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PRIMARY SOURCES

Resources for Southern Jewish Research: A Family History Perspective

by

Karen S. Franklin and Anton Hieke*

Genealogy research can provide evidence of links across the country, patterns of mobility and interaction, and business ties and development. It helps demonstrate that people assume multiple identities and maintain Jewish institutions and connections from location to location even while acculturating. For these and other reasons, it provides excellent primary tools appropriate for historians' uses.

Recently, the study of families in this context has expanded beyond the regional and biographical to be considered in American and global settings.¹ In exploring Jewish experiences, answering the historian's guiding questions of who, what, when, how, where, and especially why, frequently benefits from this type of research. Families typically emigrated from Europe to America and within America in family chain migrations. Family connections locally, nationally, and even internationally also greatly facilitated the development of Jewish economic niches and economic advancement. This approach allows the historian to better understand motives and *modi operandi* of individuals and communities.

The so-called southern experience is rarely self-contained within its regional setting. This article uses a case study of the Iseman family to illustrate how the lives of Jews in the South are embedded in transregional or transnational contexts, and that, in order to fully interpret Jewish history in the South—or in any location—one must look through the lens of

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family histories and connections in the United States and their countries of origin.

European Origins

Karen S. Franklin documented the Iseman family of South Carolina on behalf of descendants of that family. The Isemans, their interconnections, and the culture they brought with them began in the small town they came from, Stebbach, in the late eighteenth century. Anton Hieke explored the history of the Jews in Stebbach and the Grand Duchy of Baden.

Thirteen Jewish families resided in Stebbach when it was ceded to Baden in 1806. Three years later, needing to adopt family names, four of them opted for Eisenmann, also later known as Eisemann.² Family names were required throughout Europe from the late eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century. The reasons were threefold. First, the adoption was necessary to meet the Christian societal norm of first and family names that had developed in the late Middle Ages. Second, it provided clear identification for the state in matters of taxes and for the development of civil registries. Third, it allowed, as Prussian officials phrased it, to “lift the separation between Jews and Christians so that everybody who does not have the right to ask in a religious aspect is left in the dark whether or not somebody is a Jew.”³ It thus provided one prerequisite for equality within society.

The number of *Eise(n)manns* from Stebbach in their various German and English spellings, including Iseman, might be confusing. A tree of the family provides clarity, but not all descendants are known. Changes to the name in the United States again demonstrate the difficulties in establishing family relations. Sigmund Americanized his name to Eiseman. The Eisenmanns of South Carolina became Isemans. Others kept the full spelling of Eisenmann. They share the same background, coming from a wider family in a small, rural German community facing dissolution over modernization.

The community they left behind was one of numerous Jewish hamlets in the southern part of German-speaking central Europe. Stebbach had historically belonged to the Palatinate. Then, beginning with the French Revolution of 1789 and solidified at the Congress of Vienna following Napoleon’s downfall in 1815, stronger neighbors absorbed tiny German states. The new Grand Duchy of Baden thus accidentally became the new

home of many Jewish communities such as the former Palatinate Stebbach.⁴

Stebbach's Jewish community therefore historically connects to Palatinate tradition. Jewish presence in tiny territories formerly belonging to individual families (*Adelsdörfer* in German, *noble villages*) was based on the rulers' destitution rather than societal liberalism. A tax on Jewish residents, *Schutzgeld*, provided a steady income from those "protected Jews." The poverty this tax engendered presented an additional motive for emigration.⁵

Most Jewish residents in Stebbach were merchants dealing in cattle, grain, wine, dry goods (including rags), and oils. Others were innkeepers or butchers such as Isaak Eisenmann/Isaac Iseman.⁶ As was often common with immigrants, the Isemans continued as merchants in America. They brought skill sets with them that benefited their adaptation.

Jews in Stebbach, as subjects of the Grand Duke of Baden, were gradually emancipated. Beginning in 1808, they became citizens on the state level and on par with Christians, but were second-class citizens on the communal level since they were not granted the right to vote. They could purchase real estate but did not enjoy freedom of residence. As Jews, they had the right to settle in their community of birth only if wishing to reside in Baden. Complete emancipation came in 1862, but these restrictions before that date further fostered emigration.⁷

Stebbach's Jewish community boasted a synagogue but never exceeded more than 125 individuals, although this number represented about 14 percent of the entire population. Constantly declining in the latter half of the nineteenth century, by 1915 the Jewish community was dissolved. Whereas internal migration to other communities in Baden and the German states somewhat accounted for dissolutions of Jewish small-town communities, emigration abroad of families like the Isemans served as the major factor.

In the database for emigrants from southwest Germany, Iseman Iseman (born Isaak Eisenmann) appears as one of six Eisenmanns from Stebbach to emigrate to America. None of Isaak's brothers are listed.⁸ His destination (which is rarely included in other emigration permits) suggests a chain migration in that he followed his three brothers, Isaac, Marx, and Manuel, to South Carolina. Community records from Germany commonly show this type of emigration pattern beginning about 1840. In

Stebbach, it resulted in a significantly dwindling Jewish community. Whereas 124 Jews lived there in 1841, the number dropped to 69 in 1864.

The entire community of Stebbach, Jews and Christians alike, was on the move in the nineteenth century with varying destinations. In the early years of the century, the Black Sea coast was a draw. In July 1833 alone, emigration permits for Russian Poland were granted to fifty individuals from the town (whether Jews were among them is unknown). Thus immigration to the United States was in addition to the flow of people from small towns into cities and across Europe. The nineteenth century witnessed substantial instability through numerous wars, changes in boundaries, and economic transformation that served as push factors for internal and external migration.

America as a destination gained momentum beginning in the 1830s. Community histories show that 250 villagers (of a community of about seven hundred) left Baden for America between 1830 and 1900. The emigration database for southwest Germany shows at least twenty Jews leaving Stebbach in that period, although not all applied for a permit. They represent a fifth of some one hundred emigrants who had officially applied.⁹ As emigration reached a critical mass, further emigrants were pulled in their wake. In Stebbach, as in other small German communities, villagers constantly witnessed the departure of their neighbors and relatives, triggering further migration and allowing for the formation of networks that continued in their new homes.

The percentage of Jews who left was far higher than Christians. Jews comprised almost half of the emigrants but a much smaller proportion of residents. Jewish emigration was not solely the result of political inequality, since large number of Christians also emigrated. But the turmoil, economic hardship, and unfulfilled promises of equality connected to the failed German revolution of 1848 played a role in increased emigration. Baden was the site of anti-Jewish riots during the revolution only a few years prior to the Iseman family's departure.¹⁰ In the aftermath of 1848, as a Badener noted in his diary in 1851, "[the Prussians] were [in Baden] for more than fifteen months which has indebted the state to such an extent it is indescribable. All citizens and communities are ruined. . . . Many have left for America."¹¹ Fortunately for Isaak Iseman, who could indeed rely on "some of my siblings who already reside [in South Carolina]" the decision to leave was made easier.¹²

The Auswanderung aus Südwestdeutschland (Emigration from Southwest-Germany) online database, showing the English-language version.
(<https://www.auswanderer-bw.de>).

On May 22, 1850, Isaak Eisenmann appeared before the magistrate of Stebbach, Baden, to declare his intent to leave his home for America. He applied for a passport for himself (twenty-eight years old), his wife Lena (twenty-four), and their three children, Mayer, Bertha, and Lizette (ages six months to three and a half years). Isaak was the fifth child of Mayer Marx Eisenmann and Lippet Israel, a “protected Jew” and subject of the Grand Duke of Baden.¹³ A butcher, he had recently faced financial trouble and sought remedy by venturing to a new life in America (*Süd Karolina*, as the Grand Ducal files noted a week later), where his siblings already resided. Himself destitute, the travel expenses were covered by his wife’s savings of five hundred florins.¹⁴ The family finally left Baden in July 1850.¹⁵ In 1855 Isaak, who by that time was known by the name Iseman Iseman (to distinguish between him and his older brother Isaac), buried his wife and son Mayer in Columbia, South Carolina.¹⁶

Thus the family went from financial hardship and despair to hope and then sadness, a somewhat more complex picture of the immigrant experience than one typically encounters. We often think in terms of

individual young men venturing forth and then raising and sending money back to Europe for the next family member in line. Here the woman's savings supported the move of the entire immediate family. Her money provided her agency and the wherewithal to help the family and transform its future. The money Isaac's wife, Lena, had accumulated was either inherited from her deceased parents or possibly given to her by her husband for household expenses. Sources pertaining to the Isemans' emigration note that Isaac's property was auctioned off (*Gant* in nineteenth-century German) as a result of his bankruptcy. His wife assumed additional responsibilities that needed to be addressed before emigration. She might also have assumed the remaining property in order to ensure emigration costs.¹⁷

On October 10, 1882, the magistrate of Stebbach reported that "Sigmund Eisemann [another Stebbach Eisemann] from this place, born January 3, 1866, has applied for his emigration passports in order to emigrate to America. . . . [W]e also have the honor to report that the applicant does not have any relatives he is legally bound to reveal and who would be left behind in destitution."¹⁸ The wording of this document is revealing concerning the attitude of the local government. It suggests that local officials were concerned about family members who might remain and become charity cases and that such circumstances might preclude the granting of an emigration passport. Again, the new community's gain could be translated into the former community's loss. Only seven Jewish families remained in Stebbach after Sigmund emigrated. He was likely a cousin to the South Carolina Isemans, but South Carolina as a destination was not inevitable. He settled in Arkansas and lived there until his death in 1954.¹⁹

The Isemans and Eisenmanns may not present an apparent connection, but all known Eisenmanns (with these name derivatives) who came from Stebbach are known or assumed to be related.²⁰ The Iseman siblings left for the United States by 1850, but they were part of a broader migration away from rural German areas. Between Isaak and Sigmund Eise(n)mann's emigration, the economy changed even further, quickening the decline of Jewish small-town life in the German states. The emergence of the railway especially altered economic conditions. Communities were more efficiently linked, allowing transportation of goods and people. Wholesale businesses could provide goods to retailers instantly. If

*Sigmund Eisemann's emigration
passport statement, issued in
Stebbach, October 10, 1882.
(Courtesy of the Jewish
Heritage Collection,
College of Charleston.)*

communities were not integrated into the transportation system, they fell behind. The railway reached Stebbach only in 1877.²¹ Stebbach had shrunk already by about a fifth between 1852 and 1871.

The Problem of Name Variations and Identification

As we trace families, one of the challenges is the overlapping of names and individuals carrying several names, often because several children in the same generation were named for the same ancestor. In the case of the Isemans, such confusion has confounded historians, including the authors of this article. Two Isaac Isemans were brothers, so one changed his first name to Iseman. Among the six siblings who moved to South Carolina, five named sons Myer (or Meir, etc.), and five named daughters Lizzie or Lizette.²² These children were named for their grandparents, Mayer Marx and Lippert Iseman.

People also went by several names—the name they were born with, nicknames, Hebrew names (sometimes with nicknames of the Hebrew), Yiddish names, and Americanized names. Also, census enumerators misspelled and mangled names, and indexers misread some of them. Often genealogists list individuals by several monikers, thus referring to a family tree can help identify the correct individuals. Iseman examples include Fannie/Fanny/Fradel/Freundel/Frendel/Frances, Isaak/Isaac/Iseman, Myer/Myre St. Wald, Leopold/Lep/Lepo, and Nesannah/Rosina/Rosena/Rose.

The Americanization or secularization of the family can be traced through names. This is also true of adaptation to the South such as the use of Bubba (for Moses Herman Levi, born in 1901) and Buck (used in two generations for William/Willie Isemans born in 1881 and 1929).²³ Daniel Deronda Strauss's name was likely based on the George Eliot novel. Two Elmo Lehmans, a father and son, were born in 1884 and 1910.²⁴ Changes in the name pattern may reflect not only secularization but also conversion. Marvin Iseman, born in 1928, became a Methodist minister.²⁵ Because

Manuel [Emanuel] and Sara[h] Iseman (image added after photo was taken) and their children, taken at the time of Sara's funeral in 1900. Back row, left to right: Ben, Rose, Dee [Israel DeWitt], Mike, Estelle, Myer, Isadore. Front row, left to right: Jay, Sara, Emanuel, Mollie, Sam, Hannah. (Courtesy of Neal Gosman.)

the Ashkenazic custom of naming for a deceased individual was widespread, on the occasions where sons bear the same name as their father (or daughters, their mother) it may suggest a departure from tradition, although this pattern was not completely uncommon among German Jews.²⁶ The geographical dispersion of Isemans throughout the United States complicates the search for connections, especially because they adopted variant spellings of the name including Eiseman, Eisemann and Eisenmann.

Family Connections

Histories of four brothers—Manuel, Iseman, Isaac, and Marx Mayer—who settled in Darlington, Charleston, and Marion, South Carolina in the mid-nineteenth century, are readily available. But did sisters also emigrate? By locating researchers whose interest was in the Isemans' town of origin, Franklin discovered a family tree that documented two Iseman sisters who also came to South Carolina: Helene (Hendel) and Fannie (Frendel). Helene married Gumpel Reichert (later Richard or Richards) in 1856.²⁷ Fannie's husband, Joseph Frank, was one of the earliest Jewish settlers in Darlington. Tracing the women and family connections enhances our exploration of the interface between genealogy and social and economic history.

Fannie's daughter Carolina married her sister Helene's son Gerson Richard. Marriages between cousins were common at the time. But the discovery of a connection between the Iseman brothers and the Richard and Frank families also helps us understand a tragedy that occurred in Marion in 1870.

Newspapers throughout South Carolina covered the tragic story of a fire that took Iseman Iseman's life and destroyed a number of buildings on the courthouse square. On March 4, the *Charleston Daily News* reported that Iseman "lost his life in his humane exertions to rescue a lady from the flames."²⁸ The next day, the newspaper provided additional details:

The other half of the building . . . was inhabited by G. Richard, who also kept a store on the first floor. Mr. Richard and his wife . . . succeeded with difficulty in getting out of the burning house. . . . Mr. Iseman, an old merchant of our town [he was forty-nine], hearing that Mrs. Richard was still in the house, ran through the smoke, followed by a colored man, to rescue her.²⁹

Iseman did not know that Mrs. Richard was already safe, and he was unable to escape before “an explosion of powder shook the building.”³⁰ The article describes how the other occupant of the house warned his brother, wife, and child. However, it does not identify any relationship between Iseman Iseman and Mrs. Richard.

Charleston (SC) Daily News,
March 4, 1870.

The weekly *Marion Star and Southern Real Estate Advertiser* published more information: “Iseman Iseman perished while trying to save his niece (Caroline Richard).³¹ We know from our family research that she was doubly related: her husband was a nephew of Iseman Iseman through his sister Helene, and Caroline was a niece through Iseman’s sister Fren-del/Fannie Frank.

The newspapers dwell on the tremendous tragedy of the fire: the financial devastation to many citizens of Marion and in particular the death of Iseman Iseman. The family tree offers further insights into the circumstances. Iseman Iseman had nine children, four of whom were from a first

marriage to Lena Hausmann, who died at the age of twenty-nine. At the time of her death in 1855, these four children were under the age of six. More than thirty nieces and nephews survived Iseman Iseman, with possibly more from his two wives.

The articles about the fire raise another question: Who was the black man who ran into the building with Iseman Iseman and later jumped out of a window to safety? He was not mentioned by name in any coverage of the incident. Was he an employee of the Isemans or Richards? A passerby? Sadly, despite his heroism we may never know his true identity. Yet, that he was willing to risk his life suggests a positive relationship between members of this Jewish family and an African American—a hint at the family's possible political and economic stance during this conflict-ridden era of Reconstruction.

The marriage connections continue. Two Iseman sisters married the same man, Abram Weinberg (the second after the first had died). Lisette Eisenman married a cousin, David Kahn, a son of Fannie Eisenmann.³² Thus by expanding the family tree beyond the male line, the researcher exposes a complex web: one generation of a single family that fostered its sense of community and its desire to retain Jewish identity through marriage. The information also illustrates the pattern of intertwined families from one European community settling together in a particular location in the United States, a typical phenomenon.

In America

The world the Isemans left behind in Baden was waning as economic progress, freedom of residence, and thus urbanization brought an end to traditional Jewish small-town German life. In the American South, however, conditions were favorable for merchants in small towns. This enabled economic success for immigrants, such as the Isemans, skilled in trade. Manuel and Iseman owned over one thousand acres of land. Both were also merchants, dealing in dry goods and furs.³³ Manuel was described as "one of the most prudent men in the district [and is] regarded as a reliable Israelite."³⁴ Marx Mayer Iseman, the youngest sibling, moved to Charleston where he was a baker. Isaac Iseman, who lived in various cities in South Carolina, was also a merchant in dry goods. Not everything went well for them, however. A *Marion Star* columnist wrote about Manuel's misfortunes in an 1884 article titled "Failure of an Honorable Merchant": "For the first time in a long and honorable business life, he has to face a combination of adverse circumstances."³⁵ Emigration provided no guarantee of long-term success.

During Reconstruction, members of the Iseman family took advantage of opportunities in the burgeoning cotton trade, as did many other Jewish merchants.³⁶ Court records point to additional clues about family and social history. In 1866, Horace M. Barry of North Carolina sued Manuel Iseman, Iseman Iseman, and Gerson Richards, all of South Carolina. Court records identify the two Isemans and Richards as "pretty extensively engaged in trade" and "possessed of considerable property, real and personal." The contract was for the Isemans and Richards to sell two hundred bales of cotton to Barry for thirty-three cents per pound. They did not sell him the cotton, and Barry sued. After this suit was won by the Isemans in the State Court in Charleston, Barry then brought suit before the United States District Court, and the case was heard in Columbia and returned to Charleston, where Barry succeeded in obtaining a verdict in his favor.³⁷

From October 25, 1865, until the end of the month, Barry placed a notice in the *Wilmington Herald* cautioning against "entering into any bargain, contract or agreement with M. Iseman, I. Iseman or G. Richards of Marion, S. C. for the purchase or sale of their several lots of cotton,

amounting in all to two hundred and sixteen bales. The said cotton having been sold by them the 9th of October 1865 to H. M. Barry, and a contract of the sale having been secured and regularly signed by the above parties."³⁸

From the family tree, we notice that the brothers were sued along with their nephew Richards, the son of their sister Helene. Although we do not know why the Isemans and Richards reneged on the deal, we do note these three Jewish cotton dealers were at least initially willing to conduct business with a non-Jewish northerner during Reconstruction. Horace M. Barry, along with his brother Robert, were commission merchants and steamship agents living in Wilmington, North Carolina. From New York, Horace Barry traveled south to trade immediately following the Civil War. The *Wilmington Daily Journal* on October 27, 1867, published a profile of Barry that was carried in other southern newspapers:

H. M. Barry is the only Northern Commission merchant now conducting operations on the wharf. Mr. Barry is one of those few Northern men of capital and energy who are applying the same to their proper uses in Southern markets and endeavoring to build up Southern enterprises. He is now conducting a large commission business, and deals heavily in Naval stores and produce, buying and selling entirely on commissions. Just after the occupation of this place by the Federal forces, Mr. Barry came here and assumed the agency for the Leary line of steamers.³⁹

In 1868 Manuel Iseman was elected to the position of warden in Marion.⁴⁰ This position, coupled with the dealings of Manuel Iseman, Iseman Iseman, and Gerson Richards with the Barrys, even if these ended in court, suggest the possibility that at least parts of the family supported Reconstruction.

Not all of the Isemans in South Carolina were small-town merchants. The life of Myre St. Wald Iseman took a much more colorful twist as he, like many children of German Jewish immigrants of his generation, became a professional.⁴¹ Born Myer Iseman in 1854 in Marion, Myre was the second of twelve children of Manuel Iseman and Sarah Jacobs. Myre is remembered as a pharmacist in Georgetown, South Carolina, in part because of photographs of his iconic storefront at 807 Front Street and because of the colorful prescription book from his business in the Iseman Family Collection.⁴²

*Myre St. Wald Iseman prescription book, c. 1889.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston.)*

*Iseman Drug Co., 807 Front Street, Georgetown, South Carolina, c. 1900.
(Courtesy of Georgetown County Library, Georgetown, SC.)*

Iseman studied at the University of Louisville School of Medicine, where he earned a degree in 1880. Returning to Darlington, he operated a drug store and served as an official meteorological observer for the state before the U.S. Weather Bureau was created in 1890.⁴³ By 1887 he had moved to Georgetown, where he ran a wholesale and retail drug store that also sold stationery, perfume, fancy goods, and toilet articles. Subsequently he practiced medicine in Atlanta, Washington, and Los Angeles.⁴⁴ Thus his career illustrates how some Jewish professionals remained highly mobile and switched from occupation to occupation.⁴⁵

Iseman's experiences in medical school in Louisville, where he was one of few Jewish students, no doubt influenced his attitudes towards race and society. In 1912, he published a book titled *Race Suicide*. The term *race suicide* refers to an idea within the eugenics movement during the late nineteenth into the early twentieth century that Anglo-Saxon birth rates were dropping below those of immigrant and minority groups they considered inferior. Those who subscribed to the theory, including sociologist Edward A. Ross, feared that the white "race" would thus die out and be replaced by the more fertile immigrant "races." Blame was cast primarily on immigrants (for having too many children) and on white women (for not having enough). Many politicians and doctors of the period subscribed to this philosophy. President Theodore Roosevelt gave a speech to the National Congress of Mothers in 1905 in which he asserted that a woman who is childless by choice contributes to race suicide. Roosevelt attacked college-educated women as well as birth control in the name of race betterment. Roosevelt was somewhat sympathetic to issues of women's rights, but held the "duty" to reproduce the "American race" as the overpowering consideration. He commented in a 1902 letter, "If the women do not recognize that the greatest thing for any woman is to be a good wife and mother, why, that nation has cause to be alarmed about its future."⁴⁶ The concept of race suicide reversed Darwinian survival of the fit to argue against what followers considered the survival of the unfit. It served as a major rationale for immigration restriction laws aimed partly against eastern European Jews.

Iseman's book *Race Suicide* offers a more nuanced approach to the topic and is much more sympathetic to the plight of women. Although the theory of eugenics was widely held at the time, its adherents displayed a range of views. Unlike many others, Iseman looked to societal reasons

*Myre St. Wald Iseman, Race Suicide,
1912. (Worthpoint.com.)*

for the decrease in the “Anglo-Teuton” population. Rather than blaming the women who were failing to have enough—or even any—children, he asserted that women deserved political rights and protection under the law: “While it is unquestionably woman’s mission to bring children into the world, it is debatable whether under all circumstances it is her duty to do so. Obligation to self is just as necessary in woman as in man.”⁴⁷ To quote a review in the *Buffalo Times*:

In this thorough study, Dr. Iseman has gone much further than the consideration of race suicide as that term is ordinarily used. He shows that this form of the evil is only one of many whereby its distinctive ends are accomplished. He tells of the evils of child labor, the physical and the mental dwarfing of the mill and the factory upon immature womanhood, and the effects of slum life in our cities. Furthermore Dr. Iseman deals with the subject as it most gravely affects the future for the great American republic. With the vigor of a strong, clear, broad mind, in a style pleasing as well as singularly forceful, Dr. Iseman presents in this masterly treatise a subject that is of utmost importance.⁴⁸

Iseman had turned race suicide on its head by transforming its focus to the social justice causes dear to the Classical Reform agenda of his generation. Myre St. Wald Iseman died in 1919 in Los Angeles, and his ashes are interred at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, a nondenominational cemetery. The Washington Centennial Lodge of Masons acknowledged his passing as a member.⁴⁹

More Family Connections

When research began on the Isemans, Franklin never expected to tackle so many larger issues relating to southern Jewish history, nor did she anticipate the broad scope of the family and their activities throughout the United States. The research uncovered an example relevant to women's history in the early 1880s. A twenty-one-year-old woman, Pauline Unger, left her family in New York to move to Savannah. We could not understand this move by looking at larger historical circumstances until examination of the family relationships enlightened us. Pauline's sister Rosalie had married a Munich-born Savannah man. Pauline most probably went south to help Rosalie care for her four sons under the age of five, one of whom, Percie, born in 1880, died in infancy.

Pauline Unger probably met Jacob Iseman while she was living in Savannah. In 1880 he was living in Marion. They married in about 1888. The Savannah business directory for 1889 shows Jacob Iseman in business with G. Eckstein, his brother-in-law.⁵⁰ Jacob and Pauline named their first son Percy, after the Percie who had died.

Like many Jewish families who arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, the lives of the Isemans took diverse trajectories in the twentieth century—in where they chose to reside, their cultural identification, and their occupations. Some members enjoyed a public presence such as Percy Reginald Iseman, a second-generation southern Jew born in Savannah who graduated from Columbia School of Mining in 1911.⁵¹ His work as a mining engineer took him shortly thereafter to Antofagasta, Chile, and he later became a director of Seeman Brothers, a wholesale grocery business owned by his wife's family.⁵² By the next generation, their son Joseph Seeman Iseman distinguished himself as an attorney and educator. He was affiliated for more than six decades with the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, serving in many capacities, including as managing partner. He was also well known for his role in the formation of the Children's Television Workshop, which originated *Sesame Street*. Among the clients he represented were Arthur Miller, Robert Motherwell (his brother-in-law), Vladimir Nabokov, and Theodore H. White.⁵³

The Isemans married into other well-known Jewish families including the Stixes, Sternbergers, Sycles, and Schafers. From South Carolina

Joseph Seeman Iseman. (Courtesy of Ellen M. Iseman.)

they moved throughout the country within a generation or two, many settling in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Little Rock, and Richmond. Distant Iseman cousins had moved to South Dakota by the 1860s.

Conclusion

This case study has drawn on readily available online and published sources for family historians including family trees on genealogical databases such as Ancestry.com, census records, the work of other genealogists, and public sources such as newspaper clippings and even communal histories in Europe. In doing so, the article illustrates how these types of sources help answer traditional historical questions in areas of immigration, economic, family, intellectual, political, social, race, and women's history. Concentrating on a single family, this essay also reflects the benefits of history from the bottom up.

NOTES

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¹ See, for example, Tobias Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (Chicago, 2012); Ava F. Kahn and Adam D. Mendelsohn, eds., *Transnational Traditions: New Perspectives on American Jewish History* (Detroit, 2014); Hasia Diner, *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migrations to the New World and the Peddlers Who Forged the Way* (New Haven, 2015); and Adam D. Mendelsohn, *The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (New York, 2015).

² "Das Dorf Stebbach als Lehen" [The village of Stebbach as a Fief], accessed May 12, 2019, http://stebbach-ortsgeschichte.de/index_4.htm; "Stebbach (Gemeinde [Community of] Gemmingen, Landkreis [County] Heilbronn)," Alemannia Judaica, accessed May 13, 2020, http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/stebbach_synagoge.htm. The four families were probably related to each other at the time they took their surnames. Anton Hieke translated the titles of all German sources in this article for clarity.

³ See "Edikt betreffend die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse der Juden in dem Preussischen Staate [Edict Concerning the Civil Conditions of Jews in Prussia], March 11, 1812," *Gesetz-Sammlung für die königlichen Preussischen Staaten [Statute Book of the Royal Prussian States]* 5 (1812): 17–22; Michael Wagner-Kern, *Staat und Namensänderung: die öffentlich-rechtliche Namensänderung in Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert [State and Name Changes: The Name Change in Germany in the 19th and 20th Centuries as Regulated by Law]* (Tübingen, 2002), 38–50. Lists of name adoptions provide a census of Jewish residents in individual communities for the period.

⁴ Baden's 65 German square miles in 1798 grew to 272 in 1815. Bavaria went from 1,061 to 1,500 square miles; Hesse-Darmstadt from 102 to 193; Hesse-Kassel from 156 to 210; and Württemberg from 155 to 355 square miles. Numerous Jewish immigrants moved from these areas to the United States. See Karl-Heinrich Lang, *Tabellen über Flächen-Inhalt, Menschen-Zahl, Einkünfte, und Bevorstehenden Verlust der Teutschen Reichs-Lande [Tables on Area, Number of People, Income, and Impending Loss of German Imperial Territories]* (Basel, 1798), 6, 11, 20, 30; Johann Georg Heinrich Hassel, *Lehrbuch der Statistik der Europäischen Staaten für höhere Lehranstalten, zugleich Handbuch zur Selbstbelehrung [Textbook of Statistics of the European States for Higher Education and Handbook for Self-Study]* (Weimar, 1822), 153, 200, 211, 217, 225.

⁵ Wilhelm Kreutz, "Die pfälzischen Juden der napoleonischen Ära: Bevölkerungsentwicklung, regionale Ausbreitung und Sozialstruktur [The Palatinate's Jews in the Era of Napoleon: Development of Population, Regional Distribution, and Social Structure]," in *Pfälzisches Judentum Gestern und Heute: Beiträge zur Regionalgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts [The Palatinate's Jewry and Judaism Then and Now: Contributions to the Regional History of the 19th and 20th Centuries]*, ed. Alfred Hans Kuby (Neustadt, 1992), 37–39.

⁶ "Die jüdische Gemeinde [The Jewish Community]," accessed May 13, 2020, http://stebbach-ortsgeschichte.de/index_10.htm. A growing number of non-Jewish historians have taken an interest in the former Jewish residents in their small towns in Germany

and eastern Europe and documented them. They trace the fate of Holocaust victims, survivors and refugees, their ancestors, and their descendants. Many initiatives in Germany were developed after 1988, the fiftieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht*. One can locate local researchers by asking other genealogists who share an interest in the town or archivists from the region, or by locating these publications. One can also seek information on Obermayer German Jewish History Award recipients. Awardees are individuals and organizations in Germany that have raised awareness of a once-vibrant Jewish history and culture in their communities through educational programs, exhibitions, restoration of synagogues and cemeteries, installation of Holocaust memorials, genealogical research, development of websites, publications, *Stolpersteine*, public programs, and other activities. There are almost one hundred awardees from twenty years of the program. Recently this type of effort has grown because of research in preparation for placement of *Stolpersteine* that identify Holocaust victims with cobblestone-sized memorials in the pavement in front of their last-known residences. Some of these projects also document the emigration history of the Jews of the towns, including those who left well before the Holocaust. These stories are often published on websites of local history initiatives or the official websites of communities. See, for instance, the “stumbling stone” for Marie Caroline Eisenmann (1886–1940) of Cannstatt, née Jäger, who was hospitalized in a mental institution in Winnweiler (some eighty miles away from Stebbach) and eventually euthanized by the Nazis in 1940. Prior to World War I, she had spent two years in America before returning to Germany. “Marie Caroline Eisenmann: ‘verlegt’ nach Grafeneck [Marie Caroline Eisenmann ‘Transferred’ to Grafeneck],” Cannstatter Stolperstein-Initiative, accessed June 29, 2019, <https://www.stolpersteine-cannstatt.de/biografien/marie-caroline-eisenmann-verlegt-nach-grafeneck>.

⁷ See Wolfram Angerbauer and Hans Georg Frank, *Jüdische Gemeinden in Kreis und Stadt Heilbronn: Geschichte, Schicksale, Dokumente* [*Jewish Communities in the County and City of Heilbronn: History, Fate, Documents*] 1 (Landkreis Heilbronn, 1986), 10.

⁸ The other Eisenmanns were Adolf and the widow of Wolf Eisenmann with her three children, David, Siegmund, and another David. See *Auswanderung aus Südwestdeutschland* [*Emigration from South West Germany*], accessed June 6, 2019, www.auswanderer-bw.de. German databases such as this can provide crucial information for emigrants from German communities in the area – how many people were traveling, where they were from, religion such as “*isr*,” etc. Yet these are far from complete, as less than half of all emigrants applied for passports and emigration permits.

⁹ *Auswanderung aus Südwestdeutschland*, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.auswanderer-bw.de/index.php?sprache=de&suche=1>. An English-language version of the site, *Emigration from Southwest-Germany*, is accessible through the same URL.

¹⁰ Uri R. Kaufmann, *Kleine Geschichte der Juden in Baden* [*Brief History of the Jews of Baden*] (Karlsruhe, 2007), 69.

¹¹ „Diary of Johann Jakob Spielmann, 1800–65,” in August Feßler, ed. “Tagebuch meines Urgroßvaters [Diary of My Great-Grandfather],” *Heimatgruß* [*Notes from Home*] aus Lichtenau, Ulm, Scherzheim, Muckenschopf, Grauelsbaum (Lichtenau, 1986), 20–26.

¹² Report of Grand-Ducal Chief Magistrate Messmer, May 29, 1850, Iseman Family Collection, box 1, folder 1a, Jewish Heritage Collection, Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC (hereafter cited as Iseman Family Collection). Joseph Iseman, a

great-grandson of Manuel, deposited these papers, the result of decades of research. He was the father of Ellen and Fred Iseman, who commissioned Karen S. Franklin to study their family.

¹³ Protected Jews, *Schutzjuden* in German, was a pre-emancipation concept of Jews in Germany being under a petty monarch's protection and owing the monarch compensation in return. Initially protected by the popes, Jews became direct subjects of the Holy Roman Emperor beginning with Frederick II in the thirteenth century. The popes' and emperors' eventually futile actions represented a genuine attempt to protect Jews after the tragic pogroms during the Crusades, causing, for instance, the destruction of the so-called *ShUM* (שומ) communities (ש - Speyer, ׀ - Worms, and ׃ - Mayence). In the decisive Golden Bull of 1356 (to some degree the German version of the English Magna Carta), the protection of Jews and the accompanying protection fee (*Schutzgeld*) shifted from the emperor to the petty monarchs. They thus determined the residence or nonresidence of Jews in their territories. Protected Jews became bondsmen generating steady income. The concept was discontinued with emancipation in Germany in the late nineteenth century. See Sabine Ullmann, "Judenschutz," *Historisches Lexikon Bayerns* [Historical Dictionary of Bavaria], accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.historisches-lexikon-bayerns.de/Lexikon/Judenschutz>.

¹⁴ Report of Grand-Ducal Chief Magistrate Messmer, May 22 and May 29, 1850; marriage certificate (Getraute Nro. 1) of Isaak Eisenmann and Lea Hausmann, April 7, 1846, box 1, folder 1a, Iseman Family Collection.

¹⁵ Claim of Fleischer and Ullmann against Lea Eisenmann, July 10, 1850, Iseman Family Collection.

¹⁶ The JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR) lists six Isemans buried in Columbia, SC. JOWBR, Ancestry, accessed May 25, 2020, <https://www.ancestry-library.com/search/collections/1411/>. Ancestry requires a subscription, but many public libraries offer access to it and other genealogical materials. See also Barnett Elzas, *The Jewish Cemeteries at Columbia, S.C.* (Charleston, SC, 1910), 6.

¹⁷ See Claim of Fleischer and Ullmann against Lea Eisenmann, July 10, 1850, Iseman Family Collection.

¹⁸ The Iseman Family Collection in Charleston includes copies of Isaac Iseman's emigration applications in German with an English translation. They also hold the emigration application of Sigmund Eisemann, one of the other emigrants from Stebbach noted in the database for southwest Germany. *Bericht des Gemeinderaths in Stebbach vom 10. Oktober 1882* [Report of the Community Council of Stebbach of October 10, 1882]. A translation of this document is not available, and it is but one example of sources in Germany and the United States that are difficult to access due to language barriers as well as the form of script. *Deutsche Kurrente*, the old German script used for this document, was a uniquely German style in use until the Nazi period. It was then no longer taught because of its impracticability for governing conquered, foreign-language nations. The bulk of handwritten German sources up to that point are in this style or a derivative of it. Yet, affordable script recognition software largely exists on the trial level only (such as *Transkribus*, transkribus.eu) because of its striking dissimilarities to other Latin-based scripts. Because scripts may be illegible even to modern native readers of German, central German archives may provide affordable transliteration services. Most genealogists facing that problem on a regular basis, however, have their "go-to" older

Germans still versed in *Deutsche Kurrente*. When seeking support in reading sources at hand, individuals knowledgeable in that style may be contacted through organizations and clubs such as *Freunde der Deutschen Kurrentschrift* [Friends of German Script], *deutsche-kurrentschrift.de*. The same basically holds true for German print (*Fraktur*, or a derivate of it) although to a lesser degree. Recognition software for traditional German print and for optical character recognition (OCR) is more readily available. Their success rate for German print, however, is still below that for Antiqua-based print.

¹⁹ “Sigmund Eiseman,” Oakland and Fraternal Historic Cemetery Park, Little Rock, *findagrave.com*, accessed May 2, 2019, *findagrave.com/memorial/64683140/sigmund-eiseman*. Findagrave.com, a nonsubscription website based on voluntary contributions, provides easy access to cemetery records, which in turn often permits conclusions concerning webs of relations within given regions. The tombstone may not only provide information regarding lifespan, but also place of origin and family relations, as typically only families and close relatives shared a plot. Cemeteries, in turn, allow conclusions as to the religious affiliation with Judaism, i.e., if the individual was affiliated with a synagogue of a certain branch, depending on the affiliation of the cemetery. For small-town communities, cemeteries also often served even more remote places, thus they help in identifying otherwise overlooked Jewish communities as well as ties between center and periphery Jewry. Databases such as *findagrave.com* rely heavily on volunteer work, thus information has to be taken with a grain of salt if a photograph of the tombstone is not added.

²⁰ “Iseman” is the American spelling of the German pronunciation of Eis[en]mann.

²¹ *Stebbach – Altgemeinde-Teilort* [Stebbach—Old Community~District], accessed May 12, 2019, https://www.leo-bw.de/web/guest/detail-gis/-/Detail/details/ORT/labw_ortslexikon/1951/Stebbach+%5BAltgemeinde-Teilort%5D; “Infrastruktur und Versorgung,” *Stebbach Ortsgeschichte*, accessed May 28, 2020, http://stebbach-ortsgeschichte.de/index_11.htm.

²² In only one case a grandchild was named Lizette. For the most part the eldest children received the names Myer and Lizette.

²³ Although Buck’s actual name was William Franklin Iseman, his tombstone reflects his nickname, Willie Buck Iseman. *Findagrave.com*, accessed June 10, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/91865834/willie-buck-iseman>. Certificate of death for William Franklin Iseman, South Carolina Death Records, 1821–1968, Ancestry, accessed June 10, 2019, https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=8741&h=1644127&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Mzl1&_phstart=successSource.

²⁴ Their grandmother/great-grandmother was Amelia Iseman.

²⁵ Obituary of Martha D. Iseman, South Carolina Obituary and Death Notices Collection, accessed May 25, 2020, http://www.genealogybuff.com/sc/state/webbbs_config.pl/noframes/read/1171.

²⁶ As an example, Karen S. Franklin was named Karen Jeanne Spiegel for her mother, Jeanne Spiegel. Five generations of Henry Morgenthau are named for Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

²⁷ Alex Calzareth, e-mail to Karen S. Franklin, February 28, 2018.

²⁸ *Charleston (SC) Daily News*, March 4, 1870.

²⁹ *Charleston Daily News*, March 5, 1870.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Marion (SC) Star and Southern Real Estate Advertiser*, March 2, 1870.

³² Using European records indexed on Ancestry.com or JewishGen.com facilitates tracing European records to the United States, and vice versa. From this, we find that Fanni Kahn was married to Marx Kahn in Stebbach. Her father was Maier Eisemann. Baden, Germany, Lutheran Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1783–1875, Ancestry, accessed June 4, 2019, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/61242>.

³³ “Darlington, South Carolina,” Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed June 10, 2019, www.isjl.org/south-carolina-darlington-encyclopedia.html. The reference to furs is from a letter to Joseph Iseman from a distant cousin, as archived in Joseph Iseman Family Papers.

³⁴ See Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (Berlin and Boston, 2013), 159.

³⁵ “Failure of an Honorable Merchant,” *Marion (SC) Star*, January 23, 1884.

³⁶ For a discussion of Jews in the cotton business, see Michael R. Cohen, *Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era* (New York, 2017).

³⁷ J. S. G. Richardson, *Reports of Cases at Law, Argued and Determined in the Court of Appeals and Court of Errors of South Carolina. Volume XIV. From November 1866, to May 1867; Inclusive* (Philadelphia, 1867), 129–42. The authors are indebted to attorney Beth Jacob for assistance in analyzing this case. Beth Jacob, e-mail to Karen S. Franklin, April 25, 2013.

³⁸ *Wilmington (NC) Herald*, October 28, 1865.

³⁹ “H. M. Barry,” *Wilmington Daily Journal*, October 27, 1867.

⁴⁰ *Columbia (SC) Daily Phoenix*, November 12, 1868.

⁴¹ Eric Goldstein, interview conducted by Karen S. Franklin, June 10, 2019.

⁴² Georgetown County Public Library, “The Iseman Drug Company in Georgetown, History Of SC Slide Collection,” accessed June 10, 2019, <https://www.knowitall.org/photo/ise-man-drug-company-georgetown-history-sc-slide-collection>. The prescription book, covering the years 1887 through 1889, includes handwritten prescriptions that are glued to the pages of the volume. Each prescription includes the prescription number, patient’s name, date, dosage, and formulation of the prescription. Myre St. Wald Iseman wrote most of the prescriptions. Iseman Family Collection.

⁴³ M. S. Iseman is noted as being the meteorological observer in Darlington in the early 1880s. *Second Annual Report of the State Board of Health of South Carolina* (Charleston, 1881), 25.

⁴⁴ Iseman Family Collection.

⁴⁵ For the similar story of David Mayer, a contemporary who started as a pharmacist and moved into different occupations, see Mark K. Bauman, “Factionalism and Ethnic Politics in Atlanta: German Jews from the Civil War through the Progressive Era,” *A New Vision of Southern Jewish History: Studies in Institution Building, Leadership, Interaction, and Mobility* (Tuscaloosa, 2019), 107–20.

⁴⁶ Adam Hochman, “Race Suicide,” Eugenics Archive, accessed June 6, 2019, <http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/535eedb87095aa0000000250>; “Theodore Roosevelt’s

1902 letter on 'race suicide' to Marie Van Horst," October 18, 1902, *progressingamerica*, accessed July 1, 2019, <https://progressingamerica.blogspot.com/2013/06/theodore-roosevelts-1902-letter-on-race.html>.

⁴⁷ M. S. Iseman, *Race Suicide* (New York, 1912), 213.

⁴⁸ *Buffalo (NY) Times*, September 8, 1912.

⁴⁹ *Washington (DC) Herald*, October 12, 1919.

⁵⁰ A. E. Sholes, ed., *Sholes' Directory of the City of Savannah for 1889* (Savannah, 1889), 249.

⁵¹ *Catalogue of Officers and Graduates of Columbia University from the Foundation of King's College in 1754* (New York, 1912), 591, accessed July 2, 2019, <https://archive.org/details/catalogueofoffic00colu/page/590>.

⁵² "Percy R. Iseman," *New York Sun*, June 15, 1942.

⁵³ "Joseph S. Iseman, 89, Lawyer and Educator, Dies," *New York Times*, May 1, 2006.