph of Landau and a brief description of his personality. Duntov, *In Southern States*, 128.

⁶⁷ Lazarson does not appear in Atlanta census records. Merlin gives his first initial as the character *yud*, which could correspond to a 'J,' 'I,' or 'Y' in English.

⁶⁸ Morris Jacobs was a leader of the Miami Beach branch who had lived in Atlanta at one point, where his son Joseph became a labor attorney and a longtime Arbeter Ring leader. Morris's daughter Henrietta, who lent the author her copy of *In Southern States*, married Boris Bell of the Houston branch. Interview with Henrietta Bell and Susan Ganc by author, May 21, 2012, Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life Oral History Collection, Jackson, MS; Finding Aid for the Joseph Jacobs papers, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, <http://digitalcollections.library.gsu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/findingaids/id/1163>, accessed March 28, 2014.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Two Civil Rights Testimonies

by

Edward K. Kaplan*

**Kivie Kaplan, "Report on Trip to Mississippi,"
Vineyard Haven, Mass., July 14, 1964**

**Edward K. Kaplan, "Personal Report
on the March to Montgomery,"
March, 1965¹**

The background of this first document is somber. It is a personal report by my father, Kivie Kaplan, a participant in a fact-finding mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to investigate the disappearance and probable deaths of three young civil rights activists: Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, who were Jews from the North, and James Chaney, an African American from rural Mississippi. Summer 1964, known by supporters as "Freedom Summer," was the theater of a massive campaign to train volunteers to register black people to vote—all of them risking beatings, torture, and death for doing so.

Because these events have been covered comprehensively by Seth Cagin and Philip Dray,² I concentrate on the personal experience of one person, Kivie Kaplan, a white liberal, recognizably Jewish (that is conforming to the stereotype of an

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overweight man with a long nose), motivated by his Jewish identity to fight for justice and equality for all people.³ Like numerous other Jews of his generation (he was born in 1904), his parents and grandparents had emigrated from Lithuania before World War I, settling in Boston. Kivie did not go to college but developed a successful leather business with his two older brothers. Wealthy, generous, and idealistic, he was deeply, almost obsessively committed to social justice for all citizens, especially Jews and African Americans. Such was his identity as a Jew in post-Shoah America.

Kivie Kaplan developed his engagement through two organizations: the Social Action Commission of Reform Judaism, part of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC, now the Union for Reform Judaism, URJ) and the NAACP.⁴ At the time of his "Report on Trip to Mississippi," dated July 14, 1964, he was serving on the NAACP board of directors and co-chairing the Life Membership Committee with Dr. Benjamin Mays; he later served as cochair alongside Jackie Robinson. My father seemingly devoted most of his waking hours to raising money through the life membership program, saving the organization from financial ruin in the early fifties.⁵ He won election to the NAACP national presidency in 1966, an honorary but influential volunteer position traditionally reserved for white men. His predecessors included Jewish brothers Joel and Arthur Spingarn.

Two organizations recruited and trained students from the North for Mississippi Freedom Summer: the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the coalition vehicle, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), run mainly by energetic young people. My father participated in the NAACP, the largest and most stable civil rights organization, on the local and national levels.

How did this Jewish businessman become a national leader of the NAACP? Kivie was active in Jewish causes in Boston, his home base. Already committed to sectarian humanitarian service, he enlarged his concerns through the initiative of a friend, S. Ralph Harlow, professor of religion at Smith College,

*Kivie Kaplan, c. 1950.
(Courtesy of the Jacob Rader
Marcus Center of the American
Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.)*

a democratic socialist, Christian Zionist, and active member of the NAACP board of directors.⁶ In February 1954 Harlow presented Kivie to the board as a person highly qualified to save the financially strapped organization.

Kivie began by reviving its life membership program. At five hundred dollars, or fifty-two cents a day, this was something within reach of most people. He quickly proved more than just a charismatic fund-raiser. He had a knack for inspiring NAACP professional staff as well as activists in the field.

Kivie was progressive but neither a radical nor a Democrat. As a Boston Jew, he did not trust the Irish Democratic machine or countenance the segregationist Dixiecrats of the South. An unabashed manager of his company, he was not a labor activist. His Colonial Tanning Company had a profit-sharing system in which all employees received a bonus on that year's profits in proportion to their position in the company. He was wary of unionization and preferred to deal with the local

Profit Sharing Committee. Nonetheless some signs indicated limited egalitarianism. For example, all employees received a hot lunch and ate in the same dining area. Kivie identified himself as a "liberal Republican" like New York Senator Jacob Javits and Governor Nelson Rockefeller, two among hundreds of celebrities to whom he sold NAACP life memberships.

As a Jew and a liberal, therefore, Kaplan embraced the integration mission of the NAACP. As a Jew, fully aware of the Shoah, he was attuned to the lethal possibilities of institutional and personal racial discrimination in the United States. He also had experienced antisemitism in America. He often told the story of his honeymoon trip in Florida when he encountered a hotel sign: "No dogs or Jews allowed." "Don't feel too bad, Mr. Kaplan," his black driver sought to console him, "we Negroes can't use the beach or go out after dark without a permit."⁷ This image remained with the sensitive Jew from the North, who ultimately became fervently devoted to the civil rights struggle even to the point of putting his life in danger, as his "Report on Trip to Mississippi" testifies.

Nonetheless Kivie also enjoyed himself. He admired and was admired by hundreds of those he termed "fighters for justice," the NAACP activists and social action rabbis, the latter primarily from the Reform movement. He relished the personal contact and meals with these "dedicated people," white, black, old, and especially young, most of whom exhibited forceful personalities.

Kivie Kaplan was an outgoing, gregarious person who constantly solicited NAACP life memberships, a compulsion that annoyed many people while earning the admiration of those who sympathized with the cause. At times he could be harsh, even insensitive, calling someone a "bigot" to their face. But normally when he met people, to sweeten the medicine he distributed cards that read "Keep Smiling," with inspirational sayings on the back, such as "The optimist is as often wrong as the pessimist, but is far happier." These cards became a trademark even when traveling abroad. They also served as a crutch against a suppressed shyness.

*Kivie Kaplan's "Keep Smiling" card, front and back.
(Courtesy of Edward K. Kaplan.)*

His confidence in the "Keep Smiling" slogan could also be dangerous. With grim humor, he told how he risked being murdered by a man he thought was a Jewish businessman but who turned out to be a corpulent Mississippi sheriff who hated Jews and blacks.

Kivie maintained an immense correspondence with rabbis (mostly Reform), various activists, personal friends and family, dictating, it has been claimed, about five hundred letters a week. As his son, I remember seeing him using his Dictaphone for several hours a day. He would also telephone civil activist rabbis from the South who felt they were victimized by their congregations, or whose synagogues or homes were bombed by racists. He formed a lifelong bond with William B. Silverman, rabbi of Reform temple Ohabei Sholom (commonly called the Vine Street Temple) in Nashville, Tennessee, after his Jewish Community Center was bombed in March 1958 and he received personal threats. Kivie telephoned immediately to offer hospitality at his home in Boston to Silverman and his family "until this blows over." Kivie said that they became "friends," and he promised to write or telephone the rabbi every week, which he did. Silverman repaid the favor by coediting, with S. Norman Feingold, the book *Kivie Kaplan: A Legend in His Own Time*, a collection of testimonials.⁸

Kivie's most benign custom was to send gifts of books, snacks, and other goodies to people he knew. For example, he made sure that civil rights leader Bayard Rustin received his almonds! In his almost constant travels he accumulated a mass of friends and supporters, as we may easily infer from the report highlighted in this article. I was privileged to partake in this moral force, although not always joyfully.⁹ Sometimes I got tired of delivering these "care packages."

The NAACP Special Committee

The following reproduces a mimeographed copy of Kivie Kaplan's dictated report of his participation with a committee of the NAACP national board of directors formed to investigate the disappearance and probable murders of three young civil

rights workers—Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney—near Philadelphia, Mississippi. This took place during a time of crisis for everyone involved with voter registration in the South, particularly in Mississippi. The Freedom Summer mission was launched at the fifty-fifth annual NAACP convention in Washington, D.C., on June 25, 1964. Delegates from around the country demanded that the federal government prevent violence against black citizens. They began by picketing the U.S. Department of Justice. It was also decided that after the convention a delegation would tour Mississippi in order to substantiate FBI and local police investigations of the disappearance of the three young men. Furthermore, they hoped that a highly publicized visit would help protect the remaining civil rights workers and generally raise morale. Kivie Kaplan was the first board member to volunteer.

Robert L. Carter, NAACP general counsel and later a federal judge in New York City, guided the special committee. Gloster B. Current, director of branches and field administration of the national NAACP and a buddy of my father's, oversaw operations.¹⁰

The delegation included Dr. H. Claude Hudson, an ebullient eighty-year-old dentist from Los Angeles (head of the delegation); John F. Davis of East Orange, New Jersey, a youth representative; Alfred Baker Lewis and his wife, Eileen, from Greenwich, Connecticut; Chester I. Lewis of Wichita, Kansas, an attorney; L. Joseph Overton of New York, a labor leader; and Dr. Eugene T. Reed, New York State Conference president. Maurice White of the national NAACP provided public relations logistics. But the trip depended primarily on local officials. Charles Evers, who had succeeded his brother Medgar as Mississippi field director after the latter's murder, coordinated visits to several towns.

Kivie's dictated "Report on Trip to Mississippi" displays his objectivity and lack of pretentiousness, with a characteristic looseness of syntax. The reader is struck by his vitality, uncomplicated courage, warmth, and admiration for people. A practical, unsentimental man, his emotions are largely implied.

*The NAACP Special Committee at JFK International Airport,
preparing to board their plane to Jackson, Mississippi, July 5, 1964.*

*Top row: newspaper reporter Thomas Johnson and NAACP public
relations officer Maurice F. White; second row: Mrs. Eileen Lewis and
NAACP board member John F. Davis; third row: NAACP board
members Alfred Baker Lewis, L. Joseph Overton, and Kivie Kaplan;
bottom row: NAACP director of branches and field administration Gloster B.
Current, general counsel Robert L. Carter, board member Dr. Eugene T.
Reed, and Msgr. Archibald McLees.
(Courtesy of Edward K. Kaplan.)*

His eyewitness report begins with the NAACP national convention, the organization's strongest political tool. In June 1964, two thousand delegates gathered in Washington, D.C., gave reports, held workshops, and applauded rousing speeches. That year the featured theme was Mississippi Summer and the disappearance of three civil rights workers. Emotions were raw, as Medgar Evers had been assassinated just one year earlier.

After the delegates picketed the Department of Justice, a group of leaders, including Kivie Kaplan, met with President Lyndon Johnson, who impressed them as sincere. He told the delegates that he would authorize federal protection such as FBI agents. Allen Dulles, CIA director under presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, would provide oversight. Having interrupted his customary summer vacation on Martha's Vineyard to attend the NAACP convention, Kivie Kaplan returned to the island to prepare for the dangerous involvement in Mississippi Freedom Summer.

A few days later, as the NAACP committee met at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, Kivie greeted other "coworkers in the fight for justice." The send-off crowd included Monsignor Archibald V. McLees, a Catholic priest active in the NAACP and a former pastor in the predominantly black Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn; Jacob Polish, a Reform rabbi from Forest Hills, New York; Albert Vorspan, director of the UAHC Social Action Commission, an associate and close friend; his wife Shirley; and me, in New York to begin graduate study in French literature at Columbia University that fall. An airport porter who "refused to take a tip and gave me a blessing besides" especially moved Kivie.

Not a minute would be wasted. Careful preparation made this trip an opportunity to lift the spirits of "our people," as Kivie called the NAACP family, through mass meetings, personal visits, press conferences, and also, quite bravely, desegregation of hotels, restaurants, and other public facilities. The hope was that this highly visible integration would become permanent. It is remarkable how many segregated facilities remained open to this mixed group from the NAACP, at least temporarily. Per-

haps the owners were being pragmatic in light of the highly visible media coverage. Each stop reinforced the synergy of the national NAACP and its local branches. The first night began with a mass meeting. In the crowd Kivie was delighted to recognize Marvin Braiterman, a lawyer from Baltimore and fellow member of the UAHC Social Action Commission, as well as several young people from the North participating in the voter registration drive.

The NAACP branches had made arrangements with local and federal law enforcement—who were not always trustworthy—starting with a press conference at the Jackson, Mississippi, airport. Kivie described the hostile stares of local whites, the sense of danger shared by both visitors and locals. All the while, following his grand obsession, Kivie continued to sell life memberships and innocently pass out his “Keep Smiling” cards.

In Jackson, Kivie greeted Charles Evers and was happily surprised to see Kenneth Guscott, president of the Boston Branch of the NAACP.¹¹ He was especially pleased to learn from the Religious Bi-Racial Committee that the forceful Reform rabbi in Jackson, Perry E. Nussbaum, was “very cooperative.” The Ku Klux Klan subsequently bombed Nussbaum’s house and synagogue.¹² We do not have any additional record that Kivie met with other Mississippi rabbis, but I remember an anecdote about Charles Mantinband of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, whom Kivie knew well. Mantinband, whose sense of humor Kivie enjoyed, once defended accepting some dishonest or “tainted” money donated to his synagogue. Mantinband retorted: “The only thing tainted about this money is that it ‘taint enough.”¹³

The next morning, Kivie, who used every waking minute, invited for “an early breakfast” the president and dean of Tougaloo College, a historically black institution associated with Brown University through exchanges of students and faculty. Kivie served on the Tougaloo Board of Trustees.

Canton, Mississippi, about fifty miles from Jackson, provided the next stop, where the delegation visited COFO

headquarters.¹⁴ As the delegation approached its goal, Philadelphia, Mississippi, about sixty miles from Canton, a showdown took place. In the courthouse they first met with the county prosecutor, who was “very antagonistic,” according to Kivie’s memorandum. Outside they saw a hostile mob, “about 700 people that had rocks, bottles, guns and other things

*Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Missing”
poster picturing Andrew Goodman, James Chaney,
and Michael Schwerner, 1964.
(FBI / Core NYC.)*

ready . . . but we were just fortunate that God was on our side and we were on our way." He continued, "We could see on our way to Meridian that everybody had been alerted along the road—all unfriendly. If looks could kill we all would have been dead ducks." The fate of the missing young men became more ominous.

A midnight press conference launched their stay in Meridian. The next day began with a poignant visit with Fannie Lee Chaney, mother of James Earl "J. E." Chaney, one of the missing men. Kivie gave Mrs. Chaney a fifty-dollar check from Hazel Greenwald, the official photographer of the Zionist women's organization Hadassah; a personal friend from the Vineyard; and, of course, a life member of the NAACP. (A life membership was usually required to be his friend.) Several weeks after the committee returned to New York, the bodies were found, and still later it was learned that members of the Ku Klux Klan had murdered the three activists near Philadelphia, Mississippi.

The next stop was Laurel, where a rousing event of "a few hundred boys and girls" took place. Then they completed a two-hour drive to Moss Point, where a young woman had been shot one day earlier. The police, as Kivie wrote, "supposedly" protected their mass meeting from a hostile mob.

Next, at the infamous courthouse of Philadelphia, Mississippi, came Kivie's brush with death. The delegation attempted to speak with Rayford Jones, the county prosecutor, and Cecil Price, the deputy sheriff later indicted for the murder of the three young men. With a salutary sense of humor, Kivie made an almost fatal mistake based on wishful thinking. Among the hostile lawmen, Kivie thought he recognized a fellow Jew, as he wrote: "a prosperous-looking business man . . . about one and a half times as big as I was . . . and when I started to sell him a life membership I found out that he was a sheriff and what he said I wouldn't dare write. I got away from him so quickly after he put his hand on his guns that I never realized I could move so fast. I didn't even dare give him a Smile card."

Kivie impulsively and incorrectly judged that this hefty "prosperous-looking business man" (that is, heavier than he

was) must have been a fellow Jew. Ironically, Kivie was actually seeking companionship through a stereotype shared by anti-semites: heavy-set, prosperous businessmen were, almost by definition, Jews. This comforting illusion did not last. Gloster Current's account is more explicit, although he places this event later. Quoting my father, with some syntactical acrobatics: "I thought he was a Jewish fellow who owned the motel because he looked like one of my brothers there. So, he opens his coat with two guns and his badge and you never saw Kivie move so fast in all your life."¹⁵

The remainder of Kivie's report needs no interpretation. Along the way he names heroic figures such as Rev. Charles L. Pendleton, a white minister from Waterbury, Connecticut. In Jackson, Mississippi, capital of segregation and racist violence, the delegation met with Mrs. Vera Mae Pigeo and her daughter Mary Jane and heard harrowing testimony from a fifteen-year-old male who had been jailed and beaten.¹⁶

Kivie Kaplan ended with a report on Clarksdale, Mississippi, which he called "a BAD town." Byron De La Beckwith, Jr., the white supremacist from Greenwood, Mississippi, who murdered Medgar Evers, remained at large. (He was finally convicted in 1994 after two trials resulting in hung juries.) Kivie concluded: "I believe that for every incident there are a hundred incidents at least that go unreported."

The group returned to Memphis, Tennessee, where the local NAACP branch arranged a final press conference. Discouraged, the delegation returned to New York. Kivie resumed his vacation on Martha's Vineyard and, without delay, dictated the report on Bastille Day, July 14, 1964, a festival of freedom. Kivie Kaplan passed away in 1975, a little over a decade later.

The Selma-Montgomery March

The following year, March 20 to 22, 1965, I participated in the famous Selma-Montgomery March with my father and my fifteen-year-old nephew, Louis Grossman. At that time I had begun my first year as a graduate student at Columbia Univer-

sity as a candidate for an M.A. and Ph.D. in French literature. By temperament I was not an activist, but I believed in the cause for justice, and, I must admit, I was thirsty for emotions. My training in literary analysis encouraged me to seek dramatic, meaningful images.

I wrote my report as a self-conscious twenty-three-year-old budding intellectual, familiar with the inner workings of the NAACP, inspired by the spectacle while maintaining a sometimes ironic distance. I was aware that public demonstrations, as inspiring and politically influential as they were, did not replace the painstaking legal processes of the NAACP—and in fact depended upon them. My mind kept slipping into Martin Buber's analysis of the I-Thou encounter, an intimate communication of a single person (a subject) in a world of objects.¹⁷ I was trying to reconcile my fascination with individuals and the enthralling energy of the crowds.

The identity issue experienced was rather one of generation. My father was born in Boston. He did not go to college, but he built a successful tanning business with his two brothers, each of whom developed their own ethical projects. I was already beginning my doctoral studies in French literature—hardly a militant profession, at least according to American stereotypes. I was filling in my identity through books and, fortunately for me, encounters with numerous activists, some of whom were intellectuals. My father defined his Jewish guideline in one simple principle, "All men are created in God's image." He was incapable of analyzing the insight, but he lived it.

A self-educated man, my father was a true believer. I was (and remain) a seeker and enthusiastically Jewish. My young nephew, deeply moved, eventually became a businessman and lay leader in the Reform movement of Judaism. I became a university professor. Three generations, three temperaments.

My report was written almost fifty years ago. At the time, I felt that the march provided an extraordinary human opportunity for us, white liberals from the Boston suburbs. Unlike the NAACP fact-finding trip to Mississippi, this complex mass

demonstration was conceived as a national event supported by the media.¹⁸ The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) were joined by all civil rights organizations and hundreds of progressive organizations around the country to march from Selma, Alabama, to the capital in Montgomery.

The Social Action Commission of the UAHC organized our participation. This group would join the march toward the end, about four miles from the capital of Alabama, where Rev. King and other black and white leaders would speak, all challenging the staunch segregationist, Governor George Wallace.

Joining the march at different stages was standard procedure. Years later, for example, I would learn that at the very beginning, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel—soon to become my role model—marched next to Rev. King in the front row, returning to New York later that night. In this fashion, groups or individuals were picked up at the airport and, when possible, returned as previously scheduled. The Kaplans and the UAHC group joined the throngs toward the conclusion of the march.

Edward K. Kaplan, 2011.

(Courtesy of Edward K. Kaplan)

Since my report is rather specific and shorter than my father's, I shall add only brief explanations about people we met and some personal observations. Our experience began overnight in a New York hotel room as my father woke us up at 3:30 AM. The UAHC president, Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, a fiery prophetic activist, drove us to the airport. UAHC publicist Gunther Lawrence unfurled our banner that read: "Justice, Justice Shalt Thou Pursue—UAHC." Our group included

*The civil rights march from Selma to
Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965.
(Photo by Peter Pettus, from Wikimedia Commons.)*

Rabbi Eisendrath, Al Vorspan, and Rabbi Phillip Schechter from Atlantic City. We were ready to bear witness and absorb the emotions of public protest.

Indeed, we were not alone. The chartered Saturn Airways plane was filled with clergy. After landing at the Montgomery airport, while finding the place for us to march, my father met several NAACP companions, particularly Claude Hudson from the Mississippi trip; Aaron Henry, a pharmacist and militant

organizer of the Mississippi Democratic Party; Mrs. Vera Pigeo; and a stranger who recognized Kivie from Mississippi Summer about eight months earlier. I do not recall whether Kivie or others from the UAHC group connected with other rabbis from either the South or the North.

We were aware of the symbolic value of our gesture, as we vaguely sensed its historical significance. My heart told me that we were living the “alliance” of whites and blacks, blacks and Jews, as literally true. Although future cynics might question its validity, for us as participants the slogan took on real meaning. As Heschel later remarked, “I felt that my legs were praying.”¹⁹

In Montgomery, we met several prominent people who would speak at the concluding rally, including A. Philip Randolph, venerable head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union; Ralph Bunche, a Nobel Prize laureate and undersecretary of the United Nations when the State of Israel was proclaimed, who had marched next to Heschel in the front row at Selma, Alabama; Roy Wilkins, head of the NAACP; Whitney Young, head of the National Urban League; and Rev. Edward Odom of the NAACP. I was especially thrilled to shake the hand of Rev. King, whom I had met in 1961 when he and my father were awarded honorary doctorates from Lincoln University, a historically black institution in Pennsylvania.

My narrative emphasizes the emotional impact of the march.

Perceptions and Perspectives

As indicated above, this report was written around fifty years ago by a young man, concerned with ideas as much as with actions, confronting the responsibilities of being a Jew. I was also struggling with my privileged background (a Jew from the Boston suburbs) and, even less consciously, sought to appreciate the unfamiliar culture of the South. A great many of the people we met—black and white Christians, friends and foes—had never before met a Jew outside of a business setting, another surprise for me that seemed to

portend a momentous responsibility. I was largely ignorant of these aspects of southern culture and sought meaning in the familiar.

As an aspiring but immature writer, I celebrated my “Jewishness” with some overblown images such as Dr. King, “the Savior of our Southern Seder,” and by my assimilation of the freedom song: “We joined sweaty hands and croaked, groaned or sung the present avatar of Shema Yisrael: WE SHALL OVERCOME!” For those of us, oppressed and bored by religious services in suburban synagogues, this was a true liberation. Social action provided a concrete opportunity to invigorate abstract ethical or spiritual principles, familiar to us through sermons. Such are the realities of which the “myth” of the black-Jewish alliance is made.²⁰

An additional anecdote offers perspective on the black-Jewish alliance. Around 1970 within the NAACP, a group of “young Turks,” activists sympathetic to the emerging Black Power movement, wanted to remove my father from the national presidency to which he was elected in 1966 after having served as cochair of the Life Membership Committee.²¹ Kivie listened patiently and then reminded them that the NAACP was a democratic, integrated organization. He refused to resign but welcomed their support of another candidate who was black. Kivie won reelection. Regardless of this confrontation, he never felt resentful, as did many white liberals during this period of black self-assertion. He understood that the need for black self-respect might collide with the needs of other groups.

Finally, I offer a brief comment concerning the encounter between Jews from the North and those from the South. It seems that the circumstances of their meeting, in the hostile environment of the rural South, along with the temperaments of the individuals involved, determined the different actions and perceptions of each group. My father formed a close friendship with Harry Golden, author and genial editor of the *Carolina Israelite* (which we subscribed to); Rabbi William B. Silverman, whose Jewish Community Center in Nashville, Tennessee, was

bombed; Rabbi Charles Mantinband of Hattiesburg, Mississippi; and many other activists. Kivie was quite aware that as white liberals from the North and visitors, we lived in relative safety.

Such documents as those that follow help flesh out the abstractions of sociology and politics. One of the duties of each generation is to transmit to our youth personal experiences such as these, creating living dialogue with the past, enhancing self-knowledge, and fostering even greater—and hopefully more lucid—commitments.

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**Kivie Kaplan, "Report on Trip to Mississippi,"
Vineyard Haven, Mass., July 14, 1964**

When we were at the Convention of the NAACP in Washington on Wednesday, June 24th, the entire Convention adjourned and picketed the Department of Justice on account of the Mississippi situation with the three missing boys. After that, a group of the National Board of the NAACP were invited to meet with President Johnson in the Cabinet Room and we met for about an hour and fifteen minutes. We had an off-the-record meeting and we were all sure of the sincerity of President Johnson and how he realized how serious the situation was. He told us that he had called the governor and the senators and other key people and had sent down a jetload of FBI people and investigators and Allen Dulles and that everything that was being done would be done.

Our National Board meeting was on Friday, the 26th of June at 5:00 PM and normally we were through by eight o'clock so that we could attend the evening sessions of the Convention. However, at 1:00 AM the following morning we were still going strong and it was unanimously voted at the Board meeting that a group of us would go as an investigating committee to Mississippi to see just what the situation was. I was one of those that volunteered that was chosen and there were a total of seven of us.

It was the sense of some that we leave immediately after the Convention but after a meeting after our Board meeting finished

of the committee we decided that plans would have to be made and an itinerary and mass meetings arranged and meetings with key people and people who had been subjected to police brutality and other indecencies, so that we were to hear from the staff the following Monday or Tuesday as to when we would leave.

At Vineyard Haven, Mass. I received a telephone call the following Tuesday that we would all leave Kennedy Airport early the morning of July 5th. This necessitated leaving Martha's Vineyard on July 4th, which I did and arrived in New York late that evening. We had, to bless us on the trip on Sunday morning, Monsignor Archibald [McLees] and Rabbi Jacob Polish and among others my son Edward was there, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Vorspan—Al is the Director of the Commission On Social Action—and many of the group's friends and relatives. It was a great send-off.

In addition to the Board members we had three staff members, Mr. Gloster Current, the Director of [NAACP] Branches, Mr. Robert Carter, the General [Counsel], and Mr. Maurice White of our Public Relations Department. At the airport the porter absolutely refused to take a tip and gave me a blessing besides.

Our first stop enroute to Jackson, Mississippi was Atlanta, Georgia and a group of our Youth met us at the airport, where we stayed for about an hour and a half and we had a great reception there from them and went over various matters.

We then proceeded to Jackson, Mississippi and had a wonderful reception at the airport, including press, radio and television interviews and I was pleasantly surprised to find Mr. Kenneth Guscott, the President of the Boston Branch, as well as Mr. Charles Evers, who is the Field Director for the State of Mississippi for the NAACP. He was arrested for speeding on the way to the airport, in spite of all the cars on the road passing him, but of course, these were white people.

We were able to desegregate the hotels and motels in Jackson except the Robert E. Lee, which chose to close its doors and go out of business rather than desegregate and we had plenty of police protection in Jackson wherever we met. However, everybody at the hotel was glaring at us and the situation was very tense. In

addition to the police there were plenty of plainclothes detectives watching out for us.

On the way from the airport our driver—a minister—was extremely nervous, being afraid of the cops because if they just go a little too fast or even within the speed limits they watch everybody like hawks. We had a warm welcome by all the Negro people and all the Negro officials of the NAACP.

Our people had met with the Chamber of Commerce, the police, the FBI and the city officials and they had agreed to open the hotels and restaurants and that was why we didn't have any trouble outside of this glaring experience. As you know, our investigating committee was to study the police brutality, murders, mobbings, the disappearance of the three boys, voter registration and other forms of discrimination, including what the Federal and State authorities are doing.

The first night at our mass meeting we had an overflow audience. All of us on the delegation, the seven Board members, spoke and I was very pleasantly surprised to see in audience Mr. Marvin Braiterman, a lawyer from Baltimore, who is a fellow member of the Social Action Commission of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and also there was a young girl by the name of Cooper from Boston and a lot of other boys and girls from the North were there. There was a great spirit and it was very, very moving and I sold five life memberships that evening alone. After the meeting we were escorted back to the hotel by the police and the police were on duty all night long and watched us when we came down for breakfast and were there with their guns in the dining room. I had invited the President and Dean of Tougaloo University for a very early breakfast and they asked me whether they would be served and I told them to come right along, which they did, and we were courteously served and treated with the greatest of respect.

The only incidents we had during the night were a few of our people were harassed by calls asking if there were any "niggers" in the room. I only received one call then had the telephone disconnected for the rest of the evening.

*Kivie Kaplan, "Report on Trip to Mississippi,"
July 14, 1964, p. 1.
(Courtesy of Edward K. Kaplan.)*

The temperature in Mississippi when we arrived was 97 degrees in the shade and it went from there to 115 during the time we visited the state. The population of the State of Mississippi is 42% Negro. However, in some of the towns the population would go as high as 75% Negro and the average income in the State of the Negro families is approximately \$700 per annum.

The people have been a beaten and harassed and intimidated people. It is actually a police state; a dog has more rights than a Negro because if they kill a dog the Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty to Animals will be after them, but nobody bothers them if they kill a Negro. However, our people are willing to give their lives for Freedom.

They appreciated us coming down very, very much, particularly the white people in the delegation.

We tried to get to see the governor and other state officials, unsuccessfully, but hope that we will see them before our trip was over.

There were three cars in the caravan of our people, NAACP, and nine cars of press, radio and television, representing all the major newspapers and networks all over the country. This gave both our group and the press a feeling of security as we were traveling around together.

Our Field Secretary in Jackson, Charles Evers, has armed guards around his home twenty-four hours a day.

Our people are having trouble on registering for voting and all types of obstacles are put in their way and when they finally do fill out the application they have to come back thirty days later and in most cases they are turned down.

The Negro members of the Religious Bi-racial Committee thought that they are making some progress and I received a report that in Jackson Rabbi Nussbaum has been very cooperative. However, most white ministers are afraid to come out too much in the open, as many have had their lives threatened by members of their churches.

We had reports on police brutality. A military policeman home on a visit wouldn't move to the back of the bus and he was shot dead by a policeman. No prosecution on this case and there

are cases of many other people having been killed and beaten to a pulp with no prosecution.

We drove to Canton, about forty miles from Jackson, to the headquarters of COFO. Had a press conference there and a meeting with our people. There are about 75% Negroes there and they are working very strenuously on voter registration. They also have a Freedom School and many young men and women from the North as well as all over the country are there.

They are also having plenty of trouble with beatings, intimidation and all kinds of delays on voter registration.

We then drove to Philadelphia, about sixty miles, and met with the county prosecutor to try to find out about the three missing boys. He told us they have 600 people working on the search, including the FBI and the sailors, and that they were doing all they could to find the three. He would not allow us to see the remains of the burned church or the burned car. His attitude was very antagonistic. The county prosecutor referred to our people as "Niggers" and was very rough and mean and we got nowhere with him. He called our attorney by his first name and the attorney, Mr. Robert Carter, and he had a verbal battle. He was finally willing to let one or two of us go to see the burned church. Our attitude was "all or none." By that time things were very TENSE and our people were afraid we would all be killed. A large crowd had gathered around the courthouse. THEY WERE VERY UNFRIENDLY and we were told to GET GOING QUICKLY. We were really scared and we were hustled out of town by a back road. There must have been 700 people that had rocks, bottles, guns and other things ready to throw or hit us with but we were just fortunate that God was on our side and we were on our way.

We could see on our way to Meridian that everybody had been alerted along the road—all unfriendly. If looks could kill we all would have been dead ducks. It was a tough day and night. We checked in at the police station in Meridian and had guards all the time. We had a large mass meeting in the evening and then a press conference a little after midnight. We broke the segregation in the hotels in Meridian and stayed at the Holiday Inn. We had been making history along the road. The next morning we are vis-

iting the Chane[y] home. This is the mother of the Negro boy, one of the three that are missing. This was a very sad visit. Mrs. Chane[y] had not heard from any state or local police or government officials. She had heard twice from President Johnson and also the FBI. She has five children and I presented her with \$50 for the family in behalf of Hazel Greenwald. She was very appreciative.

We then drove to Laurel, where we had a great reception at noon by a few hundred boys and girls. Their singing and reception was terrific. We were told of several incidents they had in Laurel. Two boys went to the Burger Chef and they were refused and when they left some men beat them and later another group went and they were greeted by some white men who beat them up also. The police arrested the ones who had been beaten and not the ones who did the beating. Several boys and girls gave us their experiences in desegregated restaurants. There were quite a few boys and girls here in Laurel from the North helping and they are also having serious problems here on voter registration. The potential number of voters in this town is 10,000 and they have 1,000 registered. They do not have adequate police protection, they do not have any Negro policemen on the police force and no desegregation in the schools. Many of our people have had their lives threatened. However, we were able to desegregate the restaurant at the best motel in the city.

We had a two-hour drive to Moss Point. This is where a girl was shot the night before we got there—an eighteen year old girl and was almost killed and they also shot into the car of a news reporter but just missed him. We had a lovely dinner at the church and then heard several cases about false arrest and police brutality. There is a shipyard in Pascagoula and there are many discriminations against the Negro. We had to adjourn our meeting, which we were having outdoors, as the heat was terrific indoors, as there were some men wandering around with rifles. At the mass meeting the sheriff, armed with two guns, sat at the foot of the pulpit to protect us. We had the largest and best meeting on our trip. Several hundred were out around the church, as it was packed. After the meeting we

desegregated four hotels and a few of us stayed in each one of them. We had supposedly police protection. There was one mean sheriff—about one and a half times as big as I was—and I thought he was a prosperous-looking business man and when I started to sell him a life membership I found out that he was a sheriff and what he said I wouldn't dare write. I got away from him so quickly after he put his hand on his guns that I never realized I could move so fast. I didn't even dare to give him a Smile Card.

We had also sold five life memberships in this town at the meeting at Moss Point. We desegregated Biloxi, Gulf Port, Pascagoula and Edgewater Park. You probably know that that evening there was a bombing in Macomb and we met with one of the boys that was involved in that bombing.

In trying to see the governor we flew from Gulf Port to Jackson. We had sent wires and we had called, asking for an audience and we never received an answer. We went to the governor's office and his secretary dismissed us. As we were going out and we wanted to deliver our message to the governor, we read it to the press and there was an angry, jeering crowd that threw spitballs and nuts, telling us that we should eat them, these monkeys and calling us Jews, Communists, white trash and other things that I wouldn't want to write. This was in the governor's mansion. All kinds of cat-calls and other derogatory remarks. We then proceeded to Clarksdale by car, which is a three and a half hour drive. We were greeted by the state police, taking pictures of us being greeted by our Negro friends. We had dinner at the church and at the end of the dinner a storm came up and all the lights went out. All of us sang Freedom Songs during the dark period of about half an hour. Later the lights went on and we proceeded with our program. Mrs. Vera [Pigee], a friend of Eddie's and mine, and her daughter, Mary Jane, were there and she and others were telling us about some of the experiences that they had. Vera had been beaten to a pulp when wanting to use a ladies' room in a gas station and just recently she was again arrested for passing a [car] on the right as a trumped-up charge and was going on trial the next day.

We had a fifteen year old boy telling us how he spent six months in jail and how he was beaten and he was beaten so badly that his hearing has been impaired — also on a trumped-up charge because he was a civil rights worker.

We met Rev. Charles Pend[le]ton, a white minister from Waterbury, Conn. He was the chaplain of twenty of the Northern boys and girls and he told us how he was intimidated by police chief Ben Collins and spoken to with foul language. He reported this to the FBI. Mrs. Brooks told of her arrest for picketing and her jail experience. She said she and thirty other women were put to hard labor. They were in a cell ten by nine and they put the heat on in addition to the normal heat for two continuous days and they put them out to hard labor with a scythe to cut grass, a scythe that was too heavy for a man to carry and they used to watch them when they took their showers and they used to commit other indecencies that I wouldn't want to print. It was 105 outside and 115 in the church. Many of the boys and girls told us about the intimidation from the police chief—these are white boys and girls from all over the country as far away as Los Angeles.

Beckwith, the man who killed Medgar Evers, is still out on bail and probably will continue free.

Clarksdale is having trouble desegregating, with very few [exceptions]. This is a BAD town. I stayed at a Negro home and had breakfast there and had a chance to learn a lot of what is going on. It is not good. People here have been killed for no reason at all. The plight of these people is very sad, being killed and beaten at will.

I believe that for every incident reported there are a hundred incidents at least that go unreported and that action should be taken by the Federal Government.

I am appending to this report copies of messages that we have delivered and sent along the road, which are self-explanatory.

We proceeded by car to Memphis, where we had a press conference and then a meeting with our Memphis Branch people on

all phases of our work and then proceeded on to New York and home.

KK:wb

Dictated but not read.

Vineyard Haven, Mass.

July 14, 1964

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**Edward K. Kaplan, "Personal Report
on the March to Montgomery,"
March, 1965**

This concerns our encounter at Montgomery, Alabama: Kivie Kaplan, my father; Louis Grossman, my 15 year old nephew; and myself, Edward. The day in New York began quite early as Kivie came marching into our room at 3:30 AM, singing freedom songs, being rather jolly and round. At 3:50 Gunther Lawrence, from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, dropped in to get us. Downstairs we met Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, the president of the UAHC, who drove us to the airport at 4:30 AM.

At the airport we saw a crowd which resembled the Ecumenical Council with a few strays from a Joan Baez concert. The waiting room was already filled, mostly with ministers and priests, some rabbinical students and various assorted liberals of all shapes and colors. We had a big sign with "Justice, Justice Shalt Thou Pursue—UAHC" on it. A few publicity pictures for the sake of the cause, and we took off at 8:00 AM, two hours late. We went with a flight chartered by the New York Protestant Council, on Saturn Airlines; this should have been a warning to the astrologically minded. On the plane we met more ministers, some funny ones seemed to be running away from their conservative bishops, others were quiet and determined, some were reading the Bible; I read *The New Republic*. Since we were sitting in front of the

*Edward K. Kaplan, "Personal Report on the March to
Montgomery," March 1965, p. 1.
(Courtesy of Edward K. Kaplan.)*

bathrooms, we had a chance to meet most of the travellers; it was a good occasion for Kivie to start with his "Keep Smiling" cards. With the aid of the clergy, we were all in good spirits.

We arrived at the Montgomery airport at 11:30 AM their time, losing an hour on the way over. We were immediately greeted by an old pal of Kivie, Dr. Claude Hudson, a 79 year old NAACP colleague; he had seen the "Smile" cards and concluded that Kivie was in town. There were city buses waiting to take us to the march site. Two SNCC fellows greeted us, one in the overall uniform of the group and the other in dungarees and a big cowboy hat; both were Negro. The latter drawled that he knew Kivie from somewhere; it turned out to be Mississippi last summer. At the field near St. Jude's hospital, where the 300 marchers had spent the night, were thousands of people—it turned out to be 25,000. A most amazing assortment of people which defied description. I was dazzled, numbed by the vastness, the singing, the determination, the mixture, the mud, age and youth, some with suits and ties, others in rags, side by side, under the same sun, the same clouds, marching to the same capital for the same reasons; priests and nuns, clergy of all sorts, beatniks, farmers, teenage tramps, Ivy League people. This was the exterior. The mud was sticky and I was speechless.

On the way to our places we met the Mississippi delegation. Dr. Aaron Henry, Mississippi NAACP leader, threw his arms around Kivie and made a big deal, and Mrs. Vera Pigeo gave us one of her inimitable smiles. It was a privilege to see these extraordinarily brave people; it was good to see friends in that crowd. We found a place and unrolled our "Justice" sign: Al Vorspan, Rabbi Eisendrath, Rabbi Schecter from Atlantic City, votre serviteur, Kivie and Louis. Evidently we were representing the Jews, along with hundreds of others, many of whom we knew. This was by far the most meaningful part of our itinerary.

We first marched through the Negro section of town. It was to be a march of 3½ miles, and the streets were unpaved and muddy, with deep gutters on the sides. The houses were small and gray, wooden and rotting, porches filled with old women and little children waving and smiling, one woman bowing, some

clapping, old geezers with canes and suspenders, hundreds of children of all ages, mostly small and cute, pathetically poor, dressed shabbily, some in ragged clothing. These poor people lined the streets. Some smiled; others just looked, seemingly bewildered. Other old women seemed to see a new age, new hope: Freedom. It was concrete, an invasion from the white Christian world; some saw Jews for the first time, talked with a friendly white for the first time—were human. We passed Negro schools with children hanging from the windows to see us—little black children, only black children. Louis was the first to burst into tears; Kivie was next as he saw some of the people by the side give cold drinks to the marchers who immediately passed them along after taking a quick gulp. It was hot and muggy in our city clothes. I was in a daze, looking as much as possible and deeply moved: trying to think and understand these feelings, trying to capture the distress and the hope, the misery and the truth, trying to find a common identity with these people from an alien culture. I shall never forget those dusky little faces, staring and clapping and singing, mouthing barely understandable words, words too big for their little hearts; overwhelmed by the numbers, the power which was theirs, which smiled back. Some day, I thought, these same children will be marching as citizens in a transformed culture.

The white section started with the poor folks, a subtle transition in space, characterized only by the color of the faces—and the quality of those faces: they were not very happy, not as curious. Most of them stayed on their porches and just looked, immobile and uncommitted, almost frozen with indifference, it seemed. Some of the “teddy boys” with cowboy boots and blue eyes (no doubt) said some nasty things as we passed by; their looks expressed more than their words, a hollow and insignificant hatred seemed a mere diversion to them, the joy of active aggression had been stifled by habit. The streets began to be paved, with buildings and commercial enterprises, office workers, the functionaries of this little metropolis, some workers as well: these people were more angry and sullen; they were protected by numbers and bourgeois respectability. One of these creatures, a human bullock

worthy of Daumier or George Grosz, shook his fist and jowls at us, babbling incoherently: just a patient in the asylum, shaking his fist at the wall, trying to shut off the waterfall. I wasn't really impressed by dramatic hatred in this commercial district, mostly ironic indifference. (All the while, Kivie was passing out his "Keep Smiling" cards to the marchers, and to the Negro spectators when they were available. They were neither articulate nor manifestly committed in the presence of whites; they stood apart on the sidewalks.)

As we approached the Capital, we saw a gigantic poster on a building showing M. L. King "in school with the Communists" (sic). A group of skinny white ladies spotted the Jewish theme of our sign and gave us an extra nasty look. They shouted slogans which, though unheard, increased by [a] sense of Jewish identity. Of course, this is one reason why we were there.

Along the way hundred and maybe thousands of [troops], armed with rifles, were stationed to protect us. These fellows frightened me more than anything else, along with the constant egg-beating of the helicopters overhead. Most of them were nationalized National Guard units; some wore Confederate flags on their uniforms. Their faces betrayed the disgust they felt. I was afraid that they might lose their heads and open fire on us, or that the helicopters would pour some Vietnam gas on us. Nothing of the sort. When we looked back we saw an endless line of marchers; we heard the rhythms of the freedom songs; we felt warm and happy to have such people on our side.

At the Capital the folksingers were at work. Some of the usual freedom songs, and the chanted liturgy of "What do we want?"—"FREEDOM!!!"—"When do we want it?"—"NOW!!!" As empty and sublime as a worn out prayer. The speeches were mostly long and windy. Brief and effective were Rabbi Eisendrath, A. Philip Randolph, Ralph Bunche and Roy Wilkins. Then came the long expected speech from Reverend Martin Luther King—the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Dr. King's speech was a rhythmical masterpiece of oratorical geometry. We all shared commitment to the message; it remained to deepen the emotional experience, to engrave with energy and

devotion the idealism which has consistently motivated the Freedom Movement. His talk was a symphony in black and white, a Beethoven ecstasy, elevating the masses to the exaltation of screaming applause, and slamming us back to the reality of past hopelessness. *Hope* and *Freedom*, the emblems of our struggle, booming out over multitudes, bouncing off the lily-white walls of George Wallace's crumbling Confederate fortress; the pulse of hope quickens, the blood of freedom courses through our veins, revitalizing the spirit with the present communion of brotherhood, the desire for peace and (even) the possibility of love. Here was the Moses of our new mythology, the savior of our Southern Seder, the archetypal Jesus dressed in black. Here was a Baptist preacher injecting new meaning into the American Constitution, a judicial reality which is fighting for rebirth into human truth. Beneath the Confederate flag of the Montgomery dome, white and black together affirmed a common faith. The ritual sacrifice of the moribund Confederacy completed, we joined sweaty hands and croaked, groaned or sung the present avatar of Shema Yisrael: WE SHALL OVERCOME!

After the rally we were told to leave the city as quickly as possible, especially for those in cars. We met many of our friends too numerous to mention, among whom were Whitney Young, Reverend Odom, Charles Evers, Dr. Ralph Bunche. Just before they entered their plane, we talked with Dr. and Mrs. King, who asked for Mother. Kivie sold a Life Membership to one of my sister's old boyfriend[s] (they always come in handy) and so on. Six hours late, our Saturn airplane took off at midnight; we arrived in New York at 3:00 AM and flew back to Boston at 7:30, after having slept on the benches in the waiting room.

For the three of us, the trip to Montgomery was an intensely personal encounter, in Buber's sense. There we were, three fugitives from the comfortable middle class. Well-fed abstractionists, we witnessed a magnificently significant example of how our lofty Judeo-Christian ideals took on the reality of human flesh: black and white together.

Edward K. Kaplan
March, 1965

NOTES

¹ Both of these documents are preserved in the Kivie Kaplan Papers at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, Manuscript Collection No. 26.

² Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *We are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney, and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi* (New York, 1988), especially chapter 11, "The Forty-Four Days," 336–402.

³ Kivie is a family name, recalling Rabbi Akiva.

⁴ See essays by Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch, Albert Vorspan, Rabbi William B. Silverman, and Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn in *Kivie Kaplan: A Legend in His Own Time*, ed. S. Norman Feingold and William B. Silverman (New York, 1976).

⁵ Edward B. Muse, *Paying for Freedom: History of the NAACP and the Life Membership Program, 1909–1987* (Baltimore, 1986), and essays by Roy Wilkins, Gloster Current, James Farmer, and others in Feingold and Silverman, *Legend in His Own Time*.

⁶ Rabbi and Mrs. Samuel Perlman, "S. Ralph Harlow's Influence," in Feingold and Silverman, *Legend in His Own Time*, 87–96.

⁷ Charlotte Dubin, "NAACP President Applies Jewish Soul to Civil Rights," *Detroit Jewish News*, July 7, 1972.

⁸ Feingold and Silverman, *Legend in His Own Time*, 19–20.

⁹ See Edward K. Kaplan, "The Family Man," in Feingold and Silverman, *Legend in His Own Time*, 49–75, for the somewhat critical view of a young son.

¹⁰ Gloster Current, "His Convictions and Courage," in Feingold and Silverman, *Legend in His Own Time*, 173–181; Roy Wilkins, "Kivie Kaplan and the NAACP," in Feingold and Silverman, *Legend in His Own Time*, 139–154.

¹¹ Current, "His Convictions," 173–181; Wilkins, "Kaplan and the NAACP," 139–154.

¹² Gary P. Zola, "What Price Amos? Perry Nussbaum's Career in Jackson, Mississippi," in *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s*, ed. Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin (Tuscaloosa, 1997), 230–257; Scott M. Langston, "The Bible and Bombings: Southern Rabbis Respond during the Civil Rights Movement," *Southern Jewish History* 14 (2011): 155–200.

¹³ Clive Webb, "Big Struggle in a Small Town: Charles Mantinband of Hattiesburg, Mississippi," in Bauman and Kalin, *Quiet Voices*, 213–229.

¹⁴ Doug McAdams, *Freedom Summer* (New York, 1998).

¹⁵ Current, "His Convictions," 181.

¹⁶ For background on Pigea and many of these events, see, for example, Françoise N. Hamlin, "Vera Mae Pigea: Mothering the Movement," *Proteus: A Journal of Ideas* 22 (Spring 2005): 19–27; Deanna M. Gillespie, "'First Class' Citizenship Education in the Mississippi Delta, 1961–1965," *Journal of Southern History* 80 (February 2014): 109–142.

¹⁷ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, rev. ed. (New York, 2000).

¹⁸ Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–1968* (New York, 2006), especially part 1, “Selma: The Last Revolution,” 5–202. For a parallel Jewish perspective, see Edward K. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940–1972* (New Haven, CT, 2007), especially chapter 11, “A Prophetic Witness,” 197–213, and chapter 12, “We Shall Overcome,” 214–234. See also Gilbert Jonas, *Freedom's Sword: The NAACP and the Struggle against Racism in America, 1909–1969* (New York, 2007); James W. Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (New York, 1963–1964); Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, 2009).

¹⁹ Quoted by Susannah Heschel from a memorandum written by her father, this has become a powerful (and often misquoted) slogan: “[H]aving walked with Hasidic rabbis on various occasions, I felt a sense of the Holy in what I was doing. . . . Even without words our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying.” Susannah Heschel, introduction to Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York, 1996), xxiii. See also Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 225.

²⁰ The literature concerning the history of black-Jewish relations and the existence (or lack thereof) and extent of an alliance or coalition is extensive. See, for example, Cheryl Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, NJ, 2010); and John Bracey and August Meier, “Toward a Research Agenda for Blacks and Jews in United States History,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12 (Spring 1993): 60–69.

²¹ “Black Backed for N.A.A.C.P.,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1972.

Book Reviews

Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation. By Anton Hieke. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2013. 396 pages.

Compiling a database of every Jewish resident of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia at key points during the Reconstruction Era that followed the Civil War is a labor-intensive task. It involves not only the arduous work of combing through census documents, cemetery lists, local histories, and the like, but also wrestling with problems such as variant spellings, missing data, and conflicting information. Nonetheless, Anton Hieke has undertaken this task in order to lay the groundwork for his impressively researched study, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South*. As the foundation for his demographic research, Hieke wisely chose to use the census returns of 1860 and 1880 rather than those of 1870 (the one census taken in the midst of the Reconstruction Era). He thus can provide a sense of the composition of the Jewish population of the three states on which he focuses as well as reveal something about the geographic and social mobility of that population.

Hieke contends that the Reconstruction Era was an important one because it was “a formative period for many Jewish communities and congregations” in the South and also the period of “the beginning of a transition for so many Jewish congregations from Orthodox to Reform Judaism” (1). Nonetheless, according to Hieke, so little research has been done on southern Jews in the years just after the Civil War that much of what has been said about them is based largely on assumptions rather than on evidence. Therein lies the rationale for the research project that resulted in this volume.

The core of Hieke’s book is composed of three sections, each about a hundred pages in length, exploring three different but interrelated topics: the nature of the Jewish populations of Georgia

and the Carolinas during the Reconstruction Era; the place of Jews within southern society at the time; and the development of Jewish institutions and Jewish identity in the states under consideration. In probing these topics, Hieke has been able to shed new light on some important aspects of southern and American Jewish history. In the first section of his book, for example, the author provides an insightful discussion of the various forms of chain migration that helped populate Georgia and the Carolinas with Jews. In this section, he also demonstrates conclusively that the frequent reference to the middle decades of the nineteenth century as the "German period" of southern Jewish history (and of American Jewish history generally) is misleading, since his detailed demographic research reveals that only a minority of the Jews in the region actually emigrated from Germany. In 1860 South Carolina, to take but one example, most Jews were American-born, and Jews from Prussian Poland constituted the second largest group.

In order to evaluate the "southernness" of post-Civil War Jews in Georgia and the Carolinas, a key issue addressed in the second section of his study, the author examines how they measured up in relation to what he considers three crucial markers of southern identity: acceptance of the "racial fabric of society and politics" in the South; "Confederate patriotism"; and residence in the region (164). In connection with the question of southern Jewish identity, Hieke also examines philosemitism in the South, expressed mainly in public, and antisemitism in the region, mainly covert. He concludes that the Jews whom he has studied did largely accept the racial basis of southern society but that, nonetheless, Jews were viewed only as "integrated outsiders" (122). The majority population "included them in southern society – but not as equals," Hieke writes. "A thin line separated Jews from the core of southern collective identity, which was Christian" (132). As far as loyalty to the Confederacy is concerned, Hieke shows that some Jews fought in the Confederate army and that some served the South as blockade-runners. Here, however, as in several other instances, the author can offer only tentative conclusions. Noting that service to the Confederacy did not necessarily signify

loyalty to the South, he asserts that the question of southern Jewish patriotism must remain open.

One of the most interesting and important concepts introduced in Hieke's book is that of transregional migration, for the author's exhaustive compilation of demographic data has revealed the great extent to which individual Jews moved about. Not only did they come to the South from many different places outside of the United States, but they also migrated constantly into and out of various regions of the country. This had implications not only for the character of the Jewish population of Georgia and the Carolinas but also for the ability of Jews in these states to form firm attachments to the South. In effect, Hieke argues, the "continuous residential mobility" of the Jews he studied indicates that "their Southern identity was but one facet of their trans-regional—American—identity" (205).

In the third section of his book, Hieke sets out to show that southern congregations and communities moved toward Reform Judaism in the period after the Civil War because they were relatively isolated in "rural America," and so "they adapted accordingly" (206). In order to illustrate the adjustments that Jews made and the role of Reform, he discusses how various aspects of Jewish practice—keeping the Sabbath and observing *kashrut*, for example—were altered in the nineteenth-century southern environment. Most of Hieke's observations here ring true, although his point about the personal influence that American Jewish luminaries such as Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise had on individual southern congregations is perhaps overstated.

Hieke's book includes a number of ancillary features that help the author tell his story. Pie charts illustrating the places of origin of various samples of the Jewish population are a nice touch, for example, as are the maps included in the book, although some of these can be confusing, especially to those less familiar with the geographic complexities of nineteenth-century central Europe.

While there is a great deal about this study to commend, in certain respects it is still somewhat unpolished. One gets the sense that Hieke has felt compelled to include in his book nearly every

item of evidence and every example he has uncovered, and too often the reader can get lost in long recitations of facts. So, too, the text tends to be repetitious; variations of the phrase “as mentioned above” appear all too frequently. Finally, the volume contains many more editing problems than it should. There are not only multiple errors of grammar and punctuation, but also instances of incorrect word choice (e.g., “endemics” instead of “epidemics” [72] and “consequential” instead of “consequent” [84]); examples of proofreading oversights (e.g., “had grown eightfold to 80,000 eighty thousand” [94]), and cases of awkward construction (e.g., “The cornerstone was lowered under accompanying ceremonies” [268]).

Still, despite some shortcomings in terms of the presentation of its findings, this book performs a true service to the fields of southern and American Jewish history. Hieke has mustered a great deal of evidence to establish that, contrary to some common assumptions, Jewish life in the Reconstruction South was not necessarily “German” in character, that southern Jews did not adopt a southern identity wholesale, that they did not achieve full acceptance as equals by their white Christian neighbors, and that Reform Judaism in Georgia and the Carolinas was not copied directly from German models but rather developed on the basis of local conditions. All in all, this prodigiously researched book constitutes a very valuable addition to the literature.

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In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama’s Jews, the Second World War, and the Holocaust. By Dan J. Puckett. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014. 326 pages.

Dan J. Puckett’s *In the Shadow of Hitler* is a meticulously researched exploration of Alabama Jews’ responses to the Holocaust during World War II. Looking closely at the Jewish communities of Birmingham, Montgomery, Mobile, and Selma

throughout the 1930s and 1940s, as well as outlying rural communities when possible, Puckett offers a valuable consideration of the ways that these southern Jews responded to the mass murder of European Jews. Finding both similarities and differences between Alabamian responses and northern and national responses, he reminds us that there is still much research to be done on American Jewish life during these crucial years in the middle of the twentieth century.

Puckett's argument is grounded well in his research. He argues that the war, refugee crisis, intensification of antisemitism, and growth of Zionism ultimately unified Alabama's Jews. Despite the persistence of conflict between anti-Zionist Jews in the American Council for Judaism and Jewish Zionists, by the end of the war these groups had largely transcended their political, cultural, and class differences to create a more unified community, even if they were unable to do much to save their European kin. However, that unity was forged within a southern Jewish identity that still insisted upon Jews as southern whites and ignored any comparison between the Nazi segregation and persecution of Jews and the Jim Crow system and lynching in the American South. If the war did not reshape attitudes towards civil rights or race, however, it did reshape the Jewish self-image of GIs who returned from the war more committed to their Jewish identities and communities.

Puckett first explores the impact of antisemitism on Alabama Jewish communities in the 1930s, looking at the ways that the Scottsboro Boys and *Kristallnacht*—and Nazism more broadly—affected Jews in the state as well as their gentile neighbors. He then shows Alabama Jews making valiant efforts to rescue European Jewish refugees and highlights their gentile neighbors' sympathies for Jewish refugees—even if these same gentile neighbors refused to support any extension of the American quota for immigration. In the third chapter, Puckett describes the debates over Zionism throughout the 1930s, discussions that generally wound up vindicating the position of Zionists and isolating the anti-Zionists in the American Council for Judaism. The fourth chapter looks in more depth at the treatment in the Alabama press

of Nazi antisemitism and the Holocaust, finding that the state press, like the national press, adequately covered the rise of Nazi antisemitism and the Final Solution, making it possible for Alabamians to know about the Holocaust. At the same time, however, Puckett notes that the specifically Jewish identity of Nazi victims was frequently evaded in the press, thus eliding the larger story of the Holocaust for Alabama newspaper readers (again, as with readers of the mainstream press).

In his fifth chapter, Puckett looks at the powerful impact of the war upon Jewish GIs, noting their emotional connection to Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, their zeal to vanquish the Nazis, and their renewed commitment to Jewish communal life after the war. In the sixth chapter, however, Puckett offers important balance to the triumphant portrait of Alabama Jewish GIs by describing the antisemitism and racism that emerged in Alabama during and immediately after the war, including the propaganda of far-right antisemitic groups and more mainstream discrimination against Jews in public accommodations and legal proceedings. In his description of the postwar situation in the seventh chapter, Puckett describes the complicated and problematic efforts of Alabama Jews to host Holocaust refugees. Finally, in the epilogue, he describes Alabama Jews responding to the Holocaust primarily with silence in the years immediately following the war. Given recent literature on American Jews' responses to the Holocaust, Puckett's portrait suggests that Alabama Jews are like northern American Jews in some ways and very different in others. In all of these chapters, Puckett's meticulous research and careful findings are evident.

Throughout most of this book, Puckett is careful to note the important scholars with whom he is engaging, such as Hasia Diner, Deborah Dash Moore, Deborah Lipstadt, and Laurel Leff. The reader might be aided, however, by a broader historiographical argument that situates Puckett's work more clearly within the literature. In each chapter, he engages one or two historians, but his broader argument could be made more central to the entire book.

Moreover, Puckett's argument is undone a bit by his organizational structure, one that privileges each community narrative

rather than the overarching story he is telling. Readers can get a little bogged down in the different politics of Selma, Montgomery, or Birmingham without a clear roadmap to help them understand how these cities' stories matter to the overarching narrative. Then, too, it is never really clear how Alabama's story relates to the rest of the South. Why Alabama and not Mississippi or North Carolina? Were there differences or similarities within the region itself?

Despite these caveats, Puckett's carefully and extensively researched work adds an important building block to our research on American Jewish responses to the Holocaust. More research into different regions and different angles of this question can only deepen our knowledge and understanding of the impact of the Holocaust in American life.

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Website Review

Gershwind-Bennett Isaac Leiser Digital Repository. <http://leiser.library.upenn.edu/>. Created and maintained by the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. Reviewed March 2014.

Lionized as the leading Jewish religious leader of the pre-Civil War period, Isaac Leiser was arguably less influential for the potency of his ideas and the suppleness of his pen—others spoke and wrote with more facility than he did—than for his doggedness and adeptness as an organizer and innovator.* A tireless defender of traditional Judaism against religious reform, Leiser harnessed the revolutionary technologies of his age by publishing and printing reams of new and translated works on the steam-powered printing press and traveling to the furthest reaches of an expanding American Jewish community by rail and steamboat to promote his cause. An assiduous correspondent with connections across the United States and farther afield, Leiser’s letters offer a window into American Jewry during a period of dramatic change. When he arrived in America in 1824, most of the new nation’s six thousand Jews clustered in towns and cities along the Atlantic seaboard. At the time of his death in 1868, the country was home to close to two hundred thousand Jews, many of whom had been drawn westward and southward in pursuit of opportunity.

Given Leiser’s openness to transformative technologies, it seems fitting that the digitization of his own voluminous writings, including letters, sermons, and publications, reveals how a new

* The seminal biography of Leiser is Lance J. Sussman’s *Isaac Leiser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit, 1995).

set of technologies is transforming scholarly inquiry. This website, part of a broader initiative to create an online *genizah* of accessible historical sources relating to American Jewry, puts the raw materials of historical research within reach of anyone with Internet access. But it does much more than this, offering historians a new battery of tools that will alter the range and type of questions they can ask. For the first time, the researcher is able to search a corpus of 2,100 letters, written to and by Leeser, for individual keywords (*Charleston* yields 158 hits; *southern* yields 23). Scholars interested in the language and ideas of Jewish life can track the emergence of new concepts and rhetoric as well as the frequency

Website at leeser.library.upenn.edu.

of their use. Even a cursory search demonstrates how Jews adopted terminology (“nullification,” “secession”) that was drawn from the public discourse of their day. The technology also makes it possible to more efficiently gather material on subjects that are only discussed obliquely or occasionally in correspondence. For example, historians seeking to write about the impact of the environment on American Jewry—disease, weather, and natural calamities—previously would have had to read vast numbers of letters in the hope of finding the occasional reference. They can

now do so with a simple search. For those seeking historical *scha-denfreude*, references to yellow fever, earthquakes, and snow storms are instantaneously available.

If the letters offer new insights when viewed (and searched) in aggregate, they also promise rich rewards for those willing to patiently sift through the collection letter by letter. Historians, for example, know relatively little about M. N. Nathan, a peripatetic *hazan* who served congregations in England, the Caribbean, and the United States. His letters to Leeser offer wisps of long-forgotten gossip about congregational matters, asides about Jewish life in the Caribbean (and the economic costs of slave emancipation in the British Empire), and indications of his political leanings. (The “Great General Grant perhaps may not turn out a Ulysses after all,” Nathan wrote hopefully in 1864, “and the south *may yet conquer a peace*. I fervently hope and pray they may. . . . They deserve success.”) Nathan is but one of many figures lost to history and memory who return to life in these letters.

Letter from Isaac Leeser to Zalma Rehine, 23 Nisan 5596 [April 10, 1836], original and transcription, <http://leeser.library.upenn.edu>.

The website also points the way forward by supplying an interactive map that enables users to browse the letters by country, state, and city. More than one-sixth of the letters were sent to or received from correspondents in the South. Leeser, who initially joined his uncle, traditionalist Zalma Rehine, in Richmond before taking the pulpit of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, maintained close connections with Jews and Jewish life in the South throughout his career. He traveled extensively in the region to foster fledgling congregations, including the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation ("The Temple") in Atlanta. His newspaper, *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, carried stories about southern Jewish communities, often admonishing them to establish Jewish institutions and to adhere to orthodoxy. His mode of traditionalism tended to dominate in the South during his lifetime, only to be overtaken by Reform after his death. The interactive map, for example, highlights ninety-three letters relating to Charleston, South Carolina, some of which discuss the struggles within the city's Jewish community over the earliest Reform synagogue in the United States.

The map, however, is the only preformulated tool on the site that categorizes the letters by subject. It would be helpful if the site supplied other such interactive tools, collecting all the letters, for example, by author or grouping those that deal with religious reform, Sunday schools, Christian missionizing, and other major themes. This is a petty complaint about an initiative that makes the work of historians easier in so many ways. The interface is uncluttered and straightforward to use. Each letter has been transcribed (and when in Hebrew or German, translated); the transcribed text appears side by side with a digital image of the original. Historians accustomed to straining their eyes to parse meaning from spidery script will rejoice at this. We should also rejoice at the broader purpose it will serve by democratizing access to our shared historical heritage and thus demystifying the historian's craft.

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Glossary

Adjunta ~ the board of trustees of a Sephardic congregation

Aliyah (plural: **aliyot**) ~ literally, *going up*; moving from the Diaspora to Israel; the act of going up to the bimah for an honor, such as reading from the Torah during religious services

Apikorsim ~ heretics

Beth din ~ rabbinical court

Bimah ~ platform from which services are led in a synagogue

Genizah ~ literally, *hidden away*; a closet or storage space in a synagogue where old prayer books and religious articles are stored until they can be buried according to Jewish law

Hazan ~ cantor; religious leader leading prayers/chants during religious services

Heymishe ~ familiar, homey, ordinary

High Holy Days ~ Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the two most important holidays on the Jewish calendar

Kashres/kashrut/kosher ~ “purity”; Jewish laws governing food

Kristallnacht ~ literally *night of broken glass*, November 9-10, 1938, Nazi-sponsored pogrom throughout Germany and Austria, bringing widespread murder, arrests, and property destruction, escalating the violence against Jews

Landsman (plural: **landsmen**) ~ a fellow countryman; someone from the same place in Europe

Landsmanshaftn ~ social and benevolent societies comprised of landsmen.

Mazkir ~ secretary

Mensch ~ upright, honorable, decent human being

Mussafim ~ extra prayers added to the morning worship services during festivals, the High Holy Days, and Sabbath

Sephardic ~ having to do with Jews and Judaism associated with Spain and Portugal

Shavuot ~ Festival of Weeks, or Pentecost, occurring fifty days after the second day of Passover; anniversary of receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai

Shoah ~ the Holocaust, from the modern Hebrew word for catastrophic destruction

Talmud ~ collection of post-biblical ancient teachings justifying and explaining Jewish law; compilation of *Mishna* (code of Jewish religious and legal norms) and *Gemara* (discussions and explanations of *Mishna*)

Torah ~ Five Books of Moses; first five books of the Bible

Yiddishkeit ~ Yiddish culture

Yichus ~ distinguished lineage; bloodline; prestige

Yidn ~ Jews, people

YIVO ~ or the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, dedicated to preserving the cultural history of eastern European Jewry and the Yiddish language, founded in Vilna in 1925 as the Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut, literally *Yiddish Scientific Institute*, and relocated to New York in 1940

Yontifdike ~ festive, in a holiday spirit

Note on Authors

Seth R. Clare originally wrote his contribution to this volume as a Bachelor's Essay in order to earn his B.A. from the Honors College at the College of Charleston. In spring 2013, Seth received an Israel Government Fellowship through the Menachem Begin Heritage Center in Jerusalem to spend a year working as a junior diplomatic writer in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Seth is presently pursuing an M.A. degree at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, where his research interests include American foreign policy, international economics, geopolitics, energy, and finance.

Kirsten Fermaglich is associate professor of history and Jewish studies at Michigan State University. She is the author of *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America* (2006) and coeditor of the Norton Critical Edition of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (2013), as well as articles published in such journals as *American Jewish History* and *American Studies*. She is currently researching a book on name-changing in New York City in the twentieth century tentatively titled *A Rosenberg by Any Other Name*.

Anton Hieke holds a doctorate in American studies from the University of Halle-Wittenberg, Germany. His research focuses on placing the Jewish South into Atlantic history. Hieke is the author of *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (2013) and co-author of *Abraham David – Jüdische Auswanderung im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (2013). His articles on southern Jewish history have appeared in American and European journals. Hieke currently serves as Vice President of Leopold Zunz Zentrum, e.V., a society dedicated to research and dissemination of the central German Jewish past and present.

Edward K. Kaplan is Kaiserman Professor in the Humanities at Brandeis University, where he has taught courses on French, comparative literature, and religious studies since 1978. He is the author of three books and several articles in the field of French history as well as articles on Martin Buber, Thomas Merton, Howard Thurman, and Abraham Joshua Heschel. He wrote *Holiness in Words: Abraham Joshua Heschel's Poetics of Piety* (2012) and is the coauthor with Samuel Dresner of *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Prophetic Witness*, a finalist in the 1998 Jewish Book Awards, and *Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940–1972*, winner of the 2007 National Jewish Book Award in American Jew-

ish studies. He recently published an introduction to Heschel's life and works, *Abraham Heschel, Un prophète pour notre temps*. In spring 2012, he taught a seminar on Heschel and Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and writer, at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

Adam Mendelsohn is director of the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture and associate professor of Jewish studies at the College of Charleston. He specializes in the history of Anglophone Jewish communities in the period prior to eastern European mass migration. He is the author of *The Rag Race* (2014) about Jewish involvement in the clothing trade in the United States and the British Empire.

Josh Parshall is a doctoral student in American studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His interests include Jewish American identity, Yiddish and *Yiddishkayt*, and the Jewish South. Previously, Josh worked as the oral historian at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. He holds a B.A. in American studies from the University of Kansas and an M.A. in folklore from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Daniel Weinfeld, a graduate of Harvard College with a law degree from NYU School of Law, is the author of *The Jackson County War: Reconstruction and Resistance in Post-Civil War Florida* (2012) and editor of *T. Thomas Fortune's 'After War Times': An African American Childhood in Reconstruction Era Florida* (forthcoming). He has also written articles published in *Southern Jewish History* and the *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Weinfeld is programming director of the Daniel Sickles Civil War Round Table in White Plains, New York, and blogs about Florida history topics at www.bloodandoranges.com.

Lee Shai Weissbach is professor of history at the University of Louisville, where the College of Arts and Sciences recently bestowed on him its Career Achievement Award for Scholarship. His publications include *Jewish Life in Small-Town America* (2005) and *A Jewish Life on Three Continents: The Memoir of Menachem Mendel Frieden* (2013).

Quadrennial Award for Best Article in SJH

Recipients of the SJHS quadrennial prize for the outstanding article published in *Southern Jewish History*:

2001 (volumes 1–4) Scott Langston for “Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans” in volume 3.

2005 (volumes 5–8) Adam Mendelsohn for “Two Far South: Rabbinical Responses to Apartheid and Segregation in South Africa and the American South” in volume 6.

2009 (volumes 9–12) *cowinners* Dianne Ashton for “Quick to the Party: The Americanization of Hanukkah and Southern Jewry,” in volume 12; and Leonard Rogoff for “Harry Golden, New Yorker: I ♥ NC,” in volume 11.

2013 (volumes 13–16) Leonard Rogoff for “A Tale of Two Cities: Race, Riots, and Religion in New Bern and Wilmington, North Carolina, 1898” in volume 14.

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