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MUSEUM OF THE SOUTHERN JEWISH EXPERIENCE

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Cover Picture: Portrait of Margaret Anne Goldsmith, by Maurice Grosser, c. 1947. Portions of Goldsmith's memoir describing her lifelong relationship with the Black woman who raised her appear in this issue. (Courtesy of the Huntsville History Collection.)

From the Editor . . .

Virtually all the articles in this volume address nuance and complexity. We begin with an article on divisions within an extended family over the Civil War, Reconstruction, and segregation. Jay Silverberg's account brings into question unity among Jews within the North and the South over these issues. As divided as families were over politics and race, ties of blood and religion kept them together. We travel with the Ochs/Mayer family around Mississippi, Kentucky, New York, and points in between.

Leonard Rogoff takes the well-documented story of the Cone sisters of North Carolina, heiresses of the Cone Mills fortune, in new interpretive directions. Somewhat bohemian and certainly cosmopolitan, Dr. Claribel Cone and Etta Cone traveled Europe mingling with avant-garde artists and celebrities including Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas while accumulating a renowned art collection. They exemplified those southern Jews who brought art and culture to their region and who lived there while venturing beyond it literally and figuratively. While the men in their family worked as economic entrepreneurs, they expanded the woman's sphere as cultural entrepreneurs.

Mary Jo O'Rear explicates how several Jewish leaders united in successful opposition to the public funding of a statue of Jesus Christ in the harbor of the city named for his body, Corpus Christi. The roots of the call for the statue extended back decades but came to a head during the 1970s. Questions arose concerning the definition of separation of church and state. The protest provides an important example of Jews in the South openly speaking out on controversial issues.

The Primary Sources article here differs from its predecessors. Previous contributions focused on a few documents and placed them in historical perspective. Here Adrienne DeArmas describes the Shapell Roster, how and why it came into being, its analytic approach to documentation, and its value as a primary source compilation of Jewish military involvement in the Civil War. From DeArmas, we learn of the

difficulties of identifying individuals as Jews and combatants, and, by extension, the intricacies of archival research.

Seemingly so simple, the interaction between Black caregivers and the Jewish children they helped raise included numerous layers of class, race, and social/personal relations. Lance J. Sussman and Lynda Barness bring together excerpts from several memoirs written by Margaret Anne Goldsmith later in her life depicting her very personal relationship with Cora Barley Binford in Huntsville, Alabama. Although a member of the Black middle or even upper class, segregation relegated Barley Binford to a position of personal service. Yet love developed between the White child and her Black nanny, so much so that as Cora aged, Margaret Anne became one of her caregivers. An uneven relationship evens over time, and two cultures somewhat intertwine.

Janice Rothschild Blumberg, a past president and stalwart of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, passed away shortly after her hundredth birthday. It is difficult to imagine the society or conferences without her presence, much like her predecessors Saul Viener, Bernie Wax, Sam Proctor, Sol Breibart, Sumner Levine, and so many others. Following editorial policy, this volume includes a memorial to Janice as an historian with personal reminiscences included by several past presidents and me.

Finally, review section editors Shari Rabin, Ashley Walters, and Stephen J. Whitfield oversaw a plethora of book, exhibit, website, and movie reviews. Steve, who has served as book review extraordinaire for fifteen years, submitted his resignation to take effect at the completion of this volume. He is the only person who has studied southern Jewish history longer than I have—he's just older—yet his research has gone far beyond to include the histories of Brandeis University, American Jewish culture, *Fiddler on the Roof,* Cold War culture, Hannah Arendt, Dwight McDonald, Scott Nearing, and Emmett Till. Although his formal position on the journal will end, I fully expect to continue to call on him for assistance and advice . . . and the latter I expect to receive even when unsolicited. We thank Steve Whitfield for his effort and guidance through the years, first on the editorial board and then as section editor.

Many thanks to Rachel Heimovics Braun, Karen Franklin, Hollace Weiner, and Dan Weinfeld for their continuing efforts as proofreaders. Our previous printing company informed us that they would no longer

be printing journals, thus Bryan Edward Stone successfully undertook the task of locating a new printer. In the process, we informed the new printer and a university press we considered about Bryan's numerous duties. The university press especially was astounded at the scope and quality of his work as managing editor. No other editor of a journal they published came near to his accomplishments. Our thanks go to Bryan and all the section editors without whom this journal would not appear with the same quality or depth of coverage.

Mark K. Bauman

In Memoriam: Janice Oettinger Rothschild Blumberg (February 13, 1924–February 21, 2024)

Janice Oettinger Rothschild Blumberg was bigger than life. Although the epitome of the southern (Jewish) lady, the international cosmopolitan rejected the designation. Her first marriage to Rabbi Jacob Rothschild brought her into the civil rights movement. But Janice reinterpreted the domain of the *rebbetzin* by forging a sisterhood of Black and White women dedicated to the cause; by transforming her journalism degree into writing and producing plays for The Temple sisterhood and B'nai B'rith Women; by presiding over Theater Atlanta Women's Guild (according to the *Southern Israelite*, "the first Jewish woman to head a major group in Atlanta's cultural arts world"); by founding and cochairing the Visit Israel Program and providing outstanding leadership to Israel Bonds and Israeli tourism efforts; and by leading a (Georgia) women's march on Washington in support of Soviet Jewry. Janice's second marriage to insurance executive David Blumberg, who became president of B'nai B'rith International (1971–78), led her to extensive international travel, meeting presidents and prime ministers. Again, she transformed the role of wife and advisor by becoming a founder and chair (1991–98) of the B'nai B'rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C.

With these and more accomplishments notwithstanding, a remembrance in *Southern Jewish History* must concentrate on Janice's efforts as an historian. When I started my research in Atlanta and southern Jewish history in 1977, her article in the *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* (March 1973) and her history of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation of Atlanta, *As But a Day: The First Hundred Years (1867–1967)* (1967, revised and expanded in 1987), much impressed me. I first met Janice during the early

Janice Oettinger, 1947.
(Courtesy of the Cuba Family Archives for
Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.)

1980s when I chaired a panel of Atlanta Jewish leaders including her. After serving on the board of the American Jewish Historical Society, Janice became president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society (1984–86), and we met regularly at annual conferences from then until Sandy and I provided transportation for her and her dear friend Cecily Abram to her last conference in Charleston in 2022. We shared Friday dinners in her Buckhead condo and our home in Flowery Branch, and became friends with her children, Marcia, who accompanied her mother to conferences until her untimely death, and Bill.

Unbelievably humble, Janice sought and received assistance from early SJHS stalwart Louis Schmier with her second book, *One Voice, Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild and the Troubled South* (1984), a depiction of her late husband and Temple rabbi's role in the civil rights movement. This she followed with a chapter on Rabbi Rothschild appearing in *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Civil Rights* (1997), and our collaboration began. Her publications include *Prophet in a Time of Priests: Rabbi Alphabet Browne 1845–1929* (2012); "The Bomb That Healed: A Personal Memoir," *American Jewish History* (1983); "The Bomb That Healed—A Retrospective," *CCAR Journal* (1983); "Miss Daisy and I," *Reform Judaism* (Summer 1991); "Rabbi E. B. M. Browne," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (2006); "Rabbi Alphabet Browne: The Atlanta Years," *Southern Jewish History* 5 (2002); and "Sophie Weill Browne: From Rabbi's Wife to Clubwoman," *Southern Jewish History* 9 (2006). Janice also published articles in the new *Encyclopaedia Judaica* on Atlanta and Georgia Jewry and on Mayor Sam Massell. Her memoir, *What's Next? Southern Dreams, Jewish Deeds and the Challenge of Looking Back While Moving Forward*, appeared in 2020.

Janice's transformation from journalist to historian (although the former career continued in numerous newspaper and magazine venues) began with the institution that served as her religious home: The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation ("The Temple") of Atlanta. This included pioneering work concerning the pivotal bombing of The Temple in 1958. Almost all her other publications related to her family and personal experiences. All were well-documented, placed within appropriate context, and analytic. She truly deserved the Sam Proctor Award for Outstanding Career Scholarship the SJHS granted her in 2012. In 2020 the SJHS, the Breman Museum, and The Temple inaugurated a jointly coordinated lecture series named in Janice's honor.

The following are short reminiscences composed by previous SJHS presidents:

HOLLACE A. WEINER recalls: When I accepted the SJHS presidency, I realized that very few women had held the executive position. Only Rachel [Heimovics Braun], Cathy Kahn, and Janice. Those were legendary high-heeled shoes to step into. I watched and listened when they led meetings. Whenever Janice and Cathy introduced a speaker, there was always a personal connection they shared with the audience. Listeners felt

included in that personal circle. In the hospitality suite, I always quietly stood just outside the informal circle where Janice held court so I could eavesdrop and join the laughter. She knew we nicknamed you [Mark Bauman] the "Slasher," and she agreed. She also realized and appreciated how you shaped her writing and her historical narratives for the better. I shall miss the cadence of her voice, her refined southern accent, her diplomatic way of critiquing what was said at a lecture, and her elegant bearing. She was southern Jewish royalty.

RACHEL HEIMOVICS BRAUN observes: Janice Rothschild Blumberg was one of the most remarkable people I have known. Talented, beautiful, charismatic, brilliant, creative, generous, and often fun to be with, she carried herself high throughout her long life. My friendship with her goes back to the years immediately following the Bicentennial when I served on the board of the American Jewish Historical Society. I would see her at AJHS

Janice Rothschild Blumberg acting as president of SJHS at the 1985 annual conference in Memphis. (Courtesy of College of Charleston Special Collections.)

board meetings and annual conferences. But I got to know her better when, in 1985, as a newly minted southerner, I attended my first SJHS meeting in Memphis. At that time, she was SJHS president. When she finished her presidency, she put all existing papers relating to the society (papers of incorporation, minutes, membership rolls, etc.) in an old, somewhat battered, suitcase with the initials DMB (for her husband David M. Blumberg) and passed it on to her successor, Sam Proctor, who, in turn, passed it on to me when I succeeded Sam. I had frequent opportunities to work with Janice as she was a repeat contributor to *Southern Jewish History.* Her first article in 2002 (volume 5) was about her colorful and multi-degreed ancestor, Rabbi Alphabet Browne. She loved to talk and write about her interesting family. Janice was often the first to greet me at annual SJHS conferences; sometimes we "did the town" together on a free evening. We also saw one another on her visits to Central Florida and when I was in Washington D.C. Once I stayed with her in Washington and attended a dinner party in her home. That was really elegant as was everything about her.

SCOTT LANGSTON writes: "I came to know Janice through my work in the SJHS. I was rather starry-eyed when I first met her and found out she was the rabbi's wife at the time of the famous Temple bombing. I couldn't believe I was talking with someone who was so close to this historical event. She soon became a friend and a great encourager. She made me feel like the work I was doing was important—and interesting. That's unusual in academia, especially for someone like me. I was a nobody, but she was someone of some prominence in southern Jewish history circles, both for her connection to significant events and for her scholarship. She always seemed genuinely interested in me and wanted to talk with me and share a meal when we would see each other at SJHS conferences. Through the SJHS, I came to respect her as a person, a scholar, a leader, and a friend. She was a great lady whom I admired, and I am thankful she did not allow her prominence to keep her from noticing me and making me feel worthwhile.

According to PHYLLIS LEFFLER: Janice was incredibly gracious and welcoming to me when I joined SJHS and later became president. She had strong ideas about what the society should be doing, presented those ideas with vigor, and always demonstrated a commitment to the organization.

Her grandson and my son had been buddies growing up, having met at Camp Judaea one summer. Unfailingly, she always remembered that connection, and whenever we met, she asked me about my son's current activities and, of course, filled me in on her grandson! It was a connection that felt very meaningful. Substantive to the end, she nonetheless brought a personal touch and charm to relationships. SJHS has lost a true friend.

BRUCE BEEBER remembers: *Rebbetzin* Janice Rothschild Blumberg always was a valued teacher. Three examples:

> 1. Knowing that I wanted to write an article for the local newspaper here covering Jewish Columbus, Georgia (one of her early hometowns), she connected me to helpful, articulate, historically centered members of that community.
>
> 2. She already had served as president of the SJHS when I began my term as its leader. In one of my earliest actions, there was a need to transition one of the society's publication editors [Rachel Heimovics Braun]. That accomplished, I advised that the person formerly in that role be listed henceforth as "Emeritus." "Emeritus?" Mrs. Rothschild Blumberg questioned me privately. Even while not in disagreement with the designation, she asked poignantly, "do you realize what Emeritus will mean here? Have you discussed this appointment fully with your Board?" Another very good lesson.
>
> 3. Years later, at a Jewish museum event that included honoring Mrs. Rothschild Blumberg, my wife and I were privileged to have the official photographer take our pictures together with her. In the midst, an acquaintance of the *rebbetzin* sitting at her table looked over and asked me: "May I borrow your ink pen?" Janice, always again with good advice in my direction, whispered "Be careful. You'll probably never see that pen again." And don't you know, she was right.

LEONARD ROGOFF, one of Janice's myriad distant relatives, reminisces: Janice was the Grand Dame of Southern Jewry, but it was more than her link to the storied past that made her so engaging. As a memoirist, biographer, and historian, she spoke and wrote with the authority of lived experience. Having antebellum southern Jewish roots, she retained the

grace and graciousness of her upbringing. She had lived our history most famously during the tumultuous civil rights era when she and her husband, Rabbi Jack Rothschild, were intimate friends of Martin and Coretta Scott King and The Temple was bombed. Beyond the innate dignity of her presence, she was always warm and welcoming. One hundred years wasn't long enough.

JAY SILVERBERG shares the following anecdotes: Most conversations with Janice were ventures into her vast memory that would take you to places and events that she experienced and with people—historical figures in many cases—whom she knew. Discussions with Janice, though, were not simply personal remembrances. She spoke with a reverence for those she knew and an appreciation for the events she lived with people who shaped history. To know Janice, to be in her presence, was to be a part of history. Her presence will always remain with her writings and videos, and her legacy to preserve and promote southern Jewish history is embedded with those of us fortunate to have known her.

The first time I met Janice was in Nashville. You [Mark Bauman] pulled me aside and urged that I forego attending some talk to meet Janice and Cathy Kahn, who were seated together outside the lecture room. You took me to them. Cathy recognized my name, of course, knew my family. Janice asked me to sit next to her. I think Cathy knew what was coming next. She politely excused herself and off she went. Janice proceeded to ask me about, well, me. She asked about my research, my family, etc. Mark, I had no clue who she was. She knew that. Not once did she ever say who she was. The lecture ended, people exited, some of her friends walked over and before leaving, she turned to me and said how wonderful it had been to talk with me, to keep in touch and lastly, 'write about your history. It's important.' I said my goodbyes. I may have asked you who she was. I remember someone telling me, "Wait, you don't know? Well, she is . . . "

I bought the book about the temple bombing, started it that night in my hotel room and finished it on the flight home. I didn't see her again for four years, when Phyllis Leffler asked my wife and me to drive her and Cecily from D.C. to Charlottesville. Nearly four hours in a car with Janice—each way. I prepped. So did my wife. We had questions. She spoke about people and events so effortlessly, but so precisely, and with such

meaning for what she experienced and usually the relevance to current events. It was an experience.

I also had Janice and Alfred Uhry alone for about thirty minutes before the Zoom lecture/discussion he gave as the first Janice Rothschild Blumberg lecture. They carried on like teenagers, talking about Jewish life, people they knew, their work. I'll never forget it. I love reading the books and listening to you and your colleagues talk about southern Jewish history. Listening to those two was just as meaningful.

Onward . . .

ELLEN UMANSKY expounds about Janice: Long before we met, I admired Janice Rothschild Blumberg, the self-described "First Lady of The Temple" from 1946, when she married Rabbi Jacob Rothschild, until his death in 1973. During that time, she saw herself primarily as the wife of Jack Rothschild and the mother of Marcia and Bill, according to her memoir. Yet after I began teaching at Emory University in 1982, I met many people long active in the Atlanta Jewish community who shared their memories of Janice's deep involvement in The Temple and the greater community and her decades-long friendship with Coretta Scott King. I read her book, *One Voice: Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild and the Troubled South*, which revealed not only what a fine researcher and gifted writer Janice was (and the historical significance of Jacob Rothschild's rabbinate) but also the actions she took after The Temple bombing in 1958 and the 1960 sit-in against the policy of segregated facilities at Rich's department store, and the role she played in the planning of the city-wide banquet to honor Martin Luther King, Jr., after he'd been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

I first met her at one of the society's annual meetings during the mid-1990s. I particularly remember the key role Janice played in helping to organize the SJHS panel I chaired almost twenty years ago featuring wives of southern rabbis active in the civil rights movement including Janice, Helen Wax, widow of Rabbi James Wax of Memphis, and Louise Stern, widow of Rabbi Malcolm Stern of Norfolk, and her helping to make our 2007 conference in Washington, D.C. such a great success. By then, Janice and her late second husband, David Blumberg, had long made Washington, D.C., their home. After Janice returned to Atlanta in 2009, she became the "guiding spirit" behind Emory's Tam Institute for Jewish Studies' annual Jacob Rothschild Memorial Lecture, established by a group of donors

to honor Rabbi Rothschild's social justice work.* I was honored when Eric Goldstein, then Interim Director of the Tam Institute, asked me to give the inaugural Rothschild Lecture. He said that he and Janice thought that given my scholarly work on Reform Jewish leaders who saw social justice as central to their sense of religious mission, I would be the ideal person to deliver it. On April 7, 2010, after a wonderful dinner with Eric, Janice, Bill (whom I knew from the years in which I taught at Emory), Marcia (with whom I became good friends), and my son, Abe, who was then at Emory Law School, I gave a talk titled "Here I Am, Send Me: Mission, Social Justice and Modern Jewish Identity." Through Janice's and my ongoing involvement in the SJHS, it was fortunately only one of many evenings that we subsequently spent together.

Janice Rothschild Blumberg lived, made, and wrote about history. Her memory is truly a blessing to everyone who knew and loved her.

Mark K. Bauman

* Eric Goldstein, "In Memoriam: Janice Rothschild Blumberg (1924–2024)," Tam Institute for Jewish Studies, March 4, 2024.

Houses Divided that Remained Standing: Conflicting Loyalties within an Extended Southern Jewish Family

by

Jay Silverberg *

Adolph Ochs was barely one year into his ownership of the *New York Times* in 1897 when the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) offered him membership. Aware of Ochs's southern upbringing, prominence in Chattanooga, and devotion to his Confederate-loving mother, the UDC was cognizant of the impact Ochs's acceptance would have on its nascent campaign to revise Civil War memory.[1]

While he artfully refused to join the organization, Ochs's letter helps illustrate his shifting personal views about reconciliation after the Civil War. Ochs belonged to an extended southern Jewish family—the Mayers—that was drawn into the societal impact of the Civil War, adapting to a New South while either opposing or supporting the Lost Cause narrative. Ochs's brothers and cousins in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama were equally well established in the region before, during, and after the Civil War. The entire family, whether espousing Confederate or Union sympathies, balanced influences in their lives challenging their loyalty to each other, to other Jews, to their region, and to the country.[2]

Numerous newly identified primary sources add to the revelations of historians who have addressed the same or similar topics. Following the broader historiography, members of the Ochs and Mayer families can be portrayed as pragmatists, balancing religious, economic, and familial challenges before and after the war. The close-knit family also shared

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similarities with other southern—and northern—Jewish families, being "cosmopolitan, economically and geographically mobile, and willing to take controversial positions." In her analysis of Jewish mobility, Shari Rabin offers the view that Jews "were not eager assimilationists, not adamant reformers, and not staunch traditionalists, but rather ordinary Jews who were flexible, open-minded and pragmatic." Their lives teetered between a desire to embrace a progressive New South even as they were being enveloped by Lost Cause sentiments.[3]

Ochs's response to the UDC in which he sought to remove himself from the debate about Civil War memory provides insight into his evolving viewpoints about the war's place in collective memory during a forty-year period. He moved from an almost detached feeling toward the war to embracing pro-Confederate memorials and strong anti-Reconstructionist views, even supporting the disenfranchisement of Black Americans. In the letter written in 1897, he deferred to groups such as the UDC for their "sacred work" of memorialization, two years after his Chattanooga newspaper broached the beginnings of a revised Civil War memory in a similar manner to the white women of the Confederacy.[4]

A decade later, he became intertwined through his *Chattanooga Times* with a group of businessmen whose efforts significantly diminished, if not eliminated Black men from elective office, as happened in communities throughout the South seeking an end to the postbellum political and social progress Blacks had temporarily achieved during Reconstruction. In Mississippi, the Mayers also navigated regional sensitivities of war memory, memorials, and celebrations, maintaining their Judaism while working like their more famous cousin for economic and political progress amidst similar conflicts over social and racial equality.[5]

Ultimately this is a story about divisions between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and cousins, from generation to generation, on virtually every issue from the coming of the Civil War through Reconstruction, to the New South and Lost Cause mythology, and into the era of Jim Crow segregation. At the Republican convention held in Springfield, Illinois, on June 16, 1858, Abraham Lincoln famously maintained in opposition to Stephen Douglas that a "house divided against itself cannot stand." Yet, for the Ochs-Mayer extended family, such divisiveness, contrary to Lincoln's prognosis for the nation, failed to break ties of blood or religion.

Natchez Roots: Confederate Mother and Union Father

The patriarch and matriarch of the extended family, John and Jeannette Mayer—Ochs's great uncle and aunt—settled in New Orleans during the 1830s and moved to Natchez the following decade. Ochs's mother was Bertha Levy Ochs. Her father, Joseph Levy, and John Mayer were brothers from Landau, Germany.[6] Depending on the accounts, Bertha Levy's revolutionary leanings during the German uprisings in the 1840s placed her in a precarious position with authorities in Heidelberg, where she attended a private school. Levy's family removed Bertha from Heidelberg and sent her to Natchez to live with her uncle John and his family. She arrived in New Orleans on November 5, 1850. Her father, a prosperous businessman in Landau, sold the family's belongings and business and then emigrated with her mother, Regina, brothers Oscar and Dave, and sisters Fannie, Julia, and Amelia, arriving in New Orleans almost three years to the day after Bertha.[7]

John and Jeannette Mayer.
(Courtesy of the Thomas H. and Joan Gandy Photographic Collection,
Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections,
LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.)

Advertisement for a merchandise auction to be held by Joseph Levy, "merchant-tailor here." (Landauer Wochenblatt, *April 27, 1853. Courtesy of the Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.)*

Bertha Levy enjoyed the life of a southern belle in Natchez. Like so many Jewish immigrants, whatever strife she may have protested or lived through in Germany was quickly put aside as she transitioned into a privileged lifestyle amid the plantation-centered region where she settled. In 1855, her four years of relative comfort living with her family took a decided turn when she married Julius Ochs in Nashville about a year after they first met in Natchez. The two would make a formidable couple, challenged by ongoing economic struggles and their internal conflicts about the Civil War, countered by their lifelong devotion to each other and family.[8]

In 1845, Julius Ochs had followed his brothers and sisters to America. As many Jews before and after, Ochs began peddling. He eventually relied on his musical ability to entertain and his deep knowledge of Judaism to conduct services, skills that would provide for his family well into later years. The elder Ochs met with varied success as a merchant, as well as calamitous business experiences. A prosperous clothing store in Nashville burned in 1854, not long after the Levys had moved there from Cincinnati,

and he reunited with his future wife. After two years in Cincinnati and the birth of Adolph in 1858, the Ochs family returned to Nashville. When he heard the news about Fort Sumter, Julius spoke openly on behalf of the Union and was spirited out of town with his family in a friend's carriage back to Cincinnati. An abolitionist, his position was hardened by frequent peddling trips throughout the South that exposed him to the horrors of slavery.[9]

In 1861, Ochs mustered a group of volunteers in Cincinnati intent on preventing smuggling of arms and goods to the Confederacy. Troubles at home, however, soon began. "The women were fired with an almost ecstatic zeal for the Confederate cause," he wrote in his autobiography. "They were fierce, implacable in their hatred of the North. I was acquainted with many of them, for my wife, being sixteen when she came to Mississippi had imbibed the Southern spirit and entertained extreme animosity toward the North." Perhaps his wife, Bertha, maintained some of her youthful zeal for revolution as a witness to events in Heidelberg.

Bertha Levy Ochs with Adolph Ochs, 1858.
(Courtesy of the Manuscripts and Archives Division,
New York Public Library.)

Regardless, she was caught once trying to smuggle quinine to Confederate soldiers bivouacked near Cincinnati and nearly jailed a second time joining women friends and fellow Confederate sympathizers denouncing Union authority in Cincinnati. In both instances, her husband's good standing as a Union officer amicably ended her difficulties.[10]

The family enjoyed a brief period of prosperity in the years just after the war when Julius was part owner of stores in Knoxville, but those ventures, too, ended in failure. Judaism, however, acted as an anchor for the elder Ochs. A descendent of Orthodox Jews, he had become fluent in

Adolph Ochs as a young man, dressed in a Confederate uniform, c.1868. Photograph probably by Theodore Moritz Schleier. (Courtesy of the Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.)

Hebrew by his late teens. Before departing Knoxville to join Adolph in Chattanooga, Julius Ochs became the spiritual and inspirational leader of a small group of Jews, but the family's faith continually challenged Adolph Ochs in the decades that followed. The young Adolph worked briefly for his uncle, Oscar Levy, a Confederate veteran, in Providence, Rhode Island, before returning to Knoxville to work for the local newspaper. By his late teens, Adolph emerged as the "emotional and economic fulcrum of his family," a role he never relinquished. In 1878, he bought the failing *Chattanooga Times* and began his rise to the pinnacle of American newspaper publishing. Devoted to his parents, he hired his father as the bookkeeper for the newspaper, thereby recognizing Julius Ochs's lifelong

acumen for numbers and efficiency, while acutely aware of his business weaknesses. He wrote loving letters to his mother for years, hoping that she was proud of him and his achievements.[11]

After Julius Ochs died in 1888, his wife spent time with family at their various homes, always "an unreconstructed southerner." Her granddaughter, Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, remembered during one of her grandmother's visits to New York City, "we were to hear Booker T. Washington at Carnegie Hall . . . and this plan outraged her. 'How can you be taking your child out to hear that darkie!' Papa responded very calmly but very firmly, 'Mr. Washington is a great man and Iphigene should hear him.'" In 1910, Booker T. Washington wrote to Adolph Ochs seeking the *New York Times*'s support for a national exposition commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Washington asked for Ochs and the *Times* to endorse a U.S. Senate resolution supporting the exposition. The *Times* had been less than supportive of a national exposition, arguing that smaller, regional expositions might be more helpful to a commemoration than a larger, national event, which, if unsuccessful, would do more harm than good to Black Americans. Washington wrote that he would be opposed "to anything that would stir up racial strife or revive bitterness growing out of slavery and reconstruction days. . . . I believe that the Southern white people can be led to take as much pride in this Exposition as the Negro himself."[12]

Bertha Levy Ochs died in 1908. Yet even in death, the lifelong dedication of Julius and Bertha Ochs to their respective causes presented challenges to the family. Adolph Ochs talked his mother into giving his father a modest military-style procession of Union veterans, as his casket, covered in the flag of the United States, was carried to his grave. Years later, Bertha Levy Ochs's coffin next to her husband's grave was covered by the Confederate Stars and Bars, the pin of the UDC Chattanooga unit of which she was a charter member attached to her burial shroud.[13]

A Southerner in the North

As the authors of *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind The New York Times* point out, Adolph Ochs "was a man of his era and region." By the time the UDC approached him in 1897, he had owned the *Chattanooga Times* for nineteen years and maintained interests with his siblings, managing the paper even though he lived in New York. While he

attempted to use his youth as a means of deflecting the Civil War's impact in his UDC response, the war had never been far from him. During the postbellum era, family meals included debates about the Civil War. His brother George remembered, "my parents lived a wonderfully harmonious life, notwithstanding their opposed affiliations, for which they fought unrelentingly—a marvelous example of tolerance and humanism." Julius Ochs befriended two of the more noteworthy Tennesseans of the era—Andrew Johnson, who became Abraham Lincoln's vice president and successor as president, and Parson Brownlow, a newspaper publisher and Tennessee governor. Johnson and Brownlow opposed each other on secession, with the elder Ochs at times mediating their rows.[14]

By 1897 Adolph Ochs had emerged as one of Chattanooga's leading citizens, and his involvement in local matters through his newspaper's editorial coverage and policies provided early insight into his views about racial equity. In 1883, he withstood widespread criticism for his newspaper's opposition to proposed legislation that would have significantly curtailed Black political office-holding. His newspaper took an unpopular position when it lobbied for prison reform in response to the treatment of Black men frequently sentenced for minor or imagined offenses resulting in convict labor—essentially slavery in another form. Years earlier in Knoxville, his father, Julius, had directed efforts to improve conditions in the local "workhouse" or prison. *Chattanooga Times* readers canceled their subscriptions and businesses canceled advertising, costing Ochs thousands of dollars in lost revenue because of his opposition to the proposed legislation. Another controversy arose when Republicans appointed a Black man to the school board, and, although Ochs's newspaper agreed that the appointment should not have been made, his editorial position held firm—the appointment was not a sufficient reason to overhaul city government.[15]

The three Ochs brothers—Adolph, George, and Milton—were continually involved in Chattanooga's economic, social, and civic affairs. Milton, who remained in the newspaper business in Chattanooga most of his life, served as a vice president and director of the Lookout Mountain site before it became a national park. Adolph Ochs eventually deeded 2,700 acres on the slopes of Lookout Mountain that now include a national park encompassing the Civil War battlefield, the main highway in the area, and an observatory named after him. Ochs's uncle Oscar Levy and

Cannon at Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, 1918
(Library of Congress.)

cousins, Simon Mayer and Simon Lehman, fought at Chickamauga as members of the Tenth Mississippi infantry regiment.

In 1895, Ochs served as chairman of the Chickamauga Memorial Association that planned the national park. This position stands in contrast to his UDC letter in which he hopes "people forget there ever was a Civil War." His hopes, however, were swept aside by the momentum for something far different. The dedication of the Chickamauga Battlefield was among the most visible of any memorial efforts during the post-Reconstruction era of rising Jim Crow segregation. Ochs's newspaper estimated that nearly fifty thousand people were in attendance in Chattanooga during the battlefield dedication in September 1895, a national show of purported Blue-Gray reconciliation.[16]

His newspaper devoted three days of coverage to the dedication, publishing impassioned memories from those who fought in one of the bloodiest battles of the war. "Yesterday was a great day," began an editorial comment in Ochs's *Chattanooga Times* on September 20, 1895. It recounted how the U.S. vice president, governors, Civil War generals, and other dignitaries attended the ceremonies: "They were all here to witness the last but joyful rites over the dead body of sectionalism. They buried the repulsive carcass on Chickamauga field, covered the grave with the soil made sacred by American patriots, planted it so deep that no trump of discord can ever revive it into life again." Although Ochs and his newspaper followed a central theme of the times—a unified country no longer divided by the sectional differences before and after the war—historians observe that this desire for reconciliation "offered both a white-washed memory of the war and vision of sectional healing on Confederate terms."[17]

The authors of a major book on his newspaper career state that Ochs keenly sought middle ground, having observed his mother and father continually at odds over the war. His letters to pro-Confederate organizations support that premise. However, he pivoted dramatically to embrace Jim Crow efforts resulting in Black disenfranchisement in Chattanooga. In 1911, city leaders began anew to dismantle nearly thirty years of political equity among Blacks and whites, pushing through redistricting laws that essentially ended any hope of Black men winning elective office and instituting hiring practices removing or significantly restricting Black people from working in city offices. Ochs and his Chattanooga newspaper stood at the forefront of those efforts even while he resided in New York. "We have no prejudice against the Negroes but dislike to be ruled and ruined by them," a *Chattanooga Times* editorial stated.[18]

Ochs and his Democratic businessmen friends saw Republican Black elected leaders as impeding their hope for economic progress and took steps to move them aside. These efforts reflected those of leaders of other cities throughout the South that ended years of Black social, economic, and political progress during Reconstruction. However, Ochs differed in one respect, according to historian Eric Goldstein, in that, while southern Jews usually supported Black disenfranchisement, they "shied away from high profile engagement with racial issues." In contrast, Ochs stood up in the middle of them.[19]

That same year, 1911, on the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Civil War, Ochs's *New York Times* struck a conciliatory theme in its editorials, chiding readers for needlessly celebrating the war while reminding them that the soldiers who fought the battles on both sides were Americans—the same sentiments Ochs offered in his letters to the UDC. Nonetheless, news coverage in the *Times* concentrated on events memorializing the war, ignoring, either willingly or not, the profound political and societal changes during the period fueling the racist fury prompting Leo Frank's prosecution and the Lost Cause. Historians David Blight and Eric Foner suggest these changes emanated from the same racist white supremacist assault on Reconstruction.[20]

A telling anecdote about Ochs regarding the Ku Klux Klan suggests his willingness to ignore the organization's antisemitism while embracing a sanitized opinion of its racist underpinnings. In a column upon his retirement, *Knoxville Journal* publisher Alfred F. Sanford wrote in 1936 about a dinner he shared with Ochs and others. At some point, the KKK became the subject of conversation. According to Sanford, Ochs argued that the KKK leadership had misled the members, who joined as an outlet for their "native American patriotism" regardless of the organization's intolerant views.[21]

Ochs, who told inquirers that he was from Chattanooga and was proud of his southern roots, called upon his upbringing during the 1920s when he was challenged by organizations building monuments to the Civil War. In 1924, as controversy swirled around whether to build the Stone Mountain memorial in Georgia, a newspaper accused Ochs of opposing the project, and a second detractor challenged his upbringing. Ochs demanded that both check their facts, defending his heritage. He gave one thousand dollars to have his mother's name, Bertha Levy Ochs, inscribed on the Stone Mountain memorial.[22]

Four years later, the UDC sought his New York newspaper's support for the organization's efforts to be a part of the Arlington Memorial Bridge project and the Confederate Memorial at Arlington Cemetery in Washington D.C. The *Times's* Washington, D.C., bureau chief, at Ochs's request, provided details about the project in a two-page letter, suggesting that because the UDC lacked project specifics, the request for a news story touting the memorial project could be delayed if not indefinitely tabled. Ochs's *Times* had no further involvement in the project. Ochs did send two

thousand dollars in memory of his mother to the UDC to help fireproof the chapel where Robert E. Lee is buried at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. "I should be pleased to know if I can be of any further assistance in this effort to preserve and care for the South's most sacred shrine," he wrote in a letter with his contribution. He also sent two hundred dollars to help Silverdale Cemetery in Chattanooga, the gravesite of 150 unknown Confederate soldiers.[23]

Adolph's brother George shared some of the same beliefs about the South and its collective memory. George Ochs lived a life as accomplished as his brother, but in different environs. He won election as mayor of Chattanooga in 1893 when he was only thirty-one years old. His four-year term was noted for progressive achievements—the opening of the city's first hospital, planning for the city's first park system, improved financial management of city finances, and improvements to schools and public health. His career included positions as an editor and publisher for several newspapers and magazines, including key positions with the *New York Times*, president of the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, and membership on the board of education. Speeches throughout his life show the sorts of conflict evident in Lost Cause memory. To high school students, he referred to the war as "the peculiar crisis." In a speech during a memorial service

George W. Oakes (Ochs)
(Wikimedia Commons.)

in 1930 at Mount Hope Cemetery in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, Ochs drew on the Civil War tropes of the period, suggesting the animosities of "that unhappy strife" had subsided, the healing complete because the grave of the unknown Confederate soldier would be next to the graves of Union soldiers in the Arlington national military cemetery, in the shadow of the "consecrated dwelling place of Robert. E. Lee." He said his mother was "saturated with the sentiments and ideals of the Mississippi slave-holding classes, hotly espoused the cause of the South; while my father, bred in a different school of thought, joined the Union forces."[24]

Adolph and George Ochs became visible parts of the national conversation about the Civil War and its aftermath. George Ochs's speech during the 1930 memorial service, while he served as the historian of the Sons of Confederate Veterans Chapter 985 in Chattanooga, mirrored so many others seeking a Blue-Gray handshake as a symbol of reconciliation regardless of the country's inability to accept or even recognize Black equality. Adolph Ochs, seeking understanding from Lost Cause organizations about his southernness, and his brother George, on the side of reconciliation, belonged to the movement to memorialize the war and those who fought in it, embracing their family members, some of whom defended southern causes on the very battlefield that they helped to dedicate. George Ochs, speaking as Chattanooga mayor during the park dedication, proclaimed, "This park is thus the symbol of the nation's second birth, the holy ground where amity and reconciliation have erected in granite and in bronze the record of a country's heroes, a country now eternally and indivisibly reunited." As Blight suggests, "The task was harrowing: how to make the logic of sectional reconciliation compatible with the logic of emancipation." Caroline Janney more succinctly concludes that by the 1920s and 1930s, "it seemed as if the Confederate memory of the war had eclipsed that of the Union."[25]

In his study of Adolph Ochs, Gerald W. Johnson maintained that part of Ochs's greatness was his single-minded goal to overcome the contradictions, if not challenges, in his life. Ochs "had no interest in nonsense posing as intellectual and spiritual activity," according to Johnson. He looked past the misdeeds of his parents' generation to push himself and those with whom he associated to a greater good while mindful of his love for his parents and his southern roots.[26]

Influence and Conflict in Natchez

Ochs and his Mississippi family, the Mayers, shared more than a bloodline. The Mayers in Natchez were tethered as well to the Confederate and Union causes and the decisions that would determine, in historian Blight's words, "the character of the new society that they were to build." The Mayers became one of the most prosperous merchant families in Natchez, surrounded by some of the wealthiest families in America—the planter elite who wholeheartedly embraced slavery, secession, and the inevitable war to preserve their plantation lifestyles and enslaved labor force. When John and Jeannette Mayer arrived in Natchez at the beginning of the 1840s, the town's economy was slowly recovering from the worldwide depression that had begun in 1837. The family adapted well, as did many other Jewish families who were accepted for embracing the tenets of a slaveholding region while maintaining their faith, largely without interference from their Christian neighbors.[27]

The family's business interests comingled with those of siblings, in-laws, and family friends. Brothers-in-law Henry Frank and Isaac Lowenburg, Union sutlers who met in Nashville in 1862 before reuniting a year later in Natchez, became Ochs's partners in Chattanooga real estate deals during the 1880s that resulted in financial losses for the investors. Mayer men also served as Confederate soldiers. "Many were the heated discussions between these 'Yankees' and our rebel family until Mother forbade political wrangling, but encouraged affinity, prompted by her usual tact and good sense," wrote family historian Clara Lowenburg in her memoirs. Frank J. Byrne argues that the family acted as the linchpin in the interplay of Confederate-Union sentiments. "The dynamics of all nineteenth-century families incorporated varying degrees of affection, materialism, paternalism, and racism, but the peculiar blend of these qualities within the merchant family made it unique. . . . [T]he merchant family not only exhibited characteristics similar to those of both the yeoman and planter classes; its values spanned the growing sectional divide of antebellum America," Byrne contends.[28]

During the Civil War, the Mayers' successful shoe and general merchandise store provided financial stability, while the family's slave ownership added another piece to their assimilation into southern society

and mores. Byrne asserts that families like the Mayers, as merchants and Jews, were sensitive to misconceptions about secessionist sentiments, and, at least for the Mayers and other Jews, maintaining ambiguous ties to the Confederacy was a necessity.[29]

Clara Lowenburg's memoirs, covering nearly eighty years of family history, offer additional insight into the contradictions and contrasts within the Ochs-Mayer family. Several of the stories Lowenburg recounts involve enslaved Blacks, an integral part of the Natchez family, as with many other southern white families. Enslaved Blacks outnumbered whites by nearly three to one in Adams County. "Slavery was an axiomatic foundation of the social pattern of the Old South," argues Bertram W. Korn. "Jews wanted to acclimate themselves in every way to their environment; in both a social and psychological sense, they needed to be accepted as equals by their fellow citizens." Lowenburg's entries about

Clara Lowenburg Moses.
(Courtesy of the Thomas H. and Joan Gandy Photographic Collection,
Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections,
LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.)

enslaved individuals are a mixture of observational storytelling, repeating common interpretations seeking to minimize the Black viewpoint of slavery and the war while focused on the inequities inherent in her life and those of the Black people she encountered.[30]

She wrote about an enslaved woman named Ann who "nursed all of grandma's children and refused to be free after the war. . . . [S]he told us wonderful stories about the war and the time she was a slave." Lowenburg also wrote about her unease at witnessing Black roustabouts on a Mississippi River paddlewheel boat being mistreated. She recounted a story about the Mayers' liveryman and an enslaved woman who also worked for the family marrying in the family home. The man joined an all-Black unit of the Union Army after Natchez fell and served until the war ended. A Mayer brother-in-law, Julius Weis, wrote in his memoirs of feeling repugnance after watching a whipping of an enslaved Black man. "I afterwards got somewhat accustomed to it, but I always felt a pity for the poor slaves. . . . I owned several slaves myself, but I never found it necessary to punish them in such a manner."[31]

The Mayer family thrived amid the challenges of Confederate and New South initiatives because of their ability to adapt to changing times. Family members became integrally involved in a Natchez Confederate memorial project, a fraudulent election, equal but separate education for Blacks and whites, synagogue building, and confronting antisemitism, all while pursuing economic and political advancement. In many instances, these efforts coincided. Drew Gilpin Faust, in her examination of postwar attitudes, explains, "Independence and war reopened unfinished antebellum debates, intensified unresolved prewar conflicts, and subjected some of the most fundamental assumptions of the Old South to public scrutiny. In doing all of this, the Confederate effort to define a national identity produced a revealing record of southerners struggling to explain themselves to themselves."[32]

For Simon Mayer, the Confederacy served as a way of life. The third of John and Jeannette's fourteen children, he served with distinction in the Tenth Mississippi, one of fifteen Confederate units organized in Natchez. Simon's cousins who fought with him in the Tenth included Oscar Levy, Bertha Levy Ochs's brother, age nineteen, and first cousins Simon Lehmann, twenty-one, and Maurice Ries, twenty-four. A Mayer brother-in-law, Samuel Ullman, twenty-two, joined the Sixteenth Mississippi. When

Simon Mayer in uniform.
(Sizeler Family Collection,
in possession of Jay Silverberg.)

Simon Mayer resumed his place among the Natchez elite after the war, he remained steadfast in his pro-Confederate beliefs as noted in his diary, evident in postwar private correspondence, and in his involvement, among other endeavors, with a disputed congressional election in support of one of his unit's commanding officers.[33]

The diary, letters, and other sources provide insights into Mayer and his cousin, Oscar Levy. Simon Mayer linked the war's memory inextricably with persona. His military rank of "Major" was affixed to his last name as much as "Simon" during his postwar life. Oscar Levy, who settled in San Francisco and lived a successful life, largely left the war behind. Ullman, as well, moved past his war experiences. The Ochs brothers, who experienced the war differently than their Mayer cousins, balanced the memory of their parents' involvement with postwar business and personal interests that challenged their southern roots. The extended family's

experience of divided loyalties but with abiding devotion to each other before, during, and after the war was shared by other southern Jewish families as numerous historical accounts have shown. Nonetheless, the family persevered no matter the challenge, with little effect on their relationships, well past the turn of the twentieth century.[34]

The "Peculiar Institution"

An oft-repeated family story holds that John and Jeannette Mayer met onboard a ship to New Orleans, but immigration records indicate that no Jacob or John Mayer sailed aboard the *Dido*, the vessel on which Jeanette and her family arrived in New Orleans from Alsace, via Philadelphia, on January 15, 1835. Moses Ries officiated the marriage of his daughter and John Mayer in the Ries family home on April 25, 1835, about two years after John arrived in New Orleans. The Mayers bore their first three children in New Orleans by 1841, when the family moved 170 miles to Natchez.[35]

The Mayer family and the men who married into it followed typical chain migration patterns of Jewish families from the German and French areas of the Rhineland and Alsace. The Ries family arrived three years after the oldest son Solomon had established himself in New Orleans. John Mayer opened a boot-making and shoe store in Natchez. When the Civil War began, the Mayers boasted business interests, a rambling home overlooking central Natchez, and at least six enslaved individuals: two men, approximate ages seventy-five and thirty-one, and four women, ages seventy, fifty, forty-four, and thirty-one. Simon Mayer joined the Tenth Mississippi at age twenty-two.[36]

A letter Simon Mayer wrote to his family weeks after he departed from Mississippi was published on page one of the *Natchez Daily Courier*, October 14, 1862. Headlined, "From our Army in Kentucky," the letter recounting the unit's movements from Mississippi into southwestern Kentucky shows from a Confederate perspective the depth of understanding and objectivity about how some southerners the soldiers encountered did not support the war because of their economic interests or lack of slave ownership. Mayer wrote: "I will here remark that all along the route, from Camp Walthall to this place, the 'peculiar institution' was rather scarce, and fully explained the cause of the people's lukewarmness, since the commencement of the abolition doctrine, as represented and promulgated

Letter from Simon Mayer to his family, April 17, 1864.
(Courtesy of Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University Special Collections.)

by Lincoln and his party. The people not owning many, if any, slaves, their interests more with the North than the South—hence their favoring the former."[37]

The Tenth was marching toward Munfordville, its second major battle of the war, where losses were significant. The images of war became embedded in Mayer's memory. He drew arms numerous times and barely escaped five Union soldiers at the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee, firing at him from atop a steeply banked trench; the angle likely saved Mayer's life as the bullets whizzed past him, one knocking off his hat. His family reasoned that his height—four feet, eight inches tall—likely saved his life. Clara Lowenburg tells the story of General Jacob Sharp, who, upon entering a Tennessee home for a meal, was invited to take the seat of honor. The hostess said the seat next to him "is for your little boy." Sharp replied, "Madam, that little boy is my brave aide-de-camp, Major Simon Mayer." Most of Mayer's wartime experience was, in fact, as an adjutant—

assistant—to his commanding officers. His disdain for the Union never wavered, perhaps best exemplified in his notations about the Fort Pillow massacre in 1864: "Received particulars of the storming of Fort Pillow by Forrest and Chalmers, which is the most gallant thing of the war. All the garrison killed but 200, and pity that any were left."[38]

Mayer refers to his faith on occasion and even writes of attending Christian services at churches and evangelistic sermons by a proslavery preacher. He makes several references to his faith—invoking the "God of Israel" at times in his diary. Judaism was an important facet of Mayer's life after the war, but he fails to mention in his diary of any visible Jewish activity, a difficulty for most Jewish soldiers who comprised the largest non-Christian minority in either the Confederate or Union armies.[39]

On the home front, the war permeated the daily lives of Mayer's family. In 1862, during the same month when Union gunboats bombarded Natchez, one newspaper story shows Mayer's first cousin, Simon Lehman "with two associates, having run the blockade of New Orleans" planning to join "'the Natchez Southrons.' They will take all letters if left at the shoe store of J. Mayer & Son." Lehman apparently broke through the blockade. John Mayer, at age fifty-six, was listed in an 1862 news story with 150 other Natchez men as part of a home guard called the Silver Grays, required to drill on the courthouse lawn. The men paid one dollar to join and had to provide their own weapons. His store was one of three that collected goods to assist soldiers' families in Natchez. That same year, he spent $11,500 for two homes—the family home in Natchez that cost eight thousand dollars and a second home in Washington, a few miles away, that cost $3,500—investments clearly indicating that the war apparently did not affect them financially as much as others.[40]

During the brief Union shelling of Natchez in 1862, most of the family moved to Washington. In the main home, which still stands, seven-year-old Rosalie Beekman, daughter of a Mayer family friend, died of wounds from a burst Union shell, one of two fatalities from the bombardment. Such tragedies notwithstanding, southern families could maintain lasting friendships during the war while sharing different views. Rosalie Beekman's father, Aaron, a successful Jewish merchant like John Mayer, was publicly sympathetic to the Union, as were others in Natchez who lived passively throughout the war regardless of their sentiments for either side. According to testimony before the Southern Claims

Commission, Beekman sought four hundred dollars in recompense for the loss of a horse, lumber, and cotton after the fall of Natchez, although the national government denied his claim.[41]

Regardless of divisions concerning the war, the Beekman family maintained its friendship with the Mayers and other Natchez Jewish families. Jeannette Mayer, Fannie Beekman, and more than a dozen other Jewish women worked in tandem during the postbellum era on behalf of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Association, and the families shared many events together for years after the war. The friendship underscores a larger theme that historian Dianne Ashton offers about family interrelationships during the period. She argues that women during the early decades of the nineteenth century were mostly responsible for ensuring the social connections for their families, while pointing out that in Jewish families, those responsibilities were lessened because Jewish men interacted frequently through business, synagogue, fraternal, or charitable activities. Historians point out that the Jewish economic networks grew nationally and worldwide. While the Civil War temporarily severed many personal or economic links, they nonetheless remained as bonds between Jews across the regions. Prototypically, the Mayers and Ochses maintained lasting relationships with each other and their communities through marriage, business, religion, and charitable work.[42]

Concerns for a Sister and a Brother

In mid-April 1864, Mayer's diary noted: "Heard that the Yankees at Natchez were playing the deuce and had arrested a large number of the ladies, Sister Ophelia among them, and had them all confined in Court House." Ophelia Mayer had been detained after the confiscation of a cache of letters written by Natchez women, their contents viewed as objectionable by the Union commanding officer, the target of some of the women's written remarks. Specifically, Ophelia Mayer wrote that the commanding officer was a "miserable tyrant." Union soldiers surrounded the family home, and the family store was closed for three days. Mayer wrote, "[Don't] let the scoundrels intimidate you. Afraid to come out and meet us on the battlefield like men, they, like brutes, make war upon defenseless women and children." He told his family they were "still free and knowing your rights, dare to maintain them." A week later, Mayer confided in his diary: "On the 23rd all quiet. Saw in the papers of the

Isaac Lowenburg grocery store on Franklin Street in Natchez, 1870s. Courtesy of the Thomas H. and Joan Gandy Photographic Collection, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.)

banishment from Natchez of several ladies, among them a Miss Ophelia Mayer, and am fearful that it is my sister and hope soon to hear." Five days later, he heard from his commanding officer, "Your sister at home all right."[43]

She and the others were released after Isaac Lowenburg and Henry Frank, the sutlers who had befriended the family and would marry Mayer daughters after the war, interceded with Union officers, assuring them that the women would not repeat their indiscretions. Their involvement in removing the Mayer women from the controversy is indicative of the cooperation, strained at times, between locals in Natchez and the Union command, and reflects further family support even amidst recurring crises. Mayer's concern for his sister was perhaps second only to his ardent desire for his younger brother Henry to join the Tenth. Although the war was nearing its end, Mayer wrote in April 1864 beseeching Henry to enlist lest he saddle Simon with the ignominy of having a brother who refused to fight. Henry did not join his brother or his cousins on the battlefield because he was helping his family manage its store, while also apparently risking arrest or worse by traveling back and forth between Natchez and Matamoros, Mexico, which southern merchants had turned into a thriving

Oscar Levy in uniform.
(Courtesy of the Manuscripts
and Archives Division,
New York Public Library.)

commercial center for buying and selling goods in response to the Union's Gulf of Mexico blockade.[44]

Letters from Adolph Ochs's favored uncle, Oscar Levy, are similar to those written by Simon Mayer. Oscar was nineteen years old when his cousin Simon lured him to Natchez to volunteer for the Tenth Mississippi. Oscar admitted lying to his parents about his whereabouts but left no uncertainty about his sympathies. He wrote to his family from several battlefields, including Chickamauga, never wavering in his devotion to the southern cause. His letters mixed the tedium and realities of war, longing for family, and, in Levy's case, awareness that he and his sister were on opposing sides from his brother-in-law. At one point, he urged that a letter containing his whereabouts be destroyed after it was read lest Julius Ochs, the Union captain, read it. Levy's participation during the battle of Franklin, Tennessee—one of the bloodiest of the war—served as the backdrop for a postwar reunion and another family connection to the war.[45]

Levy was a member of the Signal Corps, soldiers who waved flags in a specific manner to send messages between troops. He and a fellow soldier were huddled underneath a large tree with their commanding officer, General John Bell Hood, and his staff, watching the nighttime fighting. The two signal corpsmen separated after the battle, to be reunited forty-four years later via a news story in the *Nashville American*, whose publisher was Milton Ochs, Adolph's brother. The Ochs brothers mailed their newspapers to their uncle in San Francisco, who maintained a lifelong connection to his nephews, especially Adolph, who in his late teens briefly lived with and worked for his uncle. After Oscar Levy read a story in the *Nashville American* about how a cane had been made from a tree that sheltered Levy and his fellow soldier, he wrote to his uncle about the battle. Milton Ochs published the letter, prompting Oscar Levy's Signal Corps companion to write to him. The former corpsmen met August 8, 1909, in the Hotel Manx on Union Square in San Francisco. A news story about the reunion read: "It was a reunion for the veterans; and when men have not met for forty-four years there is no use trying to detail what they talked about. Undoubtedly it savored of the military and the days passed in gray uniforms."[46]

Samuel Ullman faced similar war experiences. He returned to his Port Gibson, Mississippi, home shortly before the war after studying with a Louisville rabbi. He followed his contemporaries harboring Confederate sympathies, supporting southern Democratic candidates in opposition to Abraham Lincoln. One month after the shelling of Fort Sumter, he enlisted in the Sixteenth Mississippi. Listed as a musician in December 1861, he was close enough to subsequent battles to be wounded twice at the Battle of Cross Keys and the Battle of Antietam, where he received the wound that sent him home in December 1862. He paid a surrogate to complete his service time, but the man went AWOL and never returned to duty. "He rarely spoke of his Confederate experiences and never attended the popular reunions of soldiers that were held regularly," historian Margaret Armbrester writes.[47]

Had Julius Ochs, the only one in the family with formal military training, joined an active Ohio fighting unit, he likely would have taken up arms against his brother-in-law, Oscar Levy, or Simon Mayer. The family was one of many to experience "The Brother's War," but, unlike some families, relatives did not strike arms against each other. The fact that all

the men in the family who served during the Civil War survived is a rarity considering that one of every three southern households lost a soldier to the war. Nonetheless, postwar life was replete with challenges and tragedy as well as personal and professional accomplishments for the family's veterans and their families.[48]

Living with the Civil War

While soldiers fought the war, their families remained behind with untenable choices. "The ideology of antebellum and Confederate merchants contained a series of unresolved contradictions," Byrne writes. "These merchants embraced the South but were not of the South. They traded, haggled and invested their wealth in a slaveholding South where a planter elite created an agrarian society seemingly hostile to industry and urbanization. The skills merchants needed in order to succeed in the South also left them open to attack." The family managed. Compared with Vicksburg, Bayou Sara, Baton Rouge, and other Mississippi River port cities, Natchez remained largely intact as it transitioned to a center for Union command. The townspeople may have chafed with so much blue in their midst, but they had homes and daily lives at businesses that remained standing. Merchant families like the Mayers kept their city from ruin. As the officers aboard the Union gunboat *Essex* threatened to level Natchez in 1862, city leaders quickly surrendered. Historians point out that while the planter elite outside of the city busied themselves with saving their vast investments in land and enslaved Blacks, the merchants, including some in the Mayer family who had uneasily sided with the early war effort, understood that a devastated Natchez offered little hope for their future.[49]

After the war, Simon Mayer quickly resettled into home life. By midsummer 1865, he had assumed control of his father's business. "These former Confederate soldiers constituted part of an emerging vanguard of merchant-entrepreneurs who would change the face of Natchez and the New South in the coming years," writes Aaron Anderson. "John Mayer almost certainly could not have known that day in 1863 when he met the Union sutlers that he would become a nexus of familial association that would bind the vibrant postwar Natchez Jewish mercantile community. Within a decade his three future sons-in-law, [Isaac] Lowenburg, [Henry] Frank and [Julius] Weis, would respectively own the largest plantation

supply and commission house, its most expansive dry good firm, and perhaps the most successful cotton factorage in the entire American South," concludes Anderson.[50]

The Mayer family became part of the much larger panorama of conflicting sentiments throughout the South, as evidenced in the family's personal letters, memoirs, speeches, and involvement in ongoing religious, political, and social activities. "The Lost Cause did not signal the South's retreat from the future, but, whether intentionally or not, it eased the region's passage through a particularly difficult period of change," suggests Gaines Foster.[51]

The Confederacy was never far from Simon Mayer, who lived forty-one years after the war. He married in 1869, and he and his wife named their first son, born in 1871, Robert E. Lee Mayer. In marked contrast to Samuel Ullman, Simon maintained lifelong correspondence with fellow veterans, traveled to Confederate reunions, and joined and assumed leadership positions in Confederate organizations. "Major Mayer" soon replaced his given name. "I enjoy these reunions for I always meet a lot of my old Army comrades from different parts of the state," he wrote to his son, Robert, in 1887, noting that he had spent time with one of his commanding officers, General Edward C. Walthall.[52]

Simon Mayer.
(Courtesy of the Thomas H. and Joan Gandy Photographic Collection, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.)

His enduring friendships with his commanding officers demonstrate the strength of Mayer's tether to the Confederacy, if not the unwillingness of fellow veterans to shed their anti-Union beliefs. He described Walthall as an "intimate friend." From General Jacob H. Sharp came two letters that speak to the postwar relationships that helped to bind long-held sentiments among ex-Confederates. "Tell our people in this hour of defeat and isolation," Sharp wrote to Mayer, "to stand steady and together. The South is today the happiest and most prosperous spot on Earth. . . . [I]n a few years the people of the North will be calling on us to protect them from themselves." After the war, Sharp became an attorney, state representative, and newspaper editor in Lowndes County, on the eastern edge of Mississippi, 260 miles from Natchez. He also was a founding member of the Ku Klux Klan chapter in his county. In a second letter, he extended courtesies to Otis Baker, who like Mayer served with distinction in the Tenth Mississippi, and added touching sentiments from his wife to the Mayer family.[53]

Mayer's fondness, if not dedication, to the commanding officers he served was evident in ways other than his letters and diary. In 1880, his former commanding officer, James R. Chalmers, and a leading Black Republican and former enslaved individual, John R. Lynch, opposed each other for a Mississippi congressional seat. The general was wounded by the same shell that threw Mayer from his horse at the Battle of Stones River. Mayer had moved his family to Issaquena County, about one hundred miles north of Natchez, where he managed a general merchandise store and served as postmaster and Democratic Party leader. Why he uprooted his family from Natchez and moved is unclear, but his personal connection to General Chalmers and his Democratic Party affiliation speak to the larger motives of his party's election domineering, if not his personal interests, at the expense of Black office holders in post-Reconstruction Mississippi. Before Mayer moved, Issaquena County had become became part of the so-called "shoestring district" during a gerrymandered redistricting in 1876 that located most of Mississippi's voting Black Republicans into a narrow area along the Mississippi River, with five other voting districts boasting white majorities.[54]

Mayer is mentioned in a congressional investigation into the 1882 congressional race that Chalmers won. Despite Lynch's claims that Democrats manipulated the ballot count, the House Committee on Elections,

controlled by Democrats, ruled against him. An Issaquena County election supervisor was arrested for perjury after he swore to the legality of the election. According to one newspaper report, "the ballots were stuffed." Mayer's role, according to testimony raising questions about the integrity of the election, was to order printing of ballots in his position as chairman of the Issaquena County Democratic Executive Committee. He remained as Democratic Party chair until 1882. The family's support for Chalmers extended to Natchez, where Mayer's brother-in-law, Samuel Ullman, attended the Adams County Democratic Party convention supporting Chalmer's candidacy. By the mid-1880s, Mayer and his family had returned to Natchez, where he continued his work in Democratic Party leadership and established an insurance agency that he and his son Harold managed for over twenty years.[55]

Mayer also had a lifelong friendship and exchanged letters with Natchez veteran Otis Baker. Both men signed as charter members of the United Confederate Veterans, Camp 20, in Natchez, served as leaders in the Natchez Confederate Veterans Memorial efforts, and directed yearly local activities to acknowledge Robert E. Lee's birthday. On Robert E. Lee Day in 1903, Mayer was honored with his cousin Simon Lehman and two dozen other Confederate veterans. Mayer joined thousands of Confederate veterans who venerated Lee while trying to reclaim lost glory through the efforts of Confederate women writing the mythology of the Lost Cause. "The idea of the Civil War as a chivalric, honorable contest owed a great deal in subsequent commentary to Lee's personal values, deportment, and behavior, including his dignity in surrender at Appomattox," observes Bruce Collins.[56]

Mayer's involvement in venerating Lee and his participation in numerous other postwar efforts promoting the Confederacy were consistent with that of many southern soldiers. "White Natchez men in the late 1800s devoted an enormous amount of leisure time to male fraternal associations, where members developed new post–Civil War self-identities, while also memorializing a local version of the Lost Cause," writes Susan T. Falck. The Adams Light Infantry, organized in 1876 as mostly a fraternal organization, provides a prominent example of a postwar, veterans-focused, pro-Confederate organization. The military titles bestowed on the members were mostly honorary and required little to no active involvement in the organization's activities. Mayer's close friend Baker was

its founding officer, but Mayer, surprisingly, is not shown on the roster. His younger brother, Benjamin, and Isaac Lowenburg's son Sim are listed as members. Isaac Lowenburg and Samuel Ullman were honorary members. None of the men showed any sentiment toward the Confederacy after the organization's founding. Many of the veterans also supported the Knights Templar, associated with the Freemasons. Ex-soldiers comprised nearly a third of the Knights' membership, which excluded non-Christians. Consequently, Jews organized their separate Freemasons group in Natchez to which Mayer became a faithful and devoted member.[57]

Historians Falck and Anderson suggest that these organizations helped Jewish men gain influence and assimilate further into Natchez society. Yet that Jews required a separate lodge indicates the difficulties of gaining acceptance. The linkage to the Confederacy for women in the Mayer family also lingered. Several joined or were honorary members of the Natchez Confederate Memorial Association (CMA), which resulted in a statue and time capsule being placed in a downtown Natchez park. The CMA prospered, but the Natchez UDC struggled in its initial year to gain traction as other chapters sprouted throughout the South and emerged as the linchpins in revising the war narrative. "UDC members aspired to transform military defeat into a political and cultural victory, where states' rights and white supremacy remained intact," Karen Cox argues. Wives of Tenth Mississippi veterans eventually assumed leadership roles in the local UDC. Natchez family members also belonged to the boards of the volunteer fire department, an orphanage, and numerous social groups. George and Milton Ochs supported many Chattanooga organizations as well, with noteworthy achievement beyond their business and political successes.[58]

The Ochs and Mayer families' ability to weave together wartime and postwar personal, business, and religious experiences can be attributed to what historian Stephen Whitfield terms the "braided identity of Southern Jewry." Whitfield poses that the dynamics evident in the extended family were part of a shared heritage with their fellow Jews and non-Jews. The theme is examined, as well, by other historians who suggest that southern Jews' day-to-day lives mirrored—with religion as the exception—the lives of neighboring gentiles, hastening their assimilation if not begrudging acceptance by the larger community. Whether it was Julius Ochs befriending a rival who had cast antisemitic accusations his way or John and Jeannette

Mayer accepting Union sutlers into their home, the family repeatedly demonstrated willingness to adapt and adjust as a blurring of mixed identities.[59]

Religion

The Mayer and Ochs families repeatedly demonstrated the importance of their religion. Simon Mayer assisted other family members in founding B'nai Israel in Natchez, spoke often to confirmation classes about their responsibilities to the community, and in 1889 became president of the congregation, where even then his Confederate allegiances remained paramount. "My position before you today recalls an episode during the early days of the 'Lost Cause,'" he said in his opening remarks as synagogue president. He then spoke of a conversation with General Joseph E. Davis in 1861, who told Mayer and other soldiers "there are 2 [Davises] in the Confederacy, one brought forward by circumstances alluding to the Great Chieftain whose death a few days ago the Southland now mourns, and the other [himself] brought forward by merit." Mayer's brother-in-law Samuel Ullman spoke in 1872 at the dedication of B'nai Israel as its president. He was moved by the significance of the moment and the meaning of being Jewish. His devotion followed him to Birmingham and Temple Beth El, where he became a beloved leader of the Reform congregation.[60]

As previously indicated, the Mayer family women joined with other Jewish women as founding members of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Association in 1865. The women regularly held fundraising masquerade balls and dances to raise money for the building of B'nai Israel's synagogue. When the B'nai Israel cornerstone was laid in 1870, the newspaper noted the ladies aid association had received financial help from numerous local groups and elected leaders. Historians have pointed out that these efforts were typical of Jewish women throughout the South. "Filling important niches, they contributed vitally to creating and sustaining an evolving Jewish community life," writes Mark Bauman. "Without the work of these women, individuals in need would have suffered, congregations would have failed, programs would have either not been initiated or would have died, and the very survival of Judaism in many places would have been doubtful." Jennifer Stollman suggests that for these women "the physical presence of a synagogue demonstrated to Jews and Gentiles the real

existence of a Jewish community—one to be recognized and negotiated with." After the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) was founded in 1893, extending the national and international benevolence of Jewish women in the United States, one of the Mayer daughters, Mrs. Melanie (Mayer) Frank, became an active participant.[61]

Like the Mayers, Ochs believed in Reform Judaism, likely embedded through the teachings of his father and lay rabbi, Julius. Adolph Ochs's comments given during speeches spanning a forty-year period show the evolution of his belief that Judaism should remain within the temple and not with organizations or even people promoting the religion or Jewish causes. A *New York Times* colleague described Ochs as a "non-Jewish Jew," averse to anything having to do with "the Jewish movement," including Zionism, to which he, his newspaper, and his brother were opposed. These sentiments provide context concerning his initial ambivalence to involve himself or the *New York Times* in coverage of the Leo Frank case. He eventually directed his reporters to aggressively write about the case, a decision that deeply troubled him after Frank's murder. A letter Ochs

Adolph Ochs.
(Courtesy of the Museum of the
Southern Jewish Experience, New Orleans.)

wrote to one of Frank's appeals attorneys, Louis Marshall, illustrates the depth of Ochs's conflict. "I have never had any sympathy with the idea that the people of Atlanta as a whole are any different than those of any other American community nor have I believed that race prejudice played so important a part as seems to be the prevailing opinion." After Frank's death, Marshall, a founder of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), wrote to Ochs asking that the *New York Times* publish an editorial to bring more public awareness about lynchings targeting Black individuals throughout the South. Ochs, apparently, did not reply.[62]

Ochs finally became convinced that racial hatred prompted the Frank lynch mob after stories published in the *Times* highlighted antisemitism as a cause, and Georgia newspaper editors told him that "outside influence of the Jews" inflamed the mob. Ochs was shaken. He did not want the *Times*, or himself, to be viewed as tied to Jewish causes, and he and the newspaper had done just that. His misreading of people he thought he knew was now thrust back at him in the period after Frank's death. Ochs and his brother George believed individual Jews, not Judaism itself, were the targets of prejudice because of individual actions and that Jews should assimilate by associating with non-Jews who accepted them without prejudice. "Don't be too smart, don't know too much," Adolph Ochs had told his fellow Mizpah Temple of Chattanooga members in the late 1880s, even though he repeatedly attempted to influence several issues of the day.[63]

Ochs's support of Mizpah Temple extended for decades. When the congregation needed a new building, Ochs contributed four hundred thousand dollars for its construction, with his brother Milton managing the project. The building was in honor of their parents, Bertha and Julius, and opened in March 1928, a major community event. Ochs used the opportunity to speak passionately about Judaism, exhorting his fellow Jews to put aside their fears of anti-Jewish sentiment and refuse to associate with those who did not want to associate with them. Throughout his life, Ochs exhibited a detached sense of Judaism, using his religion to suit his needs at particular points. As he launched his publishing career in Chattanooga and then New York, he suppressed his religion as he sought support from non-Jews in the business community. And yet, when called on to address the congregation in the city he considered his hometown, Ochs rose to the occasion. Far from unique, Ochs's positions reflected

those of many Classical Reform, upper-class, and acculturated Jews of central European origin.[64]

Ochs, perhaps as much as any member of his family, had been jolted by antisemitism on a public scale in the South. His brother George confronted it during his campaign for Chattanooga mayor, as did Lowenburg and Ullman. Ochs's admonitions to his fellow Jews mirror the premise that historian Leonard Dinnerstein describes as a keen awareness Jews had of their standing among a largely Christian South wracked with bigotry and distrust of outsiders. In his studies of the Reconstruction South, Anton Hieke concludes that southern Jews—in particular German Jews like the Ochses and Mayers—expressed an ambivalence about their connection to the South. Acceptance was conditional and not always certain based on how they were able to assimilate as Jews into "southern society, politics, and the racial mores associated with the Lost Cause."[65]

Public Life, Public Challenges

Samuel Ullman, Isaac Lowenburg, Henry Frank, and Julius Weis married Mayer daughters Emma, Ophelia, Melanie, and Caroline in 1867, 1865, 1865, and 1868, respectively. For each of them, public service, national and international trade, plantation ownership, real estate, philanthropy, and family served as hallmarks of their lives as they dealt with the exigencies of Reconstruction. "The war at once destroyed the southern merchant's financial world and opened new business opportunities in what would one day be termed a 'New South,'" maintains Byrne. "Their deep involvement in the market, combined with their financial and political network across the South and the Atlantic Ocean, gave commercial southern families a distinctive worldview. To varying degrees, they believed themselves to be, and typically were, more cosmopolitan and financially adventurous than their neighbors."[66]

Lowenburg and Frank, who first met in 1862, were counted among the most wealthy, prominent businessmen in Natchez, with a portfolio of brick-and-mortar businesses and real estate on both sides of the Mississippi River. Simon and his brother, Henry, also apparently enjoyed postwar financial success, according to a local plantation owner who wrote, "They are now just looking over the front steps of the crem de la crem, they themselves having but recently become of the consolidated milk of this society." He wrote that "little Mayer made a fortune"

Partial Ochs-Mayer Family Tree.
(Courtesy of Jay Silverberg.)

speculating in cotton, and the brothers "are regarded as the rising sons of Jacob, their father." Weis moved to New Orleans in 1864 and became one of the most prominent businessmen, Jewish leaders, and philanthropists in the region until his death in 1909. Although his business success was more modest than his brothers-in-law, Ullman won acclaim for his leadership of the Jewish communities and school systems in Natchez and Birmingham. He also achieved international fame for a poem he wrote titled, "Youth."[67]

Politics also called Lowenburg and Ullman to service. Like Adolph and George Ochs and their brother-in-law Simon Mayer, Lowenburg and Ullman were Democrats. This was largely the party of choice for southern Jews after Reconstruction if they aspired to public office, as well as continued business success with white customers. While Simon Mayer's political involvement remained largely within the Democratic Party structure, Lowenburg and Ullman actively chose to seek elective and appointive public offices. Lowenburg mostly focused on efforts to improve the community's economy, pushing to invest in railroads, industry, education, public health, and public safety. Ullman believed fervently that education offered the key to community progress, thus his decades-long involvement trying to improve the education

systems for white and Black students in Natchez and Birmingham. Their public profiles, however, presented them with uncomfortable choices and circumstances. Public officeholders like Lowenburg and Ullman were expected to "uphold racial hierarchy to which many white southerners desperately clung," argues historian Jacob Morrow-Spitzer. As Eric Foner suggests, the Republican Party with its majority Black voting bloc reminded hard-lined white southerners of defeat and Black equality. Speeches, memorial days, and monuments were important, but during Reconstruction the ballot of the anti-Reconstructionist Democratic Party ultimately became the driving force for men in public office, Blight concludes.[68]

During his first campaign, Lowenburg was viewed as a progressive in opposition to the incumbent who, a local newspaper editorialized, promoted a "spirit of 'bossism,' a rule or ruin disposition on his part." Lowenburg's opposition attacked him for being a Jew, prompting the following from the *Natchez Democrat* on the day before the 1882 election: "The opposition to Mr. Lowenburg, one of the most active and enterprising citizens of Natchez, one who has been largely instrumental in the building up of a new prosperity for the city, has been placed upon the ground of his belonging to the Israelite race." Mark Bauman suggests in his examination of ethnic politics from the Civil War into the early twentieth Century that attacks like those against Lowenburg ran deeper than a strict Democratic–Republican party schism and were rooted in antisemitism by larger forces resentful of Jewish businessmen and their interaction with Black customers. Nevertheless, Lowenburg won handily, the first Jewish mayor of Natchez, and the city prospered during his tenure. D. Clayton James's examination of antebellum Natchez suggests that Lowenburg's experience was atypical. While Natchez saw its share of election intrigue, the city's political machines were not considered aggressive as compared to other communities. Democratic and Republican candidates usually campaigned and governed without rancor.[69]

The conflict with Democratic Party positions also loomed stark for Ullman and ultimately contributed to his undoing. He had spent nearly half of his life devoted to his family, Judaism, and educating Black and white children. "His father taught him what the schoolroom could not—the virtue of work, the necessity of perseverance and the value of family, democracy, liberty and tolerance," Armbrester maintains. Based on his

sermons and public statements, Rabbi Bernhard H. Gotthelf likely taught Ullman during his teenaged years about the downfalls of bigotry and the virtues of equality for all people.[70]

Ullman relocated to Birmingham in 1894 amid the city's economic boom and became a dominant figure among local leaders who "believed that improvement in civic services fostered local economic development and population growth." Ullman joined Birmingham's first board of education, working with the school superintendent to transform local education from a "village school to urban system." Ullman and his colleagues worked tirelessly to ensure equal but separate access, a fair distribution of property taxes, and higher salaries for white and Black teachers. In 1901, a Black high school named for Ullman opened, and it became a cultural hub for Birmingham's Black middle class.[71]

In 1897, Ullman confronted largely baseless allegations about school system mismanagement that came from the Regents of the White Shield and the Trades Council. The White Shield was a white supremacist organization founded in 1896. The local Trades Council, focused on protecting jobs for its white membership, continued to badger Ullman, whose beliefs about equal access to education became a political liability for the mayor and city council, which appointed the school board. Ullman and the school superintendent were key to the early successes of an effort to provide better education across racial lines in Birmingham, which at one point garnered national recognition for the superintendent. Black leaders knew that education was critical to overcoming racist attitudes promoting their inferiority.[72]

In 1897, as the Alabama legislature considered whether to hold a constitutional convention, Ullman wrote in a local newspaper, "If there be one community in the state of Alabama above that of any other which bears the shackles of slavery, it is the city of Birmingham." He argued for a more equitable property tax assessment statewide that would benefit everyone, as opposed to the state's historical racist tax policies favoring whites, particularly for school spending, which would continue under the proposed new constitution. He was nominated as a convention delegate but withdrew his name when it became apparent he would not receive the necessary votes for selection. "Ullman fearlessly, almost innocently, placed himself in the forefront of the debate in Birmingham over the nature and extent of educational opportunities to be offered to blacks in the

city," Armbrester writes. Ullman was one of the few Jewish political leaders outspoken about Black equality and the South's record on slavery.[73]

The mayor and council removed Ullman from his school board post in December 1900, setting off a firestorm of protest. News coverage ran statewide, with accusations of political shenanigans leveled against the mayor and council while touting Ullman's achievements. Community meetings took place to no avail. He eventually won reappointment in 1902 and served with diminished influence until 1904. By 1905, his twenty years of work were largely ignored when Black citizens petitioned the school board for better facilities, only to be told their request was "ill-advised and insulting."[74]

Ullman lived long enough to see the results of his progressive policies. By 1922, the school board had built several large schools for Black students, moving many of them out of rickety and unsuitable buildings, despite the opposition from white labor organizations and the Ku Klux Klan. Blight and Foner suggest that whatever progress Birmingham had achieved and sought was ultimately overwhelmed by the white supremacist attitudes of the time—that emergence from the war, Reconstruction politics, and the new order of Black-white relationships were a volatile mix. Lowenburg, Ullman, and, to an extent, Ochs, willingly entered the post-Reconstruction milieu and succeeded despite occasional setbacks.[75]

Conclusion

John and Jeannette Mayer lived sufficiently long to see their family thrive, with one notable setback. The Lowenburg legacy ended in controversy with the failure of First Natchez Bank in 1914, when bank officers, including Lowenburg's son Sim, could not meet debt obligations when the cotton crop failed. The Lowenburgs moved to New Orleans after court proceedings ended, and Sim Lowenburg paid a thirty-thousand dollar fine and attorney's fees. Dr. Phillip Beekman, son of longtime family friends, was one of the largest depositors affected by the bank's failure. He led the group critical of Lowenburg and bank management, one of the few times the Jewish community—and extended family—opposed each other. Nonetheless, by the early twentieth century, the older generation had largely given way to the grandchildren. The family maintained the bonds that had held it together for decades through many of the same linkages as the first generation—marriage, business, and social

connections. John Mayer died in 1882 followed by Jeannette Mayer in 1883. They are buried with Simon Mayer and other family members in the Jewish section of the historic Natchez City Cemetery. Simon Mayer was the one member of the immediate Mayer family whose Confederate legacy remained steadfast. Newspapers across the South published his obituary after his death in 1905 and prominently mentioned his wartime service, as would be expected. They lauded Major Simon Mayer for his many public deeds, his dedication to family and friends, his business acumen, and lastly, his dedication to the Confederacy. Anderson adds an epitaph to the Mayers and the extended family: "They were good businessmen. They emerged in a time of chaos and social change endowed with a keen eye for whatever opportunities came their way." Their contradictions and contrasts were wrapped into "the perplexing dichotomy of a class that at once used every unequal advantage to climb to the social and economic pinnacle."[76]

The experiences of the extended Ochs-Mayer family were neither unique nor typical for Jews or non-Jews. They bear telling for the nuances that they provide. Bertram W. Korn observes that Jews in the South tended to side with that region, and Jews in the North tended to place their loyalty there. Yet the stories depicted here complicate both interpretations and challenge monolithic views. They suggest that Jewish families within both regions divided their loyalties. Jews within each region identified with southern and northern mores and positions. Family and religion provided their enduring identities. Those houses—however divided—continued to stand.[77]

NOTES

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[1] *New York Times* Company Records, Adolph S. Ochs Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations (hereafter cited as Ochs Papers), box 118, folder 12; David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Boston, 2001), 273.

[2] C. Vann Woodward brought the New South into historical focus in *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951), where he discussed the breakdown of the antebellum-era aristocracy and rise of the middle class through a diversified economic structure no longer based on plantation wealth. The classic study is Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York, 1970). Eric Foner and David Blight examine Reconstruction and its multiple social failures forming the foundation of the Lost Cause. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York; 1988); Blight, *Race and Reunion*.

[3] Simon Mayer diary from 1862–1865, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, and Breman Museum, Atlanta; Sizeler Family Collection, in author's possession; Aaron D. Anderson, *Builders of a New South: Merchants, Capital, and the Remaking of Natchez, 1865–1914* (Jackson, MS, 2013); Clara Lowenburg, "My Memories," unpublished typescript, in possession of author; Clara Lowenburg, *Aunt Sister's Book* (New York, 1929); Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC, 2000); Margaret England Armbrester, *Samuel Ullman and 'Youth': The Life, The Legacy* (Tuscaloosa, 1993); Scott L. Langston, "Being Jewish in Columbus, Georgia: The Business, Politics, and Religion of Jacob and Isaac Moses, 1828–1890," *Southern Jewish History* 18 (2015): 1–61; Shari Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 2017), 6. The original Mayer diary is in two small, handwritten volumes, one held by the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati (AJA), and the other by the Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives for Southern Jewish History, Breman Museum, Atlanta, which has loaned its volume to the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (MSJE) in New Orleans. The Sizelers are descendants of the Mayer family. Lowenburg's memoirs, a complete copy of which is in the author's possession, were partially reprinted in Wendy Machlovitz, ed., *Clara Lowenburg Moses: Memoir of a Southern Jewish Woman* (Jackson, MS, 2000).

[4] Ochs to Mrs. George R. Squire, corresponding secretary, United Daughters of the Confederacy, December 23, 1897, Ochs Papers, box 118, folder 12.

[5] Nancy J. Potts, "Unfilled Expectations: The Erosion of Black Political Power in Chattanooga, 1865–1911," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 49 (Summer 1990): 112–28.

[6] The family has told the story of John Mayer changing his name from Mayer Levy to Jacob Mayer and leaving his Landau home in a dispute with his father, who wanted him to work as an apprentice shoemaker. He lived in Paris with his wealthy brother Rafael for a time before departing for the United States about 1833.

[7] One family account has Bertha Levy kneeling with a friend in protest next to the body of a revolutionary shot dead in the streets. Another has her dipping her handkerchief in the blood of a fallen revolutionary. An original of an advertisement in a Landau newspaper shows Joseph Levy, a merchant and tailor, auctioning household goods and clothing in May 1853; New Orleans Passenger Lists, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), M259, 1820–1902, 427; U.S. Passenger Lists, NARA, M259, New Orleans, 1820–1902, 406; Ochs Papers, box 20, folders 14, 15; box 128, folder 6; box 79, folder 15.

[8] Susan Tifft and Alex S. Jones, *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind The New York Times* (Boston, 2000); Ochs Papers, box 7, folder 15; box 79, folder 15; box 71, folders 8, 9, 10; box 28, folder 13; box 128, folders 6, 12, 13; box 126, folders 2, 3; box 29, folders 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; box 29, folders 4, 5, 6.

[9] Ochs Papers, box 28, folder 13.

[10] *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion,* (Washington, DC, 1901). Ochs also wrote several paragraphs in his autobiography about the smuggling techniques he observed during his war service. Ochs Papers, box 28, folder 13.

[11] Adolph Ochs returned to Knoxville occasionally after his success had been established. Nonetheless, he considered Chattanooga his southern home. Susan Gilbert, "The Ochs Family in Knoxville, Tennessee," (master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1980), accessed January 25, 2024, https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/6356; Ochs Papers, box 79. In her book about Ochs, Doris Faber reprints a letter Ochs wrote August 18, 1896, to his mother shortly after he bought the *Times* in which he said: "If I have succeeded far beyond what is ordinarily man's lot, I owe much to the influence of a mother who is the noblest and purest of mortal beings. God bless her and preserve her for many years to see her son prove himself worthy of the good fortune which has befallen him." Doris Faber, *Printer's Devil to Publisher: Adolph S. Ochs of the New York Times* (New York, 1963), 58.

[12] *Chattanooga Daily Times*, May 21, 1886; Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger and Susan W. Dryfoos, *Iphigene: My Life and the New York Times; The Memoirs of Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger* (New York, 1981), 34. Washington to Ochs, Feb. 19, 1910, Ochs Papers, box 44, folder 20.

[13] Bertha Levy Ochs and her brother Oscar Levy were remembered during a ceremony in Chattanooga honoring the Confederate dead. She was described as a "great lover of the South" and he as a Confederate veteran, buried in San Francisco. The UDC also sent flowers in Bertha Levy's honor to the Mizpah Temple dedication in 1928. *Chattanooga Daily Times*, June 3, 1923; *Chattanooga Daily Times*, March 24, 1928; Tifft and Jones, *The Trust*, 19, 50; Ochs Papers, box 44, folder 20; box 113.

[14] Tifft and Jones, *The Trust,* 8; William M. Schuyler, ed., *The Life and Letters of George Washington Ochs-Oakes* (n.p., 1933), 390; Gilbert, "Ochs Family."

[15] *Chattanooga Times*, March 26, 1883; Gilbert, "Ochs Family"; Ochs Papers, box 52, folder 13.

[16] Ochs to Mrs. George R. Squire, December 23, 1897, Ochs Papers, box 118, folder 12; Caroline E. Janney, "'I Yield to No Man an Iota of My Convictions': Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park and the Limits of Reconciliation," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2 (September 2012): 394–420. Blight suggests memory of the war had three interpretations that collided throughout the decades: the reconciliationist vision supporting how the country dealt with the war dead; the white supremacist vision that consumed the reconciliationist view through various means, including violence and terror; and the emancipationist vision, or the Black memory of the war and struggle for basic freedoms. He concludes that the emancipationist vision eventually was overwhelmed by "the forces of reconciliation." Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 2.

[17] Janney, "I Yield to No Man," 2. In *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill, 2013), Janney argues that the desire for North-South détente was

more about reunion than reconciliation, that many Union veterans simply would neither accept a sanitized version of the war nor agree to reconciliation.

[18] Tifft and Jones, *The Trust,* 8, 10; Potts, "Unfilled Expectations," 113; Ochs to Maj. Gen. David C. Shanks, October 22, 1924, Ochs Papers, box 133, folder 7; *Chattanooga Times*, March 24, 1883.

[19] Potts, "Unfilled Expectations"; Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, 2006), 58.

[20] Ochs to Mrs. George R. Squire, December 23, 1897, Ochs Papers, box 118, folder 12; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 381, 361; Foner, *Reconstruction*, chapter 12. Blight points out: "The many myths and legends fashioned out of the reconciliationist vision provided the superstructure to Civil War memory, but the base was white supremacy in both its moderate and virulent forms."

[21] The date of the dinner is not mentioned, but it likely took place in 1928 when Ochs was in Birmingham on multicity stops through the South raising money for Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Historians point out that this view of the KKK was often cited in post-Reconstruction years. *Birmingham News*, March 18, 1928; Ochs Papers, box 50, folder 13; *Knoxville Sunday Journal*, April 26, 1936. An Ochs contemporary, Bernard Baruch, shared a story in his memoir about discovering his father's KKK robe in the attic of his South Carolina home. He acknowledged the KKK's reputation but said "to children in the Reconstruction South . . . the original Klan . . . seemed a heroic band fighting to free the South from the debaucheries of carpetbag rule." Bernard M. Baruch, *My Own Story* (New York, 1957), 13.

[22] Tifft and Jones, *The Trust*, 148; Ochs to Maj. Gen. David C. Shanks, October 22, 1924, Ochs Papers, box 133, folder 7.

[23] *World-News* (Roanoke, VA), January 14, 1927; Ochs Papers, box 109, folder 17. Ochs also sent twenty-five dollars to the UDC in 1907 to help with additional improvements to the Lexington cemetery. Ochs Papers, box 188, folder 12; *Chattanooga Daily Times*, February 13, 1907.

[24] Schuyler, *Life and Letters,* 337, 338, 356; *Chattanooga Daily Times*, June 2, 1930; Ochs Papers, box 28, folder 2.

[25] George Ochs changed his name to George Oakes (pronounced Oaks) after the sinking of the *RMS Lusitania* by German U-boats in 1915. He told his family that he was fearful of retribution because the name "Ochs" was German. Multiple sources mention Adolph Ochs's displeasure with his brother's decision, but with no apparent, lingering animosity between the two. Adolph Ochs, in his comments during an event in 1928 honoring his life and achievements in Chattanooga, remarked about the pronunciation of the family name. He said it is pronounced "Ochs, as in ox." Ochs Papers, boxes 50, 51; Schuyler, *Life and Letters*, 359; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 31; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War,* 9.

[26] Gerald W. Johnson, *An Honorable Titan: A Biographical Study of Adolph S. Ochs* (Westport, CT, 1946), 81.

[27] Natchez area real estate and personal estate numbers appear in the U.S. Census. Eleven percent of the families show a total value of more than forty thousand dollars, about two million dollars in 2024; the Mayers are shown with a total of three thousand. Property records quadruple that number ($390,000 in 2024), placing the family in the middle of the eighty-one merchant families like them. Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Adams

County, Mississippi. D. Clayton James writes that foreign-born residents comprised 31 percent of the 4,680 residents in 1850 and were Irish, German, English, Scottish, Scottish-Irish, and Italian. D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge, 1993), 164–66; Bonnie K. Goodman, *The Confederacy Safe Haven for American Jews: Jews in the South 1800–1865* (n.p., 2015); Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 19.

[28] Ochs Papers, box 12, folder 4; *Natchez Democrat,* January 19, 1913*;* Lowenburg, "My Memories"*;* Frank J. Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois: Merchant Culture in the South, 1820–1865* (Lexington, KY, 2006), 77. The Lowenburgs and Franks had a close relationship with Ochs and family. Clara visited frequently with the Ochses and traveled with the family. A brief local news story about Ochs indicates, "Mr. Ochs is a cousin of Mrs. A. Moses of this city," a reference to her marriage to Abe Moses. Ochs and his wife visited Natchez at least once, the local newspaper writing about them, including a story quoting a letter from Adolph Ochs praising the community. *Natchez Democrat,* September 9, 1897, April 20, 1887, April 27, 1887; *Weekly Democrat,* May 11, 1887. In several of her published works, Joyce L. Broussard examines the role of Natchez women, many of them among the "nabob," or wealthier families, and the unmarried, during and after the war. Still, she suggests that by assuming the role of mediators, Natchez women were able to successfully maneuver through difficult interactions after Natchez was occupied in 1863, eventually with five thousand Union soldiers. See Joyce L. Broussard, "Occupied Natchez, Elite Women, and the Feminization of the Civil War," *The Journal of Mississippi History* 70 (2008): 179–207.

[29] Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois,* 2, 122.

[30] Lowenburg, "My Memories"; Bertram W. Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865," in *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn (New York, 2010), 90. The history of Natchez and its families is recounted in numerous memoirs and diaries written by Natchez women. See Joyce Linda Broussard, *Stepping Lively in Place: The Not-Married, Free Women of Civil-War-Era Natchez* (Athens, GA, 2016) and Broussard, "Occupied Natchez."

[31] Lowenburg, "My Memories"; Julius Weis, unpublished autobiography, in author's possession; Machlovitz, *Clara Lowenburg Moses*, 18; Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861–1865, Index to Compiled Military Service Records, NARA.

[32] Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, 1988), 7. Blight promotes a similar theme in the South's emergence postwar, suggesting that sectional reconciliation relied on a desire for social and economic progress—the "New South"—paired with "plantation legend" or the myth of the faithful slave. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 220.

[33] Compiled Military Service Records, NARA (ages listed are for the men in 1862). Simon Mayer's two brothers-in-law, Isaac Lowenburg and Henry Frank, remained in Natchez throughout the war. Testimony in the Contested Election of John R. Lynch vs. James R. Chalmers, from the Sixth Congressional District of Mississippi, U.S. House of Representatives Mis. Doc. No. 12, 47th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC, December 28, 1881), 45, 95.

[34] See Dianne Ashton, "Shifting Veils: Religion, Politics, and Womanhood in the Civil War Writings of American Jewish Women," in Sarna and Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War*, 279–306; David T. Morgan, "Eugenia Levy Phillips: The Civil War Experiences of a Southern

Jewish Woman," in *Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Jewish Historical Society*, ed. Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier with Malcolm Stern (Macon, GA, 1984), 95–106; David T. Morgan, "Philip Phillips: Jurist and Statesman," in Proctor and Schmier, *Jews of the South*, 107–120.

[35] Mrs. Mayer's first name is spelled "Jeannette" in her 1818 birth record, on her daughter Emma's birth record filed in 1838, and in her obituary in 1883, but "Jannette" is on her gravestone. The *New Orleans Bee* reported on May 5, 1835: "MARRIED: On Wednesday evening 29th April, last by the Revd. Moses S. Reas of the Israelite Congregation. Jr. Jacob Myer to Miss Jeannette, daughter of Moses S. Reas. Also Mr. Penel Levy to Miss Minetta, second daughter of Moses S. Reas all of this city." A *ketubbah* for the Mayer couple is part of the Sizeler Family Collection. Teri D. Tillman cites a reference that Moses Ries listed his profession in French records as *chantre de la synagogue* (cantor of the synagogue). A notation in the family bible indicates the Mayers gave birth to a daughter, Caroline, in Natchez on December 14, 1841. Tillman believes it is likely the Mayers arrived in Natchez in 1841 based on census records showing John Mayer in New Orleans in 1840, but not listed in the Mississippi State census of Adams County taken between January and February 1841. Teri D. Tillman, e-mail to author, December 10, 2023; U.S. Passenger Lists, M259, 188, NARA, New Orleans; Brian J. Costello and Carol Mills-Nichol, *Dry Goods, Cotton and Cane: 250 Years of Jewish Life, Business and Agriculture in Pointe Coupée Parish, Louisiana* (Santa Maria, CA, 2022), 96; Bertram W. Korn, *The Early Jews of New Orleans* (Waltham, MA, 1969), 237; Teri D. Tillman, "Using Indirect Evidence and Linguistic Analysis to Trace Polin Ries of New Orleans," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* (December 2011), 245–75; Passenger Lists Quarterly Abstracts, 1820–1875, December 1832, 12, NARA, New Orleans; Tillman, e-mail to author, February 6, 2024.

[36] In his autobiography, Julius Weis wrote that he paid eighteen thousand dollars for a Black man who was a barber. Mayer's first diary entry appeared on July 29, 1862. When he made his last diary entry nearly three years later, Mayer, his cousins, and their fellow soldiers in the Tenth Mississippi had walked three thousand miles, rode trains for 5,800 miles through eight states, and participated in significant battles at Atlanta, Chickamauga, Franklin, Jonesboro, Munfordville, Murfreesboro, Nashville, New Hope Church, and Resaca. Mayer's son Harold likely had the entire diary typed before he donated the original, leather-bound first volume, covering 1862 to 1863, to the AJA. The second original volume, covering 1863 to 1865, was donated to the Breman Museum and is on loan to the MSJE. Paulette Hunt French, *The 10th Mississippi Infantry Regiment, A Record of the Marches, Battles, Skirmishes, and the Men of the 10th* (Saline, MI, 2015) appears to be the only publication that liberally references Mayer's comments about the war. Mendelsohn points out that Jewish Confederates kept diaries more than their Union counterparts. Byrne's comments about diaries reflect Mayer's writings: "[T]he letters and diaries that onetime commercial men wrote tended to focus on a few broad topics, mainly the tedium of camp life, the spirit de corps of their units, and the battles they engaged in." Eighth Census of the United States, Slave Schedules, 1860, Adams County, Mississippi; Weis autobiography; U.S. Civil War Soldiers, 1861–1865, M232, roll 25, NARA; Adam D. Mendelsohn, *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War: The Union Army* (New York, 2022); C. E. Dornbusch and Silas Felton, *Military Bibliography of the Civil War*, vols. 2, 3, 4 (New York, 1972); Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 137.

[37] *Natchez Daily Courier*, October 14, 1862. The "peculiar institution" is a term referencing slavery attributed to John C. Calhoun, a South Carolinian who served as a U.S. senator, secretary of state, and vice president. Calhoun defended the "peculiar labor" and "peculiar domestick institution" in the 1830s to portray southern plantation servitude as different from slavery in other countries, while having no impact on northern U.S. states. Historian Kenneth M. Stampp challenged benevolent portrayals of enslavement in *Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1956).

[38] Mayer gained the nickname "The Little Major" or "Too Short to Shoot" during the war. On April 12, 1864, Confederate Generals Nathan Bedford Forrest and James Chalmers attacked Fort Pillow, Henning, Tennessee, which was defended by white and Black troops. Confederate soldiers overran the Union ranks and, when they saw Black soldiers, massacred hundreds of them despite attempts by commanding officers to surrender. *Confederate Veterans Magazine* (January 1903), 18; Lowenburg, *Aunt Sister's Book*; Mayer diary.

[39] Mendelsohn, *Jewish Soldiers*, 9, 137–89.

[40] Newspaper reports frequently mention soldiers who returned home during the fighting, then went back to their units. *Natchez Daily Courier,* September 10, 1862, August 16, 1862, June 12, 1863. William Ashley Vaughan, "Natchez During the Civil War" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi, 2001), 15; Chancery Clerk, Adams County Mississippi, Deed Records v. NN, 1860–1866, image group 8318401, 330–31, accessed May 10, 2024, https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/252766.

[41] Southern Claims Commission Master Index, 1871–1880, Adams County, Mississippi, 1875, Report 5, 42, NARA.

[42] See Ashton, "Shifting Veils," 282.

[43] The word *deuce* has a number of connotations and can be used as reference to making trouble. A fellow soldier in the Tenth Mississippi, Isaac Gaillard Foster, mentioned the arrests in a letter to his father. Foster said the arrests "serve to make rebels only more rebellious." Mayer diary; Lowenburg, *Aunt Sister's Book*; Simon Mayer to his family, April 17, 1864, Simon Mayer Family Collection, Manuscripts Collection 815, box 1, Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University; Isaac G. Foster to John Foster, April 17, 1864, Foster Family Correspondence, box 1, B:41, MSS 2184, Louisiana & Lower Mississippi Valley Collections (LLMVC), Louisiana State University. Ophelia Mayer was under the watch of the Union commanders in Natchez. She is listed in official war records with four other Natchez women who obtained supplies without having taken an oath of loyalty to the Union and traveled between Natchez and Vicksburg, likely with unauthorized supplies. No mention is made in the reports of any arrests, but the women were confined to Natchez. Major General N. J. T. Dana to Major C. T Christensen, July 20, 1864, 186–93, and B. G. Farrar to Captain J. H. Odlin, July 20, 1864, 196-97, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 39.

[44] In a letter from Oscar Levy to his family, quoted in a thesis by David J. Reiner, Levy mentions that he learned that Henry "has gone to Matamoros, Mexico, to make his fortune." Lowenburg, "My Memories"; Lowenberg, *Aunt Sister's Book*; David J. Reiner, "Oscar Levy: A Jew of the Confederacy" (rabbinical thesis, HUC-JIR, 2008), 24; Robert W. Delaney, "Matamoros, Port for Texas during the Civil War," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 58 (April 1955): 473–87.

[45] Reiner, "Oscar Levy," 20–25.

[46] *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 9, 1909; Ochs Papers, box 20, folder 18.

[47] U.S. Civil War Soldiers, 1861–1865, NARA; Armbrester, *Samuel Ullman*, 15–18.

[48] According to Robert Rosen, about two thousand Jewish men fought for the Confederacy. Various sources state the death rate for all Civil War soldiers was one in five. While somewhat unusual, other families had as many or more soldiers than the Mayers fighting for the Confederacy. Julius Ochs, Simon Lehmann, and Oscar Levy returned from the war without being wounded. Ullman suffered significant hearing loss after a shell exploded near him during fighting at Antietam. Maurice Reis was captured and held as a prisoner of war in the Union brigade at Rock Island, Illinois, for almost two years until the war ended. Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 236; see Stanley L. Falk, "Divided Loyalties in 1861: The Decision of Major Alfred Mordecai," in Sarna and Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War*, 203, which outlines the challenges in another family with Union and Confederate loyalties; American Battlefield Trust, "Civil War Casualties: The Cost of War: Killed, Wounded, Captured or Missing," accessed March 18, 2024, https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/civil-war-casualties; Compiled Confederate Military Service Records, NARA.

[49] Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 2; Vaughan, *Natchez During the Civil War*, 378.

[50] *Natchez Courier*, July 7, 1865; Anderson, *Builders of a New South*, 41, 54.

[51] Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865–1913* (New York, 1987), 6.

[52] Simon Mayer to Robert Mayer, May 15, 1887, Sizeler Family Collection. Simon Mayer's brother, born in October 1862 one month after the Union bombardment and surrender of Natchez, was named Joseph Eggleston Johnson Mayer, sharing the same three names as a famed Confederate general.

[53] Mayer also served with General Patton Anderson, who cited his work in an August 1864 report on the Battle of Jonesboro, GA. Sharp to Mayer, August 11, 1902, and November 21, 1904, Sizeler Family Collection; Southern Historical Society Papers, vol. 4, 1876–1959 (Wilmington, NC, 1992), 202; Mike Bunn, "Jacob Hunter Sharp," Mississippi Encyclopedia, accessed March 18, 2024, https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/jacob-hunter-sharp.

[54] *Vicksburg Herald*, July 27, 1881; *Natchez Democrat*, May 14, 1882; *Vicksburg Daily Commercial*, June 9, 1882; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Issaquena County, Mississippi; House of Representatives, Mis. Doc. 12, 47th Congress; *Jackson Weekly Clarion*, June 13, 1872; *Weekly Democrat*, October 13, 1880; *Natchez Daily Commercial*, July 19, 1880.

[55] *Natchez Democrat*, June 8, 1908; "Lynch, John Roy, " History, Art & Archives: United States House of Representatives, accessed March 15, 2024, https://history.house.gov/People/Detail/17259; *The Clarion* (Jackson, MS), February 3, 1881.

[56] Mayer to Baker, December 13, 1897, and November 23, 1898, Baker to Mayer, July 10, 1897, Sizeler Family Collection; *Natchez Democrat*, January 20, 1903; Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*, 393; Mary B. Poppenheim, et. al., *The History of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Raleigh, NC, 1956); Bruce Collins, "Confederate Identity and the Southern Myth Since the Civil War," in *Legacy of Disunion: The Endearing Significance of the American Civil War*, ed. Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J. Parish (Baton Rouge, 2003), 33; Blight, *Race and Reunion,* 272.

[57] Benjamin Raphael Mayer is the author's maternal great-grandfather. Susan T. Falck, *Remembering Dixie: The Battle to Control Historical Memory in Natchez, Mississippi, 1865–1941*

(Jackson, MS, 2019), 75, 90; "Roll of Adams Light Infantry," accessed March 19, 2024, http://www.natchezbelle.org/adams-ind/a-lt-inf.htm.

[58] The CMA was a men's organization, with women as honorary members. The memorial still stands, protected by Mississippi law that prevents removal of Confederate memorials. After efforts to remove the memorial failed, local leaders decided to install a memorial to Black Civil War soldiers. The memorial has not yet been completed. Falck, *Remembering Dixie,* 75, 90; Anderson, *Builders of a New South,* 166; *Natchez Democrat*, May 15, 1869; *Weekly Democrat*, April 20, 1887; Confederate Memorial Association (Natchez, MS) Minute Book, 1887–1923, Manuscript Collections, Z2269.000/S/box 1, Mississippi Department of Archives and History; Karen L. Cox; *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, FL, 2019), 1; *Natchez Democrat*, June 5, 1883, April 14, 1899, June 6, 1899, and September 8, 1883; *Natchez Bulletin*, December 27, 1899; Lowenburg, "My Memories"; *Weekly Democrat*, April 20, 1881, March 30, 1887, August 15, 1887, August 21, 1887, and January 14, 1899.

[59] Stephen J. Whitfield, "The Braided Identity of Southern Jewry," *American Jewish History* 77 (March 1988): 363; John Shelton Reed, "Ethnicity in the South: Observations on the Acculturation of Southern Jews," in *Turn to the South, Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville, 1979), 137; Dianne Ashton, "Shifting Veils"; Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (Berlin and Boston, 2013).

[60] Founded in 1843, B'nai Israel is the oldest Jewish congregation in Mississippi, according to its website maintained in partnership with the Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL). The Sizeler Family Collection holds an undated, handwritten copy of Mayer's remarks on his company letterhead. Mayer said in his remarks that his predecessor as synagogue president resigned, thus the relevance of the story with General Joseph Davis, who died in New Orleans on Dec. 6, 1889. Ullman said, "It shall be our duty and pleasure to make this sacred spot a shrine to all those who may wish to drink of the waters of a pure and non-sectarian creed. By our actions and deeds we will endeavor to teach and perpetuate the principle that God is the Father of us, that all men are brethren." Jewish History of Natchez, accessed January 7, 2024, http://www.natchezteмple.org/jewish-history-of-natchez.html; Sizeler Family Collection; *Natchez Democrat*, March 14, 1872; Armbrester, *Samuel Ullman*.

[61] The Hebrew Ladies Aid Association minutes include mention of a $2,600 gift it raised during a dance in support of the local Jewish burial society. *Natchez Weekly Courier*, February 12, 1870; Temple B'nai Israel Records, MS-540, AJA; Mark K. Bauman, "Southern Jewish Women and Their Social Service Organizations," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22 (Spring 2003): 34–78; Lowenburg, "My Memories"; Jennifer A. Stollman, *Daughters of Israel, Daughters of the South: Southern Jewish Women and Identity in the Antebellum and Civil War South* (Brighton, MA, 2013), 40. See also Karla Goldman: *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism* (Boston, 2000); *Natchez Democrat,* February 2, 1870, March 7, 1872, December 8, 1895, November 6, 1898, November 20, 1899, and March 4, 1900.

[62] Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case (*New York, 1968), 91; Tifft and Jones, *The Trust*, 93–94; Ochs Papers, box 84, folder 26, box 57, folder 14, box 12, folders 5–7; *Chattanooga Daily Times*, March 24, 1928. For extensive media coverage of the Frank case see Eugene Levy, "'Is the Jew a White Man?': Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913–1915," *Phylon* 35 (Second Quarter

1974): 212–22. For a detailed examination of Ochs's anti-Zionist beliefs see Jerold S. Auerbach, *Print to Fit: The New York Times, Zionism and Israel, 1896–2016* (Brighton, MA, 2019).

[63] Tifft and Jones, *The Trust*, 51; Sandra Berman, "Leo Frank Revisited: New Resources on an Old Subject," *Southern Jewish History* 13 (2010): 5-12; Rudolph Franks to Ochs, December 17, 1914; Franks to Ochs, January 1, 1915; Franks to Ochs, October 15, 1914, Ochs Papers, box 4, folder 22, box 8b, box 84, folder 26–27.

[64] A speech Ochs gave in 1925 outlines his fervent support for Reform Judaism and his belief that Judaism existed only as a religion. Tifft and Jones, *The* Trust, 51–52; *Chattanooga Daily Times*, March 24, 1928, April 20, 1925; Ochs Papers, box 84, folders 26–27.

[65] *Chattanooga Times,* December 10, 1923; Leonard Dinnerstein, "A Note on Southern Attitudes toward Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 32 (January 1970): 43–49; Hieke, "Introduction," *Jewish Identity*; Anton Hieke, "The Transregional Mobility of Jews from Macon, Ga., 1860–1880," *American Jewish History* 97 (January 2013): 21–38; *Weekly Democrat*, February 29, 1895, April 1, 1891.

[66] Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 13. Michael R. Cohen explores the networks merchants such as the Mayer family were a part of before and especially after the Civil War in *Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era* (New York, 2017).

[67] Weis was not averse to controversy, paying a twenty-five dollar fine for violating Jim Crow laws in 1902 when he was seventy-six years old. He refused to give up his seat reserved for Black passengers on a New Orleans streetcar, telling the authorities all the seats were taken in the car reserved for whites. Weis's prominence was such that his arrest was reported in the *New York Times* and other newspapers. Anderson, *Builders of a New South*, 54; Michael Wayne, *The Reshaping of Plantation Society: The Natchez District, 1860–1880* (Baton Rouge, 1983), 165–66; T. Butler King Papers, file 443, p. 23, Southern Historical Collection–Southern Folklife Collection, University of North Carolina; Armbrester, *Samuel Ullman*, 46–65; Natchez *Democrat*, September 21, 1872; Weis autobiography; *Natchez Democrat*, January 4, 1910, December 2, 1902; *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, January 3, 1910, September 18, 1899, October 9, 1906; *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, September 18, 1899; *Natchez Weekly Democrat*, June 6, 1900.

[68] Jacob Morrow-Spitzer, "'Free from Proscription and Prejudice': Politics and Race in the Election of one Jewish Mayor in Late Reconstruction Louisiana," *Southern Jewish History* 22 (2019): 4–19; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 853; Anderson, *Builders of a New South,* 211–20; Stuart Rockoff, "Carpetbaggers, Jacklegs, and Bolting Republicans: Jews in Reconstruction Politics in Ascension Parish, Louisiana," *American Jewish History* 97 (January 2013): 39–64; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 98–140.

[69] *Natchez Democrat*, December 10, 1882, December 12, 1882; *Weekly Democrat*, January 5, 1887; Mark K. Bauman, "Factionalism and Ethnic Politics in Atlanta: The German Jews from the Civil War through the Progressive Era," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 82 (Fall 1998): 533–58; Anderson, *Builders of a New South*, 59, 127, 142; James, *Antebellum Natchez*. 182. For a list of Jewish mayors of southern towns, see "Southern Jewish Mayors Throughout History," accessed March 18, 2024, https://www.isjl.org/jewish-mayors-in-the-south.html.

[70] Armbrester, *Samuel Ullman*, 15; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 6, 1863, September 11, 1866, April 25, 1867.

[71] Carl V. Harris, "Stability and Change in Discrimination Against Black Public Schools: Birmingham, Alabama, 1871–1931" *Journal of Southern History* 51 (August 1985): 375–416.

[72] Ibid.

[73] *Birmingham Post-Herald,* November 7, 1897; Armbrester, *Samuel Ullman*, 38; "Introduction," in *Jews of the South*, ed. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson (Baton Rouge, 1973), 10.

[74] Armbrester, *Samuel Ullman*, 43.

[75] Harris, "Stability and Change," 388; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 258; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 21.

[76] *Birmingham Age-Herald*, September 7, 1900; *Natchez Weekly Democrat*, February 9, 1887; Lowenburg, "My Memories"; Ochs Papers, box 7, folder 15; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 21, 1905; *Savannah Tribune*, November 25, 1905; *Columbus Dispatch*, December 7, 1905; *Natchez Democrat*, November 21, 1905; Adams County Transcriptions of Original Signed Physicians Certificates and Hospital Record Cards, 1903–1908, accessed March 19, 2024, http://www.natchezbelle.org/adams-ind/hospital.htm.

[77] On August 30, 1987, Adolph Ochs's grandson, Arthur Ochs "Punch" Sulzberger, met the author and his family in their hometown of Thibodaux, LA, at the dedication of a new building housing the local newspaper, the *Daily Comet*. The New York Times Newspaper Group owned the paper, purchasing it from the company that bought it years earlier from the author's father.

Matisse's Cosmopolitans in the New South: The Cone Sisters Collect Modern Art

by

Leonard Rogoff *

Sisters Claribel and Etta Cone seemingly defy the stereotypes of southern Jews. Rather than "fitting in," as southern Jews allegedly admonished themselves to do, they became daring collectors of modern art, conspicuously challenging the conservative culture of their native Baltimore. Living in the decorous, upper-class German-Jewish enclave of Eutaw Place, they hung audacious nudes on a dining room wall. In a South that Baltimore journalist H. L. Mencken infamously denigrated as "The Sahara of the Bozart," they opened an art gallery called The Moderns.[1] Habitues of Paris, they hobnobbed with the avant-garde, associating with a bad boy like Picasso and cavorting with the outrageous Gertrude Stein. Their dear friend Henri Matisse, whose art was widely reviled when they first purchased his paintings, visited their apartment. Rather than provincials, distant from the centers of high culture and worldly sophistication, they were cosmopolitans habituating salons, galleries, and concert halls in Paris, Florence, and Munich and circumnavigating the globe.[2]

The sisters' role as pioneering art collectors has been well documented in exhibits, books, articles, catalogs, theses, and websites. The Cone Collection at the Baltimore Museum of Art is widely regarded among the premier global assemblages of modern art, particularly of Matisse. The sisters as art patrons have been assessed from various perspectives—feminist, aesthetic, and art historical. Their tastes and aesthetic choices have been much presented and debated. Barbara Pollack in

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The Collectors: Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta Cone and Mary Gabriel in *The Art of Acquiring: A Portrait of Etta and Claribel Cone* draw full-length portraits in book-long biographies. Memoirs by family members—notably by Ellen Hirschland and Nancy Hirschland Ramage, an art historian, and Edward Cone, a musicologist—have vividly evoked their character, family, and social setting and learnedly and perceptively limned the cultural context of their careers as art collectors. Dianna Cameron and Carrie Streeter edited an exhibition catalogue, *Modern Visions, Modern Art: The Cone Sisters in North Carolina*, an anthology of family memoirs and scholarly essays that locates the sisters in their time and place. Noted but less considered is their situation as second-generation German-Jewish women in the New South. The Cone sisters in their modernism and cosmopolitanism were exceptional but not unique.[3] The choices that they confronted, the contradictions they negotiated, were representational of southern Jewish women of their time and place, although admittedly in high relief given their extraordinary wealth and pioneering art collecting.

Indeed, the Cone sisters self-consciously thought of themselves as southern ladies. Their family roots extended not just to urban Richmond and Baltimore, but to small-town Lynchburg, Virginia, and Jonesboro, Tennessee, Claribel's birthplace.[4] They frequently sojourned with their sister Carrie in Asheville and their brothers in Blowing Rock and Greensboro, North Carolina. Like their mercantilist father and industrialist brothers, the sisters pioneered as enterprising marketers not of manufactured goods but of culture. Like their family members, too, they served as harbingers of modernity who aspired to transform an agrarian society that stood outside the national mainstream not only economically but also culturally. The role of southern Jews as cultural entrepreneurs paralleled their economic contributions.

Raised as southern ladies, Claribel and Etta joined the ranks of the New Women who aspired to roles outside hearth and home, independent of fathers and husbands, but having to find their way in a society that still expected that they would conform to traditional gender roles. Claribel pursued a career in medicine contrary to her father's wishes. In Paris, Florence, and Munich the sisters found independence, yet they always returned home. Complicating matters, conscious of their southern and German-Jewish identities, they lived largely but not entirely within a circumscribed Jewish family and social circle. Their art collecting reflected a

Claribel Cone in a light-colored dress with puffed sleeves, approximately age nineteen, c. 1883. (Courtesy of the Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, box 26, folder 1, CC.1.)

Etta Cone in a dress with a ruffled neck and puffed sleeves, early 1900s. (Courtesy of the Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, box 26, folder 13, CP26.13.3.)

habitual negotiation between the local and the cosmopolitan, tradition and modernity, across many spheres of their lives. If their artistic ambitions anticipated the future, they were also very much of their time and place. How, then, did two daughters of a German-Jewish immigrant peddler and storekeeper become connoisseurs of avant-garde art? What in their provincial southern upbringing could have inspired such an aspiration?

Family, Values, and Business

Claribel and Etta's father Herman Kahn and mother Helen Guggenheimer arrived in the American South with the mass antebellum migration of Bavarian Jews. However much the German states restricted their rights, taxed them into penury, and encouraged their assimilation, Jews adopted German culture as the portal into modern civil society. The German enlightenment promised to emancipate Jews politically, granting them civil rights and integrating them into society, with the expectation that they would assimilate into Christianity. Jews readily embraced enlightenment values and joined liberal political movements, aspiring to citizenship. These movements provoked a conservative retrenchment, particularly after the failed liberal revolutions of 1848, which dashed Jewish hopes of emancipation. Jews fled to America at rates doubling that of the general population. German-Jewish writer Berthold Auerbach spoke of a Jewish "addiction to America."[5]

Pulling Herman Kahn to America in 1846 was a typical family chain migration. Herman first resided with an older married sister, Elise Kahn Hirsh, in Richmond, where he peddled the countryside, while Helen's family had settled in nearby Lynchburg. Herman joined his brother-in-law, Jacob Adler, a merchant in Jonesboro, Tennessee, where he and Helen began a family that ultimately grew to thirteen children. Herman had carried to America an ethical letter from his brother-in-law Joseph Rosengart that many Cones to this day honor as a family covenant. Rosengart recommended to Herman "the faith of your fathers as the most sacred and the most noble." Herman was entering "a new country where . . . the Jew is not excluded from the society." "Wealth" should be used for "the best purpose and for charity," Rosengart wrote. "Be known as a philanthropist," but "live with your income."[6] Such letters, historian Jacob Rader Marcus notes, were a Jewish genre typically written by an Orthodox Jew

to a young immigrant expressing their "hopes and fears" for the dear one departing to a Jewish terra incognita. The message was covenantal, that God will care for them if they remain obedient to God, advising the young immigrant to remain loyal to family and Jewish community. One of Herman's sons, likely Julius, later wrote that his father came to America with the "intangible possession" of a "vitalizing heritage."[7] For Etta and Claribel this legacy provided guidance for their lives. They remained within the family and religious fold however much they exercised their freedom, and as philanthropists they bequeathed their riches to public charity.

Herman had been a village Jew raised in a traditional religious culture where the forces of enlightenment and emancipation were less deeply felt. In America, he renamed himself Cone and joined Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, which, although of Orthodox heritage, was wavering in its ritual practices, responding to the "acculturationist tendencies" of the times.[8] A gold plaque marked Herman's pew. Helen was a faithful worshiper, but the household was not recalled as especially religious. Synagogue movement labels did not necessarily reflect the varied practices of members.[9] The sisters were raised in a household shaped by German *Kultur*, which found expression in *Bildung*—moral education and self-improvement—which for emancipating German Jews, according to historian Michael Meyer, became the "culture . . . of their age."[10] *Bildung* was an aspiration for "higher things," a questing for truth, beauty, and goodness. Through *Bildung*, Jews would emancipate themselves, shedding their allegedly primitive religious ways, adopting German over Yiddish. German Jews flocked to museums, concert halls, intellectual salons, and art galleries as if they were houses of worship.[11] Jews cultivated an aesthetic sensibility. The Moorish, Romanesque, and neoclassical architecture of their newly erected cathedral-like temples attested not just to aestheticism, but to cosmopolitanism and civic respectability.

The Cones thus illustrated great historic trends that in the nineteenth century transformed the Jewish people: immigration to America, political emancipation, religious liberalization, and upward social mobility that took Jews from rural poverty to the urban bourgeoisie, from a nation apart to citizenship. No longer practitioners of an allegedly primitive religion speaking a guttural Yiddish, Jews integrated socially and culturally into civil society. In their mobility southern Jews were a portion of the global Jewish people. Their European families underwent a similar acculturation

as they migrated from the impoverished countryside to the cities where, pursuing careers in places and professions once closed to them, they rose into the middle class.

In eastern Tennessee Herman found some success as a merchant, investor, and landowner. A Confederate sympathizer, he owned three enslaved people in a region noted for its Unionist sentiment.[12] The Cones settled in Baltimore in 1870, where Herman opened a wholesale grocery house. Claribel, born in 1864, was the fifth and Etta, born in 1870, the ninth of thirteen children. The younger siblings were in thrall to the older, their place in the family hierarchy securing their identities.[13] In her youth Etta adored "Sister Claribel" and idolized oldest "Brother Mosie," as they called them. Typical of Jews, business was a family enterprise, and Herman employed his eldest sons, Moses and Ceasar, as drummers for his wholesale grocery. The brothers headed South to promising territories where a new railroad line might lead to the opening of a mill and the growth of a city. In 1890 the Cone brothers organized the Cone Export and Commission Company. Investing in North Carolina textile mills, Moses and Ceasar relocated to Greensboro where they built an industrial empire.

Jews played instrumental economic roles in the rise of a New South, helping to transform a traditionally agrarian society into a modern, urban, industrial one. The Cones exemplified the mobility of enterprising Jewish immigrants as they rose from peddlers to storekeepers to wholesalers to investors and to industrialists. From regional distribution hubs like Baltimore, Jews created networks of credit and commerce along rivers, coastal sea lanes, and railroad lines into heartland America. For Jews, Baltimore, the religious and commercial, if not political, capital of the region, served as the gateway city to the Southeast. A port situated on the border of North and South, it served as a "bridge" not only geographically but also culturally.[14] Coming and going from city to country, the Cone sisters trod a well-worn path. Cones were members of German-Jewish Baltimore, and Greensboro was its colony.

Etta and Claribel: The Mixture of Cultures

External forces of discrimination and internal forces of social cohesion shaped the world of Etta and Claribel Cone. Friendships, charitable organizations, and club memberships kept them in the Jewish fold, and the brothers partnered in business with fellow German Jews. In newly

urbanizing societies Jews staked a civic place. Their children took varied Jewish paths. Although their parents had kept kosher, not all the children did so.[15] Neither Claribel nor Etta evinced much religious interest, although their sister Carrie, with whom they were close, served as president of the North Carolina Association of Jewish Women, and with her husband, Moses Long, was a charter member of Asheville's synagogue, Beth HaTephila. Their bachelor brother, Frederic, who later lived with the sisters, served as Beth HaTephila's president for five years. Ceasar Cone hosted a Sunday school in his Greensboro home, and Cones endowed Temple Emanuel.[16] In their temples Reform Jews practiced a modern, progressive, rational religion with decorous rites and a social-justice agenda, akin to their Protestant neighbors' Social Gospel. Such respectability entitled Jews to citizenship in the civil state and membership in the middle class, opening doors socially and economically.

In an era of spiritualism, Jewish women explored Unitarianism or Ethical Culture. In their circle several Jewish women, notably Sally Stein, were drawn to Christian Science. In a Rosh Hashanah letter Etta playfully wished Gertrude Stein a "Happy New Year to you, you heathen."[17] Stein as an undergraduate at Radcliffe had written an essay, "The Modern Jew Who Has Given Up the Faith of His Fathers Can Reasonably and Consistently Believe in Isolation." Yet later in life she informed an interviewer, "Now I, I am a Jew, orthodox background, and I never make any bones about it." She felt Jewishness gave her the liberty of saying whatever she wanted.[18] When Claribel was asked to list her religion when registering at a German hotel in 1919, she wrote "Freiglaubig," literally translated as "free belief," implying agnostic or freethinking.[19] With the rise of an American-born, acculturated generation, perhaps a minority of American Jews affiliated with synagogues. Generational conflict on religion was common with the second generation of American Jews.

Although secular, nonobservant Jews, the sisters never left the bosom of their extended family, and their social associations consisted largely of people like themselves. For many, being Jewish was a matter of peoplehood rather than of faith.[20] In her correspondence Claribel demonstrated consciousness of who was and who was not a Jew. Sailing to Europe in 1910 the haughty Claribel expressed her disdain for a lower class of Jews aboard, whose society she avoided, but wrote glowingly of her conversations with an erudite German doctor with whom she spoke

at length on "the Jewish question."[21] When Carrie asked Claribel in 1907 to speak before the local chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women, she obliged.[22] The sisters contributed to Jewish causes, although Etta demurred about contributing to a public Jewish charity in the 1930s when European Jewry was endangered, fearful of the consequences of revealing her wealth. Yet she wrote her nephew Richard Guggenheimer, an aspiring artist whom she supported, that she was cutting back on her art buying as "many German refugee relatives are absorbing all I can afford to give them."[23] In her will the first beneficiary after the bequest of the art collection was Baltimore's Associated Jewish Charities.[24]

Their feeling of German-Jewish community explains the sisters' celebrated friendship with novelist Gertrude Stein and her brothers Leo and Michael. The Steins had moved to Baltimore from San Francisco in 1892 to live with an aunt after their parents had passed away. There the Steins joined the German-Jewish social crowd and came to know the sisters, meeting in the salons that drew those intellectually and culturally engaged. Leo, an aesthete and aspiring artist, guided the sisters to galleries and museums. Gertrude, like Claribel, had been a medical student, and their paths crossed. In Paris, both Gertrude and Etta delighted in sharing Baltimore gossip, celebrating the marriage of a Stein cousin to a Guggenheimer cousin that linked their families. In 1904 Etta hosted Gertrude at the North Carolina mountaintop home of brother Moses.[25]

The Cone parents spoke German at home, and Claribel traveled to Germany with her father.[26] Visits to the *Heimat* (homeland) typically included reunions with German family and to his native Altenstadt. Obsessed with German culture and people, Claribel took German lessons. Etta, drawn to sunnier Italy and France, was aesthetically sensitive, even in high school writing an essay extolling the artistic treasures of Florence.[27] Claribel exulted in a Cone and Guggenheimer quality that she identified as a "fineness sensitiveness refinement—consideration—goodness."[28] Not a conscious ideology, the household *Bildung* was consonant with the zeitgeist; the prophetic idealism of Reform Judaism, the civic and economic boosterism of the New South, and the social uplift of America's Progressive Era seamlessly blended. The sisters attended concerts and lectures, sat on museum and hospital boards. Addressing students at Woman's Medical College in 1896, Claribel quoted Goethe, high priest of *Bildung*, on "working upon the world which surrounds us." She expressed

Helen and Herman Cone playing cards in their home at 1607 Eutaw Place in Baltimore, 1895. (Courtesy of the Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, box 27, folder 7, CP27.7.2.)

Bildung's essence when she wrote Etta, "It is the craving for beauty that is such a vital function of the human soul—that's it—the craving for beauty—for perfection—[that] is one way . . . of finding the path to God—is[n't] it?"[29]

However cosmopolitan, the sisters remained acculturated southern ladies. "Etta was first and foremost a lady," her great-niece Ellen Hirschland recalled, while Claribel thought that the "Cone quality" was "enhanced through the southern influence and training."[30] Etta more befit the Southern Lady stereotype: polite, modest, deferential, and domestic. Both were well coiffed and attired. Eschewing the sexualized fashions of the twenties, they dressed in Victorian black, their collars high and skirts

long. Hats and gloves were de rigeur. For Jews who allegedly admonished themselves to fit in, Claribel dressed conspicuously, favoring layers of shawls, a silver skewer piercing her hair. "Jewels have spotted us as ladies of good taste," Etta noted, "even here in Asheville."[31] As they bought avant-garde art and frequented bohemian society, the sisters evoked days gone by. A Johns Hopkins professor who knew them well observed, "They had something of the nineteenth century in their manner."[32] In 1934 Matisse in a letter described Claribel as "a great beauty" while Etta was "a Queen of Israel"[33]

Claribel Cone as a resident physician at the Blockley Almshouse, approximately age twenty-seven, c. 1891–92. (Courtesy of the Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, box 26, folder 2, CC.2.)

Both sisters were aspirational, with Claribel achieving academic distinction in the sciences and Etta a passionate reader in the arts and history. In an era when graded school systems, based on German models, were becoming more expansive, especially for women's education, both attended Western Female High School. Etta became an accomplished pianist with a preference for Schubert, and Claribel also played and painted. Less than 3 percent of American women attended college, although Jewish girls in diaries and journals often expressed a desire to excel beyond their

domestic roles.[34] When Claribel shocked the family by announcing her intention to enroll at the Women's Medical College of Baltimore, her father sought to dissuade her by suggesting that she study art and invited her to visit Germany with him.[35] Claribel wanted the independence and intellectual challenge of a medical education and career and graduated first in her class from the Women's Medical College of Baltimore in 1890. Finding limited opportunity for women, she interned at the Philadelphia Hospital for the Insane. Later she pursued postgraduate work at Johns Hopkins University Hospital and dedicated herself to the research laboratory as a pathologist. Except for a brief teaching stint, Etta never aspired to a career. In their youth the sisters thus confronted the choices available to women of their generation living in transitional times. Etta would be, as Gertrude Stein described her, a "homemaker," a favorite aunt, and Claribel would pursue a professional career in defiance of family.[36]

We speak of the "Cone Sisters" as if they were joined at the hip—Picasso called them "le Miss Cones"—but they lived and traveled apart, and their relations were often contentious.[37] In "Two Women," Gertrude Stein's thinly veiled sketch of Etta and Claribel, she observed: "They were very different one from the other of them."[38] Claribel was bright, argumentative, and independent and often socially off-putting—one medical colleague described her as a "society woman sort" who "put on airs." Etta acted shy socially but was warm among friends and often disappeared in her sister's shadow.[39] Claribel was more so the New Woman, Etta the southern lady, although each partook of both roles.

Neither married. When the sisters were born, rates of unmarried women stood at about 10 percent. An unmarried daughter at home, a parental caretaker, was a social tradition among German Jews.[40] The sisters idolized and found protection in an older brother, in their case Moses.[41] Whatever his misgivings about Claribel's medical career, their father had generously supported and educated his daughters, and, after Herman's death in 1897, Moses, by then a textile magnate, became family patriarch. Moses provided a substantial stipend that underwrote the sisters' upper-class domicile and travels as well as their art collecting. Indeed, Etta made her first art purchase in 1896 when Moses gave her five hundred dollars to decorate the family parlor. She boldly purchased not rugs or furniture but four small paintings at auction from the estate of the American impressionist Theodore Robinson, a student of Monet. Despite the

impressionist palette, these small paintings were sentimentally rendered depictions of a girl in the woods, a girl with a violin, a horse drinking, and a mother and child.[42] The purpose of this first art purchase was thus domestic, interior decorating. Etta felt at home on Eutaw Place, feeding her brothers and perpetually tardy sister. Etta escaped by heading to North Carolina to visit her sister and nieces in Asheville or her brothers and their families in Greensboro.[43] After Moses and Bertha established themselves at baronial Flat Top Manor in Blowing Rock, a mountaintop estate, Etta persuaded Claribel to join her sojourns there. With Moses's death in 1908, Etta became a companion to his widow, Bertha, summering in Blowing Rock and wintering in Baltimore.[44]

Degrees of Modernity and Travel Abroad

Beneficiaries of the Gilded Age, the sisters came to maturity in the Progressive Era. They wished both to enjoy themselves and to be socially useful. Thorstein Veblen's popular *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, published in 1899, described wealthy ladies of leisure whose lives were "unproductive" as they spent lavishly, entertained extravagantly, and grumbled about the help. The sisters did not compromise on enjoying privileged lives while educating themselves, whether in the arts or medicine, and serving as civic activists and philanthropists. Another popular book, addressed to educated women, asked, *After College, What*? The manual observed that if women did not marry or teach, they still needed "something to do." Women were educated for careers not yet open to them, and their families still consigned them to traditional domestic roles as spouses and caretakers. In 1897 Claribel invited Gertrude Stein, a fellow medical student, to speak in Baltimore on "The Value of a College Education for Women," and in 1900 Dr. Claribel lectured at Woman's College in Greensboro on "Careers for Women."[45]

As Etta wrote to Stein, the "social pressure to do charity work was heavy." She identified two alternatives as "philanthropy and woman Suffrage—questions that have put old Baltimore in a real state of turmoil." Beyond art and medicine, Claribel advocated for modern causes like woman's education and suffrage, maternity hospitals, and birth registration, although neither sister seemed politically partisan. Claribel would be eulogized as one of "Baltimore's first feminists." But she also observed in a letter to Etta, "There is nothing in the world for you and me to do but

Etta Cone standing in the Roman Forum, 1913.
(Courtesy of the Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, box 26, folder 11, CP26.11.13.)

have a good time in our own way—and there is nothing in the world for us to be—but be happy—This is my will and testament."[46]

In 1903, a year after their mother's death, the sisters exercised their freedom by sailing to Europe. The grand European tour was conventional among those of their social class, and the immigrant heritage kept them tied abroad not just through family but through culture. Southern Jewish women like Ida Weis Friend of New Orleans or Gertrude Weil of Goldsboro, North Carolina, traveled abroad to polish their domestic educations. Gertrude Stein's German-born parents had taken her as a child to Austria and France. Etta headed to Florence and Tuscany while Claribel went to the Senckenberg Institute in Frankfort where she worked with Nobel laureate Paul Ehrlich. Claribel remained three years. Etta went back

to her family in Baltimore and North Carolina, but eight months later returned to Europe for two years.[47] Their friends Gertrude Stein and her brothers Leo and Michael and sister-in-law Sally had established themselves in Paris, and Claribel and Etta resumed their Baltimore relationship abroad. Gertrude became fascinated with Claribel, a spellbinding storyteller with a melodic voice who read Stein's fiction with hypnotic effect. Etta agreed to type Gertrude's manuscript of *Three Lives*, a story collection.[48]

The Steins ushered Etta and Claribel into the modernist orbit. Gertrude's charismatic older brother Leo was an aspiring painter and friend of the great art connoisseur Bernard Berenson, a fellow Harvard alumnus. As he had in Baltimore, Leo guided the sisters to galleries and museums including the Uffizi Gallery in Florence and the Louvre in Paris. In 1905 the Steins invited Etta and Claribel to join them at the Paris Salon

Gertrude Stein, Etta Cone, and Claribel Cone sitting on a bench, July 2, 1903. (Courtesy of the Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, box 27, folder 1, CG.10.)

d'Automne which was exhibiting fauvist paintings by Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, and Rouault. Claribel at first found the "color madness" to be "grotesque," questioning whether the artists were "to be taken seriously."[49]

Whatever the sisters thought of the art, the artists' bohemian poverty touched them. From 1905 to 1906 Etta, living in Paris, purchased twenty-eight works by six artists, including the then unknowns Cezanne and Picasso as well as the widely reviled Matisse.[50] The Steins attributed the Cones' art buying to "romantic charity." The sisters were enamored of Matisse, who affectionally called them "my two Baltimore ladies," and a friendship blossomed.

In 1906 and 1907, the sisters joined brother Moses and sister-in-law Bertha on an around-the-world tour. The itinerary included Jerusalem, Cairo, and Constantinople. Etta wrote of the stirrings of her "Oriental blood."[51] All came home with artwork and global bric-a-brac. Upon their return Claribel took rooms at the Marlborough Apartments in Baltimore while Etta found shelter with her brother Ceasar in Greensboro. Claribel assigned Etta the formidable task of unpacking her purchases and belongings.[52]

From 1914 to 1920 Claribel lived in Munich, stubbornly resisting family overtures to return to Baltimore even when Ceasar died and even as war anxieties roused anti-German feelings. Claribel wrote that she felt more at home in Germany. Her German sympathies abated when America entered the war, and she declared her neutrality. Cut off from her American family, she lived on loans from her German Rosengart relatives.[53]

Entrepreneurs of Modern Art

Claribel had abandoned her medical career. She now belatedly confronted the question of after college, what? She wrote Etta, "I am trying to think out some scheme of life."[54] Claribel expressed love of her family, but unlike the devoted, obedient Etta, she found it difficult to consider the feelings of others. She wrote of her "mania for living alone."[55] Claribel recognized that she was too much the lady of leisure for the Parisian bohemian life.[56] When deciding to return from Europe to Baltimore, Claribel, sounding very much like a southern lady, wrote of her "old habit of clinging to the old things—things as they were and tradition."[57] Claribel left Munich intending to turn her Baltimore apartment into a

private museum to exhibit her paintings, fabrics, sculpture, furniture, boxes, and jewelry. Her avocation became her vocation: she would be an art collector.

The sisters were now ensconced at the elegant Marlborough Apartments in the Eutaw Place enclave favored by Baltimore's German-Jewish elite. Etta, who had been collecting art since she decorated her parents' parlor, resided in one apartment adjoining Claribel's museum while Claribel lived in a studio apartment on another floor. Claribel left it to others to describe their art as a collection, she said, noting that she had collected "beautiful things" since girlhood when she picked up seashells.[58] The sisters educated themselves, taking classes in aesthetics at Johns Hopkins from art historian and philosopher George Boas, who became their mentor. By the 1920s they had become recognized players on the Paris art scene.[59]

As consumers of modern art, the sisters entered a new, fluid field that lacked an established elite that could block the progress of Jewish parvenus. Historian Charles Dellheim observes, "Marketing modern art—like many of the endeavors in which Jews clustered—was a middleman business that offered few barriers to entry."[60] Their European dealers—Bernheim, Rosengart, Rosenberg, and Kahnweiler—were, like them, Jews who were also upwardly mobile, culturally and economically, whose families had migrated from the countryside to the cities. The Swiss Matisse dealer Siegfried Rosengart was their cousin, grandson of the author of the letter their father had carried to America.[61] From 1920 to 1922 the sisters purchased fourteen Matisses. In 1922 Picasso drew Claribel's portrait. They also bought Manet, Cezanne, and Renoir along with objets d'art from around the globe. Claribel, previously a lecturer on medicine, now spoke before museums and women's clubs on modern art, illustrating her talks with prints, etchings, and lithographs from her collection. In 1929 at sixty-four, Claribel took to the radio on Wednesday afternoons to lecture on modern art.[62]

Throughout the twenties the sisters annually traveled to Europe with Paris as home. Claribel methodically reported to Etta on every gallery and museum visit, detailing the cost of everything from antiquities to the breakfast melon. By the dozens Claribel bought silk stockings and handkerchiefs at Le Bon Marché in Paris and silk scarves at Liberty in London. Travel companion Nora Kaufman opined, "She loved to buy."

Claribel noted, "I enjoy the study of things so much—and most people irritate me."[63]

Of course, Claribel's and Etta's art purchases had a financial component. Raised in a family immersed in commerce, the sisters meticulously accounted for their spending. The sisters at first lived on a yearly stipend of $2,400 from their father's estate, supplemented by their older brothers who had given them their inherited shares. Moses bequeathed half his exceedingly ample estate to his surviving siblings. In the 1920s, as Cone Mills prospered, their stock holdings ballooned into a fortune, and the sisters went on a buying spree. From Paris Claribel in 1925 telegraphed Cone Export in New York: "Bought pictures. Cable me through American Express, Paris, twenty-thousand dollars."[64] They were mindful of the market value of their art, so that when their brothers questioned their purchases, they assured them that they were the wiser investors. Claribel bought Van Gogh's "A Pair of Boots," less because she liked it than as an investment in an emerging artist.[65]

Paintings and sculpture provided only one part of enormous expenditures on lace, jewelry, shawls, fabrics, rugs, draperies, portieres, embroideries, bronzes, antique furniture, marbles, and other curiosities as well as a library of books, pamphlets, and catalogues.[66] In their apartments modernist art cohabited with lace, furniture, and textiles dating to the sixteenth century. Etta and Claribel engaged in what a biographer calls "perhaps the longest and least-advertised shopping spree in the annals of American womanhood."[67] When attending opera or theater, the sisters purchased an extra seat to hold that day's shopping. Expeditions to Le Bon Marché, antique stores, or art galleries, preceded a visit to the Louvre. Consumerism was an outgrowth of the industrial revolution, which came late to the South. The Blowing Rock mansion, like Vanderbilt's Biltmore House in Asheville or Reynolds' Reynolda House in Winston-Salem, attested to conspicuous consumption in stark contrast to the modest wood-framed mill or farmhouses which were the iconic dwellings of hardscrabble North Carolinians. For Etta and Claribel, North Carolina was the "country," but one where they enjoyed glamping as ladies of leisure.[68]

Parallels can be drawn between the economic role of the Cone brothers as industrialists in helping to create a modern New South and the cultural role of the sisters as art entrepreneurs in bringing cosmopolitan culture to a provincial region, one that Mencken complained had "not a

single picture gallery worth going into."[69] Routes of commerce also provided pathways of culture. Picasso in Paris drew a self-portrait that Gertrude Stein mailed to Etta in Greensboro. The sisters had served as guides for brother Moses and his wife Bertha in their European excursions, and Etta had taken Moses to Matisse's studio. Bertha bought a Picasso pencil sketch.[70] Their mountain retreat in Blowing Rock was decorated with global souvenirs, and Renoir and Picasso hung on the walls.[71] Not only money and merchandise had ridden the rail lines down south, but also new ideas, new art, and new ways of connecting to the world. Like their brothers, the sisters had been raised in an entrepreneurial household that proved adept at opening new markets for new commercial products. Like their industrialist brothers, too, the sisters participated in the global economy linked to New York financial markets and European export houses.

Modernist art was a new enterprise, inviting to a newly emancipated people aspiring for affluence and social integration. Although not dealers and occasionally deaccessioning art, Claribel and Etta played the classic Jewish role as middle persons, positioning themselves between the art makers and the consuming public whom they sought to educate. As presenters and educators, they helped create market demand for modern art, if not for buyers at least for patrons of museums and galleries. One art student who visited Etta and Claribel's private gallery was inspired to create modernist works, but the art-school director refused to exhibit her art, fearing it would infect other pupils. Claribel helped form a group called The Modernists. Inspired by Parisian exhibitions, as they explained to the press, they opened a gallery in Baltimore to exhibit modernist art.[72]

In bringing commerce and industry southward Moses and Ceasar had also been modernists transforming a traditionally agrarian society. Cosmopolitanism was a Jewish contribution to southern culture, and the appearance of Jews was a sign of its local presence. The Cone brothers opened global markets and introduced mechanization and new labor organization that changed the social order of the region. The brothers named one mill Revolution. As farm families flocked to the mills, the brothers constructed mill villages on scientific principles of sanitation. In mill-built schools they extended the school day and term. Moses and Bertha endowed Watauga Academy, forerunner of Appalachian State University. The Flat Top country estate featured a beaux-arts home with the latest

technology, architectural landscaping, and scientific forest and agricultural management. In a region long sustained by subsistence agriculture, they established on their estate a commercial dairy and apple orchard based on modern production and distribution principles.

Cone enterprise, whether industrial or cultural, underscores the Jewish role in the transition from Old South to New, and in this they were not alone. Another set of antebellum German-Jewish brothers, the Wallaces of Statesville, North Carolina, opened markets in Europe and Asia for berries, roots, and herbs that country folk collected in the Blue Ridge mountains. Jewish merchants conventionally advertised imported European fashions as up to date as anything not just in New York or Baltimore but in Paris or London. Their stores bore internationalist names like The Globe, Palais Royal, or Bon Marché. Southern Jewish impresarios like Mark Klaw and Simeon A. Schloss in their opera houses brought Caruso and Paderewski down home. As cultural entrepreneurs, the Cone sisters, too, acted to transform a provincial, traditional society into a modern, urbane one.

The sisters expressed the contradictions found in progressive southerners. However modernist, these southern ladies were not the radicals that their unconventional art collecting may suggest. Etta was passionate about beauty and sure of her taste, but her conservative southern upbringing largely shaped her sensibility. Although Leo Stein educated the sisters in artistic formalism, and they appreciated color, perspective, and composition, the sisters—Etta especially—were drawn to representational art. Their portraits, interiors, landscapes, and still life paintings depicted familiar, comfortable subjects, not the distortions of abstraction, notably of cubism.[73] Etta's tastes changed little from the impressionistic Robinsons that she first bought to her later Matisses. Etta exhibited limited understanding of modernism. If she bought avant-garde works, they tended to be the least radical. The sisters' collection, an art critic assesses, "represents Matisse at his most conservative and traditional," "decorative" rather than experimental, typified by paintings like "The Yellow Dress."[74] Etta preferred portraiture, whereas Claribel bought landscapes, including masterpieces by Courbet and Cezanne. In 1926 the bolder Claribel bought the most audacious painting in the collection, Matisse's "The Blue Nude," for 101,000 francs. Claribel excitedly hung it in her Baltimore living room. The more demur Etta would not question the genius of the artist who

Front back room with Redon's "Peonies," Renoir's "Les Oliviers" and "Les Roses," and Matisse's "La Leçon de Musique," after 1926. (Courtesy of the Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, box 28, folder 4, CECHOMES.15.)

Dining room with Matisse's "Large Cliff with Fish," 1941. (Courtesy of the Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, box 28, folder 14, CH.30.A.

created such an expressive canvas. She recognized her contradictions: "Do not confuse the terms beautiful and pretty," Etta wrote. "Art is not always beautiful nor even pretty, but it can be both," which she preferred.[75]

The sisters largely lost interest in Picasso as his work became more extreme under the influence of cubism and African sculpture, whereas the more radical Gertrude Stein abandoned Matisse for the Spaniard. The sisters' Picasso collecting focused on his Blue and Rose Periods, less so his cubism. Among Etta's purchases was Picasso's sentimental "Mother and Child." Etta confessed to Picasso's Parisian dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, who visited their Baltimore apartments, that she "could not understand Picasso and Cubism."[76]

Etta held a romantic view of artists, tolerating their licentious behavior as the privilege of genius.[77] Unlike the notoriously libertine heiress Peggy Guggenheim, a New Yorker settled in Venice, who collected lovers as well as modern art, the sisters were outsiders to the avant-garde. In Paris they observed without participating in the adulteries, addictions, and libertinism of Stein, Picasso, or Matisse. In her home Etta, ever the lady, refused to tolerate off-color stories, and when guests came to the apartment she put a tea caddy over a Degas nude sculpture that sat on her piano. Offered Picasso's "Boy with Horse" at a reasonable price, Etta declined, informing her nephew Edward that she did not want to see full frontal nudity at her dining table.[78] Contrarily, Claribel prominently displayed "The Blue Nude" to the outrage of unsuspecting guests. The family was "perplexed" how very proper Etta could entertain an audience with tales of bohemian artists and was bemused by her naivete. When her brother Julius questioned placing Matisse's "Large Cliff with Fish," with its unappetizing dead fish, in the family dining room, Etta responded that Matisse had personally assured her that he had hired a waterboy to refresh the fish.[79]

Baltimore looked askance at the sisters. They were a sight to behold: ample, portly Victorian women, Claribel stylishly accessorized to call attention to herself. As social outsiders, Jews found through modern art "an entrée into high culture" and were its patrons.[80] However much attached to Baltimore and active in its cultural life, the sisters, after cavorting in Paris and Munich, had no illusions about their native city's appreciation of their collection. Baltimore arrived late among cities to create cultural institutions—the Baltimore Museum of Art was founded in 1923—and the

Henri Matisse in the dining room of Etta Cone's apartment at the Marlborough Apartments, December 17, 1930. (Courtesy of the Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, box 29, folder 2, CP26.2.2.)

cultural ethos was conservative. The director of its arts school dismissed modern art as "poppycock."[81] The sisters found refuge in a circle of sophisticates including Dr. George Boas, a philosopher at Johns Hopkins, and Florence Levy and Adelyn Breeskin, directors of the Baltimore Museum of Art.[82]

By 1929, with the walls of two apartments covered with Picassos, Renoirs, Van Goghs, and Matisses especially, Claribel began considering the collection's ultimate disposition. In her will she left the collection to Etta but specified her preference that it go to the Baltimore Museum of Art with

the qualification, "if the spirit of appreciation of modern art in Baltimore should improve."[83] As patrons and educators, they had done much to promote that appreciation, and Claribel left a grant of one hundred thousand dollars to support the collection. Claribel died that year while vacationing in Europe with Etta and brother Fred. A devastated Etta took as her mission to preserve the memory of her beloved sister. Etta maintained Claribel's apartment as a memorial museum, keeping her clothes hanging in a closet and decorating it daily with fresh flowers. When Matisse visited, she commissioned him to do a portrait of her late sister. She had the apartments professionally photographed and published a memorial catalogue. She distributed the catalog of what was now formally named the Cone Collection to artists and professionals. Assuming her sister's mantle, she opened her parlor doors to artists, students, professors, and curators, and became a public spokesperson for "The Development of Modern Art," as she titled her lecture.[84]

For her last twenty years, Etta gloried in her role as docent and guardian of the Cone Collection. Nor was she immune to the flattery of visiting museum directors who coveted the collection. She supported young artists associated with the Maryland Institute, several of whom were Jews, by buying their paintings. Emerging from Claribel's shadow, she eagerly recounted stories of their Paris days. She continued to collect, filling the collection's gaps in nineteenth- and twentieth-century French art and enjoying the attention of the Paris art world.[85] She followed her sister as a public lecturer on modern art. Unusual for her, Etta even purchased Picasso's "Nude with Raised Arm," a cubist painting. With the European political situation worsening in 1938, Etta made her last trip abroad. She divided time between Baltimore and North Carolina until her death at Blowing Rock in 1949. In her will Etta granted the Baltimore Museum of Art its choice of the Cone Collection with four hundred thousand dollars to house it while the remainder, including duplicates, would go to Woman's College in Greensboro, where it is now held at the Weatherspoon Gallery. That collection includes prints and Matisse bronzes.[86]

Part of Broader Patterns

In bringing their art collection to conservative societies that little knew or even disdained modern art, the sisters acted as New Women, cosmopolitans in the provinces. In this, they were hardly alone among a

community of second-generation German-American Jews who helped bring global enterprise and high culture to the South. Such networking typified Jewish enterprise. Beyond their cousin Siegfried Rosengart, Picasso's dealer in Lucerne, Daniel Kahnweiler, Picasso's dealer in Paris, also could claim southern family ties. The Kahnweiler brothers, antebellum Bavarian Jewish entrepreneurs in Wilmington, North Carolina, had commercial links to Baltimore, New Orleans, New York, and Europe. If Etta Cone played Brahms and Schubert on the piano, Mrs. Kahnweiler sang Verdi and Meyerbeer arias at the Wilmington Opera House. Daniel Kahnweiler also visited the Cone sisters' Baltimore apartment. Ties of family, landsleit, and commerce intertwined, linking Jews internationally.

Not only as Jews but as women, the sisters also found opportunity through collecting modern art.[87] Southern Jewish women in Etta and Claribel's circle shared Claribel and Etta's sensibilities and activities as modern art entrepreneurs. Their sister-in-law, Laura Weill Cone, a native North Carolinian, urged Etta to bequeath Cone art to her hometown of Greensboro, a Piedmont mill town not otherwise mistaken as a global center of artistic modernism. Laura had lobbied for an art department as an alumna and board member of the state's Woman's College. Its first director was an advocate of modernism, and Laura's daughter married the modernist architect Edward Loewenstein.[88] The Cones' Baltimore cousin Saidie Adler May, daughter of a wealthy shoe manufacturer and a twice-divorced woman, traveled to Europe in 1924, befriended abstract expressionist Hans Hofmann, and later was among the first to collect Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell. In the 1930s she began donating to the Baltimore Museum of Art, bequeathing it three hundred thousand dollars, and, with her sister Blanche, a significant modernist collection. Saidie often consulted with cousin Etta, and they coordinated their philanthropy.[89]

In Charleston Anita Pollitzer, a national suffragist leader, had studied art at Columbia where she had befriended her classmate Georgia O'Keefe, whom she famously introduced to Alfred Stieglitz. Theresa Pollak as an artist and educator is credited with introducing modern art to Richmond. As leader of the city's School of the Arts, she shocked public morals by introducing nude models into the classes. Later, Alice Rubinstein Ehrlich played an influential role as a teacher and abstract artist in Raleigh. Patsy Rabinowitz Nasher with her husband Ray was a globally significant patron of painting and sculpture whose collection is now held

by namesake modernist museums in Dallas and Durham.[90] However individualistic, even eccentric, the Cone sisters, however exceptional their wealth, they were very much women of their time, class, and ethnicity.

The paradoxical attitudes toward tradition and modernism, domesticity and freedom that informed the sisters' art collecting can be seen in other dimensions of endeavor for Jewish women who felt loyal to family and community even as they aspired to personal fulfillment. It reflected the sensibility underlying the emergent Reform Judaism as articulated in its Pittsburgh Platform of 1885. Reform Judaism would be a "progressive religion," egalitarian, "adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization" while also "convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past."[91] Suffragists justified the then disruptive notion that women deserved the vote by arguing, as one southern Jewish activist put it, that women "shall use it in our old, time-honored business of housekeeping, of making life fair and clean and sanitary for our families."[92] Popular opinion at first disdained birth control as feminist, anarchist, or even communist, but women proclaimed it protective of maternal and family health. Newly established progressive fields like home economics and domestic science empowered women to fill traditional roles in modern ways that utilized new technologies.

That Etta and Claribel collected art by radicals who were upsetting conventions in their work and challenging social propriety in their lives did not mean that they spurned traditional values. Hannah Solomon, founder of the National Council of Jewish Women, expressed the feminist sensibility at the heart of these women: "Who is this new woman? . . . She is the woman who dares to go into the world. . . . She is the woman who stays at home."[93] Even in death the sisters expressed their independence while remaining mindful of family, propriety, and Judaism. The freethinking sisters were interred with their brother Fred in a neoclassical mausoleum in a nonsectarian cemetery, but a rabbi performed the funeral rites. At Etta's service Rabbi Morris Lazaron spoke warmly and familiarly of her as a "sweet friend," extolling her personal qualities of modesty and refinement. He noted that "for many of us you linked us with the precious past" even as her enduring legacy was to bring the South into the present.[94]

New York Jewish matriarch Annie Nathan Meyer, founder of Barnard College, explained the paradox of such women: "To put any radical

scheme across, it must be done in the most conservative manner possible."[95] How the Cone sisters envisioned their art can be seen through the frames that encased their paintings. Most were purchased in the 1920s and 1930s and tended to be gilded and ornate, traditionally Victorian, compatible with the interior decoration of their Marlborough apartment. The frames domesticated the radical, asking viewers to transform what was conceived as startling into something that was decorous and beautiful. In 1986 art historian Brenda Richardson, then Baltimore Museum curator, reframed the paintings with minimalist strips to emphasize their modernism, but a subsequent curator restored the original Cone frames.[96] That act presented the paintings as the sisters intended them, as timeless masterpieces. In 2001 the museum "reconceived" the collection and recreated a room that replicated the Marlborough Apartment, restoring the art to its domestic setting evocative of how the sisters had lived with it.[97]

This controversy—modern art seen through a vintage frame—encapsulates the legacy of the Cone sisters as the second-generation daughters of Jewish immigrants aspiring to be both New Women and southern ladies. Their art collecting reflected the spirit of their time and place. The New South myth promulgated a new, disruptive urbanity and industrialization even as southern society remained framed in conservative social and cultural hierarchies. As George Boas writes, the Cone sisters' collecting reflected an "expression of their personalities," consistent with other spheres of their lives.[98]

Negotiating among competing family, social, and cultural demands, the Cone sisters pursued freedom but within limits. They remained Jews although they thought freely as they entered new social and cultural realms. The German heritage of *Bildung* infused their lives with high culture and moral purpose even as their art collection challenged classical ideals. As rooted cosmopolitans, they would live in avant-garde Paris, cavort with Gertrude Stein, but also be devoted Baltimore and Blowing Rock daughters, aunts, and sisters. They traveled but came home.

NOTES

[1] H. L. Mencken, "The Sahara of the Bozart," accessed June 3, 2024, https://thegrandarchive.wordpress.com/the-sahara-of-the-bozart. The essay first appeared in 1917 in the *New York Evening Mail*.

[2] For the case for Southern Jews as provincials see Eli Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York, 1973).

[3] Barbara Pollack, *The Collectors: Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta Cone* (Indianapolis, 1962); Mary Gabriel, *The Art of Acquiring: A Portrait of Etta and Claribel Cone* (Baltimore, 2002). Dianna Cameron and Carrie Streeter, eds., *Modern Visions, Modern Art: The Cone Sisters in North Carolina* (Blowing Rock, NC, 2019); Nancy Hirschland Ramage, "Mothers, Sisters, Cousins, Aunts: At Home with Women of the Cone Family," in *Modern Visions, Modern Art*, 25–47; Edward Cone, "The Miss Etta Cones, the Steins, and M'sieu Matisse," in Cameron and Streeter, *Modern Visions, Modern Art*, 111–29. See also Ellen Hirschland and Nancy Hirschland Ramage, *The Cone Sisters of Baltimore: Collecting at Full Tilt* (Evanston, IL, 2008).

[4] Ramage, "Mothers, Sisters, Cousins, Aunts," 25–26.

[5] Quoted in Emily C. Rose, *Portraits of Our Past: Jews of the German Countryside* (Philadelphia, 2001), 282.

[6] Quoted in Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 64–65.

[7] Jacob Rader Marcus, *This I Believe: Documents of American Jewish Life* (Northvale, NJ, 1990), 10–11, 79.

[8] See Eric Goldstein and Deborah Weiner, *On Middle Ground: A History of the Jews of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 2018), 80.

[9] Pollack, *Collectors,* 15; Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground,* 77–80.

[10] Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988), 72.

[11] Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch, 1743–1933* (New York, 2002), 260. In 1809 Herman's father, Moses Kahn, had had his portrait painted in oil.

[12] Mary Gabriel notes that during the war the Cones had retreated to a farm, perhaps in response to U. S. Grant's notorious General Order 11, which had called for the expulsion of Jews as allegedly illicit cotton speculators. She furthermore notes that after the war Cone and his partner Adler sought cover by taking on as a partner a local sheriff who had been a Unionist. Hirschland and Ramage cite a memoir by Sam Adler that recalled no experience of antisemitism in Jonesborough. Gabriel, *Art of Acquiring*, 4; Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters*, 17. On General Order 11, see Jonathan D. Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* (New York, 2012).

[13] Edward Cone, "The Miss Etta Cones, the Steins, and M'sieu Matisse," *American Scholar* 42 (Summer 1973): 441. Another Bavarian-Jewish immigrant family in North Carolina, the Weils exhibited a similar custom of addressing older siblings as "Sister" or "Brother."

[14] See Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground,* 2. Cincinnati in the Mideast, St. Louis in the Midwest, and San Francisco in the Far West performed similar roles as regional hubs for economic networks extending into the countryside.

[15] Ramage, "Mothers, Sisters, Cousins, Aunts," 31.

[16] Sharon Fahrer, *A Home in Shalom'ville: The History of Asheville's Jewish Community* (Asheville, NC, 2015), 67; Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 34; Greensboro: Historical Overview, Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed May 23, 2024, https://www.isjl.org/north-carolina-greensboro-encyclopedia.html.

[17] Gabriel, *Art of Acquiring*, 72.

[18] Quoted in Samuel M. Steward, ed., *Dear Sammy: Letters from Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas* (New York, 1977), 9.

[19] Ibid, 108. Religious alternatives like Ethical Culture and Christian Science did not require formal conversion. Sally Stein gravitated to Christian Science as did Harriet Lane Levy, a San Franciscan born into an affiliated Jewish family who came to Paris with Alice B. Toklas and joined the Stein social circle. Toklas, who later converted to Roman Catholicism, and Gertrude Stein remained in France during the Nazi occupation, controversially accommodating to the Vichy regime however fearful they felt as Jews. Hirschland translates *freiglaubig* as "agnostick," but one scholar of German Jewry, Anton Hieke, suggests "'Freiglaube' or 'Freireligion'" is indeed more than simply agnostic. "There was a movement in the 19th century that aimed at finding community and commonality in a shared belief in god freed by the corset of dogma or religion as such. Faith without religion." Anton Hieke, e-mail to the author, February 21, 2024. See also Benny Kraut, *From Reform Judaism to Ethical Culture: The Religious Evolution of Felix Adler* (Cincinnati, 1979); Ellen M. Umansky, *From Christian Science to Jewish Science: Spiritual Healing and American Jews* (New York, 2005).

[20] Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, 2004), 206.

[21] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 108. Letters cited were sent shipboard to Blowing Rock: Claribel Cone to Etta Cone, June 1, 1910; Claribel Cone to Etta Cone, June 3, 1910. Although Claribel did not specifically identify these Jews ethnically, at the time social relations between the Americanized Germans and the less acculturated, more recently arrived eastern Europeans were fraught, especially in Baltimore. See Goldstein and Weiner, *On Middle Ground*, 126–27.

[22] Ramage, "Mothers, Sisters, Cousins, Aunts," 31, 33; Etta Cone to Richard Guggenheimer, n.d., Etta Cone Letters, 1927–1949, University of North Carolina at Greensboro Libraries, accessed February 16, 2024, https://gateway.uncg.edu/islandora/object/mss%3A189285. Etta's values and interests are reflected in the four hundred thousand dollars she left the Baltimore Museum of Art in contrast with the five thousand dollars left to the Associated Jewish Charities.

[23] Brenda Richardson, *Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta: The Cone Collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art* (Baltimore, 1985), 80. Etta also protested that "income taxes" pressed upon her. Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 200.

[24] Etta Cone to Richard Guggenheimer, n.d., Etta Cone Letters, 1927–1949, University of North Carolina at Greensboro Libraries; Last Will and Testament of Etta Cone, University of North Carolina at Greensboro University Libraries, 7, accessed February 15, 2024, https://gateway.uncg.edu/islandora/object/cone%3A29028#page/1/mode/1up.

[25] Dolene Guggenheimer married Simon Stein. Pollack, *Collectors,* 84; Dianna Cameron and Carrie Streeter, "'The Spirit of Appreciation': Seeing Two Sisters' Vision," in Cameron and Streeter, *Modern Visions, Modern Art*, 6.

[26] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 70; Pollack, *Collectors*, 15, 31. Pollack claims the household language was English.

[27] Pollack, *Collectors*, 18, 19–20.

[28] Quoted in Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 76; Claribel Cone to Etta Cone, December 7, 1910, Baltimore Museum of Art Archives. Claribel noted that this refinement was present in each family member although in lesser or greater degree. Whereas the two eldest

sons were destined for careers in their father's business, younger sons pursued law and medicine.

[29] Claribel Cone, "Introductory Address to the Medical Class of the Woman's Medical College," 1896, quoted in Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 226; quoted in Pollack, *Collectors*, 179.

[30] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 63, 69, 76.

[31] Karen Levitov, *Collecting Matisse and Modern Masters: The Cone Sisters of Baltimore* (New Haven, CT, 2011), 15; Cameron and Streeter, "'Spirit of Appreciation,'" 11.

[32] George Boas, "The Cones," in *Cone Collection: A Handbook with a Catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture* (Baltimore, 1955), 11.

[33] Baltimore Museum of Art, "The Cone Collection," accessed June 3, 2024, http://52.2.241.195/collections/cone.html; Henri Matisse to Simon Bussy, May 24, 1934, quoted in Gabriel, *Art of Acquiring*, v.

[34] Leonard Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil: A Jewish Progressive in the New South* (Chapel Hill, 2017), 32–34. Weil was a North Carolina contemporary of the sisters with Baltimore Jewish social and family ties.

[35] Pollack, *Collectors*, 20.

[36] Ibid, 149.

[37] Cone, citing Gertrude Stein, said Picasso called them "the Miss Etta Cones," while Carolyn Burke claims "les Miss Etta Cone." Cone, "The Miss Etta Cones," 441; Carolyn Burke, "Gertrude Stein, the Cone Sisters, and the Puzzle of Female Friendship," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (Spring 1982): 549.

[38] Gertrude Stein, "Two Women," in Pollack, *Collectors,* 279. In the story Claribel is Martha and Etta, Ada.

[39] Pollack, *Collectors*, 18–19.

[40] William Toll observed bachelorhood and spinsterhood as a "social tradition" among German Jews in Portland, Oregon. Of the twelve Cone siblings to survive into adulthood, three of the nine men remained unmarried as did two of the three women. William Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class: Portland Jewry over Four Generations* (Albany, 1982), 52–55; Cone family tree, accessed May 13, 2024, https://gateway.uncg.edu/islandora/object/cone%3A67374.

[41] Richardson, *Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta,* 64–65.

[42] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 55; Pollack, *Collectors,* 34.

[43] Pollack, *Collectors*, 33–34.

[44] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 60.

[45] Cameron and Streeter, "'Spirit of Appreciation," 23.

[46] Etta Cone to Gertrude Stein, February 11, 1910, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts, Yale University Library; Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 5; quoted in Cameron and Streeter, "Spirit of Appreciation," 29, 178.

[47] Richardson, *Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta*, 79, 81.

[48] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 67.

[49] Quoted in Richardson, *Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta,* 89.

[50] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 58.

[51] Quoted in Pollack, *Collectors,* 91.

[52] Ibid, 95.

[53] Claribel Cone to Etta Cone, August 22, 1910, quoted in Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 73. See Gabriel, *Art of Acquiring,* 109–13. Although Claribel, who continued to admire the German spirit, did not cite antisemitism as a reason for her return to America, Gabriel notes that she left the very year that Hitler was proclaiming his antisemitic manifestos in Munich. Antisemitism was pervasive in the city, climaxed by the assassination of the socialist revolutionary Kurt Eisner, a Jew, in 1919. Revolutionaries searched Claribel's hotel room—after all, she was a rich Jewish bourgeois—but left her undisturbed, taking only a box of bon bons. Claribel's lack of reaction to the effusion of antisemitism—she seemed mostly concerned about packing her books and boxes—suggests a lack of political consciousness.

[54] Pollack, *Collectors*, 114.

[55] Quoted in Richardson, *Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta*, 70.

[56] Ibid., 115–16.

[57] Ibid., 119.

[58] Ibid., 101.

[59] Pollack, *Collectors,* 124–26.

[60] Charles Dellheim, *Belonging and Betrayal: How Jews Made the Art World Modern* (Waltham, MA, 2021), 159, 161.

[61] Richardson, *Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta*, xvi.

[62] Cameron and Streeter, "Spirit of Appreciation," 16–17, 18.

[63] Pollack, *Collectors*, 137, 134, 135, 152.

[64] Ibid., 182. The sisters were prescient. Cone Mills Corporation, after buy outs and takeovers, filed for bankruptcy in 2003 while the Cone Collection was valued at some one billion dollars.

[65] Pollack, *Collectors*, 304.

[66] Ibid, 304.

[67] Ibid., 304.

[68] Richardson, *Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta*, 99.

[69] Mencken, "Sahara of the Bozart."

[70] Pollack, *Collectors,* 89.

[71] Cameron and Streeter, "Spirit of Appreciation," 7; Ramage, "Mothers," 38.

[72] Cameron and Streeter, "Spirit of Appreciation," 17.

[73] Ibid., 58, 102; Charlotte Gere and Marina Vaizey, *Great Women Collectors* (New York, 1999), 154.

[74] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 101. Art critic Alfred Barr characterized Matisse's Nice period, when the sisters were his most avid collectors, as his "easiest," "relaxed," and most decorative, that would appeal to "amateur" collectors like the Cone sisters. Dominique Fourcade, in a 1986 exhibition catalog, challenges Barr, arguing that Matisse in Nice was at his most original, radical, and innovative. However, Barr's judgment has largely prevailed. For a discussion of this debate see Joan Leslie Horn, "Claribel Cone and Etta Cone: Collecting Matisse, Entering History" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1991), 12.

[75] Richardson, *Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta*, 94; Pollack, *Collectors*, 189; quoted in Cameron and Streeter, "Spirit of Appreciation," 21.

[76] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* xvi; Richardson, *Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta*, 91, 15.

[77] Quoted in Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters,* 65. This opinion was attributed to Laura Cone, Etta and Claribel's sister-in-law.

[78] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters*, 65; Pollack, *Collectors,* 238.

[79] Hirschland and Ramage, *Cone Sisters*, 119; Cone, *The Misses Etta* Cones, 457.

[80] Dellheim, *Belonging and Betrayal*, 159.

[81] Mary Gabriel, *Art of Acquiring*, 144.

[82] Cameron and Streeter, "Spirit of Appreciation," 17.

[83] Pollack, *Collectors*, 193.

[84] Ibid., 239; Cameron and Streeter, "Spirit of Appreciation," 21.

[85] Richardson, *Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta*, 150; Pollack, *Collectors,* 236.

[86] The committee appointed to oversee the deposition of the collection consisted almost entirely of Jews—Laura Cone, attorney Philip Perlman, and art restorer David Rosen, as well as museum director Adelyn Dohme Breeskin, a Christian who carried the Jewish surname of her ex-husband. Dr. Gertrude Rosenthal served as the Baltimore museum's senior curator. Pollack, *Collectors,* 252.

[87] The earliest major modernist collectors were men: Albert Barnes, Stephen Clark, John Quinn, and Sergei Shculkin. The Parisian gallery of Berthe Weill, an Alsatian Jew, was the first to sell works by Picasso and Matisse. American heiresses Isabell Gardner and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney at first rejected purchasing Matisse, but eventually added modernist art to their masterwork collections. Another wealthy art patron, Mabel Dodge, enjoyed a bohemian lifestyle that included Gertrude Stein in her circle. Pollack, *Collectors*, 187; Gabriel, *Art of Acquiring,* 91.

[88] Cameron and Streeter, "Spirit of Appreciation," 22; Ramage, "Mothers," 44; Patrick Lucas, "Edward Loewenstein's Midcentury Architectural Innovation in North Carolina," *Southern Jewish History* 16 (2013): 43–88.

[89] Susan Helen Adler, *Saidie May: Pioneer of Early 20th Century Collecting* (Baltimore, 2008), 1–5, 81, 239.

[90] "Patsy Nasher, 59, Dies, Was Sculpture Patron," accessed May 31, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/09/obituaries/patsy-nasher-59-dies-was-sculpture-patron.html.

[91] "The Pittsburgh Platform," accessed May 31, 2024, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-pittsburgh-platform.

[92] Quoted in Rogoff, *Gertrude Weil*, 126.

[93] "Women of Valor: Hannah Greenebaum Solomon," Jewish Women's Archive, accessed November 29, 2022, https://jwa.org/womenofvalor/solomon.

[94] Quoted in Hirschland and Ramage, "Cone Sisters," 206. Lazaron was an accomplished painter besides serving as a pulpit rabbi. An ecumenicist, in 1949 he had broken with Baltimore Hebrew Congregation over his outspoken anti-Zionism although later he reconciled with the temple.

[95] Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting, The National Council of Jewish Women* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 6.

[96] Brenda Richardson, "What's in a Frame?," 4, quoted in Hirschland and Ramage, "Cone Sisters," 211.

[97] Carla Brenner, *The Baltimore Museum of Art: Celebrating a Museum* (Baltimore, 2001), 20.
[120] Pollack, *Collectors,* 124–26.

The Constitution, Corpus Christi, and the Statue on the Bay

by

Mary Jo O'Rear *

A quiet but clear voice commanded attention in the Corpus Christi city council chamber one hot August afternoon in 1979. A controversy that had been tearing the coastal city apart for more than two years was soon to end with a council vote, anticipated since the preceding April. But citizens wanted their input first, and although the person standing at the microphone had been there before, people quieted down to listen. "I think all of you are aware that I have been opposed to this project since the inception of it," Helen Wilk began. "At this point in time it seems to me that whether it is legal or illegal, constitutional or unconstitutional is really secondary to the fact that it has been a very negative and divisive issue in our community. And perhaps as you were forced to face this issue it occurred to you, as it has to me, that the discussion of a statue of Jesus does not belong in the realm of city governmental business."[1]

The eternal question among those who exist as a minority in a culture dominated by the majority is to what lengths will one go to survive, or, to put it more bluntly, how far does one go along to get along? A small community of Jews faced this dilemma nearly fifty years ago in a Texas coastal city that not only overwhelmingly embraced Christianity but also bore the name of the Christ. How Corpus Christi Jews met the challenge while maintaining their dignity is a story of strength, wisdom, and a whole lot of letter-writing.

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Statue of Jesus? City governmental business? What was going on in Corpus Christi that hot summer in the seventies? A busy metropolis of approximately 230,000 people built around a deep seaport, with a naval air station, army maintenance and repair facility, and booming petrochemical industry, the city was a virtual prototype of twentieth century normality.[2]

Yet the issue being decided was far from normal. It extended beyond domestic feuds and stretched even beyond any typical church and state altercation. For the past two years, Corpus Christi had become a battlefield of opposing voices, Constitution supporters and effigy advocates, each arguing the very nature of the city—and all associated with its name.

Background

The name Corpus Christi did not seem divisive at first. The appellation represented a step up from the settlement's original designation as "Kinney's Rancho," a hideout for smugglers using the waterways of that part of the gulf as trafficking routes to and from Mexico. By 1841, however, the hamlet's denizens had renamed the metropolis after the bay beneath their wharves, and eleven years later the Texas legislature officially incorporated Corpus Christi.[3]

Corpus Christi downtown bayfront, c. 1980.
(Courtesy of Corpus Christi Caller-Times.*)*

The bay, spread along a curved part of the coast and opening into the gulf, had acquired several appellations by that time. Tradition held that Spanish explorer Alonso Álvarez de Pineda discovered the water body in 1519 and, because that happened near the Roman Catholic feast day of Corpus Christi (the Latin term for the Body of Christ), Pineda named the bay Corpus Christi.[4] Subsequent research has revealed, however, that not only did Pineda's route keep him a distance from the bay, he was also not the one who named it. Joaquin Orobio y Basterra was the first European to sight it more than two hundred years later, naming it "Playa de San Miguel Arcángel." Not until Colonel Diego Ortiz Parilla designated it "Playa de Corpus Christi" on his 1766 Gulf Coast map did Corpus Christi became the official name of the moon-shaped bay—and, seventy-five years later, the official name of the city.[5]

Nonetheless, the tradition that Pineda discovered and christened the bay remained embedded in civic consciousness. It cast a romantic haze over grubbier days and gave a patina of elegance to a town early characterized as "the most murderous, thieving, gambling, cut-throat, God-forsaken hole in the 'Lone Star state.'"[6] Well into the twentieth century, seawall shelters retold Pineda's legend, and courtly coronations reenacted his legacy.[7] Partly because the supposed 1519 commemoration of a religious feast day idealized Corpus Christi's past, it was no real surprise when various entities began offering statues of Jesus to grace the bayfront.

The first came in 1927 when sculptor Gutzon Borglum, soon to start work on Mount Rushmore, visited the city for the first time. Asked to share his thoughts about improving the shell piles and sea rubble bordering the shoreline, he came up with an image of "a great waterfront development . . . [with] esplanade and boulevard extending the entire front of the city." The more he pondered, the vaster his vision grew; soon playgrounds and parking spots emerged. But the city's name especially inspired him: "Corpus Christi—Body of Christ!" he exclaimed. "I will include the character of Christ in the general design . . . and I shall locate Him well out into the sea." Within a year, plans emerged for a thirty-two-foot-high figure of Jesus, situated outside the breakwater facing the gulf to welcome ships coming into the new harbor. The sculptor intended to give the statue to the city as part of a comprehensive program including land reclamation, park formation, and airstrip construction.[8]

Sculptor Gutzon Borglum in the 1930s. (Courtesy of Robin Borglum Kennedy.)

Plan for the bayfront by Gutzon Borglum, 1927, including a seawall, breakwaters, and the figure of Jesus at the far right. (Courtesy of Corpus Christi Public Library.)

That the project came to naught had nothing to do with the statue's proposed location on submerged city land. Instead, questions of idolatry, property rights, and financial compensation derailed Borglum's grand scheme. His ire was so great that he turned the very name of the city back onto itself. "'Corpus Christi' is a mis-nomer. . . . [I]illiterate[s] call her—'Corpus.' . . . I don't like to use that word. But if I think of Corpus as she is . . . and what she might have been . . . I never want to see her again."[9]

Nor did he. But the concept of commemorating the name of the city as a symbolic monument on the bay returned in 1953, twenty-five years after Borglum's plan collapsed. This time the statue of Jesus would be situated, as before, on water, but now it would be three times taller than that proposed by Borglum and formed from rolled aluminum to "eliminate glare in the daylight and be more attractive under floodlights." Its significance as a "symbol of Christian faith," especially compelling during the anticommunist McCarthy era, further accentuated its political and cultural allure. But contributions were never sufficient to launch the project, and the problem of placing it on submerged city land did not arise.[10]

Eighteen years later, in 1971, at the Sheraton-Marina Inn, Meliton Salas, professor of fine arts at the University of Guadalajara and sculptor of the Two Eagles monument in Del Rio, Texas, presented his vision of the city's name: a model of a sixteen-story-high figure of Christ, standing on a base and sheltering within itself a stairway and an elevator. The statue, again to be erected on public property, would have an observation deck within its head, providing visitors "a birds-eye view in all directions."[11]

Proposal and the Jewish Community

The grandiosity of such a structure, rather than its placement, may have killed Salas's "tribute to . . . Corpus Christi, USA," but the idea of a statue of Jesus upon the bay lingered. On October 20, 1977, a brief announcement appeared in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times:* "Referred to the Municipal Arts Commission a proposal from Dr. Sherman Coleman to sculpture, at no cost to the city, a 30-foot bronze statue of Christ if the city will provide a location for the figure and build a base for it. The arts commission is to study the feasibility of the project, plus a possible location, and report back to the council."[12]

Six weeks later the arts commission met publicly and announced its decision—to recommend to the council that the offer from Coleman,

prominent physician as well as sculptor, be accepted. Amid a chorus of supporters speaking in favor of building the statue on public land, the statement of Dr. Michael Meaney, local author and former theology professor at Notre Dame University, stood out. The statue of Christ "would be a fitting symbol of the city," Meaney stated, then added that it was "highly likely" that a majority of the local Jewish community would not oppose the project.[13]

"Highly likely"? This after Stern Feinberg, leading member of the Jewish community in Corpus Christi and one of the few members of the commission to oppose the decision, had just castigated his associates for "'their total lack of understanding of the Constitution of the United States and its separation of church and state.'' "Highly likely"? This after Helen Wilk, member of the Jewish Community Council and former president of the Temple Beth El Sisterhood, had just reminded them, "We are not a Christian city, we are a secular city." Wilk continued, "I did not choose the name of our city, but I accept it . . . not . . . its religiosity." Her voice, as she concluded, was almost plaintive. "A religious symbol, any religious symbol, does not belong on public lands. Putting this statue up makes me an outsider in my own city."[14]

Wilk had not always felt that way. Born Helen Goldman in Wisconsin in 1939, she moved with her parents to Detroit when her father, brought to the United States when only three, began managing the family's jukebox business. In Detroit Helen became close to her Ukrainian-born grandmother, who instructed her in Yiddish, showed her how to bake, and probably encouraged her independent streak. "I attended Sunday school [for] Confirmation but did not attend the . . . ceremony," she later admitted. "I felt that most of my classmates were only going in order to have a big party [afterward]." Such self-sufficiency emerged again in her mid-teens when she became engaged to twenty-two-year-old Larry Wilk, whom she married in 1957. In 1963, with Larry's orthopedic residency completed and two years in the service to fulfill, Helen and Larry left Michigan for Fort Hood (now Fort Cavazos) in central Texas. "We packed up our Pontiac station wagon . . . with a four-year-old, a two-year-old . . . a three-year-old and a dog [and] drove to Texas!"—and ultimately discovered Corpus Christi.[15]

Located on the Gulf Coast and neither as big as Houston nor as small as Nacogdoches, it was just the right size for the young physician to start

Helen Wilk, c. 1980. (Courtesy of the Wilk Family.)

his practice after his military discharge. The addition of another child a few years later cemented the family's bond with Corpus Christi—a city that, in political terms, was growing and changing as much as the Wilk family. Jumpstarted from seedy village to emergent town by the addition of a deep seaport in 1926, the community had merged its interests with those of big business after World War II. By the time Helen and Larry moved there during the sixties, the city had increased to more than 168,000

residents with leaders in oil, industry, and retail commerce shepherding its growth.[16]

But more than municipal vigor attracted the Wilks; the Jewish community had grown as well. Originally too small to do more than hold High Holy Days services in individual homes, two hundred Jews lived in Corpus Christi by the time of the port's dedication. Three years later, the congregants purchased land to build Temple Beth El and in 1932 hired their first permanent rabbi, Sidney A. Wolf.[17] Thirteen years later, a second congregation took form, B'nai Israel Synagogue, moving into its sanctuary in 1944. Separate in affiliation—Temple Beth El members were Reform, B'nai Israel was Orthodox—the two worked to ameliorate the horrors of World War II, providing free phone calls to servicemen, catering meals for uniformed personnel at the Naval Air Station, and providing homes for Holocaust survivors. The congregations' women sold $226,000 in war bonds, and Jewish men comprised 10 percent of those from Corpus Christi who served in uniform, clearly a disproportionate number in a city where Jews were less than 2 percent of the population.[18]

Original building of Temple Beth El, Corpus Christi, constructed in 1937.
*(*Our Golden Years: A History of Temple Beth El*, 1983).*

Jewish activities were not just war driven. Jews had actively participated as Corpus Christi citizenry since their arrival in 1858. By 1942 businessmen like Morris Lichtenstein had become so valued to the chamber of commerce that he was nominated for director. His brother Al served as city mayor ten years later. Fanny Alexander administered the county chapter of the American Red Cross and helped organize the Nueces County Tuberculosis Society. Nat Selinger was named Young Man of the Year by the Jaycees, and Sam Kane, former resistance fighter in Czechoslovakia, fast became in the postwar years a major figure in the local meatpacking industry.[19]

More than livestock, oil, and agriculture interests fueled Corpus Christi's economy by the late sixties. City leaders' efforts to attract more commercial development—like petroleum refining, chemical research, and tourism—paid off in increased population and heightened opportunities for young professionals, including for many Jews, since "the quotas that limited Jewish entrance into many universities" had been lifted.[20] Donald Feferman, Harvard graduate and 1965 recipient of a doctorate in jurisprudence, established his law practice in Corpus Christi and became a member of Temple Beth El. Stern Feinberg, graduate of Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration, relocated to the city, became partner and manager in the Best Western Sandy Shores motel, and joined Temple Beth El as well. Alan Zane, member of B'nai Israel Synagogue, received his medical degree in otolaryngology (ears, nose, and throat) from Wayne State University in Indiana before practicing his specialty in Corpus Christi. Cornelia Levy, born in Matamoros, Mexico, and recent recipient of a master's degree in English and speech from Texas A&I University in Kingsville, moved to the city to teach, but a chance encounter with another transplant, chemist Leon Levy from New York, led to marriage. They too were part of Temple Beth El. Even hometown boys returned. Jack Solka, with a master's degree in architecture from Columbia and certification from the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards of New York, chose to go back to Corpus Christi and build his architectural practice there rather than remain in the East. With Helen and Larry Wilk and the other Jewish families numbering around three hundred at that time, Jack and Davie Lou Solka interacted comfortably with the secular life of the city while sharing in the spiritual life of their synagogue.[21]

This commitment involved participation in the local Jewish Community Council. Formed in 1953 out of concern that members of the two synagogues were becoming increasingly isolated from each other, the Jewish Community Council quickly became an active force of shared Judaism in the city guided by an elected board of directors and an executive director. Its spacious center hosted youth activities, lecture series, and art exhibitions, while a monthly newsletter, the *JCC Focus,* advertised future events. But the *Focus* did more than "serve" its members, as its masthead promised. Under the direction of San Antonio–born businesswoman Lillian Racusin since 1963, the publication also "informed," centering attention on events and developments with local impact.[22] By the seventies in Corpus Christi, these were considerable.

Changes and Reactions

Some portended political change. The combined business-civic interests so long in control of the city were now challenged by civil rights leaders like Tony and Ruben Bonilla, members of the League of United Latin American Citizens, and Dr. Hector Garcia, founder of the American G.I. Forum—Latin American civil rights organizations that had been founded in Corpus Christi. Their influence in forming "loose centrist coalitions" that would encourage more jobs, better housing, and increased social services for minorities within the city already promised to upend voting patterns.[23]

Proud, like many citizens, that voluntary integration of restaurants, hotels, department stores, and the city's junior college had been accomplished by 1964, Mayor James Bernard safely assured a ministerial group that "Corpus Christians have made a lot of progress without major disruptions." But the 1970 ruling by Federal Judge Woodrow Seale that the local school district had deliberately maintained a segregated school system shocked the city, and the subsequent order by Judge Owen Cox to transfer students from one section of town to another to fully accomplish integration was shattering.[24]

Seven years later, the unease and acrimony caused by such a damaging blow to established custom still festered. Consequently, when a local newspaper reported that Jews at the arts commission meeting had objected to the use of city funds to display a statue of Christ on the bay, anger surged. Accusing Feinberg and Wilk of "frontal audacity" by

claiming constitutional rights, Robert Bluntzer, member of one of the oldest families in the area, likened them to infamous atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair. Rejecting Helen Wilk's handwritten request that he "reconsider his goals," sculptor Sherman Coleman maligned her plea as a hate letter. Acknowledging that Jews know "how a majority can abuse the rights of a minority," newspaper publisher Ed Harte ignored Wilk's appeal to reconsider his approval of the statue.[25]

Neither Helen Wilk nor Feinberg faced the firestorm alone. The moment the proposal of placing a statue of Jesus on public land was made, a cadre of leaders from the Jewish community emerged to protest.[26] In an article that appeared three weeks after the commission meeting, Jack Solka reminded readers of the sectarian aspect of the offer: "[A] statue of Christ is a religious symbol," he wrote, and emphasized that it not "be constructed on public property or through the use of public funds." Cornelia Levy emphasized the same points in her December 22nd letter to the editor: "Yes, the Jewish community has spoken with disapproval about . . . a statue of Christ at the entrance of Corpus Christi Harbor," but the objection was because "taxes—everybody's taxes—will be used."[27]

At a public hearing, Alan Zane, president of B'nai Israel, expressed the Jewish community's concern "that the proposal before the City Council infringes on [constitutional] guarantees." He expounded more strongly in a letter he and two others—Madelyn Loeb, first woman president of the Jewish Community Council, and Donald Feferman, president of Temple Beth El—presented to the city council that same day at the public hearing. "It has been stated that the majority will should control, and since the majority of the citizens may be in favor of the project, it should go forward. Those who express this view have a misconception of the purpose of the Constitution. . . . [It] establishes certain rights to which the majority will does not control . . . [and this prevents] the majority from violating those rights of the minority."[28]

The three also challenged the proposal made by sculptor Coleman that people see Christ only as a historical figure, that "This would be a historical statue relating to the name of the city" rather than a religious symbol. They succinctly rejoined: "Jesus is uniquely inherent to the Christian religions. There is no more basic symbol of Christianity than a depiction of Jesus Christ."[29]

Corpus Christi Caller, *December 9, 1977. (Newspapers.com.)*

Historic Symbol versus Constitutionality

The problem, however, persisted that many in Corpus Christi had no objection to that "basic symbol of Christianity" being erected on public land. Marilyn McLair, in her letter to the editor of the *Corpus Christi Caller* in December, extolled the statue on the bay: "A fantastic idea! I cannot think of anything more beautiful than seeing Christ as we enter our city." James Dougherty, another long-time South Texas resident, echoed her: "The name of this city . . . Corpus Christi . . . had special meaning to its originators, for they believed Him their savior. . . . I think it only fitting that a statue of Him be erected . . . in the city's harbor."[30]

Even more threatening was the partisanship gradually emerging. Members of social circles began to be slighted because of the controversy, and relations among old friends suddenly soured. McLair publicly prayed "that the Jewish Community will not hinder . . . this marvelous idea," and the original sponsor of the project, Mercedes Quintero Eugenio, wife of neurosurgeon Marco Eugenio, blatantly accused statue opponents of "using half-truths and personal innuendoes." Active on the board of the Art Museum of South Texas, Eugenio was the arts commission member who originally persuaded Coleman to offer his services to the city. Fifteen months of debate had failed to convince her that a statue of Christ on the bay represented anything more "than a work of art." In a column on the Public Forum page of the *Caller* on March 2, 1979, Eugenio went so far as to denounce those opposing her for confusing "religious bias with a constitutional concern" and "senselessly treading on the rights of others."[31]

Harold Alberts, former regional chairman of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League, early legal advisor to B'nai Israel Synagogue, and one of the foremost lawyers in South Texas—he had been admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States, before the Treasury Department, and before the Court of Military Appeals—also appeared on the Public Forum page, as well as at the Tuesday Luncheon Club and in city council chambers. Alberts's presentations, ranging from church and state history to city charter particulars, confounded Eugenio's accusations by their objectivity. His scenario predicting the kind of community that would result from the statue's placement was persuasive—at least to those

Mercedes Quintero Eugenio in 1979. (Courtesy of Corpus Christi Caller-Times.*)*

Harold Alberts in 1969. (Courtesy of Corpus Christi Caller-Times.*)*

who opposed the statue. "Religious sectarianism [would then] become the symbol of Corpus Christi," he argued, and his promise of judicial condemnation was clear: the U.S. Supreme Court "would support the unconstitutionality of erecting a religious monument on public land [even if it meant going] against the will of the people who want the statue."[32]

Two recent court cases had strengthened his position, both of which Alberts shared with Racusin, who was reporting on the controversy in the *JCC Focus* newsletters, and with Helen Wilk, who continued to address city council members. A California Supreme Court decision affirmed that Los Angeles "may not display [a] lighted, single-barred cross on city land by any means whatsoever." And a U.S. Supreme Court judgment, the second case, reversed an appeals court's approval of a Ten Commandments monument on courthouse grounds.[33]

Action and Responses

Unconvinced by legal arguments and desperate for a solution, city officials finally made two decisions: to support the creation of a nonprofit group to "finance the construction of the base of the statue and pay for its installation and its annual maintenance," and to put the question of "whether a religious statue can be erected on city property in Corpus Christi" directly to the state's attorney general, John Hill. Hill's answer, given three months later, proved ambiguous since he failed to address the basic legal question, "whether by allowing the statue the city would be aiding an established religion." But he did address the practical aspect: "A city may sell or lease land to an individual even though the individual may subsequently intend to use the land for religious purposes."[34]

Sketch indicating the location of Sunfish Island in Corpus Christi Bay, c. 1978. (Helen Wilk Papers, Courtesy of Helen Wilk.)

Despite Alberts's immediate promise of a lawsuit ("I assure you that litigation will be pursued"), the city council authorized a contract guaranteeing a five-year lease on a spoil-formed landform called Sunfish Island, lying two-tenths of a mile out in the bay. On it, a new nonprofit organization would erect a statue of the Christ, bearing "all costs of sculpting, erection and maintenance." Furthermore, a plaque would sit on the base "disavowing any religious endorsement by the city."[35]

The logical impact of such an arrangement bordered on the ridiculous: "Inasmuch as the statue is to be located on [an] island, 1,100 feet from the seawall, totally surrounded by water, the sign is ludicrous to say the least," Helen Wilk wrote in the Jewish Community Council newsletter. The *Dallas Morning News* was even more explicit, the controversy now getting statewide attention: "That may clear up the matter for a fair share of the fish, but not too many land-dwelling beings."[36]

Even more withering was Alberts's indictment of the decision: "Religious freedom is not first lost when a policeman padlocks the doors of the Synagogues. . . . The loss begins subtly and gently with the ruling authority . . . indicating favoritism . . . toward their own religious persuasion. . . . If our City Government lends the authority . . . of civil government to one religious persuasion in denigration of others, it will have taken the first step in repudiating . . . that 'wall of separation' between church and state."[37]

Just as concerned, Lillian Racusin used the March 1979 edition of *JCC Focus* to rally her readership. First singling out Alberts and Wilk for special praise, she then commended Jack and Davie Lou Solka, Madelyn Loeb, recently retired rabbi Sidney Wolf, newly installed Temple Beth El rabbi Stephen Fisch, and others for fearlessly speaking up "at four [city council] meetings, . . . to the press, at several organizational meetings and in private conversations." Then she called on the entire Jewish community to speak up as well through letters to the editor and other valuable contacts: "We are beginning to gain support from many varied sources. By continuing our efforts, this support will grow."[38]

The Jewish Community Council went one step further in late March 1979 by creating an ad hoc statue committee. The timing was excellent, because before the lease proposal could be legitimized, it had to have an official vote of approval three times. By mid-April, the council had voted twice to approve the statue lease on Sunfish Island; all that was needed

was one more vote. But a city election loomed ahead, charter rules kicked in, and a moratorium on all city-allocated contracts went into place. A final vote would not take place on a statue in the bay until after the April election.[39]

The next few weeks seethed with activity, controversy now raging as much around the political situation in Corpus Christi as the statue situation. Disgusted with the reactionary stands taken by the current city council, Luther G. Jones, Jr., vice-president of the Mercantile National Bank and former commander of the Corpus Christi Army Depot, agreed to run for mayor, and others of similar thought joined him on a ticket. Faced with an ever-growing field of candidates, many of them running as independents, the ad hoc statue committee, chaired by Alberts and comprised of over thirty members, refined its efforts against the imminent lease agreement. Some volunteers kept the Jewish community informed, whereas others approached Christians opposed to the statue. A few generated publicity and maintained editorial consistency while others like Helen Wilk and Davie Lou Solka and the many letter-writers of the committee contacted and addressed city council candidates.

Interviewing them may been the most crucial job, however, because the reactions of the different campaigners to the placing of a statue of Jesus on city land varied markedly. Francisco Rodriguez, an independent running for the first time, flatly opposed putting the statue on city land. "We're being threatened by a lawsuit," he stated. "We need to avoid any litigation. If you're going to spend the public's money, you need to spend it fixing potholes." David Diaz, office holder from the administration in office, disagreed. "You don't stand back if you are threatened by a lawsuit." The statue should be built, he continued, and let the Supreme Court settle the issue "once and for all." Jack Dumphy, local business owner and air force veteran, was one of the few to consider the constitutional aspect: "The question submitted to the attorney general was whether the City Council has the authority to lease land for public use. What should be part of the decision is the question of the separation of church and state." His opponent for a seat on the council refused to take a stand, unlike realtor Betty Turner, another independent running for the first time, who would only support the statue of Christ if it were erected on private land.[40]

The Election, Delay, Decision, and Denouement

The general election on April 7 reinstated one incumbent and added two new members, both on Jones's slate. But the runoff election to be held three weeks later would determine the direction the new council would take. Tensions ran high and comments brutal as the results came in that Saturday night. On the morning of April 29, the *Corpus Christi Caller* headlined, "Jones is elected." The makeup of the council had changed. New mayor Luther Jones, Jr., incumbent David Diaz, and two independents, Betty Turner and Jack Dumphy, joined those earlier elected. Of the seven Corpus Christi City Council members elected in April 1979, Harold Alberts and the JCC's ad hoc statue committee had endorsed three: Turner, Dumphy, and Jones.[41]

Nonetheless, a final vote on the contract regarding a statue in the bay did not come soon. Mayor Jones "said he would like to see this [issue] explored further before it becomes an agenda item," and "city manager Marvin Townsend thought it the better part of valor to delay . . . until the newly elected city fathers had a chance to study the issues." Thus, as spring rolled into summer, forums continued to be held, opinion letters continued to be published, alternative sites continued to be discussed, and even more national news sites including in Milwaukee and New York City took notice. Finally, in a late July meeting already seething with heated attacks on airport management and bus system rates, statue advocate Mercedes Eugenio pointedly accused the city of ignoring the issue. "I heard it loud and clear," councilman Dumphy remarked. "We've been accused of purposely not putting it on the agenda." So the date of August 8, 1979, was set for the council to finally decide whether the city would allocate a contract "to lease public land for the placement of a statue of Jesus."[42]

Alberts again gathered committee members together: "It is of utmost importance that you plan to attend the City Council meeting . . . and that you urge your friends to attend with you." Then he instructed committee members and their supporters to proceed with the "personal contacts and/or personal letters" they had already been directing "to the Councilmen who have shown their sensitivity to the best interests of our community [and] to all the Councilmen . . . [reminding them] that the Attorney General's opinion did not address itself . . . to the issue in Corpus

Letters from Helen Wilk to city officials.
(Helen Wilk Papers, Courtesy of Helen Wilk.)

Christi." He ended with the hope that "this 'low key' but persistent effort . . . will resolve an issue that may [otherwise] erode our constitutional guarantee of 'Separation of Church and State.'"[43]

Like her fellow committee members, Wilk needed no further urging. Within a day after the meeting, she mailed handwritten letters to individual council persons, thanking those who had indicated support and urging dissenters to understand her position. "I truly feel this is not properly city business," she insisted, "and I am hoping that your concern

. . . will persuade you that it is in the best interests of our lovely city *not* to approve a religious statue on public land."[44]

These beliefs she had expressed continuously from the original arts commission meeting to the present, she shared that hot summer day of August 8 when, for the last time, she urged the council to "not involve the city" in the proposed land lease. Rabbi Stephen Fisch, Jack Solka, and almost a dozen more also begged the council to vote against the contract, even as Mercedes Eugenio argued that it be approved because "a great majority of the people of Corpus Christi" supported it. But a phrase Helen had included in a letter to Mayor Jones four months earlier may have had the greatest impact: "I do feel [the placement of this statue on public land] is unconstitutional, but in the depths of my being is the hurt that has come from realizing that although this statue will never represent me, or many others, it may stand on *my* land and announce to all that I am an outsider in my city."[45]

Mayor Luther Jones took up that cry of the dispossessed minority—the same cry that had influenced his run for office—as he addressed the chamber audience that hot afternoon:

> It has been suggested that the statue ought to be built because the majority of citizens want it. This may or may not be true; however, many in this community can remember when many Mexican Americans could not enter some restaurants in town and if the issue had been submitted to the voters at that time, the majority would have preferred the status quo. The fact that the majority favored the status quo did not make it right. Others can recall that within the last fifteen years a black man or woman could not vote in many parts of the United States, and there's no doubt that if the issue had been submitted to vote the majority would have favored maintaining the status quo. But that did not make it right. . . . I intend to vote against granting a lease of publicly owned land for the purpose of erecting a statue of Christ.[46]

After each council member added personal remarks, Jones ordered the members polled; three voted aye, three voted nay. Then the city secretary turned to councilman Dumphy. "I knew when I was elected to the City Council," he later confided to a reporter, "I would face critical issues. But I never knew my vote would determine whether or not there would be a statue." He then voted no."[47] No statue of Christ would be erected on city land in Corpus Christi Bay.

Aftermath

Repercussions ensued—insults thrown, aspersions cast, apologies demanded. Many remember years later the hostility they unexpectedly encountered, and certain friendships damaged were never repaired. But as the city returned to its usual interests and things "went back to the way before, maybe with a little strain," one result became obvious: the Jewish community in Corpus Christi had stood firm against a constitutional threat. Its group and individual efforts had clarified the church/state issue involved and had propelled citizens to fight for "[a] system of government that represents *all* its citizens."[48]

This story exemplifies how Jews in the South protested when they saw their interests and identity challenged. Rather than selected individuals, virtually every Jewish organization and its leaders undertook principled stands. A small but respected minority, they could not have succeeded without the support of non-Jews including elected public officials.

Yet not everything remained settled. The concept that Corpus Christi was a "secular city," as Helen Wilk had asserted in that 1977 arts council meeting, had not been fully accepted. Its vulnerability to sectarian pressure was challenged again during the 1990s, when still another effort emerged to erect a statue of Christ on the bayfront. This later attempt culminated in the completion of a statue by noted Corpus Christi sculptor Kent Ullberg of Jesus delivering a sermon from a boat, today one of the city's most conspicuous and beloved landmarks—facing the bay on the grounds of the First United Methodist Church.[49] Even more recently, a nonprofit group has purchased acreage along the highway approaching the city upon which to set a cross, promising it to "be the largest . . . in the Western hemisphere." However high the structure may eventually loom, its base will rest on private property, a quiet reminder that, even in a city named Corpus Christi, religious interests have no place on publicly owned land.[50]

NOTES

The author expresses her thanks to Patty Block, Davie Lou Solka, and Bryan Edward Stone for their assistance.

[1] City of Corpus Christi Council Minutes, August 8, 1979, Helen Wilk Papers (hereafter cited as Wilk Papers), in possession of author.

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PRIMARY SOURCES

The Shapell Roster of Jewish Service in the American Civil War: A Resource for Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century American Jewish History

by

Adrienne DeArmas *

In 2013, in conjunction with the exhibition, *Passages through the Fire: Jews and the Civil War*, the American Jewish Historical Society hosted a roundtable discussion, "Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War: Jews and the Battle of Gettysburg." The event featured John R. Sellers, the project manager of what would become known as The Shapell Roster of Jewish Service in the American Civil War, and J. David Hacker, a demographic historian specializing in nineteenth century America, whose groundbreaking research, "A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead," had recently been published.[1] Afterwards, Hacker praised the ambitious effort behind the Shapell Roster: "[You] do understand that this has never been done before, right?" He was not wrong. His encouragement confirmed the growing belief of the project's staff that we needed to significantly shift the original scope of work established two years earlier.

Phase I: An Accurate Accounting

In 2011, Sellers had been tasked by the Shapell Manuscript Foundation with building a research team to create a historically accurate roster of Jews who served in the American Civil War.[2] As one of the researchers selected for this opportunity, I was provided two books: Simon Wolf's *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen*, and Mel Young's *Where They Lie*; a bibliography of resources on nineteenth-century American Jewish history and the Civil War; a website link to an online database created by the foundation for data entry; and a deadline of one year.[3] I was instructed to

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assume that all the names in Wolf and Young were Jewish unless I found compelling evidence to the contrary and that I should not be concerned with whether these Jewish soldiers were practicing Jews unless, of course, they converted to Christianity.[4] In conjunction with the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Civil War, the goal was to publish a four-volume military "roll of honor." Each name would be listed with their service history details and a designation of one of three Jewish affiliations: Jewish, Unknown, or Not Jewish.[5]

Within the first year, it became clear that every name in Wolf's roster required research to confirm that they did serve and that they were, in fact, Jewish.[6] By 2013, the scope of the project was expanded to include genealogical research, additional researchers were hired, and the database was redesigned to accommodate the breadth of data we collected. We added a new Jewish affiliation, "Jewish according to Wolf," to account for those names that we could not find service records for, or for those who only existed in the military records. To support our claim that each man did or did not serve and was or was not Jewish, we began collecting documentary proof that would be attached to their record in the database. And, perhaps most importantly, we began to grapple with the possibility that there were *not* ten thousand Jews who served in the American Civil War.

"Ten Thousand Jews": A Brief Analysis of Wolf's Roster

Despite the universal acknowledgement amongst Jewish scholars that *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* is not the gospel on the topic of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American Jewish military history, it has been the only resource that offered an answer to the question, "How many Jews served in the American Civil War?" During the centennial anniversary of the Civil War in the early 1960s, the American Jewish community revisited the topic for the first time since Wolf's volume appeared in 1895. The Civil War Centennial Jewish Historical Commission created the commemorative exhibition *The American Jew in the Civil War*, Bertram W. Korn republished *American Jewry and the Civil War*, and others published new volumes on the topic.[7]

Shortly thereafter, archivist Sylvan Morris Dubow took Wolf to task concerning flaws in his methodology, but Dubow declined to explore how Wolf conducted his research, nor did he correct Wolf's inaccuracies.[8]

Simon Wolf, 1916.
(Wikimedia Commons.)

Twenty years later, Mel Young identified names that Wolf omitted in *Where They Lie*, but since he, like Wolf, relied on name profiling, not all of his discoveries were accurate. Robert Rosen's *The Jewish Confederates*, a testament to old-fashioned pre-internet research, is currently considered the most accurate accounting of Jewish Confederate service in the Civil War.[9] If these authors did not specifically state, "ten thousand Jews served in the Civil War," many academic publications did.[10] The reality is, even though we are investigating every name in these resources, it is highly unlikely that this number is accurate—the statistics fail to support the claim.[11]

Phase II: A Shift in Focus

By 2018, our project assumed a name: The Shapell Roster of Jewish Service in the American Civil War (or the Shapell Roster). The database was redesigned and again expanded to include nearly one hundred data entry fields, all accessible via a new, powerful, and flexible search engine. Jewish affiliations were renamed and revised as Jewish Statuses: Jewish, Not Jewish, and To Be Determined. Definitions of Jewish were created: Genealogical Proof, Self-Identification, and Testament by the Soldier's

Sample search results, Shapell Roster.
(https://www.shapell.org/civil-war-soldier-database/search.)

Contemporaries.[12] Target audiences were identified as descendants, scholars, and enthusiasts with an interest in American Jewish history, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century history, the American Civil War, and Jewish genealogy. The shift in focus from "how many" to "who were they?" relieved us from providing a number that was outdated almost as soon as it was given and, most importantly, brought the Shapell Roster into alignment with the Shapell Manuscript Foundation's mission of making historical documents, especially those that "express humanity, compassion, modesty, fragility, and irony," more accessible to the public.[13]

Phase III: Engaging the Public

In preparation for the launch of the Union records of the Shapell Roster, we documented our research methodology, which includes adherence to the Genealogical Proof Standard[14] and utilization of Karl Popper's Falsifiability Principle;[15] updated the standard operating procedures documentation that detail how, and under what circumstances, every field in the database is populated;[16] published articles about the soldiers at shapell.org;[17] posted "Featured Soldier" content on social media;[18] and presented slideshow lectures at institutions and conferences.[19]

In August 2022, the Shapell Manuscript Foundation published more than seven thousand Union records from the Shapell Roster and plans to release the remaining records, state by state, starting in 2025.[20] The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), Jewish War Veterans (JWV), the National Museum of American Jewish Military History (NMAJMH), and JewishGen are some of the Shapell Roster's early organizational supporters—the latter partnering with the Shapell Manuscript Foundation in 2023 to make the Shapell Roster accessible to its constituency via JewishGen.org. Adam Mendelsohn's *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War: the Union Army*, is the first of what we hope will be many interpretations of the Shapell Roster's data.[21] As more scholars become aware of its existence, we look forward to seeing how the data can be utilized to explore new ideas on topics long contemplated or never previously discussed.

Stories from the South

According to the National Park Service, "soldier demographics for the Confederate Army are not available due to incomplete and destroyed enlistment records."[22] Another challenge in identifying Jewish soldiers in the South is the intersection between the Jewish tradition of bestowing on a newborn the given name of a recently deceased relative and the "Surname, first initial of given name"convention employed by the CSA. Imagine the following scenario: In 1837, Jacob Cohen, a father of eight sons, suffered a heart attack and died. Between 1837 and 1842, Jacob's sons were blessed with eight sons of their own, all of whom were named Jacob Cohen in honor of their recently deceased paternal grandfather. Fast forward to 1861, and eight men identified as "Cohen, J" enlist or were drafted into Confederate service. To further complicate this situation, "J" and "I" are nearly identical in nineteenth century handwriting, so just when we think we have determined who's who among the Jacob Cohens, we then must account for all the Joshua, John, Isaac, Isidore, Isaiah, or Israel Cohens—and this takes time.

As we continue to prepare the records of those who served from southern states for publication, the following provides an advance look at a few newly discovered documents, intriguing research conundrums, and interesting individuals you can expect to find in the Shapell Roster.

Louisiana: Philip Thalheimer

Proving a soldier Jewish by self-identification is only possible when nineteenth- or early twentieth-century documents such as digitized newspapers remain extant. Occasionally, the document might be a ketubah, last will and testament, diary, or letter. In Philip Thalheimer's case, the document was a letter discovered in his service records at the National Archives. A native of Niederstetten, Württemberg, Thalheimer moved to Baton Rouge for a business opportunity prior to the war. Not wanting to abandon his financial interests, the thirty-two-year-old reluctantly joined the Ninth Battalion Louisiana Infantry in 1862.[23] Captured in July 1863, Thalheimer spent the remainder of the war at the Customs House Prison in New Orleans. Two months after being incarcerated, he wrote to Brigadier General James Bowen, requesting a parole to attend Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services at a local synagogue:[24]

> Custom House Prison
> September 10. 1863.
> Brig. Genl. Bowen
> Provost-Marshal New Orleans
>
> Dear Sir:
>
> I beg leave to submit the following statement to your kind consideration, trusting that you will favorably act upon it: The religion to which I belong has 3 holidays in the year, on which of all others I always attended the services in the Synagogue wherever I resided; these holidays are coming off, or rather begin next Sunday evening the 13th inst. and end Tuesday evening the 15th, and begin again, Tuesday evening the 23th inst and Wednesday evening the 24th inst. in all three days. To be able to adhere to the principles taught me by my parents, I would now beg you to grant me a parole within the city limits for the above named days, so that I may attend the services in either one of the Synagogues here.
>
> Awaiting the requested permission, I remain, Very Respectfully
> Your Obdt. Servt.
> P. Thalheimer
> Lieut.

Letter from Lt. P. Thalheimer requesting parole to attend
High Holiday services, September 10, 1863.
(National Archives and Records Administration.)

Mississippi: I. Bloomenthal/Blumenthal

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison, Wisconsin, houses an interesting document that archivist Russell P. Horton describes as a souvenir.[25] Like most of the collection, the document has no provenance other than it was donated by a Civil War veteran, whose identity was not recorded. It is a Request for Leave, signed by I. Bloomenthal, for nine days to celebrate Passover in April 1865. We currently know little about Bloomenthal. The document indicates that he served in Captain Turner's Company of the Mississippi Light Artillery as a private, he was Jewish, and had relatives in Mobile, Alabama.[26] Based on his inclusion in the 1866 Mobile city directory as "Blumenthal, I," we also know he survived the war and worked as a clerk for the clothing store, Hoffstadt & Co.[27]

In 1865, the dates for Passover were April 11 to April 18. Blumenthal requested leave on April 5, not knowing that in four days the war would be over. Unfortunately, we will probably never know if his request was granted, if he spent Passover with his relatives, what his first name was, what happened to him after 1866, or how his request for leave ended up in the possession of a Wisconsin Civil War veteran. To this last point, someone wrote "Herbert Roderick" on the document twice in non-period pencil. A quick search of Wisconsin soldiers reveals that a Herbert Roderick Bird served in the Twenty-third Wisconsin Infantry, and in April 1865 he was in Mobile with his regiment. Also, a soldier named Herbert Roderick served in the Twenty-fourth Wisconsin Infantry, but he was in Tennessee in April 1865. Research into the provenance of the letter and Blumenthal remains ongoing. The documents in question read as follows:

> Head Quarters Turner's Battery E
> Right Wing Def. Mobile April 5th, 1865
>
> Col,"
>
> The undersigned I Blumenthal a private in Turner's Battery E respectfully ask for leave of absence for the period of nine days to remain in the City of Mobile, He being an Israelite, and wishes to celebrate a feast, which is called Passover, with his Relations in the City, he would in case of an emergency, be at his post, where he has been since the Commencement of the War.

Private I. Bloomenthal, request for leave, April 1865.
(Courtesy of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.)

I am respectfully your obed. servant, I. Blumenthal, Private, Turner's Battery.

Col. G. G. Garner
Chief of Staff
Distr. of the Gulf

****

Hd Qrs Turner's Batty "E"
Rit Wing Defences of Mobile
April 5th, 1865

Col

I have the honor to make application for a leave of absence for the period of nine days being an Israelite, I wish to attend a feast of Passover, with my Relatives. I only ask permission to remain in the City of Mobile, where I can be summoned to my post in case of an emergency, where I have ever been since the Commencement of the War.

I am Sir Very Respectfully your obt Servt, I. Bloomenthal, Private, in Turner's Battery.

Col. G. G. Garner
Chief of Staff
Dist. of the Gulf

Texas: David, Jacob, Pinkney, and Hamilton Pohalski

Finding genealogical proof that a Confederate soldier was Jewish often results in adding members of the family to the Shapell Roster. Wolf included two soldiers from Texas, "P." and "G. D." Pohalski. The only matches in the historical record were Pinkney and David Pohalski of Smith County, Texas, the sons of Alexander Pohalska, a Polish immigrant who came to America in 1854 and died in November 1860. Alexander's last will and testament identified his family as follows: "I desire them [executors] to pay over to my beloved wife Ester Pohalska and my four beloved and only children my daughter Rachel and three sons, Davis, Jacob and Pink. The wife and daughter reside in the town of Branska in that

part of Poland which belongs to the government of Russia, Jacob in the city and state of New York and Davis and Pink in Smith County State of Texas."[28]

In addition to Pinkney and David, two additional men with the Pohalski surname served in the Confederacy from Texas: Jacob and Hamilton. It's unclear why Jacob, a resident of New York City, served in the Twelfth Brigade, Texas State Troops, but presumably he went to Texas after his father died and did not leave prior to the war.[29] One can also presume that he favored the Union, given that he moved back to New York City after the war and named his first-born son Abraham Lincoln Pohalski.[30]

So, who was Hamilton Pohalski? To date, we have not found any mention of him in the historical record other than his Eleventh Texas Infantry service record, and the only information in it is a note that reads, "Servant attached to hospital by Sur[geon] E[benezer] Jones, to serve permanently."[31] The rank of servant is not unheard of and is typically preceded by "Colored," "Negro," or "Black," but not in this case. Was Hamilton Pohalski the purchased property of Pinkney or David Pohalski?

P. Pohalski & Co., book cover,
The Count of Monte Cristo.
(Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.)

Was he their half-brother, fathered by Alexander with a woman of color who may or may not have been his slave? Or was he an enslaved man owned by one of his half-brothers? For our purposes, the distinction is the difference between a story about Jewish slave holders and a new addition to the Shapell Roster.

Postcard of the Threefoot Building, Meridian, Mississippi.
(Courtesy of the University of Mississippi,
Archives and Special Collections.)

Mississippi and Alabama: Abraham Threefoot and Michael Threefoot

Abraham Threefoot was a private in the quartermaster department of the Confederate army. After the war, he served as an elected officer in Beth Israel Congregation of Meridian, Mississippi, and when he died, he was interred in the synagogue's cemetery. Family trees on multiple genealogical websites identify Abraham's brother, Michael.[32] Michael enlisted in the Second Alabama Volunteer Militia but did not appear to be Jewish. Even more confusing, in 1860, Michael lived in Mobile with his wife, Susannah, daughters Courtney, Pocahontas, and Pattie, and his wife's aunt, Pocahontas Eldridge.[33] Per family history, Michael immigrated first and anglicized his surname literally ("Dreyfus" in German means tripod or three-foot). He fell in love with and married a descendant of Rebecca Rolphe, who was born Amonute, the daughter of the Powhatan chief and best known by her nickname, Pocahontas. The Eldridge family tradition of naming at least one daughter Pocahontas each generation explains Michael Threefoot's daughter's name, as well as his wife's aunt's name, and quickly disabused us of the hypothesis that Michael Threefoot was a Native American who converted to Judaism.[34] The historical record does not tell us why one brother embraced his Jewish heritage while the other did not, leaving us to wonder what effect this had on their relationship and if this happened in other Jewish families who immigrated to America during this time period.

Conclusion

These case studies illustrate the challenges historians, repository staff, and genealogists face in determining both Jewish identity and evidence of Civil War service. Sources are widespread and not always clear. Our work is largely possible because of the digitization of historical documents, which has come a long way since the Library of Congress launched the first pilot program in 1995. In 2021, FamilySearch completed the digitization of 2.4 million rolls of microfilm representing eighty-three years of filming the world's historical genealogical records.[35] Access to so many primary sources allowed us to change the question from "how many" to "who were they" and supports our mandate of transparency.[36] As more repositories, especially in the southern states, continue to digitize their holdings and more people discover the Shapell Roster, our ability to

determine who I. Blumenthal and Hamilton Pohalski were increases exponentially. As new resources become available, the Shapell Roster will continue to be updated.

NOTES

[1] Storke Funeral Home, John R. Sellers, PhD (November 5, 1933 – October 6, 2019), accessed June 1, 2024, https://storkefuneralhome.com/storke-funeral-home-obituaries/john-r-sellers-phd/249; J. David Hacker, "A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead," *Civil War History* 57 (December 2011): 307–48.

[2] For decades, collector Robert D. Marcus searched for Jewish soldiers and sailors who were not included in Simon Wolf's 1895 Civil War roster. In 2009, with the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Civil War on the horizon, Marcus offered his findings to Benjamin Shapell, a fellow collector and close friend, who immediately recognized the importance of this venture as a foundation for the future study of American Jewish history. Marcus continues to support the project he initiated as an advisor and contributor of newly discovered names.

[3] Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* (Philadelphia, 1895); Mel Young, *Where They Lie* (Lanham, MD, 1991).

[4] For the sake of brevity, the term "soldier" is used generically to represent any enlisted or commissioned military personnel who served during the Civil War, e.g., soldiers, sailors, marines, surgeons, hospital stewards, chaplains, veterinarians, cooks, and cabinet members like Judah Philip Benjamin, the attorney general, secretary of war, and secretary of state for the Confederacy.

[5] Service history typically includes regiment, company, rank, muster in and muster out dates, promotions and commissions, and battle-related information such as MIA (missing in action), WIA (wounded in action), POW (prisoner of war), and KIA (killed in action) if applicable. Jewish affiliations were defined as Jewish (if documented and verified but not in Wolf, or in Wolf but undocumented and unverified); Unknown (undocumented, unverified, and not in Wolf); Not Jewish (in Wolf but documented as a non-Jew).

[6] As of this writing, our research has found that fewer than fifty of the names in Wolf's roster did not serve during the Civil War, as opposed to the nearly eight hundred that have been definitively determined not to be Jewish and the 3,500 that have yet to be proven as Jewish or not Jewish. See "Methodology and Research Process: Evidence of Judaism," The Shapell Roster of Jewish Service in the American Civil War, The Shapell Manuscript Foundation, accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.shapell.org/roster/methodology.

[7] "The Preparation of the National Civil War Centennial Jewish Historical Exhibit," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 49 (December 1959): 137–39; Isidore S. Meyer, *The American Jew in the Civil War* (New York, 1962); Irving I. Katz, *The Jewish Soldier from Michigan in the Civil War* (Detroit, 1962); Harry Simonhoff, *Jewish Participants in the Civil War* (New York, 1963); Robert Shosteck, *The Jewish Community of Washington, DC, During the Civil War* (Washington, DC, 1967).

[8] Sylvan Morris Dubow, "Identifying the Jewish Serviceman in the Civil War: A Re-appraisal of Simon Wolf's 'The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen,'" *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 59 (March 1970): 357–69.

[9] Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC, 2000).

[10] Donald Altschiller, "Jews," *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, eds. David Stephen Heidler, Jeanne T. Heidler, and David J. Coles (New York, 2000), 1070–71; Jonathan D. Sarna, "Jews and the Civil War," *Passages Through the Fire: Jews and the Civil War* (New York, 2013), 9–29; Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish life in North Carolin*a (Chapel Hill, 1990), 71.

[11] In 1860, the estimated white population was 27 million and the Jewish population was approximately two hundred thousand. An estimated 3.6 million white men served in the Union and Confederacy, thus 14 percent of the estimated white population in 1860. If ten thousand Jews served in the Civil War, that would indicate 5 percent of the total Jewish population. Currently, we have identified slightly more than three thousand with confirmed service who are also Jewish. See Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585–1984* (Lanham, MD, 1990); Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, accessed June 20, 2024, https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1864/dec/1860a.html; National Park Service, "Civil War Facts: 1861-1865," accessed June 20, 2024, https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/facts.htm.

[12] "Methodology and Research Process."

[13] Benjamin Shapell, *Lincoln and the Jews* (New York, 2015), ix.

[14] To reach a sound conclusion, all five components of the Genealogical Proof Standard must be met: 1) reasonably exhaustive research; 2) complete and accurate source citations; 3) thorough analysis and correlation; 4) resolution of conflicting evidence; and 5) soundly written conclusion based on the strongest evidence. Board for Certification of Genealogists, "Ethics and Standards," accessed June 20, 2024, https://bcgcertification.org/ethics-standards. See also Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards* (second rev. ed., Nashville, 2021).

[15] Karl Popper argues that a theory cannot be proved by verification alone, that if a theory can be falsified the theory cannot be proved. Because we are attempting to prove that a soldier was Jewish, unless we find an obituary that lauds the deceased's meritorious service in a named regiment during the war and his I.O.B.B. membership, we have to find two men of the same name, with approximately the same date of birth—one a soldier, the other Jewish. If multiple men appear in the historical record who could be a match, we have to disprove each until we find the match. In many cases, this is, unfortunately, unfeasible. Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London, 1959).

[16] To ensure uniformity without compromising the details of each soldier's experience, all pages in the database are reviewed against these standards before being made available to the public. Wherever possible, the data is normalized so that searching is easy and results are consistent. For data that cannot be normalized (for example, in free text fields) controlled language is used. Each soldier's page will eventually feature a biographical summary, but users should understand that this is a database composed of data, not stories.

[17] See "Marcus Spiegel: From Conservative Democrat to 'Strong Abolitionist,'" accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.shapell.org/historical-perspectives/shapell-roster-articles

/marcus-spiegel-from-conservative-democrat-to-strong-abolitionist; "Edmund Louis Gray Zalinski: Soldier, Scholar, Inventor," accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.shapell.org/historical-perspectives/shapell-roster-articles/edmund-louis-gray-zalinski-soldier-scholar-inventor; "Dankmar Adler: Courage, Architecture, and the American Dream," accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.shapell.org/historical-perspectives/shapell-roster-articles/dankmar-adler-courage-architecture-and-the-american-dream; "International Man of Mystery—Colonel Frederick George d'Utassy," accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.shapell.org/historical-perspectives/shapell-roster-articles/colonel-frederick-george-dutassy.

[18] See the Facebook page for the Shapell Manuscript Foundation, accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.facebook.com/ShapellManuscriptFoundation.

[19] All recorded slideshow lectures can be viewed on our YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/@ShapellOrg.

[20] Shapell Roster search page, accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.shapell.org/civil-war-soldier-database/search.

[21] Adam Mendelsohn, *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War: The Union Army* (New York, 2022).

[22] "Civil War Facts."

[23] US War Department, Adjutant General's Office, War Records Office, "Thalheimer, P," *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Louisiana, 1861–1865*, Microfilm Publications and Textual Records, NAID: 586957; War Department Collection of Confederate Records, 1825–1927, Record Group 109, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, 7–8.

[24] Ibid., 14.

[25] Russell P. Horton, e-mail to author, September 4, 2013.

[26] US War Department, Adjutant General's Office, War Records Office, "Bloomenthal, J.," *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Mississippi, 1861–1865*, Microfilm Publications and Textual Records, NAID: 586957; War Department Collection of Confederate Records, 1825–1927, Record Group 109, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; I. Blumenthal to Col. G. G. Garner, April 5, 1865, courtesy Wisconsin Veterans Museum.

[27] Henry Farrow and W.B. Dennett, *Directory of the City of Mobile* (Mobile, AL, 1866), 6, accessed August 6, 2024, Ancestry.com.

[28] Abraham Pohalska, Probate Minutes, Smith County, TX, Texas Wills and Probate Records, 1833–1974, accessed August 6, 2024, Ancestry.com.

[29] Pohalska, J., Civil War Muster Rolls Index Cards, Ancestry.com.

[30] *Trow's New York City Directory* (New York City, 1894), 1111, Ancestry.com; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, New York, New York.

[31] U.S. War Department, Adjutant General's Office, War Records Office, "Pohalski, Hamilton," *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas, 1861–1865*, Microfilm Publications and Textual Records, NAID: 586957; War Department Collection of Confederate Records, 1825–1927, Record Group 109, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

[32] Jon Samuels, "Abraham Threefoot (Dreifuss)," accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.geni.com/family-tree/index/6000000018944654820; Randy Schoenberg and Jessica Mayer, "Michael Threefoot (Dreyfus)," accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.geni

.com/people/Michael-Threefoot/6000000037652024907?through=6000000018944654820; B. T. Kaston, "3ft-Alcus," accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/tree/46052030/family?cfpid=6469183433; John Friedberg, "Friedberg," accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.myheritage.com/site-family-tree-487066641/friedberg.

[33] Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Mobile, Alabama.

[34] Katherine Lee McGahagin Holman, "Dreyfus or Threefoot family in Mississippi," Ancestry Message Boards, June 28, 2008, accessed June 21, 2024, https://www.ancestry.com/boards/surnames.dreyfus/1.3.2.

[35] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Church Completes Major Microfilm Digitization Initiative," September 21, 2021, accessed June 25, 2024, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/church-completes-major-microfilm-digitization-initiative.

[36] For a more in-depth explanation of our research methodology, see "Methodology and Research Process."

MEMOIR

Transcending Race, Religion, and Class: Select Huntsville Memoirs by Margaret Anne Goldsmith

by

Lance J. Sussman and Lynda Barness *

Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Cora Memoirs": A Tribute to My Mother, Cora Barley Binford; Marguerite Newton, Margaret Anne Goldsmith's Birth Mother; My Doll Named Cora; The Jew Joint[1]

In 2017, Leonard Rogoff and Margaret Anne Goldsmith contributed an article to *Southern Jewish History* on "Four Jewish Families and the Built Environment of Huntsville, Alabama, 1852–2017."[2] They concentrated on the contributions of Goldsmith's extended family to the economic and cultural development of the city of Huntsville and its Jewish community. Their work drew from the extensive archives donated by Goldsmith, a prolific memoirist and daughter of Huntsville's leading Jewish family.[3] Included in her papers are also memoirs of the private life of her family. The memoirs presented here focus on her relationship with Cora Barley Binford, a thirty-four-year-old Black woman who was hired by the Goldsmith family in 1942 to care for Margaret Anne as an infant but who became her "mother" due to the extraordinary circumstances these memoirs reveal. Her 2005 obituary describes much of what we know about Cora Barley Binford's biography:

> In early 1942, Cora began taking care of Margaret Anne Goldsmith and continued in that capacity for 12 years. She provided for Margaret Anne the care and the unconditional love that a

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> mother provides. Cora became Margaret Anne's mother and Margaret Anne became Cora's daughter, for it is not in giving birth that makes one a mother but through raising that child that makes one a mother.[4]

Domestic Service

The relationship of Cora Barley Binford and Margaret Anne Goldsmith, itself a touching story, also points to wider cultural issues. With the rise of modern social history and feminist historiography, the role of women serving as domestic servants, wet nurses, and nannies has attracted significant scholarly attention.[5] In popular culture alone, scholars have substantial material from which to draw. From the complex biblical narrative of the birth of Moses, to Angelica in *Romeo and Juliet*, to Ruth

Cora Barley with a young Margaret Anne Goldsmith.
(Courtesy of the Huntsville History Collection,
gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

("Mammy") in *Gone with the Wind*, to Maria in *The Sound of Music,* to Aibileen Clark in *The Help,* nonfamily women of different classes, faiths, and races have played essential roles in childrearing and household management. In recent years, the discovery of nonfiction sources has also challenged and deepened our understanding of these cross-cultural, often enduring, and norm-defying relationships.[6]

The study of the southern American Jewish experience and its mix of interfaith, multiracial, and cross-class domestic relationships comes with its own set of special questions and issues. How did Jewish slave owners treat their household help?[7] What was the frequency of miscegenation among southern Jews before and after the Civil War?[8] Were postbellum Jewish employers of Black women just another example of White folks exploiting the services of underclass people, or was there something different about the Jewish–Black, minority-minority nexus? And, if southern Jews generally or quietly supported the civil rights movement after World War II, did they in turn treat their help differently, and, if so, how?[9] In 1987, playwright Alfred Uhry, in his classic *Driving Miss Daisy,* suggested that there were no easy answers to these and other questions. In 2002, "Jewish Girls and African American Nannies," appearing in *Lilith* magazine and based on multiple interviews across the United States, further problematized the historical relations of American Jews and their domestic help.[10]

With respect to the American system of in-house childcare, the history of nannies in the United Kingdom provides comparative perspective. By 1700, nannies in England were generally educated, worked solely for food and lodging, and mostly reported to the lady of the house. During the Victorian period, a degree of nanny professionalization occurred, and by 1892 the Norland Institute Nanny Training College had been established. By contrast, the role of nannies in America's segregated South was radically different and did not professionalize.[11]

Unsurprisingly, scholars hold a wide range of opinions about the origin, nature, and function of the southern Black nanny. In her pathbreaking 2008 book, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory,* Kimberly Wallace-Sanders notes that "historians suggest that the term *black mammy* was developed to draw boundaries between the various maternal figures on the planation." Eugene Genovese, Wallace-Sanders continues, made the "dramatic proclamation" that the presence

of the Black mammy in the Big House was essential to "understanding the tragedy of plantation pluralism."[12] By contrast, other historians have argued that the character of the antebellum mammy was largely an anachronistic invention of the Jim Crow era and served in a somewhat analogous manner to the infamous Uncle Tom character. Recent scholarship demonstrates that postbellum mammies were "dedicated to their own families, and often resentful of their lowly societal status."[13]

On January 25, 1912, the New York *Independent* ran a blistering story titled "More Slavery at the South" by a "Negro Nurse." The anonymous writer lashed out without restraint. "[Though] today we are enjoying nominal freedom," she noted, "we are literally slaves. We had to attend to all the needs of the children of the house on a 24-hour basis including nursing and to do other menial chores as well. It's 'Mammy, do this' or 'Mammy do that,' or 'Mammy do the other' from my mistress, all the time."[14] By contrast, Cora Barley Binford was maternal and devoted.

The tension between the personal experience of the Black mammy, her resentment of the social system which defined her, and her sincere and reciprocated love of the children she cared for was poignantly captured by Sally Mann who boldly states in "White Child, Black Nanny," "down here in the South, you can't throw a dead cat without hitting an older, well-off White person raised by a black woman, and every damn one of them will earnestly insist that a reciprocal and equal form of love was exchanged between them." This reflects, Mann continues, "one side of the fundamental paradox of the South, that a White elite, determined to segregate the races in public, based their stunningly intimate domestic arrangements on an erasure of that segregation in private."[15]

Jews in the postbellum South faced the added dimension of living as a religious minority in a region defined by racial segregation. Abraham J. Peck observes, "Jews in the South also continued to hover between myth and reality. They assumed a certain distance from the racial question but made every effort to see that religious and economic freedoms were not harmed by an overt distaste for the system of segregation and a too visible reaction against the entire oppressive nature of Southern society." Peck concludes, "this was in keeping, after all, with the notion that Southern gentlemen—both Jew and Christian—were required to maintain a proper and correct attitude at all times. This was to be the proper response even if their make-believe could not hide the glaring inequalities around

them."[16] However, the question remains whether the public nature of the southern Jewish experience was also true inside southern Jewish homes.

The memoirs offered here—Margaret Anne Goldsmith's "A Tribute to My Mother, Cora Barley Binford"; "Marguerite Newton, Margaret Anne Goldsmith's Birth Mother"; "My Doll Named Cora"; and "The Jew Joint"—do not bring us any closer to definitive conclusions about Black nannies and Jewish families in the middle decades of the twentieth century. However, they provide particularly heartfelt accounts about one special relationship between the only child of an elite Jewish family, the Black caretaker she came to call "mother," and the special circumstances that brought them together. In this case, the biological mother was absent, and the Black "mother" stayed with the child on a 24/7 basis during her childhood.

Huntsville

Part of those special circumstances included the history of Huntsville, Alabama, where Goldsmith and Barley forged their lifelong and evolving relationship. In 1940, near the end of the Depression, Huntsville still housed a population of only thirteen thousand people. Best known for cotton production, it was also identified as the "Watercress Capital of the World." The situation changed rapidly during World War II when the United States Army obtained thirty-five thousand acres in the Huntsville area for three chemical munition facilities, including the Redstone Arsenal, which brought twenty thousand people to operate the military programs. After the war, successful lobbying resulted in development of the Ordnance Guided Missile Center (OGMC) in Huntsville, which eventually led Wernher von Braun and a team of nearly two hundred former Nazi scientists to settle in northern Alabama. Huntsville quickly became known as the Rocket City. According to the 1960 census, Huntsville grew over 340.3 percent during the prior decade and, with continued growth, it currently boasts the second largest metropolitan population in Alabama.[17]

The influx of new people during World War II helped thwart efforts to maintain the city's long-standing segregationist policies in the early 1960s.[18] Today, Huntsville proudly celebrates the fact that it was the first city in Alabama to integrate its public schools, a legacy that may have helped shape Goldsmith's "Cora memoirs."[19]

Margaret Anne and Cora

Margaret Anne Goldsmith was born in 1941 in Huntsville just as the city began its remarkable transition in size, economy, and racial policies.[20] In many ways, she represents a living bridge between the old and new Huntsville. Over time, Goldsmith developed an acute sense of responsibility to preserve her family's multigenerational role in the development of the general and Jewish community and consequently assembled a massive archival collection to which she added her many memoirs and historical articles. As a prolific chronicler of the Huntsville experience, she endeavored to be as comprehensive as possible.[21]

Her father, Lawrence Bernstein Goldsmith, Jr., a scion of Huntsville's leading Jewish family and a highly successful businessman, married Marguerite Newton, a daughter of a local Presbyterian family.[22]

Margaret Anne shared the following about her parents:

> [M]y biological mother was Presbyterian. My DNA is 51 per cent Ashkenazi Jewish and about 2 per cent British Isles, 25 percent Northern Europe and 1 per cent Viking. Marguerite's father was a Newton and her mother a Payne. My mother was not particularly religious. I did find a King James Bible in her possessions. When she died, I asked a good friend who is a Presbyterian minister to officiate at her funeral. He was very understanding as to my wishes to not have any Christian references. My thoughts are that there were no young Jewish women to date in Huntsville and my father had very little Jewish upbringing. He was born in 1909. They were married by a Justice of the Peace. Marguerite's father had a men's clothing business, they were middle class without the social standing of the Goldsmiths, plus she had been married before and divorced. My father described some prejudice as to his dating the Christian women in town with equal social status to his. Once my father had received custody of me, there was no question as to my being raised Jewish.
>
> It was when I began dating a young man from New York who was Conservative and worked at the Arsenal that I realized there were Jews who did not consider me Jewish. Elisha Gurfein broke up with me because his mother had asked him to because I was not Jewish. I experienced more of the same when I lived in New Orleans. It was devastating to me, and I began questioning my Jewish identity—it took years to work through the conflict. I did

Margaret Anne with her father, Lawrence Goldsmith, and grandmother, Annie Schiffman Goldsmith, c. 1942. (Courtesy of the Weitzman National Jewish History Museum, gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

> so while writing the history of my family and the Huntsville Jewish community during the 1980s.
>
> My father's second wife was Gentile but of no denomination. The rabbi would not marry them, however the Central Presbyterian Church minister agreed to do so. Jewell began going to his church after they married when I was 12. It was confusing to me. She recognized that and began going to temple and joined Sisterhood, knowing that it was important that I not be confused, which I appreciated. Their friends were mainly Jewish and when she died, the rabbi at Temple B'nai Sholom, who officiated at her funeral, buried some old prayer books beneath her casket. Although my stepmother never converted, the rabbi told me that he considered her to be Jewish based on the way she conducted her religious life after marrying my father.[23]

Immediately after Margaret Anne's birth it became clear that the baby was unsafe in the care of her birth mother, according to Goldsmith's memoir. The couple divorced, and the father won full custody of the infant. He arranged for her to be raised in the Jewish tradition despite her

lack of matrilineal Jewish status. Unable to care for the child by himself, Lawrence Goldsmith first employed an elderly housekeeper, who in turn identified Cora, a maid in Huntsville's prestigious Russel Erskine Hotel, where the family maintained a residence, to raise the child there and in a separate summer home in Huntsville. In 2002, Goldsmith wrote an extensive article on life at the hotel, including pictures of the maids in full uniform and a "Christmas party for hotel employees," as well as several references to Cora.[24]

Margaret Anne and Cora were inseparable, even sleeping in the same room while in the hotel, sharing a bathroom, and eating together, but with Cora having her own designated dinner plate. When Margaret Anne turned twelve, her father remarried, again to a gentile woman, Jewell Shelton.[25] The new Mrs. Goldsmith rapidly integrated herself into the small local Jewish community and changed Cora's status from Margaret Anne's nanny to a household maid. Subsequently Margaret Anne was sent to a boarding school in Washington, D.C., for her junior and senior years of high school, before she matriculated at Tulane University.

However, Margaret Anne never forgot Cora's role in her early childhood nor her stepmother's realignment of the Goldsmith family. Margaret Anne, who lived in New Orleans after she married, eventually returned to Huntsville in the 1980s and reconnected with her "Mother Cora." Goldsmith became part of Cora's geriatric care team with the measured cooperation of the Barley Binford family. Margaret Anne participated prominently in Cora's 2005 funeral as her "daughter." Cora's funeral incorporated several Jewish prayers and, although Cora retained a deep Christian faith and remained a devout Christian throughout her life, her funeral was a Judeo-Christian event, reflecting the religious heritage of her daughter, Margaret Anne.

The seventh of sixteen children, Cora Dixon Barley Binford was born on December 21, 1908, in Madison County, Alabama, in a predominantly Black area called Pond Beat. The family owned a farm where Cora worked with her family. She attended a local school and later earned a GED while working in Huntsville. Along with her parents and siblings, she belonged to Center Grove United Methodist Church.[26]

As a young woman, Cora moved to Huntsville and found employment in the Russel Erskine Hotel in 1929. She remained there throughout the difficult Depression years and even helped find employment in the

hotel for several family members. During her years at the hotel, Cora volunteered during her off hours at Huntsville Hospital. Early in 1942, Cora began taking care of Margaret Anne Goldsmith and continued in that capacity for twelve years. Her obituary explains:

> The Lakeside United Methodist Church played a major role in Cora's adult life. She joined Lakeside when she moved to Huntsville during the early 1940s and continued as a devoted member until her death. For over fifty years, she attended church school and religious services regularly. When she could no longer drive herself, she continued to attend. In addition to taking part in the church's religious activities, Cora belonged the Lee Fearn Circle and the Satellite Senior Group. Cora's early public service in the community began with joining Mizpah Chapter #37 of The Order of The Eastern Star in 1951.[27]

Cora married Reverend Elmer Binford in 1950, which increased her social status in the Black community. Binford, a graduate of Howard University, taught high school. The Binfords' marriage lasted over forty years; they had no children of their own. Cora assisted her husband in his ministry as a visiting preacher and teacher throughout small towns in Alabama and Mississippi on weekends, which often placed them at great risk as a Black couple traveling alone in the rural South. During the reverend's ministry, Cora taught Sunday school and served as the district coordinator of Children's Work for the Methodist Church. When Reverend Binford became bedridden during his later years, Cora devoted herself to his care. Cora Barley Binford died on November 28, 2005, and was buried in Valhalla Memorial Gardens in Huntsville. Margaret Anne contributed a poem to the service sheet for Cora's funeral:

A Tribute to My Mother
Margaret Anne Goldsmith

How blessed I am that I could choose my mother—
God guided Cora to me and I chose her
I knew then that she would give birth
To my spirit—my soul—my essence—
She became and continues to be my teacher
Whose teachings I strive to follow
Whose person I strive to emulate

Cora introduced me to the world
She introduced me to the beauty and goodness of life
Cora gave me roots and pride in who I am
And at the proper time
She gave me wings to fly

Cora's Daughter

The Memoirs: An Overview

Margaret Anne's memoirs of Cora contain many highlights of their time together. For example, Cora avoided racial flashpoints in Huntsville when caring for Margaret Anne and did not attempt to sit at segregated lunch counters or in Whites-only sections of movie theaters. On the other hand, Cora took Margaret Anne to the public library in Huntsville. Cora also brought Margaret Anne to synagogue for lessons and services although Temple B'nai Sholom, established in 1847, was too small to employ a full-time rabbi prior to World War II. At the end of the nineteenth century, it had been able to build an impressive structure (1898) with the help and leadership of the Goldsmith family. Yet by 1945, only sixteen families contributed to the congregation.[28]

Cora also brought Margaret Anne to Barley-Binford family events. In her essay "The Jew Joint," Goldsmith demonstrates her belief that a special Jewish-Black alliance in the South was mutually and respectfully held. Thus, in defiance of Jim Crow, Margaret Anne grew up on both sides of Alabama's color line.

Few if any of the great historical developments that transformed her hometown played explicit roles early in Margaret Anne's childhood. What did matter was that Cora was always there for her as her mother, read poetry to her, and took her to church and synagogue to nurture her spiritual development. In the end, both women became pillars of their respective communities and worked toward making civic society in Huntsville more civil. They remained emotionally connected as grown women. All of this and more is part of Margaret Anne Goldsmith's remarkable "Cora Memoirs."

The unique relationship of Cora and Margaret Anne points to wider cultural issues. The "Cora Memoirs" illustrate a poignant, heartwarming, sad, and yet uplifting story. They depict family and religious difficulties as well as triumphs from a previous era in which a talented woman in the

Black community turned to domestic service because of the exigencies of a segregated society. The memoirs also demonstrate the limitations and difficulties of being Jewish in small southern towns. At still another level, the Goldsmith–Barley Binford saga illustrates the strong bonds developed across racial and religious lines in a complex relationship.

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Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Cora Memoirs": A Tribute to My Mother, Cora Barley Binford; Marguerite Newton, Margaret Anne Goldsmith's Birth Mother; My Doll Named Cora; The Jew Joint

A TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER, CORA BARLEY BINFORD

When I was a little girl, I would beg Cora to tell me the story of how we met. She was the maid on the eleventh floor of the Russel Erskine [Hotel], where my father, who had received custody of me, and I shared connecting rooms. My grandparents had a suite on the twelfth floor. It was early 1942; I was born in October 1941. Every afternoon when Cora finished cleaning the twelve guest rooms on the floor, she would play with me. I became so attached to her that she had to get down on her knees and crawl out of the room to leave so I wouldn't cry. That stopped working when I could pull up and see her crawling out of the door. The following June, my father, my grandparents, my nurse Alice, and I moved to our family home on Gates Avenue for the summer months. It was then that my nurse Alice told my grandmother she was too old to take care of me and needed to retire. When my grandmother got upset, Alice reassured her there was no need to worry, that Margaret Anne had found " a replacement nurse for herself. Later, my grandmother, who I called " Annie," interviewed Cora, and our wonderful mother-daughter relationship followed. Cora said that during the interview my grandmother told her, "Cora, you will be responsible to keep the baby from crying." Cora said she responded that babies cry and if that was what was expected, she would return to the hotel. My grandmother realized the foolishness of what she said, and Cora remained and was never questioned again.

Cora Barley as a hospital volunteer. (Courtesy of the Weitzman National Jewish History Museum, Philadelphia, gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

Cora was not only my mother; she was my family. In fact, Cora was the center of my life. In the afternoon after my nap, Cora would take me to see my grandmother, and before supper in the evening she would take me to my grandparents' suite to visit with them and my father. I never ate with my father or grandparents, nor did they provide any of my care. In fact, until I was around seven years old, I ate all my meals with Cora.

One story Cora told me that illustrates my attachment and dependence on her occurred when one of her family members who lived in Chicago died. Cora took the train to Chicago and when she arrived there had been numerous calls from my grandmother. Although someone had been hired to take care of me while she was away, my grandmother said that I had not stopped crying since Cora left. Cora did not stay for the funeral but returned on the next train. When I was a few years old, Cora would leave me with my grandparents and father to visit with them alone before supper. Shortly after she left, she would get a call that I was crying and to come get me. Cora and I slept in the same room, ate together, and wherever we went, Cora took me. When a ride was needed, Bore Scruggs, who worked in the family's automobile shop, would drive us.

Cora believed in eight glasses of water a day, proper diet, fresh air, sunshine, and sufficient exercise. She always made sure I ate an apple a day. Before I could eat it alone, I remember Cora first peeling my apple and then scraping it with a spoon to a sauce-like consistency. As soon as I could walk, Cora took me on adventures. Some days we would go to the Big Spring, where I would throw rocks in the water and watch the ripples spread out in circles, or I would feed the ducks or spend hours riding on the little cast iron lion. When I was older, Cora would let me climb on the limestone bluff above the spring or slide down the hill behind Cotton Row on pieces of cardboard. When we came home in the late afternoon and on rainy days, Cora would turn on the radio and we listened to music.

Sometimes Cora would recite poetry from the works of Paul Laurence Dunbar, a late nineteenth-century African American poet whose poems she and her siblings learned by heart as youngsters. At other times Cora would sing to me. My favorite was one that began, "Dance with the dolly with a hole in her stockin', her knees keep a knocking and her toes

Margaret Anne, c. 1947, by a pond where she used to swim. (Courtesy of the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

keep a rocking. . . . Dance by the light of the moon." I had an old Victrola, the windup kind, and often we would listen to recordings of children's stories. We also played games including checkers, Chinese checkers, and tiddlywinks.

Where we went every day was left up to Cora. Being intelligent and wise, she exposed me to everything Huntsville had to offer during the 1940s. Our daily adventures took us all over town. There were visits to the Big Spring Icehouse and to the Coca Cola Bottling Company. Regularly we went to the old Carnegie Library, where we would check out books several times a week and attend the Saturday afternoon story hour. Other mothers who brought their children to story hour would consult Cora on child rearing. Cora's reputation had spread throughout Huntsville.

Cora never spanked me. She often said there was no need to, that she would just redirect me when I was getting out of hand. Ours was a most unusual relationship. Living together in one room created a special bond, greater than many children have with their own mothers. She had a special ability with children to understand them. Cora knew my thought process and could judge when it was appropriate to scold me and when not to do so to encourage my creativity.

One recollection illustrates that ability. One summer, when I was around three years old, I was outside playing in my sandbox one morning and Cora had to go inside. She asked Ada, our cook, to keep an eye on me. Cora told me not to go in the house because I would get sand all over Ada's kitchen. When Cora returned, I was standing at the kitchen sink getting water. Cora asked why I hadn't used the hydrant near the sandbox, and I replied that the water was wetter in the kitchen. Cora decided that in my mind I had provided a logical answer, and she didn't reprimand me. In fact, Cora never needed to reprimand me; she realized that I did not want to be bad and that I always wanted to please her. It was the fact that Cora understood me so well that helped me develop as I did.

During my early years, Cora and I would often visit her family. Her mother lived on Pulaski Pike. Mrs. Cooper, with whom Cora lived before she began taking care of me, lived on Oak Avenue (now Gallatin Street), with [Cora's] sister Leona, who worked as a secretary at a nearby gas station. Mrs. Cooper always kept a room for Cora in case she wanted to

return; however, I would never have let "My Cora" leave me. I often played with Cora's nieces and nephews who lived near her mother's house on Pulaski Pike. In fact, it was Cora's family members with whom I spent most of my time playing during my early years.

We never went to the drugstore to buy ice cream or to places where Cora as a Black person could not be served; Cora was too proud to subject herself to that humiliation. Once we went to the movies and had to sit in the balcony. My father's secretary, who worked for our family for over fifty years, told me that after the movie we had gone to the office, and I had a tantrum because "My Cora" had not been able to sit downstairs with the other parents and children. I remained in the balcony with her.

Years later, when I asked Cora about my father and grandparents and their limited ability to take care of me, especially during my early years, Cora said that they didn't understand children. I remember her telling me long after I was an adult that she had been so upset at times that she wanted to kidnap me but that her brothers and sisters had warned her against doing that. I do not know what upset Cora, but I do know that she loved and wanted to protect me as a mother. Cora was levelheaded and sensible. Whatever had upset her I am sure was serious. I cannot recall what happened; I do know that my early childhood was far from normal. I realize that my father and grandparents truly were not capable of taking care of a child, as Cora surmised. My grandmother also suffered from depression. Although never diagnosed, I made that observation based on her lack of activity, her reclusiveness, and my own understanding of depression in later years.

I remember one upsetting incident that occurred when I feared for Cora's safety. I was visiting my mother, Marguerite, one summer afternoon. I was outside playing, and I remember going to the door to go inside and seeing Marguerite standing in front of Cora, screaming at her. I tried to open the door and it was locked. Cora and Marguerite then ran out of the room. I remember looking through the locked door at Marguerite's aunt, Mrs. Camper, sitting on the couch, laughing at me. Cora went out the back door and came to get me. I was crying; she reassured me that she was all right. I learned later what had happened. Marguerite wanted Cora to leave so I could visit alone. I never visited my mother or her family without Cora being with me. That was the agreement regarding my visits required by the court.

MARGUERITE NEWTON, MARGARET ANNE GOLDSMITH'S BIRTH MOTHER

I was born in October 1941; Marguerite Newton and my father, Lawrence Goldsmith, Jr., married during the summer of 1940. Marguerite suffered from mental illness. Soon after she and my father married, her symptoms became apparent, and the doctors recommended she have a baby, "something to call her own." In those days, the understanding of mental illness was limited and having a baby was thought to be the cure for a woman's problems.

As a result of my birth, Marguerite's mental and emotional problems became more severe. I was several months old when she had a tantrum and broke the apartment windows and pulled down a curtain rod that just missed my bassinette. My father called Marguerite's doctor, Dr. Holliman, her mother Edith Newton, her uncle Will Payne, his parents Annie and Lawrence Goldsmith, and his attorney. It was recommended that Marguerite's mother take her home with her and that I be taken to a neutral place with my nurse. My nurse, Alice, and I went to live with Mrs. Alene Payne, the former wife of Marguerite's uncle, Will Payne. Mrs. Payne lived near my father and grandparents on Eustis Avenue. When I was in my forties, I read all the above in the records of the Madison County Courthouse. There is a note in the records from Marguerite's doctor, Dr. Holliman, recommending she not have custody of me, stating "Mrs. Goldsmith should not have custody of her daughter, or she could kill or maim her." My father was awarded custody of me. I was less than six months old.

After the custody proceedings my father, my nurse, Alice, and I went to live with my grandparents, who lived in the Russel Erskine Hotel. Alice had been my father's nurse when he was a child and was now too old to take care of a baby, a fact no one seemed to recognize. During the summer before I was a year old, when we were living at our family home on Gates Avenue, Alice told my grandmother that she was too old to take care of me and needed to retire. When my grandmother became upset, Alice told her that [she] had found a new nurse for [me] the previous winter, Cora Barley, the maid on the eleventh floor of the hotel who played with me every day after she finished her work. Cora was

hired and remained with me until my father remarried when I was twelve. During my first twelve years, Cora was the most important person in my life.

I began to visit my mother once a week as a toddler when it was required by the court. I always visited with Cora. I assumed later that Marguerite's family had asked the court to request I visit weekly in hopes that Marguerite would be able to respond to me and that her emotional condition might improve. That never happened. Marguerite was never able to relate to me.

I was not told that Marguerite was my mother. Her mother Edith referred to Marguerite as my "Little Mother." I assumed that a Little Mother was a family friend and always called her Marguerite. It was not explained that Marguerite's mother was my grandmother, and I was told to call her by her first name, Edith. Since I thought Marguerite and Edith were family friends, I did not think their behavior odd. Visiting them was not something I enjoyed since I always played alone. In hopes that Marguerite would play with me, Cora talked to Edith and Marguerite and let me play by myself.

My earliest memories of visiting Marguerite and her mother were when they lived in an apartment in a large two-story house on Lincoln Street at the end of Gates Avenue. It was a short walk along a shady tree-lined street of antebellum houses to their apartment from our home at the corner of Gates and Green Street, where we lived during the summer. During the winter we lived at the Russel Erskine Hotel. Then we walked through downtown Huntsville, past my father's and grandfather's office on the courthouse square to the town's early residential district and continued to Lincoln and Gates. I remember there were many steep steps from the sidewalk up the hill to their front door. When Cora and I arrived, there were no hugs or special greetings. Cora was invited to sit and talk to Edith. Marguerite sat quietly and seldom spoke while I played alone on the floor with the toys that we brought with us.

Once I remember Edith telling me to polish Marguerite's toenails, which I did. Years later I realized Edith was trying to create a connection between Marguerite and me. What seems strange is that Edith did not suggest that Marguerite paint my fingernails or toenails, which would have been the normal thing for a mother to do with her little girl. I did what I was told. I remember trying to do a good job and not get any polish

on her skin. I had just learned to color by staying in the lines of the pictures in my coloring book. Painting her toenails was a similar project. My memory of that situation was the companionship of her legs that were strong and of olive complexion.

Several years later Marguerite and Edith purchased a modest house off Holmes Avenue in a new neighborhood called Terry Heights. The Braden family lived next door with their two daughters, Diane and Dena. Diane was my age and I played with her when I visited Marguerite and Edith. Cora always stayed with me during my visits. In the late afternoon we had ice cream that Marguerite had made in an ice tray. Edith would say, "Marguerite, get your cream for Margaret Anne." Looking back, Marguerite did not initiate activity but seemed to always follow the instructions of her mother.

When I was around seven, Marguerite and Edith moved to Daytona Beach, Florida. When they returned to Huntsville at Christmas and during the summer, they stayed with Edith's sister Vassie Camper and her husband, who lived in Madison, which at that time was in the country. The Campers' house was an old farmhouse with no running water, only a hand pump and an outdoor toilet. The house was on a hill above a small creek. During the summer Marguerite said she would bathe in the creek. We often walked down the hill to look at the creek. I remember thinking how much fun it would have been to go in and show Marguerite that I had learned to float, but she never offered to take me swimming and I did not ask.

Memories of my visits at the Campers' house during Marguerite's and Edith's trips are few. I do remember when I was around seven or eight years old, taking a walk alone in the woods with Marguerite and seeing a stile and asking Marguerite what it was. She explained that it was a structure that enabled people to cross over a fence that did not have a gate. The wooden stile we were looking at straddled a wire fence that was about four or five feet high and had steps like a ladder on both sides. While we stood there, Marguerite turned and looked at me and said, "You know, I should not have had children." I remember responding, "Well, I am glad I am here." I think Marguerite said that she was glad I was here, but I don't remember exactly what she said because it was upsetting for me to think that she had not wanted me. I vividly remember standing next to the stile and Marguerite's words. I realized after I was an adult that by telling me

she should not have had children she was making a reference to her mental and emotional condition that became more severe after my birth. Nevertheless, I was hurt by her comment since I knew nothing about her problems after my birth and was too young to understand.

Big and Little Daddy

I remember my first day of school (1947?) and my grandmother, who I called "Annie," taking me to register. On our way home, I remember asking her who were the people in my family, if Little Daddy (my father) was my brother, if she was my mother and was Big Daddy (my grandfather) my father. It had never been explained to me who everyone was in my family, since I had been taught to call my grandparents and my father Annie, Big Daddy, and Little Daddy. I also wanted to know who the lady was I visited every week that I was told to call, "Little Mother," who in fact was my mother, Marguerite Newton. Annie answered my questions correctly and seemed surprised that I would ask. Regardless, I still felt that my father was my brother, my grandparents my parents, and that Cora was the person who filled the role of mother.

School

I went to kindergarten at Miss Mary Bern Darwin's at the corner of California and McClung, and in the first grade I went to Fifth Avenue School on Governor's Drive. Bore Scruggs would drive me to and from school with Cora. The following year, when I was in the second grade, the school districts were changed, and I went to West Clinton, down the street from the hotel. It was only a few blocks away and Cora and I walked to school every day. In the afternoon Cora was there to pick me up and we walked home together. Before going out to play, Cora helped me with my homework. Because of her help I made straight A's. It was Cora who read to me every night before bed from books we checked out at the library from the time I was able to listen to stories until I was able to choose books to read myself.

Sometimes after school I brought a friend home to play. I remember that Cora did not interfere with my play and encouraged me to use my imagination and creativity and play with whatever was at hand. For example, when we went to the Big Spring, I found old pieces of cardboard stored in one of the buildings to use for a sled to slide down the hill behind

Cotton Row. When I climbed on the bluff above the Spring, I used one of the rock ledges for my pretend kitchen. I had toys but not many. My grandparents bought all my toys at FAO Schwarz when they went to New York in the fall and spring. The toys were selected by the salesperson. They also bought my clothes in New York and would have them shipped to Huntsville. Mrs. Farley, a local seamstress, made whatever alterations were needed because Annie bought my clothes too large so I could grow into them. Neither my grandparents nor my father ever took me shopping. I remember once asking my father if he would buy me a gift for Christmas because Annie and Big Daddy bought all my clothes and toys. He bought me a silver bracelet with a blue turquoise stone in the center.

I had a collection of Story Book Dolls that sat on my toy shelf, and I did not play with them since they were too elegant. A few dolls that I remember included my Margaret O'Brien doll, named for the well-known child actress of the nineteen forties, and a doll that could drink from a bottle, the water went through, and she wet her diaper. However, not having had a biological mother relationship meant I did not know how to play with dolls by assuming the role of mother.

MY DOLL NAMED CORA

One of my most treasured toys was a doll that Cora made for me when I was four or five years old. The doll had black hair and was made of light brown material. Her embroidered facial features were not typically African American but more like Cora's, whose ancestors were a combination of African American, American Indian, and Caucasian. Cora was tall and slender with light brown, almost cream-colored, skin with freckles. She dressed my doll in a red dress with a white apron. The only doll I kept through the years was my "Cora Doll," because I could not part with her.

Temple B'nai Sholom

Regarding my religion, an incident occurred that I remember when I was in grammar school. I was the only Jewish child at West Clinton. Frances Sturtevant, who I played with occasionally, asked Cora if I could go to church with her since I didn't have a church. Cora told Frances in no uncertain terms that I was Jewish and that I went to Temple B'nai

Cora's doll.
(Courtesy of the Breman Museum,
Atlanta, gift of Margaret Anne
Goldsmith.)

Temple B'nai Sholom, Huntsville, Alabama.
(Courtesy of Huntsville–Madison County
Public Library Special Collections.)

Sholom.[29] It was the first time I was aware there was a difference between my temple and the churches in town. When I was older, I realized that some of the children may have been told by their parents that I wasn't Christian and didn't go to church.

When it came to religious school at Temple B'nai Sholom, Cora learned all the Hebrew prayers and would then teach them to me. She was so well-regarded that the teachers would always give me the lead in the holiday plays because they knew I would learn my part perfectly under Cora's tutelage.

A Trip to Segregated Florida

When I was seven my father met Jewell Shelton through a mutual friend. Jewell lived in Birmingham when they began dating. She later moved to Decatur and then to Florence, Alabama. At the time they married I was in the seventh grade. Shortly after they began dating and before Cora married, my father and Jewell took a trip to Florida with me. Since they were not married at the time, my grandparents insisted they take Cora as a chaperone. I remember how humiliating that trip was for Cora because of segregation. She was not allowed to go to any of the restaurants or even to the hotel's beach area or swimming pool. Cora was confined to our room all day where she ate her meals. I was with my father and Jewell all day at the beach and sometimes would go out to dinner with them. I remember when we returned to Huntsville seeing Cora cry with relief. I had never seen Cora cry before and realized in later years how traumatic that trip had been for her.

Cora's Plate

When I was seven, I began eating meals with my father and grandparents. During the summer when we were living at our house on Gates, Cora ate lunch in the kitchen. I remember that Cora only used a particular plate and that it was cream colored, designed with short black curved lines and a thin black border. I called it Cora's plate because it reminded me of Cora's freckles. She also used the kitchen utensils, not our sterling silver. It did not seem odd to me then that Cora was not using our china and silver. It was years later that I thought about the custom, especially in the South, for Black servants to have separate tableware. Likely Cora accepted

Cora's plate.
(Courtesy of the Breman Museum, Atlanta, gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

the custom and did not feel insulted, as I do for her today. That same plate was among the items that were passed down to me when my father passed away. I kept it at my apartment at the I. Schiffman Building, where I lived in the 1980s and 1990s during trips to Huntsville to assist my father with our family business. My "Cora's plate" was a treasure; I used it often.

Cora's Story

Cora often talked about life on her father's farm near the Tennessee River, inhabited at that time by some White families and about 70 percent black families, many of whom owned their own farms. Cora and her siblings were tall, slender, and light-skinned, with features that were more Caucasian than African American. The Barley sons and daughters were protective of each other, not only because it was how they were raised, but also to take care of each other. Because of their coloring, Cora told me that they often were the brunt of not only White prejudice but prejudice from other Blacks whose skin was much darker.

When Cora was a young woman, she came to town to live with Mrs. Cooper and work at the Russel Erskine Hotel shortly after it opened in 1929. One main reason was to make money to send home
and help her family during the Depression. She continued to work at the hotel until she began taking care of me in 1942. A story she told me about her work at the hotel occurred when her sister came to work as a maid there also. The housekeeping superintendent told Cora that because of the Depression they were not able to keep her sister, but that they wanted her

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

to stay. Cora responded that if they wanted her, they would have to keep her sister also. Cora and her sister remained. That incident is an excellent example of who Cora was and demonstrates her loyalty to her family and her ability to assert herself during those years during segregation when it was not acceptable for a Black person to do so. While Cora worked at the hotel, and before she began taking care of me, she volunteered as a nurse at Huntsville Hospital.

Cora Marries Reverend Binford

Schools for Black children only went to the seventh grade in Pond Beat, where Cora grew up, one of the areas later taken by the government for Redstone Arsenal. After I started school, Cora did not remain idle but began taking a correspondence course to get her GED. She was able to complete all the courses alone except for algebra and needed a tutor. She heard about a teacher at Council High who was also a traveling minister on weekends, Reverend Elmer Binford, from the well-respected Binford

family of Huntsville. Reverend Binford fell in love with Cora and, in addition to teaching her algebra, he began to court her. I remember the chocolate-covered cherries he would bring that I enjoyed eating. When he proposed I was terribly upset. I was around eight years old at the time. Cora began preparing for their wedding, and I remember her making her wedding dress on her mother's Singer sewing machine. The machine was old-fashioned and not electric; Cora operated it by gently moving her foot back and forth, rhythmic fashion, on the foot pedal.

Cora and Reverend Binford's wedding took place on a hot summer afternoon at her mother's house on Pulaski Pike in 1949. My grandmother took me and her friend, Mrs. Grace Goldstein. We also took my childhood friend Susan Pipes. I remember during the wedding, to keep from crying, I kept fanning myself with the hem of my dress. Cora remembered watching me and told me later that she was so concerned about me that she could hardly concentrate on what the preacher was saying.

When Cora married, I was able to manage without her being with me around the clock. Cora continued to work for us and would pick me up after school and take care of me until around five, when she went home. I would then eat with my father and grandparents and sleep with my grandmother in her room.

During the four years after Cora married, until I was twelve, her life was quite active, taking care of me during the afternoons and on weekends as the wife of a traveling minister. Cora always drove so Reverend Binford could be rested when they arrived at one of the churches where he preached. Years later, I asked Cora about those years and their experience driving to small churches through rural Alabama and Mississippi during the period of the civil rights movement. She told me that as a precaution they always kept their gas tank as full as possible, stopping often to fill up, since they never knew if they would be refused gas because they were Black. She said that they never experienced any dangerous situation because Reverend Binford always kept a level head, and when asked to leave a station, he never became argumentative but would turn and leave. I admired how brave they were and their devotion to Reverend Binford's churches.

Cora became active in Reverend Binford's church Sunday schools and went to Methodist conferences with him. She became an Eastern Star

and was active at her home church, Lakeside Methodist. Cora and Reverend Binford adored each other; their marriage was a blessing for both. I remember Cora saying that they never argued but were able to talk and work out whatever their differences might be.

After Cora married my life changed, as it centered more around my friends and school and my reliance on her became less. Many afternoons after school and on weekends I spent skating and playing with my best friend Anna Gene Clift from West Clinton School, who lived a few blocks away. In addition, my father had begun to date Jewell, and she spent weekends with us in Huntsville. Often, they took me with them during the day on Saturdays and Sundays. Although my time with Cora was limited, our love and devotion to each other never changed.

Margaret Anne's Stepmother and Cora's Dismissal

My father married [Jewell] when I was twelve, and Cora continued to work for us but not as my caretaker, instead as my father's and stepmother's maid. They had moved to the family home on Gates Street and my grandparents then lived in the Russel Erskine year-round. The following summer, when I was away at overnight camp, my stepmother, who was jealous of my relationship with Cora, told my father that Cora had cursed her. What happened was that my father had the floors refinished and my stepmother told Cora to remove her shoes so she would not scratch the floor while she worked. Cora responded that the floors were cold and that she did not want to catch a cold and refused to remove her shoes. I believe my stepmother created the situation to have a reason to tell my father to fire Cora.

My father never asked Cora what had happened; instead, he said, "Cora, we can't have you talking to Mrs. Jewell that way, you will have to leave." I learned about what happened when I returned from camp and only heard Cora's explanation years later. Even today, I cannot get over my father's lack of appreciation for the many years that Cora had taken care of me or concern for my relationship with Cora. There was no severance pay. Cora had income from her husband; however, had she been alone I know he would have acted the same way, which disturbs me greatly, even today. Cora would normally have stood up for herself; however, I believe she realized that with my stepmother in charge, it was time for her to leave. My stepmother had taken over my care, and Cora did not

like being a maid; she preferred to take care of children. Sometime later Cora went to work for the Vernon Hutchens family, who had several small children. Cora's leaving would have been devastating to me had I been younger, but as a twelve-year-old, I said very little and kept my sadness to myself.

Prep School and Beyond

I left home in the eleventh grade to attend prep school, and after graduation I went to college. When I was able to drive, I visited Cora when I was home, even though my parents said that my driving in a Black neighborhood was dangerous. It was evidence of my stepmother's continuing jealousy of Cora. I visited with Cora, regardless.

When my father died in 1995, I asked Cora to sit with me at his funeral since it had been Cora and my father who raised me. I remember overhearing my stepmother telling people, "Margaret Anne let that Black woman sit next to her at her father's funeral." When Cora died and I gave her eulogy, my stepmother refused to attend her funeral. She also made remarks about the special tribute I wrote that was published in the *Huntsville Times* in which I referred to Cora as my mother.

Cora Barley Binford. (Courtesy of the Huntsville History Collection, gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

Reverend Binford was much older than Cora and began to decline while Cora was still quite active. They had moved from Mrs. Cooper's house that Cora had inherited near St. Bartley's Church when urban renewal took it by eminent domain and had moved to Hammonds Avenue off Pulaski Pike to a new brick house they had built. Cora took care of Reverend Binford beautifully by herself during those years, even though her siblings, her friends, and her neighbors all offered to help her. She prided herself on being able to develop a technique to turn him often so that he never had a bed sore. Cora would leave home for short periods to take care of errands. She told me that it was important that she get out and would carefully plan her outings so that she could go out once a day. Cora said that she realized if the house caught on fire, she would not be able to get Reverend Binford out. She trusted God and knew Reverend Binford would be fine when she returned, and he always was.

THE JEW JOINT

The "Jew Joint Event" occurred during the 1990s when I had begun attending the Barley family reunions with Cora. Attendees often numbered around two hundred, including children. Everyone arrives on Friday and there is registration and a reception. Saturday morning there is a family picnic at one of the town's parks since the "old home place" no longer exists. On Saturday night there is a banquet. One of the senior family members gives a keynote speech, followed by a program which includes more talks, tributes to ancestors, and a video. On Sunday everyone attends the family's ancestral church, Lakeside Methodist.

During one memorable reunion, I was sitting next to Cora at church on Sunday morning. One of her nephews, Cory Brown, not an ordained preacher but a preacher nevertheless, was invited to give the sermon. At one point in the sermon Cory warned everyone not to go to places where there was drinking and other questionable behavior. He called these places "Jew Joints." When I heard his remark, I was devastated. Here was my family, folks I had played with as a child, and I heard one of them make a remark like that. I thought Cora hadn't heard the remark and so I said nothing to her.

The following week I phoned ADL [the Anti-Defamation League] and the rabbi at Temple B'nai Sholom and was told not to make an ordeal

of the situation but to get some books on Judaism for Cory and ask Lakeside's minister to call together a meeting with the three of us to discuss what I had heard Cory say. I phoned the minister, who agreed to convene a meeting.

We all arrived after dinner. First the minister suggested we join hands and pray, which we did. Then we sat down, and the minister told Cory that I had something I wanted to say. I began by telling him that I was Jewish and that during his sermon at the family church service I had heard a remark he made that had disturbed me. Cory looked baffled. When I mentioned his reference to "Jew Joints," Cory began to laugh and explained that he would never have said anything negative about the Jewish people. Further, that he had lived in Mississippi during the civil rights era and had made many wonderful Jewish friends from the North who had saved his life. He then told me that what he had said was "Juke Joints." Then I remembered what juke joints were from reading Alice Walker's *Color Purple***.** Initially I was embarrassed but recovered quickly because what followed was bridging a cultural gap between races that we three recognized. We hugged, prayed some more, and parted as new friends.

Since then, I have shared my "Jew Joint" story at appropriate places, once when Dillard, a New Orleans African American university, and Tulane, with its large Jewish population, were having a gathering with the local New Orleans Jewish community. Both groups were sharing their slave stories, attempting to outdo one another. It occurred to me that they were missing the point and raised my hand to offer my "Jew Joint" story. As I was talking, the Jewish folks were on the edge of their chairs and the African Americans were smiling, knowing exactly what had happened to me. Telling the story made such an impression that the wife of Dillard's president asked me to sit next to her during the rest of the event. Before I left, she invited me to be her guest the following week to hear B. B. King, who was performing at Dillard at an invitation-only performance.

I've told my "Jew Joint" story countless times, once to Abraham Foxman, former Director of ADL. It illustrates the real issue between races, which is a cultural one. Another issue between Blacks and Whites is the concept of TIME—which I have discussed at length with Cora's brother Earl Barley. That story will have to wait for the right occasion to share. It too illustrates a cultural gap between races.

Cora Barley Binford and Margaret Anne Goldsmith.
(Courtesy of the Huntsville History Collection,
gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

Enduring Ties

After Reverend Binford passed away Cora continued to live alone and to be active in her church and her community, until she too began to fail. I had returned to Huntsville to live after my father died in 1995 and visited with Cora regularly; I took her out for dinner on Mother's Day and on other occasions and went with her to her family reunions every year. I was fortunate to hear Cora give the keynote address at her reunion banquet one year.

My relationship to Cora deepened over the years; when I had three children, I became even more aware of the important role Cora had played in my life. My children had the good fortune of meeting and getting to know Cora, as she lived until all three were young adults.

As Cora began to decline, I stayed in close touch and checked on her daily. She remained at home, and I arranged with her two nieces who oversaw her affairs for the three of us to take meals to her when she could no longer cook. Cora began to suffer from dementia. I remember crying following our visits when she would talk about her parents and her siblings who were no longer living as though they were still there. Eventually I was able to deal with the situation and began responding appropriately. I suggested to her nieces that they move Cora to an assisted living arrangement, but they refused, saying that her brothers would not approve. When Cora fell and was hospitalized, I spoke with her doctor and asked him to request she be released to a facility where she could receive care and not go home alone. Her nieces then moved Cora to an assisted living home. Cora remained there and then was moved to a second home where she received excellent care, and I was pleased. When that arrangement ended with the caretaker retiring, Cora was moved to a third facility. The last facility, run by an immature young woman, was of great concern to me. I talked to her nieces and to several other members of her family. Cora was not moved and continued to decline rapidly. I made calls to various agencies, only to learn that small facilities of that nature are not supervised and do not fall under the guidelines of homes that must follow government regulations.

As I look back at our over-sixty-year relationship, Cora was the most important person in my life, especially during my early years, and she continued to be important to me throughout her life. She was and continues to be my teacher. Cora was a person of sterling character, a person

whom I respect and admire more than anyone I have ever known. She lived through difficult times, including segregation, the Depression, and World War II. She never wavered from her high standards and impeccable morals. My life without Cora would have been very difficult. A wise woman who was my therapist told me after hearing my family story that it was because of Cora that I survived.

NOTES

[1] A redacted version of Margaret Anne Goldsmith's "Cora Memoirs" is presented here to establish a clear chronology of the Goldsmith/Barley Binford personal story. In some instances, similar versions of the same information appear. Section headings in italics, drawn from "A Tribute to My Mother," were also added by the editors for clarity.

[2] Leonard Rogoff with Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Four German Jewish Families and the Built Environment of Huntsville Alabama, 1852–2017," *Southern Jewish History* 20 (2017): 33–67.

[3] Margaret Anne Goldsmith amassed a vast archival collection. It is located within the Goldman Schiffman Family Collection and housed in the Archives and Special Collections in the M. Louis Salmon Library, University of Alabama, Huntsville. It includes detailed documents about Schiffman and Company, Hollytree Camp, the Russel Erskine Hotel, the estate documents of generations of her family, and a genealogy of these generations. In addition, her collections include photographs, documents, artifacts, descriptions of contributions (including land donations, endowments, and exhibits), and the transfer of the Goldsmith Schiffman Collection from the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library to UAH Special Collections and Archives in 2017, as well as master list notebooks, VHS and cassette tapes, framed artwork and certificates, oversized materials, reference books, close to 150 vignettes authored by Margaret Anne Goldsmith, business and family tax information, an 1840 siddur, and a box of Cora's personal belongings. Margaret Anne Goldsmith donated some 150 boxes. Other family heirlooms are housed at the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia and the Breman Museum in Atlanta.

[4] "Cora Binford Obituary," December 2, 2005, accessed April 1, 2024, https://obits.al.com/us/obituaries/huntsville/name/cora-binford-obituary?id=9508300.

[5] Stephen Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA, 2004); Katherine Van Wormer, David W. Jackson III, and Charletta Suddeth, *The Maid Narratives: Black Domestics and White Families in the Jim Crow South* (Baton Rouge, 2012); Geraldine Youcha, *Minding the Children: Child Care in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Boston, 2005).

[6] Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, curator, *Framing Shadows: Portraits of Nannies from the Robert Langmuir African American Photograph Collection,* Emory Libraries, accessed May 12, 2024, https://exhibits.libraries.emory.edu/framing-shadows; Just Like a Family (blog), accessed

March 15, 2024, https://justlikefamilyblog.com; David Pilgrim, "The Mammy Caricature," Jim Crow Museum, accessed March 15, 2024, https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/mammies/homepage.htm.

[7] Bertram W. Korn, *Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865*," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 50 (March 1961): 9–68; Lance J. Sussman, "Foreword," in Bertram Wallace Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 2001); Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn, eds., *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader* (New York, 2010).

[8] Laura Arnold Leibman, *Once We Were Slaves: The Extraordinary Journey of a Multiracial Jewish Family* (New York, 2021); Joshua D. Rothman, "'Notorious in the Neighborhood': An Interracial Family in Early National and Antebellum Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 67 (February 2001): 73–114.

[9] Marc Dollinger, *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s* (Waltham, MA, 2018); Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, 2006); Eric J. Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (Cambridge, MA, 2005). For an insightful fictional account of the relationship between a Jewish family and its Black maid in Alabama, see Roy Hoffman, *Almost Family* (New York, 1983).

[10] "Jewish Girls and African American Nannies," *Lilith*, December 17, 2002, accessed March 25, 2024, https://lilith.org/articles/jewish-girls-and-african-american-nannies-2.

[11] Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny* (London, 2014); Katherine Holden, *Nanny Knows Best: The History of the British Nanny* (Cheltenham, UK, 2013).

[12] Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory,* (Ann Arbor, 2008): 14.

[13] Pilgrim, "Mammy Caricature." Other words are also descriptors of types of domestic and household help. Synonyms for "mammy" mean different things at different times and in different places: nanny, nurse, wet nurse, caregiver, housemaid, nursemaid, house servant, mother's helper, domestic, and housekeeper.

[14] A Negro Nurse, "'We Are Literally Slaves': An Early Twentieth Century Black Nanny Sets the Record Straight," *Independent,* January 25, 1912, 196–200, accessed February 29, 2024, https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/80. The *Independent* was a weekly magazine published in New York City from 1848 to 1928.

[15] Sally Mann, "White Child, Black Nanny," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 26, 2015, accessed February 29, 2024, https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2015/10/white-child-black-nanny. See also Sally Mann, *Hold Still: A Memoir with Photographs* (New York, 2015).

[16] Abraham J. Peck, "That Other 'Peculiar Institution': Jews and Judaism in the Nineteenth Century South," *Modern Judaism*, 7 (February 1987): 110.

[17] Ranée G. Pruitt, ed., *Eden of the South: A Chronology of Huntsville, Alabama, 1805–2005* (Huntsville, AL, 2005), 180–99.

[18] John H. Tate, "Do You Know Sonnie?," *Old Huntsville* 354 (August 2022): 3–6; Adam Harris, "Why Not My Son? How Sonnie Hereford IV and His Dad Integrated Alabama's Public Schools," Southern Poverty Law Center, September 7, 2018, accessed March 31, 2024, https://www.splcenter.org/news/2018/09/07/why-not-my-son-how-sonnie-hereford-iv-and-his-dad-integrated-alabamas-public-schools; Kelly Fisk Hamlin, "Huntsville Civil

Rights Timeline," *Huntsville Historical Review* 44 (April 2019): 35–60. By contrast, see Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham Alabama, The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York, 2001).

[19] For an example of a current narrative of Huntsville during the civil rights era, see the children's book Hester Bass, *Seeds of Freedom: The Peaceful Integration of Huntsville, Alabama* (Somerville, MA, 2018).

[20] Redstone Arsenal Video Archives, "The Historical Record of Margaret Anne Goldsmith," January 7, 2024, accessed April 1, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pp9hQQKtbU4.

[21] In an e-mail to the editors on March 26, 2024, Goldsmith explained: "I wrote the [Cora] memoir after my eightieth birthday, sometime during 2023. After my eightieth birthday I wrote letters to many of my guests, including those unable to attend. Afterwards my daughter Bobbie encouraged me to write a memoir about Cora, which I did. Then I wrote memoirs to each of my three children and one about their father who had passed away. I had each child's memoir, the one of Cora, and the one of their father hand-bound in leather for each."

[22] Margaret Anne Goldsmith Hanaw, "5 Generations of Life: My Family and the Huntsville, Alabama Jewish Community, 1852–1982," *Huntsville Historical Review* 12 (July 1982): 5–40; Marjorie Ann Reeves, "Jewish Business Community During the 19th Century," *Huntsville Historical Review* 42 (October 2017): 24–28; Dawn Suiter, "I. Schiffman & Company: A Depression-Era Success Story," *Huntsville Historical Review* 42 (April 2018): 18–50; "Huntsville, Alabama," ISJL Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed April 1, 2024, https://www.isjl.org/alabama-huntsville-encyclopedia.html.

[23] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, e-mail to the editors, January 2, 2024. On March 15, 1983, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) passed a resolution on patrilineality.

[24] Diane Ellis, Lynn Jones, and Pat Ryan, eds., *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly* 30: 3–4 (Fall and Winter 2004) was devoted entirely to the Russel Erskine Hotel, including the following articles: David Bowman, "The Russel Erskine Hotel," 13–44; Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Living at the Hotel: Childhood Memories," 45–54; and David C. Greenberg, "Historic Renovation of the Russel Erskine," 65–70.

[25] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, telephone call with editors, January 22, 2024.

[26] Cora Binford Obituary, accessed April 19, 2024, https://obits.al.com/us/obituaries/huntsville/name/cora-binford-obituary?id=9508300.

[27] Ibid.

[28] "Huntsville, Alabama," ISJL Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed April 1, 2024, https://www.isjl.org/alabama-huntsville-encyclopedia.html.

[29] The authors had a telephone call with the current rabbi of Temple B'nai Sholom, P. J. Schwartz, on January 5, 2024, that included an extensive conversation about current antisemitism in the Huntsville area. Rabbi Schwartz observed that antisemitism exists in Huntsville but is often subtle.

Book Reviews

A Slow, Calculated Lynching: The Story of Clyde Kennard. By Devery S. Anderson. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2023. 299 pages.

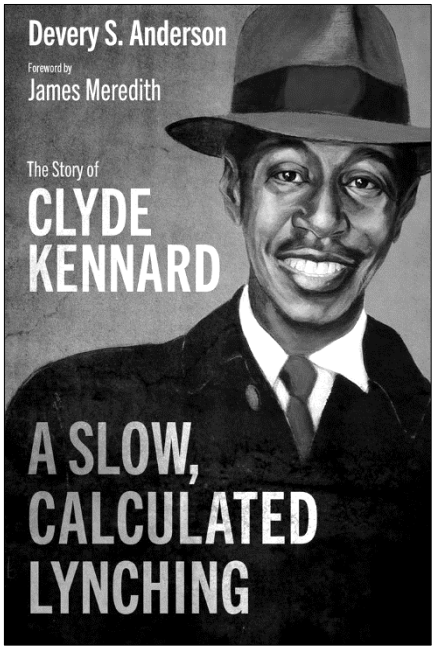
Students of the southern Jewish experience may have first learned of the plight of Clyde Kennard in *The Quiet Voices* (1997), the anthology that Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin coedited that illuminates the southern rabbinate's response to the crisis of civil rights. In a chapter profiling Rabbi Charles Mantinband of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, the British historian Clive Webb devoted a couple of pages to Kennard's attempt to desegregate Mississippi Southern College (MSC), which became the University of Southern Mississippi, in 1962. Kennard was nothing if not persistent; he was also congenitally upbeat. He yearned for change, having seen the wretchedness of white supremacy of his native state from outside. Kennard had spent a decade serving in the U.S. Army in Germany, where he taught denazification, and in Korea, where he made thirty-six jumps as a paratrooper. As a civilian he took classes at the University of Chicago before returning to Forrest County to help his widowed mother manage a chicken farm.

Seeking to further his education, Kennard made three formal attempts—from 1955 until 1959—to enroll at the all-white institution of higher learning closest to the farm. The leadership of MSC justifiably worried that constitutional law was on the applicant's side. After all, in 1950 the Supreme Court had explicitly abandoned the doctrine of "separate but equal" for colleges and universities, even before invalidating Jim Crow in public schools. But rather than get on the right side of history, an option

that Kennard offered MSC, it stonewalled. The school reinterpreted regulations and invented newer requirements. It failed to send the proper forms and provided misleading advice about the admissions process. These delaying tactics frustrated—but did not deter—Kennard. During this process Rabbi Mantinband gave Kennard loyal and open support, Webb noted.

But Kennard was badly outnumbered. He did not realize that his quest attracted the attention of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, a secretive and sinister agency that engaged in surveillance. This segregationist, tax-supported *Stasi* tried to find derogatory information on Kennard but came up empty. Then the police, the political order, and the judicial system accomplished what the academic bureaucracy could not indefinitely hope to do. Convicted felons were disqualified from enrollment at any state university or college, so Kennard was framed. In a dry state, police arrested the teetotaler on false charges for possessing two cartons of whiskey in his car, which he had allegedly driven recklessly. More ominously, in 1960 Kennard was convicted—based on perjured testimony—of stealing five sacks of chicken feed (worth about twenty-five dollars) from a warehouse. The all-white jury needed only ten minutes to find the defendant guilty, and the penalty was harsh—seven years (including hard labor) at the notorious Parchman prison farm. Suffering from anemia and then from colon cancer, he was denied crucial medical treatment that might have prolonged and perhaps even saved his life. When the penal system finished him off, Kennard was only thirty-eight years old.

A Slow, Calculated Lynching expands Clive Webb's concise account of Kennard's terrible plight, which represented the cruelty of the racism that pervaded mid-century Mississippi. The author of this superb volume, Devery S. Anderson, is not a historian of southern Jewry. A graduate of the University of Utah, he is primarily a historian of Mormons. But in 2015 he also published what is by far the best book on the murder of Emmett Till, and Anderson's latest work amply displays his remarkable gifts as a researcher. He is exceptionally energetic, thorough, and resourceful. He certainly did not undertake this project looking for Jews, but Anderson evidently cannot help himself. He has identified Kennard's two closest white friends in Hattiesburg—perhaps his *only* real white friends there—and both were Jews. Although Mantinband had moved to Texas shortly



before Kennard died, the prison visits that the rabbi of Temple B'nai Israel made showed an admirable devotion. Mantinband also chaired the Mississippi Council on Human Relations; but because the rabbi did not drive, Kennard sometimes chauffeured him to speaking engagements throughout the state. The rabbi tried to keep Kennard's mind active during his ordeal. One example was the gift of one of the monumental volumes of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

One of Mantinband's congregants also befriended Kennard: Dave Matison, Jr., a merchant. (This was, after all, the small-town Deep South.) Matison partly owned Hattiesburg's largest department store, Fine Brothers–Matison. His father had immigrated from Minsk half a century earlier, and Kennard became an occasional employee in this family's store in addition to performing household repairs. When he was put on trial, both Mantinband and Matison served as character witnesses and refused to accept Kennard's guilt. Matison nevertheless regarded his friend's effort to desegregate MSC as quixotic and offered to pay for his further education outside of Mississippi. With a bachelor's degree, Matison believed, Kennard would have a better chance to desegregate a graduate or professional school. Webb disapproved of Matison's gesture. Certainly well-intended and generous, it also meant a renunciation of rights. Kennard paid a high price for that principle, which he lived long enough to see vindicated only when James Meredith, who contributes a foreword to Anderson's book, was admitted to Ole Miss in October 1962. (Kennard died the following Independence Day.)

By 1962, a third Jew entered the story that *A Slow, Calculated Lynching* so compellingly presents. After completing his junior year at Brandeis University, Ronald A. Hollander decided to live in Jackson and write for

an independent, pro–civil rights newspaper that militants from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) had founded. As an untrained reporter for the *Mississippi Free Press*, the twenty-year-old Long Islander learned of Kennard's unjust imprisonment and worsening health. By early August, Hollander's first story in that newspaper appeared, and he too was nothing if not persistent. By early November, Hollander reached a much larger readership with *The Reporter*, a reliably liberal and influential magazine. It gave Hollander a forum and made the case of Clyde Kennard a national story. Max Ascoli, an Italian-born Jewish philosopher and anti-Fascist activist, was the founder and publisher of *The Reporter*. Ascoli found refuge in New York and married a daughter of Julius Rosenwald, the Sears, Roebuck CEO and visionary philanthropist. Unfortunately, Hollander arrived in Mississippi too late to do the beleaguered subject of his journalism much good. But at least Hollander managed to transfer his full and invaluable files to Anderson before dying in 2022.

Readers of *A Slow, Calculated Lynching* may find it hard to escape the conclusion that the gallant but luckless Kennard was just a little ahead of his time. Only two years after his death, two Black women matriculated without friction at USM. They did not need the legal help that Meredith had required against the recalcitrance of Ole Miss, where he could draw upon two of the very best civil rights lawyers in the nation: Constance Baker Motley and Jack Greenberg of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. By contrast Kennard felt compelled to reassure MSC and its segregationist supporters that an organization as stigmatized and threatening as the NAACP was not involved in litigation against the university. Medgar Evers offered Kennard unstinting moral support, however, and the NAACP did provide financial aid so that his mother could keep her farm. Kennard recruited R. Jess Brown, and to a lesser extent, Jack Young, as defense attorneys to rebut the false charges in court. The pair constituted exactly half of the state's Black bar. Both lawyers were dedicated and able. But their race handicapped them in court, and their idealistic client would have preferred MSC to admit him on his merits without filing a lawsuit.

Anderson has gained access to trial transcripts as well as to the files of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, and characteristically conducted numerous interviews. A few corroborating details could also have been gleaned from Rabbi P. Allen Krause's 1966 interview with

Mantinband, which is excerpted in *To Stand Aside or Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement* (2016). The rabbi underscored the boldness that was required to serve as a character witness, as he and Matison did, on behalf of a Black citizen who sought to end the segregation of higher education in Mississippi. *A Slow, Calculated Lynching* has everything to do with the mid-century struggle to remedy racial injustice, and ostensibly the fate of Clyde Kennard had nothing to do with the conduct of small-town Jews. Yet their place in this story suggests the difficulty of separating them from the travail of civil rights. From that angle, the reaction of southern rabbis and merchants and their families looks paradigmatic, a token of a larger topic. In Hattiesburg, at least, they partly met the moral challenge.

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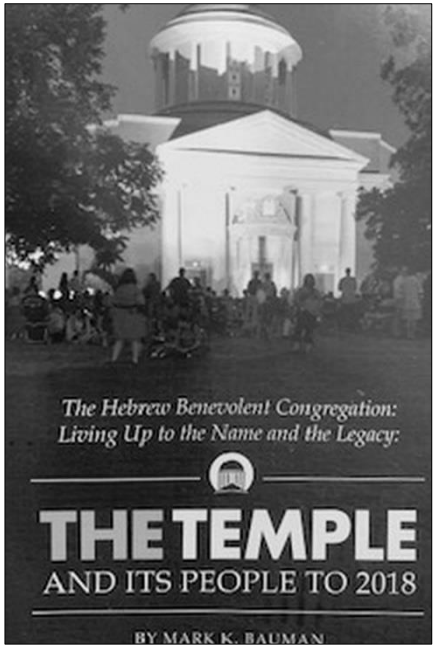
The Temple and Its People to 2018: The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation: Living Up to the Name and the Legacy. By Mark K. Bauman. Atlanta: The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, The Temple, 2023. 280 pages.

The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, better known as "The Temple," is Atlanta's preeminent Reform congregation. Officially chartered in 1867, it can be traced back to a society that was founded in 1860. Two events in the congregation's history stand out: the lynching of congregation member Leo Frank in 1915 and the bombing of the congregation's building in 1958. Both cases illustrate not only the reluctance of the local government and the legal system to address deeply rooted racism, antisemitism, and extrajudicial killings, but also the fragility of Jewish acceptance. The Frank case has been extensively covered by scholars and writers. Many readers outside of the South will be less familiar with the other deeply unsettling event. On October 12, 1958, The Temple made national news when several white supremacists who called themselves the "Confederate Underground" detonated fifty sticks of dynamite, causing considerable damage to the congregation's edifice. Due to several fortunate circumstances, no one was injured in the attack. The bombing was motivated at least in part by Rabbi Jacob Rothschild's courageous

advocacy of civil rights. The bombing occurred, not quite coincidentally, when Atlanta was reinventing itself into an international business center. In contrast to 1915, the city's establishment, led by Mayor William B. Hartsfield, quickly condemned the attack. Yet no perpetrator was ever convicted.

In 1996 the writer Melissa Fay Greene published *The Temple Bombing*, a detailed history of this episode. She provided some background about the congregation's history. A detailed history of The Temple, to add to Steven Hertzberg's historical survey of Atlanta Jewry, *Strangers within the Gate City* (1978), remains a desideratum. In 2017, several years before The Temple celebrated the 150th anniversary of its founding, Mark K. Bauman began collecting material about the congregation's history. The result is not a historical overview. *The Temple and Its People to 2018* is instead an extensive and detailed chronology of major events in the history of the congregation.

Houses of worship have formed an essential component of American society from the earliest days of the European settlement. Many religious congregations have published accounts about their history, sometimes repeatedly. These range from handwritten reports and small pamphlets to beautifully bound and richly illustrated volumes. Some are simple timelines; others are longer narrative accounts. Only a tiny number of these histories can be characterized as critically informed academic studies. Most book-length histories of congregations have been commissioned by their boards, usually on the occasion of an important anniversary. These internal histories tend to sidestep problematic aspects of congregational history and usually aim to reach a readership consisting of the members of these religious communities. Not surprisingly, internal histories devote much attention to leaders at



the expense of inclusiveness. Quite a few internal congregational histories nevertheless contain valuable information and can be put to good use by scholars of American religious history. *The Temple and Its People to 2018* belongs to this category.

Published by the congregation, this volume is a rather unusual hybrid. Longer narrative passages are organized along a chronology of the congregation's history. The book lacks illustrations other than a couple of photos on the front and back covers. A recognized specialist in southern Jewish history, Bauman has assembled much useful detail about Atlanta Jewry, about the city itself, and about events on the national and even international level. Unfortunately, there is no index, which would have been helpful in looking up specific events and figures. A three-page bibliography sheds light on works about Jewish history in Atlanta and the South. The timeline is divided into six time periods. For each period Bauman provides a very brief overview. Each section contains dozens of dates (only years, not months or days), each with a brief summary of events. For some years up to twenty events are discussed. Some events and appointments receive several paragraphs, others barely a sentence. It remains unclear whether these events are listed in chronological order for each year.

No statistics or tables are provided. For some years Bauman shares a few numbers about Atlanta's Jewish and general population. But the reader cannot track the development of the congregation's membership over the last century and a half. This lacuna is a pity because one important question is how a prominent urban congregation coped with suburbanization and with the coexistence of Conservative and Orthodox congregations—in a city that became a major center of Jewish life beginning about six decades ago. Did Jews who moved from the Northeast and Midwest join The Temple, or did they mostly affiliate with the newer suburban congregations? Moreover, it remains unclear whether The Temple became a metropolitan congregation that has been able to attract younger members from the suburbs. A brief discussion of these changes on page 189 does not provide answers to these questions. I also wondered what relationships The Temple fostered with other Atlanta congregations, not least with the famous Ebenezer Baptist Church, which Martin Luther King, Jr., and his father served. These unanswered questions point to the shortcomings of the encyclopedic timeline approach that Bauman adopted.

Nor is it clear which criteria he used in determining which events and other features to include. For instance, readers will find much information about women and women's organizations, but very little about members who fought in World War I and World War II. The names of dozens of board members are mentioned, as well as the dates of their service and the offices they held. For members of the congregation that published this volume, such information matters. But it also overloads the text with much that will not pique the curiosity of other potential readers. Bauman could have moved some of this material into appendices or placed it online. No map of the city is provided. It takes considerable time to figure out when the congregation moved in its long history, because that information is buried in the timeline. For basic facts, readers may find the congregation's website easier to navigate. There already exists an account of the rabbis who served The Temple, as well as major events in its history.

One major challenge for any author seeking to write the history of a congregation is the availability of historical records. Most American congregations are highly mobile. Older congregations have frequently relocated, following their members to new neighborhoods. Repeated moves, the lack of space for documents, indifference to the value of appreciating the past, and transitions in leadership explain why few congregations maintain adequate archives. Bauman's timeline indicates that he pulled a lot of material not from The Temple's archive (if it actually exists) but from Jewish and other periodicals. Here energy and ingenuity met necessity. He sometimes provides dates (although only calendar years) and quotations, but unfortunately, he provides no citations.

The encyclopedic timeline approach of this volume comes with yet another downside. Less than a page is devoted to the 1958 bombing, which made national headlines. The Frank case also receives remarkably limited attention. According to the timeline, Frank was a member of The Temple and married a local woman in 1910. One of his attorneys also belonged to the congregation. In passing, Bauman remarks that many members of The Temple fled the city after the lynching. Most readers would undoubtedly be curious to learn more. Despite the limitations of this volume, it constitutes a valuable contribution to southern Jewish history and to the genre of congregational histories. Bauman's achievement will hopefully inspire a critical history of this major American congregation. The Temple has

offered a unifying vision in a city (and a nation) still struggling to overcome the bitter legacy of bigotry.

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Jewish Historical Societies: Navigating the Professional–Amateur Divide. Edited by Joel Gereboff and Jonathan L. Friedmann. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2023. 288 pages.

With this new volume, Joel Gereboff and Jonathan Friedmann have sparked an important conversation about and for American Jewish historical societies. It is a call to action, of sorts. Although, as the coeditors rightly state, more unites these organizations than divides them, rarely do they come together and learn from each other. Perhaps this volume will change that.

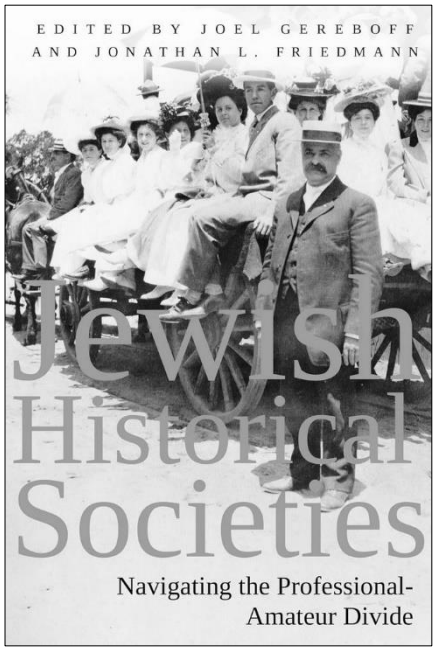
A study of six of the nation's forty regional Jewish historical societies, the book tells a collective story of perseverance spanning more than six decades. In his introductory essay, Gereboff, associate professor of religious studies at Arizona State University, provides scholarly context for the field of American Jewish history—namely, the major players and the important publications—and the place of historical societies in it. Many of the societies, however, were built by committed amateur historians and advocates. Their ranks suggest, as the volume's subtitle makes clear, a divide between academically trained historians and amateurs. According to Gereboff, this has been largely in the "standards, tools, methods, analysis, and contextualization" used in the presentation and construction of the Jewish story in America but can also be seen in the missions and directions of the societies. An underlying question in the book is whether the gap can be bridged. The activities of all six historical societies featured show the myriad ways in which bridges have been built and are being imagined for the future.

The second chapter, by George M. Goodwin, longtime editor of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Society's (RIJHS) publication, *The Notes*, analyzes the ups and downs of that society's evolution and provides insights on the history and politics of the region. For example, what he calls

the "state's Jewish tug of war between the condemnation of hatred and the celebration of freedom" (93) makes for an interesting read. Friedmann's subsequent chapter on the Western States Jewish History Association (WSJHA), which he now directs, is a well-researched and thorough account of its split with the older Southern California Jewish Historical Society (SCJHS) and the battle over their shared journal, *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly*. Unfortunately, at triple the length of the other essays, Friedmann's piece creates a significant imbalance in the volume.

Long associated with the Southern Jewish Historical Society and its well-respected publication, *Southern Jewish History*, Mark K. Bauman takes deserved pride in the SJHS and how it continues to act on its mission and successfully reaches out to different groups. He writes: "The Scott and Donna Langston archival grant program, active participation of numerous archivists and museum professionals, the encouragement of individuals to donate materials to archives, and publications in the journal have fostered the development and expansion of archives and museums in the region" (180). The final three essays cover more recent history in far fewer pages: Jeanne Abrams discusses the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society (RMJHS) and Beck Archives; Catherine Cangany writes of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan (JHSM); and Lawrence Bell highlights the Arizona Jewish Historical Society (AZJHS).

The RMJHS provides an interesting model in that it combines a historical society with an archive (Beck) and ties them both to a university (Denver). Its minijournal ceased publication in 2008, while the JHSM's journal, *Michigan Jewish History*, was relaunched in 2020 as a peer-reviewed publication in order "to attract higher-quality work and academic authors' consideration" (198). In this case, a deliberate effort is made to bridge the divide. Finally, the AZJHS appears to be the least bothered by the professional–amateur divide; its raison d'être, as articulated by its executive director, harkens back to some of the earliest (nonacademic) missions of these societies. "We are not primarily interested in 'problematizing' the Jewish experience but rather in cultivating Jewish identity and presenting a positive image of Jews to those outside our community," Bell claims. "There is plenty of self-critique and infighting to go around. I want people to feel good about being Jewish" (223).



Since a small cadre of people started many of these societies, and much of their work focused on publishing journals (a venue where the professional–amateur divide is most apparent), the volume disproportionately concentrates on these older and some might say drier stories. As someone who works in publishing, I found these histories fascinating; it is not clear, however, precisely what the discourse is intended to encourage. The volume includes an appendix of all local and regional Jewish historical societies, along with the year of their founding, the names of their journals, their websites, and missions. In what ways are the six chosen for this volume representative of the group? Thanks to the list, we know how many are now inactive, but how many others hover on the brink of dissolution? What does this trend mean? How do the societies measure short-term and long-term success? Their stories also involve issues that plague most legacy nonprofit organizations. Their challenge is finding ways to reach out to a younger audience, as well as funding for staff and resources, and continued relevance (both physically and virtually) in an ever-changing landscape.

Given our current digital age, the subject receives surprisingly scant attention in this book, particularly considering this professional–amateur divide. As the editors suggest, "In all cases, accessibility of archival material has become central, with digitization and online cataloguing playing increasing roles" (8). In short, everybody wants to digitize and have an online presence. But what that online presence looks like is a contested subject between professionals and lay people. The level of curation, for example, that online sources might receive offers but one example. Even regarding conventional publishing, the authors must know the connection between a journal's digital availability and frequency of citation.

Addressing access and cost to these initiatives impacts the professional–amateur divide, particularly if they are too costly or require subscriptions.

Despite the bumps in the road these societies have faced, the general tone of *Jewish Historical Societies* remains optimistic. Goodwin nevertheless calls the future of the RIJHS, the oldest of these organizations, a "mixed bag" (100). Its endowment has nearly doubled, and it has moved into a more visible and adaptable space, but its membership has declined considerably. The WSJHA has relaunched and revamped its history journal, *Western States Jewish History*, and maintained its online Jewish Museum of the American West. But Friedmann thinks it is too soon to tell if they are successful. Meanwhile, Bauman concludes that the SJHS enjoys an enviable position, with a "dramatically growing endowment and stable organizational structure" (188). With her article titled "Our Star is Rising," Cangany's vision for the inclusion of a new museum in the JHSM is both bold and inspiring. It aims "to protect and preserve Jewish Michigan's material culture, to offer engaging and relevant histories for today's diverse audiences, to partner with high-profile organizations within and beyond the Jewish community, and to hold on to our core while also stretching our reach" (204).

The RMJHS is charting a new course with the recent retirement of longtime director Jeanne Abrams and the hiring of Joshua Furman as her successor. A search for a new curator of the Beck archives recently resulted in the hiring of David Fasman. Finally, the youngest of the societies discussed, the AZJHS (est. 1981) has plotted its own path with the building of a new Holocaust education center, increased interfaith partnerships, a diverse range of programming, and use of its space. "The more we diversify and get away from the Arizona Jewish story," executive director Bell concludes, "the more Jewish transplants and non-Jews are attracted to our offerings" (225). This assessment records a shift in how to define the agenda of a Jewish historical society, which others may replicate, and is a story worth following.

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The Life and Letters of Samuel Ellsworth Fleet: An Immigrant's Tale. By Jerome Novey. Independently published via Amazon, 2023. 270 pages.

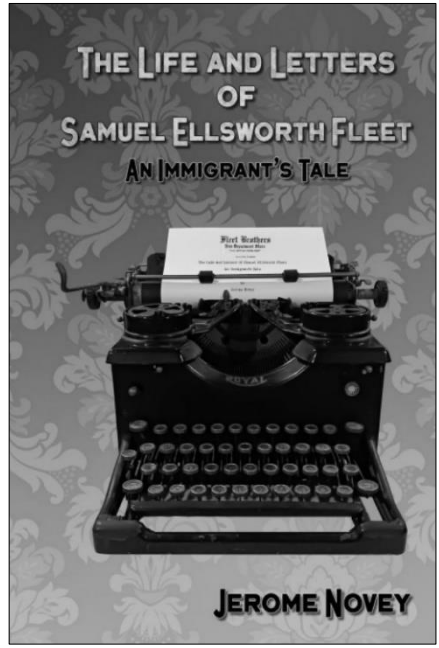
We are like cut flowers; we die without roots, which are our collective memories. Some southern Jews do not have the benefit of learning much about their ancestors. Only a tiny percentage left any paper trail for their descendants to recover and consider and reproduce. The Fleets are not among those unlucky families, because Jerome Novey has reconstructed the past of his kin, and this "immigrant's tale" constitutes a microcosm of the experience of many Jewish families. This vivid volume rescues one family from the obscurity to which so many others have been consigned. An attorney based in Tallahassee, Novey has lovingly chronicled his family's story through a selection of 10 percent of 1,500 letters that his grandfather Samuel Fleet wrote mostly to relatives between 1917 and 1984. Because "his handwriting was illegible," Novey mentions that Fleet typed the letters on a manual typewriter and saved carbon copies. Happily, his grandson provides some political and geographical context as well.

Both an author and editor, Novey employs a narrative approach to the book. He usually prints entire letters (complete with dates and salutations); some of the primary sources are excerpts. The family name had been Pasinik under the tsars, although when it was changed to Fleet, or by whom, is unclear. The family was hardly exceptional in fleeing from the horror of pogroms to seek religious freedom and economic opportunity in the *Goldene Medina*, yet unusual in seeking refuge and a better life in Florida. From the state's early history, hospitality to Jewish immigrants could not have been easily predicted. Spain had taken possession of Florida in 1513, and until 1763 when the Treaty of Paris transferred possession to Great Britain, only Catholics—among European immigrants—were allowed to live in the colony. By the nineteenth century, Jews began settling in the tiny towns below Georgia. In 1845, when Florida achieved statehood, fewer than a hundred Jews lived there. By 1900 six Jewish congregations existed. Fourteen years later, the state housed fewer than eight thousand Jews, of whom the largest number lived in Jacksonville.

Samuel Fleet, the eldest of Sarah and Jacob Fleet's six sons and two daughters, was conceived in Balta, Ukraine, but born in a Philadelphia tenement in 1892. A strong-willed wife encouraged her husband to move

to the South to maximize the benefits for a growing family. With two hundred dollars and eleven-year-old Sam, Jacob took a Clyde Line steamship in 1903 to Florida and landed among the tiny Jewish community of Live Oak, about eighty-five miles west of Jacksonville. Seven years later, after the rest of the family arrived, Jacob and Sarah had accumulated enough resources from washing and pressing laundry to open a small retail shop. Theirs illustrates the typical saga of the emergence of Jewish merchants on the main streets and crossroads of southern villages and towns. What started as a small dry goods store in 1910 became a department store four years later. An expanding business enabled the Fleets to acquire real estate, a goal of many immigrants because Jews were usually forbidden to own land in the Old World. Live Oak prospered primarily because a local lumber company provided materials for the prefabricated home catalog business of Sears, Roebuck of Chicago.

Yet even in this remote town, Sarah and Jacob Fleet gave their children a strong Jewish life. Along with other Jewish families settled in Live Oak, they hired a *shochet* who also taught Hebrew and Judaism to the children. Lacking a separate synagogue, worship services took place at the Masonic Temple. In 1914 Sam married Minnie Mendelson of Jacksonville, a sign of adherence to tradition. In my efforts to document Florida Jewish history, I was amazed to discover that even in small Jewish communities, Jews found other Jews to marry. Jacob also took pride in his acquired citizenship. When he died in spring 1945, Sam was sitting shiva for Franklin D. Roosevelt. Sam Fleet balanced a business career with an active civic life in his adopted town. His letters reflect resourcefulness, adaptability, political acumen, and a sense of humor, as well as consciousness of his Jewish identity. Although bigotry characterized communities like Live Oak, Sam claimed not to fear the Ku Klux



Klan. He knew most of its members, "having sold them their sheets—seconds with the holes already in place." Novey admits that "Sam may have embellished the tale with the 'seconds' flourish," the lower-quality sheets.

His letters are poetic, full of wisdom, and not sparing of advice to his relatives, of whom Sam was sometimes critical. The themes of resilience, Jewish continuity, education, family loyalty, and friendship stand out. The topics range from God to taxes, but his basic message seems to have been the unknowable character of life, its ultimate mysteriousness. In letters to Novey's parents, Sam conveys his understanding that the biggest obstacle to happiness resides in "our own emotions." The body nevertheless makes its own claims. Beginning in 1962, his wife Minnie suffered the first of several strokes that left her bedridden until her death eight years later. At the age of eighty, Sam married Dora Sugarman Kusnitz of Rome, Georgia, whom he met while attending a bar mitzvah in Atlanta. Prior to his second marriage in 1972, he visited Israel—a destination about as different from Live Oak as one could imagine. Upon his return, Sam wrote that the visit "gave him an additional reason for being most happy to live in the U.S.A." He reflected that Israel is a haven for those "folks" who have been deprived of their freedom, that anyone who wants to work hard can survive there without fear, and that socialism had deprived most of any incentive to accumulate an estate.

The letters, spanning six generations, faithfully reflect the southern Jewish experience. Sam's voice comes across with immediacy, "as if he was sitting across the kitchen table, as we often did during his lifetime," Novey remarks. His grandfather exuded confidence and optimism throughout his life. He exhibited curiosity about people and deeply cared about those around him. Whatever the uncertainties and challenges of life in the twenty-first century, Novey points to the precariousness of Jewish life when the family fled Ukraine—the baseline of this "immigrant's tale" and its consequential southern chapters.

I first learned of Samuel Fleet through Maynard Abrams, an attorney who lived in Hollywood, Florida. He served as mayor and was president of the *MOSAIC: Jewish Life in Florida* project that evolved into the Jewish Museum of Florida on Miami Beach. Abrams married Gertrude Mendelson, whose mother Bessie Fleet was Sam's sister. Gertrude's father Louis was a brother of Sam's first wife. Abrams wrote a history of Gertrude's

family that included extensive family trees. The earliest items that he gave me for the *MOSAIC* project included a detailed front-page Live Oak newspaper article about the 1916 brit milah of Joel Fleet, a son of Sam and Minnie. The 1940 ketubah of Joel and Margaret Fleet and many family photos were donated to the collection of the museum. Thus I have known of the Fleet family for four decades. But not until this book did I grasp the durability and tenacity of its patriarch.

As a cultural anthropologist focusing on Florida Jewish communal history, I wish that Novey had supplied his readers with a family tree, so that they could identify more fully the recipients of the letters and their relationship to Sam. One grandchild of Minnie and Sam is Adele Fleet Bacow, the wife of Lawrence "Larry" Bacow, who became the twenty-ninth president of Harvard University. I was amused to read Sam's birthday letter to Larry, enclosing five dollars, a sum that the patriarch sent annually to all of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren as well as their spouses. The grandchildren reciprocated with correspondence that paid tribute to Sam's estimable character and charming personality. *The Life and Letters of Samuel Ellsworth Fleet* thus constitutes a glowing contribution to the family records that enhance southern Jewish historiography.

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Most Fortunate Unfortunates: The Jewish Orphans' Home of New Orleans. By Marlene Trestman. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2023. 336 pages.

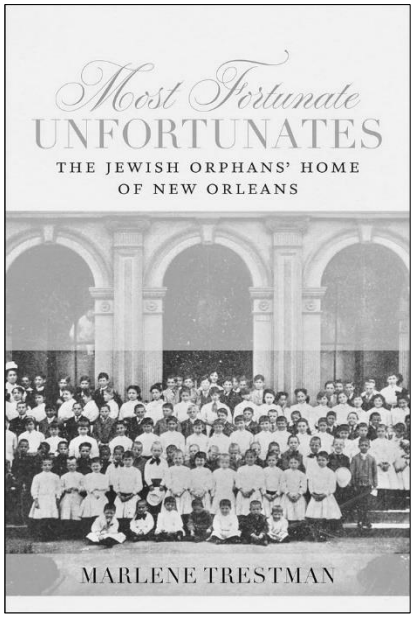
Marlene Trestman approaches her subject with passionate interest born of her own experience. As related in the preface to her study of the Jewish Orphans' Home of New Orleans (hereafter referred to as the Home), she lost both of her parents by age eleven and was placed with a loving foster family. She attended day camp and ballet classes at the Jewish Community Center that was housed in the Home's former building. The author also attended the Isidore Newman School that the Home had established. Acknowledging her personal connection to the Home and its

history, Trestman celebrates its accomplishments, but she does not shy away from its shortcomings. Hers is the first complete history of this influential institution.

Trestman's comprehensive and engaging study is enhanced by photographs and the recollections of Home alumni. Her book chronicles the development of the Home against the backdrop of American and Jewish history, conditions in the city of New Orleans, and the evolution of theory and practice in the dependent childcare field. In many respects, the Home's story resembles those of other American—and specifically American Jewish—orphanages in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Trestman also highlights some unique features of the Home, expanding knowledge of the history of both child welfare and southern Jewry. Her study addresses issues of race, class, and gender as they factor in the Home's story.

The association that created the Jewish Orphans' Home of New Orleans was formed in March 1855 in response to the recurring yellow fever epidemics in the city. New Orleans was a propitious site for such an institution. There Ursuline nuns founded the first orphanage in what became the United States as early as 1726. Other Christian groups established childcare institutions in the city, which boasted a number of Jewish charitable societies. The Home was not the first Jewish orphanage in the country. The South Carolina Hebrew Orphan Society had been formed in 1801 to place Jewish orphans in private homes, and the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia was established in 1855, six months before the New Orleans institution was built. However, the New Orleans Home was the first American Jewish orphanage to have its own building. The Home's founders and early leaders—including Gershom Kursheedt, James Gutheim, Meyer Simpson, and Joseph Marks—were prominent members of the city's Jewish community.

From its founding through its closing in 1946, the Home cared for a total of 1,623 full and half orphans, as well as twenty-four adult women, mostly widows. After 1924 the admission policy expanded to include any child "without adequate means of support" or "proper care or supervision" (188). Although half of the Home's residents were between the ages of five and ten, the New Orleans directors were unusual in accepting children under age two. Dues paid by association members and voluntary donations funded the orphanage. Beginning in 1875, District Grand



Lodge #7 of the International Order of B'nai B'rith also made annual contributions. A regional institution, the orphanage served seven mid-South states -- Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. Compared to the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York and the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum, for instance, the New Orleans Home was small. Its largest enrollment was 173 in 1915.

Like other American orphanages in the nineteenth century, the Home had a regimented atmosphere in its early decades. Children were summoned to meals and other activities by a clanging bell, slept in barracks-style dormitories, and ate at long tables. However, the Home's small size softened some of these features, allowing for more individual attention.

In the early twentieth century, childcare experts began to criticize institutional settings. Increasingly, they advocated for home care for dependent children, either with their families (subsidized by mothers' pensions) or in foster homes. Orphanage directors experienced mounting pressure to make their institutions as home-like as possible. They were encouraged to nurture children's individuality, to provide more social and recreational activities, and to promote their wards' greater integration into the larger community. The New Orleans Home's board and staff responded by introducing smaller bedrooms to replace the dormitories and family-style dining. Youngsters attended synagogues and enjoyed clubs, team sports, musical instruction and performances, overnight summer camp experiences, birthday celebrations, and more visiting opportunities with parents and relatives.

Like many other American Jewish orphanages, the Home's religious program reflected Reform Jewish practice as favored by the founders. Despite a bylaw that required adherence to Jewish dietary laws, the orphanage served shrimp and ham to its young charges by the early

twentieth century, and the children enjoyed both Passover matzo and Easter eggs. After 1880, when more eastern European immigrant children gained admittance to the Home, they received the same Reform-style religious training, which sometimes distanced them from their more observant immigrant parents.

Some aspects of the Home's history distinguish it from the experience of other American Jewish orphanages and enrich our understanding of the New Orleans Jewish community. At least fourteen of the Home's thirty founders owned slaves, including children. Trestman describes this situation as "moral dissonance" (17) with their support for the home. Other founders, even if they did not own slaves, profited from slavery in some way because it was intertwined with the city's economy. During the bitter Civil War years, the Home's leaders provided food and clothing to Confederate troops. Four of the leaders (including Rabbi Gutheim and his family) were expelled from the city because they refused to swear allegiance to the United States, as the occupying Union forces required in September 1862. The Home later hired Black staff members as housekeepers, custodians, cooks and, most commonly, nursery workers for its youngest children. As Trestman notes, middle- and upper-class white families in New Orleans often employed Black women as caregivers for young children at the time. She comments that "while segregationist laws and societal norms precluded public interactions between the races . . . close relationships between Black staff and white children flourished in the Home's private spaces" (182).

Moreover, unlike some other nineteenth-century general and Jewish orphanages, women were not among the founders of the New Orleans Home and did not have decision-making authority in the early years. They donated funds to the institution and served as paid matrons and teachers, and also as volunteer "honorary matrons" who helped supervise the matrons. Only in 1914 were women finally accepted as voting members of the Home's association and as members of its board.

The New Orleans Home experienced its share of challenges and accomplishments. In 1865, an Orleans Parish Grand Jury report deemed the orphanage to be dirty and "badly managed" (57). A serious episode occurred in 1886, when a superintendent was fired after an accusation of sexual assault of a fifteen-year-old female ward. Yet Trestman notes that the Home's leaders and staff were generally devoted to the children they

served. The institution always provided quality medical and dental care. As early as 1883, the directors introduced a kindergarten soon after that educational innovation arrived in New Orleans. And in 1904, the Home created the Isidore Newman School, a unique coeducational, nondenominational school that served Home wards as well as children from the general community. The school originally offered manual training along with regular subjects and later evolved into a premier private college preparatory school that still exists.

Trestman notes that the Home's directors were slower than their counterparts in other Jewish childcare institutions around the country to recognize noninstitutional care as the wave of the future. She points out that their preference for institutional over foster care typified New Orleans institutions at the time. But by the 1940s, the Home's enrollment declined sharply due to new governmental programs that provided support to impoverished families, consistent with expert advice. The financial difficulties of maintaining an aging building with a dwindling resident population, as well as the death of the long-time superintendent Harry Ginsburg, forced the Home to close its doors in 1946. In its place, the Jewish Children's Regional Service (JCRS) was created to support dependent children and their families, referring only those with particular emotional or behavioral needs to institutions. Today, the JCRS serves at-risk, dependent, and financially challenged Jewish children and families in Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee.

Many alumni had fond memories of growing up in the orphanage and believed that the Home provided them excellent care. According to Trestman, while some alumni "expressed sadness or bitterness about a policy or practice, such as the regimented schedule and discipline, . . . the vast majority . . . expressed gratitude for the care and opportunities the Home provided and the strong bonds they forged with fellow residents and staff" (3). Quite a few alumni went on to higher education and to illustrious careers in various fields. Trestman takes the title of her book from alumnus Louis Peters, who declared in 1980: "Fortunate unfortunates. That's what we were—we kids who were raised in the Jewish Children's Home in New Orleans."

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Peddlers, Merchants, and Manufacturers: How Jewish Entrepreneurs Built Economy and Community in Upcountry South Carolina. By Diane Catherine Vecchio. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2023. 202 pages.

Diane Catherine Vecchio has made an important contribution to Jewish immigration and economic history by explicating the movement of Jews into South Carolina's Upcountry, a ten-county region located in the state's northwestern section. By showing how Jews successfully negotiated its social, cultural, and economic environment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, she fills in an important missing piece of a larger, better-known picture. While this story has many similarities with Jews living elsewhere, there are overlooked aspects, particularly the mostly neglected Jewish contributions to the Upcountry's economic development. As Vecchio observes, "Jewish garment manufacturers have gone unnoticed" and more broadly "the Jews of the Upcountry have gone unnoticed" (4).

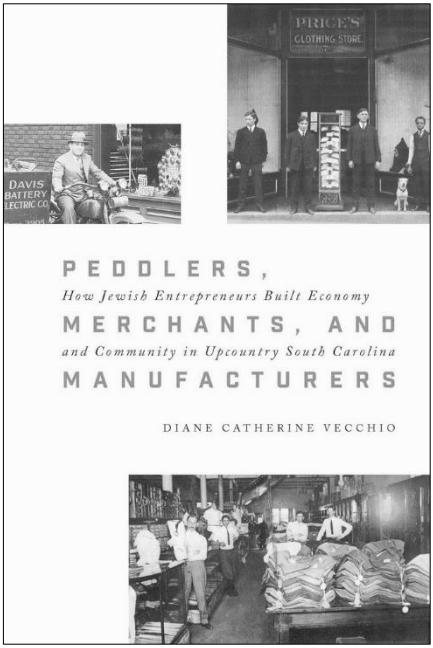
Focusing on the Upcountry's Jewish peddlers, merchants, and manufacturers, Vecchio combines her extensive experience in immigration history with oral histories, memoirs, and other primary and secondary sources. She demonstrates that these entrepreneurs left the country's northern and southern regions, as well as Russia and other European locations, and intentionally came to the Upcountry. It offered business opportunities and kinship networks, shaped by larger economic forces. Less familiar features match these familiar patterns. Upcountry Jews, like many in the South, rarely belonged to the working class, unlike their counterparts who settled in larger cities such as late nineteenth-century New York City. Instead, they lived as middle and upper-middle-class merchants and manufacturers, steadily using the resources and opportunities of their stature to make further advances and contributions. These, however, were not without serious economic challenges and setbacks, accompanying sporadic yet persistent antisemitism.

Vecchio progresses in a largely chronological fashion. After overviewing the Upcountry's broader colonial context in South Carolina and the South, she details how the Upcountry's shift after the Civil War from an agricultural to industrialized society created better transportation networks and increased urbanization, which in turn attracted Jewish "risk-

takers." As in other places, Upcountry Jews commonly began as peddlers. They were welcomed for the needed goods they could provide their White and Black customers. While many peddlers prospered, success was not guaranteed, often leaving erstwhile entrepreneurs decades to establish themselves in communities. Nonetheless, these successful Jewish merchants formed a foundation for their ranks to grow.

With the coming of the twentieth century, a growing textile manufacturing industry, which had been gradually moving from New England to the South, attracted more Jews into the Upcountry. The cities of Spartanburg and Greenville, along with some smaller cities, became the area's industrial centers. Many Jewish entrepreneurs focused on retail clothing merchandising, providing the latest fashionable styles from New York to customers and securing jobs for Jewish families and friends. Despite such valued services, discriminatory practices prevented merchants from obtaining much-needed credit from traditional sources. Nonetheless, the region's Jewish social networks and communities responded by offering alternative credit sources.

Vecchio's third chapter demonstrates the residual impact of the growing Jewish population in the Upcountry and the business success that followed. Not surprisingly, as Jewish communities grew, they began creating religious organizations and self-help associations, with the Spartanburg Jewish community organizing the area's first congregation in 1905. Jews also increasingly interacted with non-Jewish populations by joining fraternal organizations and civic life, which, according to Vecchio, "were a crucial means for Jews to fit into southern communal life" (64). They accrued social benefits by virtue of work as businesspeople, rather than as factory and sweat shop laborers. Capitalizing on the positive associations of



business with progress and the New South, Upcountry Jews encountered fewer social divisions between Jews and non-Jews than their counterparts nationally. Participation in World War I, including Jewish women's involvement in the Red Cross and War Bond campaigns, furthered positive perceptions. Finally, the ability of Jews to afford houses in better neighborhoods helped them to avoid establishing ethnic enclaves, in part because there were too few Jews to do so, but also due to favorable attitudes toward them.

In the decades between the world wars, Upcountry Jews continued to exhibit characteristics found in other Jewish communities but also varied in other ways. As New England textile companies looked to states where wages were lower and where labor unions were unwelcome, employers increasingly moved to the South. Foreign-born and American-born Jews alike increasingly came to the Upcountry and established companies, particularly in apparel manufacturing. Many were successful but not all, which, like Jewish communities elsewhere, led to a fluid population. Some families remained for decades, while others moved on after brief stays. Most of the successful businesses demonstrated an "intergenerational family business succession" (81), which allows Vecchio to challenge the claim that southern Jewish fathers built businesses for the sons who did not want them. During this period, Jews in the Upcountry, like Jews elsewhere, continued to assimilate primarily through home ownership, citizenship, and education. This integration, however, occurred more rapidly than in other parts of the country, largely due to the continued absence of distinctive Jewish enclaves.

After World War II, the Upcountry became an "industrial powerhouse" and entered "a golden decade of prosperity" (119). Jewish entrepreneurs in textiles and apparel manufacturing benefited from and contributed to a period of corporate consolidation and technological innovation. This process reflected Jewish involvement in the relocation of capital from the North to the South that Vecchio contends has been overlooked. Astoundingly, at least thirty or more Jewish-owned garment factories opened in the Upcountry between 1940 and 1970. The Teszler, Nachman, and Lowenstein families, as well as Shepard Saltzman, Max Heller, David Krieger, and Max Shore, were among those building successful companies. Divisive labor issues, however, continued to challenge these companies. Vecchio concludes that the area's Jewish manufacturers

were generally more open to labor unions than their non-Jewish counterparts. At the same time, Jewish-Black relations followed patterns typical in the region. While Upcountry Jewish businesspeople may have had friendly relations with their Black clientele, they rarely offered public support for civil rights and desegregation.

Beginning in the 1970s, technological developments and foreign competition made it difficult for textile and garment manufacturers to compete, and many of them went out of business. Jewish merchants in small towns, however, often survived longer than those in cities. At the same time, Jewish business owners frequently became involved in local politics. Vecchio focuses on Max Heller, who was elected mayor of Greenville, and his counterpart in Spartanburg, William (Bill) Barnet. Their political successes in office merit the attention that Vecchio gives them. A comparable treatment of small-town Jewish mayors, however, would provide valuable points of comparison and deepen our understanding of the connections between Jewish business activities and political activity in the Upcountry.

Jewish entrepreneurs there operated in a context of larger economic and social forces over multiple generations. These businessmen employed multiple strategies to build their companies and, by extension, to enhance their Jewish and local communities. Not unique either as businesspeople or as southern Jews or as American Jews, yet they effectively responded to local, regional, and national conditions and deserve the scholarship that Diane Vecchio has lavished upon this topic. Depicting the interplay of Jews with the South Carolina Upcountry ranks as her most compelling contribution to the study of southern Jewry.

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Film Reviews

People of the Crossing: The Jews of El Paso. Produced and directed by Isaac Artenstein. Cinewest Productions, 2023. 56 minutes.

An indelible moment in *People of the Crossing* perfectly situates a story in place and time. Jewish residents of El Paso and Juárez, its sister city across the Rio Grande, gather at a spot where a gap in the border fence allows the two groups to stand within a few feet of each other. Mexican Jews cluster on their side, American Jews on theirs, but they are close enough to sing and pray together. A light breeze spreads the flags of the United States, Mexico, and Israel. The terrain is dry and scrubby, the sky clear, low mountains rise behind them. The fence—a monstrous twenty-foot-high rust-colored series of tightly spaced vertical steel beams—looms over them, snaking across the hills into the distance and casting striped shadows over the ad hoc congregation. "There's no rabbi in Juárez," says Stephen Leon, rabbi emeritus of El Paso's B'nai Zion Synagogue. "This idea of meeting at a place where the border is accessible, without having to worry about immigration policemen and things like that, we decided to come together." Leon continues, "To sound the shofar as one community—two countries, one community—of Jewish people. To show our unity. And maybe if we sound the shofar loud enough, maybe we can break down those walls instead of building them."

Indeed, for most of the history of the border region, the Rio Grande provided a channel for communication, commerce, travel, and trade; El Paso literally means *the passage*. The very idea of imposing there a rigorously patrolled and impassable boundary is new and largely anathema to

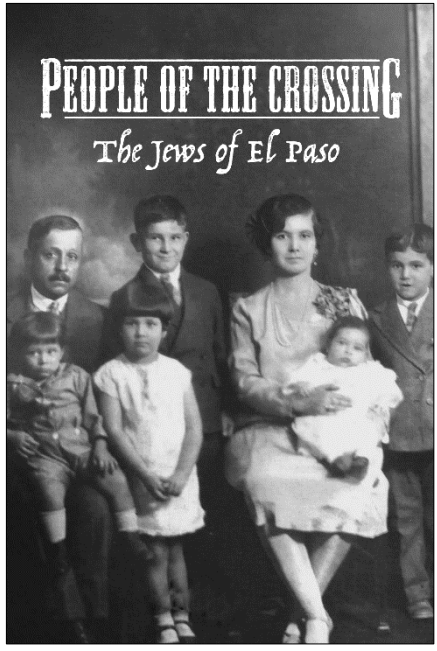
the region, its topography, and the people who have long inhabited both sides. As several of the film's subjects remember, until recently the cities of El Paso and Juárez were a single unit, connected by the world's only international streetcar line. "When I grew up," Cliff Eisenberg remembers, "Juárez and El Paso were almost like one. You could go back and forth, you didn't need passports." Dining, drinking, and night clubs flourished in Juárez, and El Pasoans, who lived in a dry county, crossed regularly to enjoy the nightlife. "We went to school with kids who lived in Juárez and who walked across or drove across or took the bus across," says Lee Schwartz. "It was a free trade zone, and people just came and went. They lived on one side and worked on the other." Jewish residents of Juárez attended synagogue and received medical care on the Texas side.

The development of a Jewish community in the region followed a familiar pattern common throughout the United States. Early arriving pioneers, often immigrants, shaped the outlines of Jewish institutional life. They became nearly universally involved in retail and commercial business and committed themselves to civic activism and public leadership. Those familiar characteristics, however, were inflected in El Paso to its distinctive setting. In the nineteenth century, El Paso was a boomtown (larger, as one interviewee notes, than San Antonio, Austin, or Phoenix), and the opportunities Jewish entrepreneurs always sought were highlighted there. It was also, in every respect, the Wild West. "El Paso wasn't known as the safest and gentlest city to find oneself in," observes Rabbi Ben Zeidman of Temple Mt. Sinai. "It took guts to find yourself in this city, in this region, trying to succeed." Gunfights typified a settlement where law and order was hard to maintain, and one of the city's leading Jews, Ernst Kohlberg, was shot dead in 1910 over a business dispute. During the Mexican Revolution, residents viewed the fighting in Juárez from their rooftops.

The interview subjects in *People of the Crossing* recall how their families arrived in El Paso, in stories resembling those from across the United States. Their ancestors were ambitious young people from large U.S. cities or from Europe seeking economic opportunity. Some were refugees or Holocaust survivors. But their accounts reveal a surprising variety of backgrounds, points of origins, and immigration experiences. El Paso Jews originated in Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Russia, but also came from Syria, Israel, Mexico, and Nicaragua. Some entered the U.S. at New York

and made their way through Chicago or Galveston to West Texas, whereas others landed at Vera Cruz and traveled northward. Many arrived in the city after a sojourn in Mexico or other parts of Latin America, especially after the immigrant quota acts of the 1920s stifled direct European immigration to the United States. Mayor Pro Tem Peter Svarzbein speaks of his father, a physician from Argentina, attracted to El Paso as a place where being bilingual "would be a blessing, not a hindrance." In the border city he found "the best of both worlds. He could have the economic life of the United States here, with the cultural life and vitality of Latino America."

Nothing, of course, is more familiar than Jews finding their niche in commerce and retail, and El Paso provides no shortage of examples, each demonstrating the economic and cultural impact of the locale. The Popular Store, for example, founded in 1902 by Hungarian immigrants Adolph and Maurice Schwartz, operated for more than ninety years, growing into the largest department store between Los Angeles and Fort Worth. It was a "beautiful store," says descendant Stuart Schwartz, "a favorite of all El Pasoans as well as so many Mexicans who were a very important part of the clientele." Edi Brannon, the Popular's former president, recalled the devaluation of the peso in the 1980s and its devastating effect on borderland economies. Many American retailers stopped accepting pesos in payment, but "we never did," she says. "That kind of exemplifies how we felt and how we honored our Mexico customers." Jews often opened a business first in Juárez (as had the Schwartzes) before relocating north across the river.



People of the Crossing provides synopses of several additional prominent El Paso Jewish businesses. Kahn's Sweet Shop, a bakery that supplied the usual fare for the local clientele, also specialized in bagels, rye, challah, and "Jewish

cookies." The hardware store Krakauer, Zork & Moye "sold everything from needles to engines"—including weapons to partisans in the Mexican Revolution. And Max Feinberg & Co., which originated as a scrap metal business, grew into one of the state's largest pipe distributorships, an essential item in the oil fields. This survey effectively demonstrates a significant Jewish presence in El Paso as well as the degree to which Jewish businesspeople were essential to the economy of the city and region.

As in communities elsewhere, El Paso Jews leveraged their commercial status into civic leadership, and several of the film's interview subjects talk of their families' hope to give back to a community that had welcomed them. Sam Schutze, an early German immigrant, was "the first municipal leader of El Paso" and helped forge an effective city government. In the city Olga Kohlberg established the first free kindergarten in Texas. In the 1920s, Joseph Roth, rabbi at B'nai Zion Synagogue, also chaired the departments of psychology and philosophy at the college that eventually became the University of Texas at El Paso. Furthermore, Jews actively worked on behalf of fellow Jews. Rabbi Martin Zielonka, who served Reform congregation Temple Mt. Sinai for decades, advocated for Jewish immigrants in the 1920s who were trapped in Mexico by the new immigration restrictions. He helped some cross successfully into the U.S. while assisting others to establish permanent communities in Mexican cities. And in the 1930s, Fanny Zlabovsky, working with the local National Council of Jewish Women's Committee for the Foreign Born, helped direct European refugees to safety in El Paso. One of the film's most affecting examples of how the region's distinctive character fomented a passion for social justice is immigration attorney Carlos Spector's assessment of his choice of career: "I grew up with the racism against Mexicans, people who were having trouble crossing, even though they were only going back to their old homes" in Texas. "I went to law school to be an immigration lawyer," he says, "and that's what I'll do till I die, in my sense to live a Jewish life with Jewish values, which is justice for all, to make *tikkun olam*."

Several speakers note how that shared sense of social engagement brought together a tremendously diverse community. The film describes a wide range of Jewish religious practices and provides a good balance of Reform, Conservative, Chabad, Ashkenazic, and Sephardic perspectives. Rabbi Zeidman describes "the concept of feeling *la familia* in El Paso, that we are all family. That cuts across religious lines and it cuts across ethnic

lines as well. There was and has always been this sense that we're in it together." Gorgeous aerial shots of the city's synagogues, perched among the mountains and beautifully designed to their surroundings, seem to illustrate that harmony among the city's Jews and between them and their non-Jewish neighbors.

Those aerial views, along with lovely interior views of the synagogues, are one of the great strengths of *People of the Crossing*, adding immediacy and liveliness that prevent it from being overladen with still photos. In addition, the filmmakers have selected and interviewed their subjects extremely well, a group of well-spoken, self-aware, and informative subjects. If anything is missing from the film, it is perhaps a sense of where Jews fit within the larger community, how their experience may be like or unlike that of other El Pasoans or, indeed, other Texans. Viewers will learn a great deal about this Jewish community but will not get a strong sense of how typical or unusual its experiences may be.

Without such broader context, it is easy to conclude that El Paso Jews are in some ways unique. Indeed, without saying so explicitly, *People of the Crossing* strongly implies a special Jewish responsibility, particularly on the fraught subject of immigration. Of everyone living in the shadow of the border fence, Jews are perhaps the most aware of how their lives were saved and their survival assured by their families' immigration into the United States, a point made by several of the interviewees. Like their Mexican-descended neighbors, El Paso Jews understand and insist that migrants from various backgrounds improve the places that are wise enough to welcome them. As the U.S.-Mexico border becomes ever more politicized and divisive, more rigid and militarized, as it is robbed of the permeability that was always its essence, as it becomes harder to tell the difference between policy and bigotry—the Jews in places like El Paso have a special part to play. "We understand that the border's a blessing," says Peter Svarzbein. "We understand that the border is something that enriches both people and enriches both places. That is a story that each of us have to carry here, and it's a story that needs to be understood more." Someone has to blow the shofar until the walls come down.

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The Nita & Zita Project. Directed and Produced by Marci Darling. Bearcat Tango Productions. 1 hour, 19 minutes.

Marci Darling's new documentary, *The Nita & Zita Project*, makes a strong case for the significance of the dancing Hungarian-Jewish Gellert sisters, who led a successful, globe-trotting career through the late 1920s into the postwar period after their immigration to the United States. Their later, mysteriously shrouded reclusive years in New Orleans possess a kind of *Grey Gardens* affect; the two sisters never marrying or bearing children, living out latter decades of their lives as aging performers, glamorously dressed for grocery outings, while quietly spending their days in a meticulously hand-painted house on New Orleans's Dauphine Street. In 1992, after both sisters had died, their incredible, hand-stitched flapperesque costume collection began to appear in a local New Orleans antique shop, piquing sudden interest in the then-forgotten story of the two sisters. Ultimately, the film demonstrates the sisters' roles as creative or "chosen ancestors" to numerous twenty-first-century burlesque dancers (including the famous Dita Von Teese), who see their own work as somehow bringing forth the artistic legacy the sisters helped forge.

The film does well to document and explore their lives and impact while navigating key informational lacunae. Many scenes are filled with imagined reflections expressed in two different performance pieces inspired by the sisters. In this way, the film mirrors the crafty, make-do nature of the sisters' famous costumes: using what's available and on-hand while imaginatively constructing missing details with care. As such, the project presents a novel approach to documenting Jewish performance across the complexities of the twentieth century, contending with the absences and unknowns that remain lost to the past. This project will likely interest audiences working on twentieth-century Jewish migration (and the transnational touring circuit), as well as southern Jewish historians exploring the role the French Quarter has played, as the documentary states, in providing community and belonging to those "living an alternative lifestyle," as it intersects in this case with the performance of postwar Jewish identity.

The known narrative of the Gellert sisters, Piroska and Flora, began with their departure in 1922 from their home in Nagybánya, Hungary (on

its brink of becoming Baia Mare, Romania). The sisters, nine years apart in age with dancing careers at home, transformed during their two-week ship voyage to emerge in the New World as the dancing twins, Nita & Zita. Referring to themselves and their act in myriad ways—from the Gellert twins to Romanian De Luxe dancers—this performed ambiguity seems intentional, escaping, perhaps, the turbulence of their Jewish past in the war-pocked and changing landscape of postimperial Europe. The twins simultaneously capitalized on the *en-vogue* orientalism of the moment, exoticizing themselves while making space for artistic exploration and immense creativity, embodied in all aspects of their dance and contortionist acts, from their costumes to their marketing.

One of the most compelling aspects of the story pertains to Nita & Zita's amazing hand-stitched costumes, many of which have now been collected and preserved. The documentary showcases many pieces as collectors and archivists discuss the significance of the handmade works, the thousands of stitches that went into them, and their idiosyncratic, tailored-to-the-body materiality. This discussion also points to how the costumes operate as what performance studies scholar Diana Taylor terms the "repertoire." Thus, in their handcrafted way, the costumes encapsulate an embodied memory that is otherwise lost or absent from normative documentary material, such as photographs or travel visas. As one interlocutor states, the costumes present as "intimate doorways" to who Nita & Zita were. Their tactile, if fragile, nature extends the memory of the dancing sisters, much as they extend their messaging into a larger conversation amongst burlesque dancers, who similarly discuss their practice of costume creation, with costuming as "a silent dance partner." Many who know of the sisters, know of them explicitly through contact with their costumes.

Furthermore, as artist Katie Pearl reflects, in maintaining the bodily form of the sisters, the costumes enable others to feel physically connected to their creative ancestors in recognizing themselves in comparable shape. Pearl notes how fitting one of the costumes perfectly evoked for her a sense of shared heritage to both the sisters and an archetypal identity of eastern European feminine form. Similarly, the film gestures to the ways in which Nita & Zita's process of costume creation further links to and extends legacies of Jewish female tailoring and handiwork, most possibly having absorbed their skillset from witnessing their mother and grandmothers' craft in Hungary. (Hungarian handicraft also emerged in the sisters' decoration of the inside and outside of their house in a style that evokes Hungarian folk floral interior décor from the Kalocsa region.)

Less clear, however, are the ways the documentary somewhat haphazardly incorporates aspects of a performance piece, also titled *The Nita & Zita Project*, as well as another, unnamed performance, through images, video, and voiceover discussion without contextualizing those separate projects (including when and where they were performed), or their relationships to the sisters' actual lives. At one point, an interviewee clarifies that some of the historical narrative stemming from these productions was purely imagined, albeit with care, although the introduction of those production elements often remains under-contextualized. This aspect of the film could use further clarification so as not to confuse audiences or sow seeds of doubt as to the veracity of information spelled out earlier on in the documentary. Most problematic of the numerous elements spelled out through clips from a filmed version of the *The Nita & Zita Project* theatre piece was only revealing through theatrical footage the earlier death of Flora in 1985, leaving Piroska alone until her death in 1991. Granted, the documentary's narrative begins in the form of a tinkling fairytale, featuring delicate but crafty collage-style elements to open the mysterious yarn to come, thereby perhaps implying that aspects of the story would be fabricated. Including title cards and production information for the performances that undergird the historical narrative would nonetheless have provided a helpful addition for audiences unfamiliar with the earlier performance pieces, or the sisters' story.

The film showcases numerous documentary images of the sisters, while using additional historical documents for contextualization, many of which help to visually enhance and support the narrative. Not all the

images and film clips, however, are well cited, and, particularly in moments in which the voiceover discusses Nita & Zita, some of the images shown that display other female artists who are not identified results in a slippage between them and other female performers of note (although, this almost suggests another nod to their ambiguously performed identities).

These more opaque elements aside, *The Nita & Zita Project* vividly illustrates the remarkable lives of these performing sisters deserving of remembrance. It also underscores the impressive notoriety and influence they have had within at least part of the contemporary burlesque community, particularly within the New Orleans circuit.

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Exhibit Reviews

A Better Life for Their Children: Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the 4,978 Schools that Changed America. Produced and curated by Andrew Feiler. Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, New Orleans, Louisiana.

On the second floor of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, Andrew Feiler's black and white photographs, each accompanied by a text panel, line the exposed brick walls of a small gallery. The exhibition, titled *A Better Life for Their Children*, examines the Rosenwald schools. According to the opening text panel, Feiler documented 105 of the surviving five hundred Rosenwald school buildings, drove more than twenty-five thousand miles, and interviewed "dozens of former students, teachers, preservationists, and community leaders in all fifteen of the program states."

Described as "one of the earliest collaborations between Jews and African Americans," Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington established the program to address significant discrepancies in facilities, funding, and opportunity for Black students, whose public schools were often in "terrible facilities with outdated materials." Between 1912 and 1932, the program built 4,977 schools across fifteen states, with one final school built in 1937.

The exhibition opens with three images that provide context for the rest of the show. Two stately photographs of individual portraits of the program's founders hang above a map. Washington gazes back at the viewer from his frame in the Tuskegee University president's home, and

(Courtesy of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, New Orleans.)

Rosenwald's small portrait hangs on the nondescript white walls of the Noble Hill School in Bartow County, Georgia. Below the portraits is a reproduction of a 1932 map from the Fisk University archives indicating the sites of Rosenwald schools, teachers' homes, and industrial education shops. Although this wall provides important historical context, it leaves the viewer wondering which of the remaining five hundred structures Feiler documented and where they are located. An additional map showing the aforementioned information would help situate the show in the present day and tie past and present together. The images throughout the show also do not include the dates on which they were photographed—another important detail that would help contextualize the work.

Across from the images of Washington and Rosenwald, a photograph of a historical marker in Lee County, Alabama, indicates the site of the Loachapoka School—the first Rosenwald school and a logical first photograph. The blurred motion of a train passing through the right side of the frame and a truck speeding through the left side emphasize the stoic stillness of the sign, which is centered in the frame and and in sharp focus.

This contrast suggests that this site is often ignored and that perhaps we should pay more attention to what is overlooked but right in front of us.

Meticulously composed and in traditional black frames and overmats, Feiler's images sit squarely within the American documentary tradition. The photographs are generally punchy and high contrast, with roads, footpaths, and clouds framing his subject, leading the viewer's eye to what he wants us to examine. Recurring motifs of American flags remind the viewer exactly where these sites are situated, who they are about, and ask questions of American identity and regionalism. Wooden slats on floors, walls, and ceilings provide visual unity, indicate the similarity between many of the structures, and hint at the era in which they were built.

Portraits and photographs of archival material are interspersed between the images of the buildings, indicating who once occupied them and what might have been left behind. Feiler portrays his subjects with dignity and respect. They are often situated in the relevant environment or accompanied by photographs or other archival material related to their specific experiences with Rosenwald schools. The variety of images creates a dynamic show that consistently reemphasizes the relationship between past and present while remaining focused.

The show also includes three archival objects: two student desks and a lunch tray. The incorporation of these objects presents the viewer with a glimpse of the material reality of the spaces described by the images. The desks in particular echo Feiler's image of the lone desk in the otherwise empty Emory school of Hale County, Alabama.

The photographs and associated text panels are informative and tell a wide variety of stories, including enough text to tell a complete anecdote without overwhelming or losing the viewer. Some of the written material focuses more on individuals, such as the text accompanying the portrait of Ellie J. Dahmer, alumna of the Jasper County, Mississippi, Rosenwald school and the widow of slain civil rights leader Vernon Dahmer, Sr. Some give broader overviews of the Rosenwald school shown, or the Rosenwald program, such as the image of the restored classroom at the Pine Grove School in Richland County, South Carolina. The text panel informs the viewer about the number of students, size of the school, and the long-term impacts of Rosenwald education. Some texts talk about the interactions between the Black community and other marginalized communities in

the relevant area, such as the interactions between the Latinx and Black communities of Turkey Scratch, Arkansas, and Black and Indigenous communities of Oklahoma.

Given the space limitations of the gallery and the breadth of Feiler's work, the show is ambitious. About twenty schools are represented. Visitors should plan to spend at least an hour in the gallery in order to read all of the text and spend adequate time with the photographs.

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What is Jewish Washington? Curated by Sarah Leavitt. The Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum, 575 3rd Street, Washington, DC.

The Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum (CJM) opened to the public during summer 2023. Located in Washington D.C.'s Penn Quarter, the 32,500-square-foot museum stands out among Judiciary Square's many municipal courthouses and office buildings. The structure includes a modern, three-story exhibit space attached to the impeccably restored, red-bricked Adas Israel Synagogue that dates back to 1876. Named after donors to the historic building's restoration, the CJM encapsulates the past and present of Jewish culture in the nation's capital. Although Washington houses one of the largest Jewish communities in America, the city is not typically viewed as a Jewish mecca in the same vein as New York. The CJM proves that despite a dearth of scholarship on "Jewish Washington," it is in fact a place with a strong and influential Jewish heritage.

The museum's introductory exhibit, *What is Jewish Washington?*, traces over two hundred years of Jewish history in the region. The earliest known Jewish resident of the district, Isaac Polock, arrived in 1795 as a builder who contributed to the first group of houses in the city. In subsequent decades, most Jews in the larger region lived as shopkeepers in nearby Annapolis, Baltimore, or Richmond. Many worked as peddlers in rural towns in Maryland and Virginia. Not until the 1850s did Jews establish small communities in D.C. Adas Israel, the oldest surviving synagogue in the city, was dedicated in 1876 with President Ulysses S.

Grant present. The event signified the first time in American history that a president attended a Jewish service. Upstairs, museum goers can walk in the synagogue's sanctuary where multimedia displays narrate the story of Grant's visit. Grant observed the dedication ceremony for three hours in the sweltering summer heat, and Jewish residents welcomed his presence as a sign of acceptance regardless of the antisemitic General Order 11 he had issued during the Civil War.

The rest of the exhibit frames Jewish Washington as a community of prominent civic leaders including politicians, Supreme Court justices, and average citizens whose business endeavors shaped the city. Washingtonians will recognize the names of regional staples such as Giant Food, a supermarket chain started by Jewish grocers during the Great Depression. Jews in Washington opened countless grocery stores, bagel shops and bakeries, bookstores, and more, depicted in an interactive map of the city. Entrepreneurial Jews thrived, but many residents encountered discrimination as well. One of the most striking exhibit objects is a housing advertisement for Spring Valley, a bucolic neighborhood surrounding American University. The ad promises that homes in Spring Valley are protected by "covenants which insure" a "selected personnel." Leases for

(Imagine Photography, courtesy of the Capital Jewish Museum.)

the neighborhood forbade "any person of the Semitic race," including "Jews and Hebrews" from renting. For every instance of prejudice curators show, Jewish Washingtonians resisted. The exhibit spotlights the landmark Supreme Court case *Shelley v. Kraemer*, which held in 1948 that racially restrictive covenants were unconstitutional. Jewish attorneys, as well as Justice Felix Frankfurter, played a part in the outcome.

Jewish activism provides an essential component of the CJM's narrative. Curators highlight how local Jews lobbied fiercely for causes that had national implications, including civil rights. Scholars of Jewish history or the civil rights movement likely know that many D.C.-area Jews marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during the famous March on Washington in 1963. For visitors and school groups unfamiliar with the history, the museum places Jews at such iconic scenes. It further dedicates a heavily interactive space to issues of contemporary social justice. Geared toward younger visitors, the "Connect, Reflect, Act" exhibition introduces guests to one hundred Washingtonians whose Jewish values have informed their political practices. Curators use ample quotes from oral history collections to accentuate Jewish belief in "allyship," which includes fighting for voting and reproductive rights and defeating Islamophobia. The exhibit deftly connects historical examples of injustice with present-day topics as told from a Jewish perspective.

Although impressively presented, the CJM's historical chronology glosses over some key moments in local Jewish history. Urban renewal projects in the city, for instance, displaced Jewish communities during the 1950s. Talmud Torah, a large synagogue in Southwest D.C., stood for more than half a century before the structure was razed for redevelopment. Community displacement and adaptation would be worthwhile themes to explore, especially as the museum seeks to illuminate Jewish resilience. Some of the more compelling stories of Jewish Washington are also buried or minimized in the overall presentation. Visitors learn that the nation's capital first implemented Prohibition in 1917, a few years before the Eighteenth Amendment established it nationally. Prohibition officers frequently targeted area Jews, but the exhibit does little to explore the ramifications.

The museum exhibit nevertheless accomplishes its goal of capturing the essence of "Jewish Washington." The space proudly sports numerous

artifacts, including Ruth Bader Ginsburg's specially commissioned lace collar, family Torah scrolls as old as the 1840s, and posters printed in Yiddish that helped boost census participation from Jewish residents. The items on display suggest answers to the museum's central question—What is Jewish Washington?—as they come from Jews both famous and anonymous. No matter where or in what capacity they worked, the Jews of Washington, D.C., evidently left their mark.

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Infinite Poem. Produced and curated by Emily Rena Williams. Louisiana State University School of Art Alfred C. Glassell, Jr. Exhibition Gallery, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. March 2024.

Emily Rena Williams's photography and oral history project, *We had to know who we were; We had to know who we weren't*, represents her fascination with and appreciation for Jewish communities in the Deep South, places that are "often perceived as the very edges of the diaspora." The project's most recent iteration took the form of an exhibition entitled *Infinite Poem*, which was on display at the LSU School of Art Alfred C. Glassell, Jr., Exhibition Gallery in Baton Rouge from March 19 to March 28, 2024. The exhibit represents Williams's master's thesis, the capstone project in her MFA in photography from LSU. Williams began her graduate program in 2022 and has quickly become embedded in the close-knit southern Jewish community. She has taken several long road trips across the Deep South over summer and winter breaks to make photographs of Jewish spaces in more than sixty towns and to interview the people who are the stewards of those spaces.

The exhibit begins with large format 4x5 photographs of abandoned, unused, and (in the case of Woodville, Mississippi) razed southern Jewish spaces. This way of making photographs is "old school," Williams admits—a way to be connected to history through both subject and medium. Centrally placed as visitors enter the exhibit is Yehuda Amichai's "Infinite Poem," from which the exhibit takes its name. "Inside the brand-new museum / there's an old synagogue," the poem begins.

Inside and beyond those first black and white photographs exists a world of light and color—photographs of currently in-use synagogue interiors grouped by category of space, from spaces of prayer and worship to spaces of memory, education, and administration. In the center of the gallery, speakers play short clips of Williams's dozens of oral history interviews, the voices guiding visitors through the space. The contemporary images blend together, hung on the walls to emphasize movement, suggesting one large southern Jewish synagogue rather than dozens of individual buildings with shared characteristics.

I was struck by the ways in which these photographs highlight the materiality of Jewish congregational life. The photographs feature objects used for ritual, including *tallesim*, prayer books, and a Shabbat song sheet left on a pew; objects used for signaling beliefs, including flags and posters in classrooms ("You can change the world"); and objects for operational purposes, like hangers in a coat closet and an ancient desktop computer with a long list of Alt codes taped to it. All of these objects are of equal importance for running a Jewish community, a task that is both spiritually meaningful and incredibly laborious.

As a viewer, I could not stop thinking about work. A photograph of Temple B'nai Israel in Victoria, Texas, features a close-up of peeling and discolored wallpaper. A photograph of Temple Beth Or in Montgomery, Alabama, features a row of filing cabinets filled with synagogue records. The leaders and members of these congregations must do both the labor of physical maintenance and the labor of memory-keeping.

Care, humor, and loss are written across the exhibit. Care is symbolized in a bulletin board full of letters and donations sent to Congregation K'nesseth Israel in Baytown, Texas, following Hurricane Harvey. Humor is illustrated in a small, cheeky photograph of fuzzy Torah scrolls in an ark at Adas Yeshurun Synagogue in Augusta, Georgia. Loss is evidenced in a photograph of memorial plaques at Temple Kol Emeth in Marietta, Georgia. I scanned this photograph relatively quickly in my first pass of the exhibit, then turned back to look more closely and noticed Leo Frank's name in the lower right corner.

In an artist's talk in the exhibit space, Williams spoke about the importance of the oral histories associated with the exhibit. The interviews are crucial, she said, "because I'm not from here." A Chicago native,

(Courtesy of Emily Rena Williams.)

Williams is careful to let southern Jews speak for themselves through her project. The echoing voices in the gallery demonstrate Williams's affection for her subjects, besides bringing the photographs to life. But the choice not to include people in the images (which Williams attributes to a need for deeper intimacy before making a portrait of a subject) means that these can feel like images of emptiness and liminality. The gallery is full of rooms that people just left; you stand in front of an image (perhaps of a hallway at Ahavas Chesed Synagogue in Mobile, Alabama) and wait patiently for someone to step into frame and welcome you inside, but they never arrive.

Williams's emphasis on rural and small-town communities means that this is inherently a story about loss and decay (not just in the Jewish South, but across rural America). I found myself considering the transition that many rural and small-town synagogues will inevitably make from activity into disuse and wondering about those buildings in the black and white images. Who was the last person to step out onto the synagogue steps? Did they know that they would be the last one to lock the door

behind them? How many of these contemporary buildings will become nothing more than a historical marker and a memory?

For many visitors to the exhibit (and visitors to future exhibitions, of which I am sure there will be many), these photographs will provide an entry point into a small but vibrant type of community that is becoming increasingly less visible. In their charming and deliberate way, these images provide a peek into a private world. In one of my favorite photographs in the exhibit, the camera is positioned just before the half-open doors of the sanctuary of Congregation K'nesseth Israel in Baytown, Texas. From the doorway, the pews and bright white walls are bathed in perfect midday light. The viewer and Williams stand side by side, careful and caring outsiders waiting to be ushered through the doors.

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Website Review

Synagogues of the South: Architecture and Jewish Identity. Researched and written by Samuel D. Gruber. Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture, College of Charleston. https://synagoguesofthesouth.cofc.edu. Reviewed March 2024.

Postcards are, at their core, the most ephemeral of things. They are cheap to make, cheap to buy, and cheap to mail. The words written on the backs of them are often fleeting as well. Yet postcards are also remarkably durable. At any antique store or flea market, one quickly learns how hard it is for people to get rid of the postcards they received. Meanwhile, the images emblazoned on the front—people, times, and places lost to time etched upon postcards—provide us enduring glimpses of the past.

The rich insight offered by these seemingly insignificant objects animates a new digital exhibit on the lost histories of Jewish life in the American South. Titled "Synagogues of the South" and published by the College of Charleston's Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture, the project harnesses postcards featuring historic synagogues to reconstruct the built environment of southern Judaism. The nearly one hundred postcards that illustrate the exhibit come from the College of Charleston's William A. Rosenthall Judaica Collection and feature everything from the colonial stylings of the 180-year-old Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim synagogue in Charleston to the coastal colors of a Miami synagogue built in 1966. The rich collection showcases nearly every architectural style, with interpretive text written by noted architect and historic preservationist Samuel D. Gruber. Across the exhibit's twelve

Synagogues of the South
(https://synagoguesofthesouth.cofc.edu)

short pages, Gruber provides an accessible overview of the major architectural styles of southern synagogues as well as original research on the history of these buildings.

The exhibit opens with a page on the four-hundred-year presence of Jews in what became the American South, as well as one focused on the use of postcards in historical research. It then moves through the architectural history of southern synagogues, opening with the various revival styles that dominated the long nineteenth century before documenting moments in the twentieth century's obsession with modernist architecture. Each page contains a brief essay on the major characteristics of a specific architectural style followed by a display of postcards from the Rosenthall Collection that feature synagogues in that style. Clicking on a postcard then brings up a high-quality scan of the image, alongside another essay by Gruber that relays the history of the synagogue featured in the postcard. The page on synagogues done in what was then known as Moorish style, for example, notes that the popularity of this architecture around the turn of the twentieth century spoke to the shared and distinctive features of southern Jewish life. While the elaborate structures done

in this style reflected the economic recovery of the South in the decades after the Civil War, their decidedly Middle Eastern, or "Oriental," motifs spoke to the desire of southern Jews to carve a distinctive presence in the region. Visiting the page on Nashville's Kahl Kadesh Ohavai Sholom temple then tells the tale of that vibrant community, as the synagogue's 1876 dedication brought in both Isaac Mayer Wise and former President Andrew Johnson.

This dance between the general and the particular carries forward through the rest of history as the architectural preferences of southern Jews shifted from Gothic and Moorish Revival to more classical and then modernist norms. The result is something of a revived directory of southern Jewish life, one that shows the depth and breadth of Judaism's presence in a region long known for its evangelical Protestant sensibilities. In the variability of architectural styles, one gets a sense of the diversity of southern Jewish life. The remarkably detailed histories of each community, in turn, showcase their importance to local life. Gruber marshals this history to show that southern Jewish history is very much American and

Synagogues of the South
(https://synagoguesofthesouth.cofc.edu)

southern history. "In religiously and culturally pluralist America, with its vast geographic expanse," he writes, "Jewish communities have probably built more types, sizes, forms, and styles of synagogues in two centuries than in the entire history of Jewish synagogue construction."

Although rich in historical interpretation and documentation, the site curiously underutilizes the digital medium in which it is published. While the exhibit's sections are roughly chronological, for example, the site does not let users "turn the page," so to speak, with some kind of "next" or "previous" button. The viewer can only move through the exhibit by utilizing a dropdown menu or returning to the home page and finding the next section. This is like needing to return to a book's table of contents every time you wanted to start a new chapter.

One also cannot view or explore the collection of postcards on the site outside of the curation provided by the site itself. No gallery view or browse page of every item exists, only a map that shows the locations of the synagogues. But even the map only offers an outline of states, which requires a user to click on a state to bring up the images and locations of the postcards available there. A more dynamic map would have allowed for a richer interpretative view of the collection.

More unfortunately, the project is digitally divorced from the archival collection on which it is based. Although the exhibit draws on more than eighty postcards from the Rosenthall Collection, the items ultimately serve only as illustrations rather than resources from which the visitors can learn. The site fails to inform visitors that the featured images are but a handful of the nearly four thousand postcards held in the collection that are scanned and placed online—a fact I only learned after independently searching for the collection and finding its full digital presence on the College of Charleston's library website. At a time when digital humanities emphasizes developing linked datasets, it seems like a lost opportunity not to have the postcards on "Synagogues of the South" connect with their permanent archival presence on the web.

Despite these technical concerns, "Synagogues of the South" stands as an important contribution to the public history of American Judaism. Gruber's prose is clear and accessible. Thus, the site could serve as a resource for educators who teach southern history, architectural history, or the history of American Judaism. It could also serve as a prompt for future research, as students and scholars fill out the histories begun by Gruber.

Indeed, the College of Charleston's Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture identifies one of the project's major goals as: "[to] spawn more research and prompt the discovery of additional images, creating a more comprehensive picture of the built heritage of the Jewish South." The site's comprehensive histories, however, mean that it stands as a resource for scholars of every religion and region as well.

Christopher D. Cantwell, Loyola University Chicago
The reviewer may be contacted at ccantwell1@luc.edu.

Glossary

Bar mitzvah (*plural*: **b'nai mitzvah**) ~ traditional coming-of-age ritual for Jewish males reaching the age of thirteen

B'nai B'rith ~ literally, *children of the covenant;* Jewish social service fraternity established in 1843

Brit milah ~ ritual circumcision performed on males eight days old; based on biblical symbol of covenant

Goldene Medina ~ literally, *Golden Land*; America

High Holy Days (*also* **High Holidays**) ~ Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the two most important holidays on the Jewish calendar

Ketubah ~ Jewish marriage contract

Landsleit (plural of **landsman**) ~ fellow countrymen; people from the same area in Europe

Matzo ~ unleavened bread eaten primarily during Passover

Passover ~ spring holiday commemorating the deliverance of the ancient Hebrews from Egyptian bondage

Rebbetzin ~ rabbi's wife

Rosh Hashanah ~ literally, *head of the year*; the new year on the Hebrew calendar; one of holiest days of the Jewish year

Shabbat (*also* **shabbos**) ~ Jewish Sabbath, day of rest; Friday at sunset to Saturday at sunset

Shiva ~ traditional seven days of mourning after a death

Shochet ~ ritual slaughterer, kosher butcher

Shofar ~ hollow ram's horn blown as a trumpet, notably to mark the beginning and end of the High Holidays

Siddur (*plural:* **siddurim***)* ~ prayer book for holidays and festivals

Tallit (*variants:* **tallis**, **tallith;** *plural*: **tallitot, tallesim**) ~ prayer shawl

Tikkun olam ~ literally, *repairing the world*; the Jewish ideal that each individual acts in partnership with God in behalf of social justice to improve the world

Yom Kippur ~ Day of Atonement; holiest day of the Jewish year

Note on Authors

Lynda Barness is a retired businesswoman turned author and editor who has published four books. Barness is currently completing a certificate program at New York University in copyediting. In addition to partnering with Lance J. Sussman on the memoir in this edition of *Southern Jewish History,* Barness is a freelance copy editor and the founder of LB Literary Projects, which has included work for the *American Jewish Archives*.

Tobias Brinkmann (Dr. phil., Technical University Berlin) is the Malvin and Lea Bank Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and History and director of the Jewish studies program at Penn State University. His research interests include migration, urban, and American Jewish history. He has published *Between Borders: The Great Jewish Migration from Eastern Europe* (2024) and *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (2012), edited *Points of Passage: Jewish Transmigrants from Eastern Europe in Scandinavia, Germany, and Britain 1880-1914* (2013), and is co-editor with Adam Mendelsohn of the special issue, "Jews in New Cities," *Jewish Culture and History* (2023).

Christopher D. Cantwell is an assistant professor of digital public history at Loyola University Chicago. His work explores the collective memories of religious communities, particularly among Protestants who identify as evangelical. He is the author of a forthcoming book *The Bible Class Teacher: Memory and the Making of White Evangelicalism*, and the director of 'Gathering Places,' a digital humanities project that works with urban congregations to document their histories.

Adrienne DeArmas has a Master of Arts in museum studies from George Washington University, and a Bachelor of Arts in anthropology from Emory University. She is the director of the Shapell Roster of Jewish Service in the American Civil War at the Shapell Manuscript Foundation. She most recently published the foreword and two of the appendices in *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War: The Union Army*, and "Edmund Louis Gray Zalinski: Soldier, Scholar, Inventor" on shapell.org. Current research interests are Jews who served in the American Civil War and the history of her 23-acre farm in West Virginia, both the house, built in 1903, and the land, once owned by Lord Fairfax and surveyed by George Washington.

Reena Sigman Friedman, associate professor of modern Jewish history at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, as well as adjunct professor of Jewish history at Gratz College, received her doctoral degree from Columbia University. She is the author of *These Are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the United States, 1880-1925* (1994), several encyclopedia entries, and numerous scholarly articles. Her recent research focuses on American Jews and movements for social justice.

Dana Herman is associate director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. She also directs the AJA's prestigious fellowship program and has overseen the publication of over twenty-five issues of the AJA's award-winning, peer-reviewed academic journal, *The American Jewish Archives Journal*. She received her doctorate in modern Jewish history from McGill University in Montreal. Herman received the HUC faculty award from Women of Reform Judaism in 2022. Herman also serves on the board of the Jewish Community Legacies Project (JCLP) and as an honorary advisory board member of JewishGen's USA Research Division.

Nora Katz is a public historian and theatre-maker currently serving as the historian at the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument in Jackson, Mississippi. Previously, she served as the director of heritage and interpretation at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL). Katz earned a master's degree in public history and cultural heritage from Trinity College, Dublin. Her current research interests include public memory of the civil rights movement, interpretation of traumatic histories, and the lives and legacies of Medgar and Myrlie Evers. Her work has appeared in *Hey Alma*, *Rooted* magazine, and on *Gravy*, the Southern Foodways Alliance podcast. She is also the author of the humor book *Literary Starbucks.*

Scott M. Langston recently retired from Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, where he taught in the religion department and served as the university's inaugural Native American Nations and Communities Liaison. A past president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, he currently serves as the primary sources section editor of *Southern Jewish History* and is on the board of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. He is co-editing, *Being in Relation: Indigenous Peoples, the Land, and Texas Christian University, 1873-2023*.

Rachel Merrill Moss holds a Ph.D. from Northwestern University and is visiting assistant professor of theater at Colgate University. She is co-editor with Debra Caplan of *The Dybbuk Century: The Jewish Play that Possessed the World* (2023), and her article "*Skrzypek* as Synecdoche: Polish-Jewishness in *Fiddler on the Roof*" was published in *Theatre Journal* (June 2023). Ross's research and forthcoming monograph focuses on performances of Jewishness in Poland across the past century in close relation to changing political and identity narratives and memory work.

Mary Jo O'Rear earned a Master of Arts degree in interdisciplinary studies (English and history) from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and a Master of Arts degree in history and political science from Texas A&M University-Kingsville. From 1967 through 1999, she taught English, U.S. history, world geography, and economics in the Corpus Christi Independent School District. From 1999 to 2005, she taught U.S. history as an adjunct professor at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, TX, and at Texas A&M-Kingsville in Kingsville, TX. She has published *Storm Over the Bay: The People of Corpus Christi and their Port* (2009); *Bulwark Against the Bay: The People of Corpus Christi and their Seawall* (2017), and *Barrier to the Bays: The Islands of the Texas Coastal Bend and their Pass* (2022). *Storm over the Bay* and *Barrier to the Bays* were finalists in the Texas Institute of Letters competition for Most Scholarly Book in 2009 and 2023. In 2006, O'Rear received the H. Bailey Carroll Award for Best Article of 2005 in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* for her "Silver-Lined Storm: The Impact of the 1919 Hurricane on the Port of Corpus Christi."

Leonard Rogoff, past president of the SJHS, served as president and historian of Jewish Heritage North Carolina, in addition to teaching at UNC–Chapel Hill, Duke, and North Carolina Central University. He is a frequent contributor to *SJH*, other journals, anthologies, and encyclopedias, and is the author of *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (2000), *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina (*2010*),* and *Gertrude Weil: A Jewish Progressive in the New South* (2017).

Jay Silverberg retired after a forty-year career in journalism and corporate consulting. He has spent the past decade researching his family history, publishing a primary source essay about his ancestors in *Southern Jewish History* (2015). He has served as president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and is a board member of the Museum of the Southern Jewish

Experience (MSJE) in New Orleans. He is currently working on a book about his family.

Andrew Sperling earned his Ph.D. in history from American University in 2024. He was recently awarded the Leon Levy Fellowship, a postdoctoral fellowship created to study the history of antisemitism, at the Center for Jewish History in New York. His research traces American Jewish responses to right-wing antisemitic extremism in the twentieth century. He has published articles on Black-Jewish relations and Jewish refugee experiences in *American Jewish History* and *Southern Jewish History*.

Bryan Edward Stone is the managing editor of *Southern Jewish History* and professor of U.S. history at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas. He was recently named a 2024 Piper Professor by the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation, which recognizes ten Texas college and university faculty annually. Stone is the author of *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (2010), which won the Southern Jewish Historical Society Book Prize in 2011, and the editor of Alexander Gurwitz's historical memoir *Memories of Two Generations: A Yiddish Life in Russia and Texas* (2016). His second edited volume, *Neither Fish Nor Fowl: A Mercantile Jewish Family on the Rio Grande*, the memoir of Morris S. Riskind of Eagle Pass, Texas, will be published in 2024.

Lance J. Sussman, Ph.D., is professor of Jewish history and the immediate past chair of the board of governors of Gratz College. Rabbi Emeritus of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel (Elkins Park, PA), Sussman recently published a collection of his sermons, *Portrait of an American Rabbi: In His Own Words* (2023). He is now preparing an anthology of his historical writings, which have been published over the course of the last forty years, on the American Jewish experience. Sussman is well-known for his seminal study, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (1995), among other works.

Professor Emeritus **Stephen J. Whitfield** earned a doctorate in the history of American civilization from Brandeis University in 1972, where he taught for the following 44 years. His books include *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till* (1991), *In Search of American Jewish Culture* (1999), and *Learning on the Left: Political Profiles of Brandeis University* (2020). Whitfield is currently writing a history of the Jewish attorneys who fought against racial segregation in the South, an extension of the Dr. Lawrence

J. Kanter Lecture that he delivered during the Southern Jewish Historical Society virtual conference in 2021. Since 2009 he has served as book review editor of *Southern Jewish History*, and he is also a member of the board of directors of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

Emily Rena Williams is an artist, photographer, and educator interested in investigating the intersections of memory, place, and identity. She is currently a visiting assistant professor of photography at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. She holds a BA in fine arts and history from Haverford College and an MFA in photography from Louisiana State University. Her ongoing work, *We had to know who we were; We had to know who we weren't*, examines the contemporary and historical Jewish experience in the rural and small-town Deep South through photographs of the built environment and oral history interviews. To date, she has visited over 50 towns in the region. Her work has been exhibited in numerous venues in Louisiana, as well as Massachusetts, Texas, Alabama, and Georgia. She will begin her Ph.D. in American studies at UNC Chapel Hill in fall 2025.

A cultural anthropologist, **Marcia Jo Zerivitz**, LHD, is founding executive director of the Jewish Museum of Florida–FIU. In 2016, Florida International University awarded her a Doctor of Humane Letters Honoris Causa for her vision and leadership to expand knowledge and enrich collective historic memory. From 1984 to 1992, she traveled 250,000 miles throughout Florida, conducting grassroots research and retrieving the state's hidden, 250+ year Jewish history, resulting in a major archive and the *MOSAIC: Jewish Life in Florida* exhibit that traveled to thirteen cities (1990–94). In 1995, she transitioned that project into the Jewish Museum of Florida (JMOF) on Miami Beach, developing the collections and presenting more than 70 exhibits with 500 educational programs in 16 years. She has authored historical exhibitions, articles, books, and films including *Jews of Florida: Centuries of Stories* (2020). Zerivitz initiated the legislation for Florida Jewish History Month (FJHM) each January and Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) each May to increase awareness of the contributions of Jews to the quality of life for all. She curates exhibits, lectures, narrates films, researches and writes on Florida Jewish history and the history of antisemitism.

Where to Find Southern Jewish History

Free search and download of the full contents of *Southern Jewish History* are available on Academia.edu. Visit the journal's page at http://independent.academia.edu/SouthernJewishHistory.

Full contents, including all three issues of *The Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* (1958–63), are also available on the SJHS website: http://www.jewishsouth.org/contents-southern-jewish-history-volume.

Print copies of past volumes may be purchased online at http://www.jewishsouth.org/store/printed-journals or by mailing a check made out to the SJHS to: Managing Editor, PO Box 271432, Corpus Christi, TX 78427.

Current print volume: $20 for individuals; $40 for libraries/institutions.
Back issues: $15 for individuals; $40 for libraries/institutions.
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Indexes of past issues and authors, a cumulative glossary, complete errata, and *SJH* award winners can be found at www.jewish-south.org/about-southern-jewish-history

SJHS Research Grants Available

The Southern Jewish Historical Society awards annual grants to support research in southern Jewish history. The application deadline for each year's awards is in March.

The Project Completion Grant is intended to facilitate the completion of projects relevant to Jewish history in the southern United States. Grants may not be used to fund research or travel, but are intended to cover production or completion expenses such as the editing or indexing of a publication, costs related to illustrations or photo permissions, the production of a media project, or the fabrication of exhibits.

The Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter Grants assist scholars and independent researchers with travel and other expenses related to conducting research in Southern Jewish history. Graduate students completing doctoral dissertations are particularly encouraged to apply. A Kanter grant also is available for research into Florida Jewish history.

The Scott and Donna Langston Archival Grant supports projects aiming to preserve archival materials related to Southern Jewish history, either in secure repositories or in digital format.

The SJHS Grant Committee will evaluate each proposal based on its relevance to the goals of the Society, its scholarly merits, its significance and educational impact, and the likelihood of its successful completion.

Awards will be presented at the society's annual fall conference, with recipients being notified in advance.

Complete details and application information is available at www.jewishsouth.org/sjhs-grants-applications.

Join the Southern Jewish Historical Society

The SJHS membership structure has recently changed. Members now select a membership *type* and then choose one of four membership *levels* in order to give at the standard rate or make an additional gift. An individual joining at the Patron level, for example, would pay $122.

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Charleston Research Fellowship

The Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture invites applications for its research fellowship program, which supports archival research in Special Collections at the College of Charleston. Applications are welcome from scholars, graduate students, journalists, filmmakers, artists, or exhibition curators whose work would benefit from doing research in Charleston. Preference will be given to researchers using materials from the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College's Addlestone Library.

An application form and additional information are available at https://jewish-south.cofc.edu/. Applications are due by March 1, 2025. Please address inquiries to Center Director Ashley Walters at waltersa1@cofc.edu.

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Randy Feinberg and Eli "Sonny" Evans at the Young Judaea Convention, Camp Blue Star, June 10–15, 1952. "Two crazies! Two of the funniest boys I know!! & I mean funny." Gift of Sandra Garfinkel Shapiro. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

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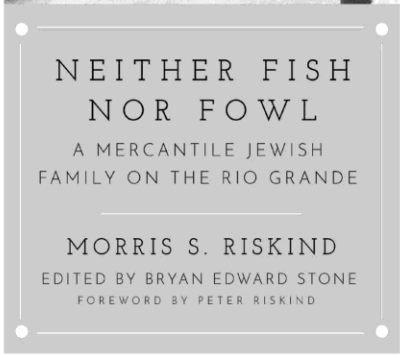

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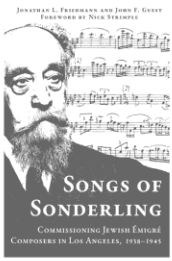

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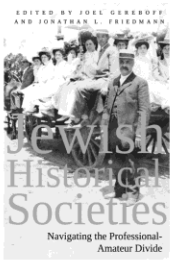

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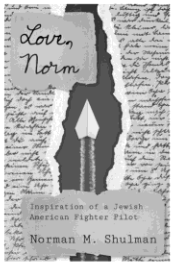

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