

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

of SOUTH CAROLINA

SUMMER 2004 VOLUME IX - NUMBER 2



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Bernard Warshaw

Cover photo:

Rabbi Benjamin G. Axelman leading a study group in the meeting room of A.Z.A. Chapter 143, on the corner of Burns Lane and King Street, ca. 1935. The women in the photo were members of the Council of Jewish Juniors, established in 1919 by the Charleston section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

Left to right, back row:

Gus Simon, Isaac Jacobs, Harold Cohen, William "Billy" Baum, David "Rocky" Goldberg, Aaron Solomon, Alwyn Goldstein, Alex Garfinkel, Harold Jacobs; seated: Leon Banov, Jr., Madeline Karesh, Esta Solomon, Morris Yaschik, Sylvia Cohen, Irving Karesh, George Kaminsky, Beatrice "Beatsie" Bluestein, Aaron Prystowsky, Arnold Prystowsky, Elmore Solomon, Walter Karesh, Solomon Breibart, Lena Feldman, George Breibart, Ralph Coleman, Gussie Toporek, Walter "Puggy" Solomon, Julius "Scruddy" Rosenblatt, Samuel J. "Sammy" Solomon, Rabbi Benjamin Axelman.

Photo: Gift of Solomon Breibart. Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston Library.

From^{the} President

Bernard Warshaw

This coming October when we meet in Charleston, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina will celebrate its tenth anniversary. The Society has come a long way in ten short years. We have mounted a nationally traveling exhibition, produced an excellent hour-long documentary, developed the best archives on South Carolina Jewish history anywhere, published bi-annual newsletters, hosted well-attended meetings, and created a grassroots organization with more than 500 dues-paying members, a home base at the College of Charleston, and professional staff to oversee operations. Most important, we have put South Carolina's long and significant Jewish story on the map just in time for the national commemoration of 350 years of Jewish settlement in America.

The meetings in October promise to be outstanding. Many volunteers are working hard to plan activities, coordinate publicity, and collaborate on hospitality and citywide events. Leah Greenberg, Sandra Rosenblum, and Eve Berlinsky deserve special mention; they are as devoted and efficient as any volunteers I have ever seen. All three congregations in Charleston are joining the festivities, with Brith Sholom Beth Israel using the meeting to celebrate its own very significant 150th anniversary. The Southern Jewish Historical Society, our co-sponsors, expect their biggest attendance to date, and the national committee to "Celebrate 350" is highlighting the conference in recognition of the special importance of South Carolina Jewish history. Send in your reservations early—we're likely to have a sell-out crowd.

My prime goal as president is to make the Society reflect its strong grassroots support. To encourage each community to become engaged in preserving its history, I am implementing structures to coordinate local efforts. This special anniversary issue of the Newsletter is a beginning, with four articles from our members. Stanley Farbstein has done yeoman's work with the cemetery project, creating a model for documenting weddings, births, and other lifecycle events, synagogue architecture, and the like. I am in the process of restructuring the Society's Board of Directors to accord with the new focus.

I am proud to be your leader through these exciting times. Please join us in October for a memorable weekend and help us organize projects in your community. Do not hesitate to call me at [843.549.7404](tel:843.549.7404) or e-mail me at Warshaw@lowcountry.com if I can be of any help.

Sincerely,

Bernard Warshaw
President



In the barnyard at the Aiken colony

Happyville: A “Kibbutz” Grows in Aiken

by Marcia Savin

“We had 2,300 acres between a village, Montmorenci, and Aiken, South Carolina. We grew watermelon, cotton, corn, even grapes. Had our own pond. Let the water out once a year. We’d walk in and pick up catfish, pike, sunfish, smelt. Have a fish fry. We dammed the stream to power our cotton gin and sawmill. Lots of trees, lumber to sell. It was called Happyville.”

Last year, I was listening to a 1982 tape¹ of my uncle Al Rothman, then 84, describing life in 1907—he was nine. The story fascinated me. My grandparents, Morris and Bertha, aged 39 and 30, respectively, Morris’s brother, and eight other families started a communal farm down South. Newly arrived from Eastern Europe, Yiddish-speaking socialists, they left the hated New York sweatshops for a dream.

“One neighbor helped us,” said Al. “One-Arm Taylor. Lost the arm in the War.” *The Civil War!* “I’d say to him, how do you plant this and he’d give the information. Because my dad wasn’t really a farmer. I don’t think any of them was.”

But Al described crops, a gin, lumber. . . . Why, in under three years, did it fail? “Some of the farmers,” he said, “made it so terrible for us. Couldn’t ship our lumber. No flatcars, no shipping. Because of how we treated the coloreds. We called them ‘Mister Smith, Mister Jones.’ When we’d go to town, we’d get flour or chewing tobacco they needed. That was one reason we had to leave.”

I had so many questions but this was 2003. Al was dead. How about his younger sister Ida, still alive and sharp at 100?² Would she remember back to ages three to six?

“We had a tenant farmer’s house. . . .” Ida reminisced. “No door. Two rooms. My father was a nonbeliever but my mother was kosher. Not one bite of meat touched her mouth there. She washed clothes at

the stream, hitting a rock. Tied a sack around my neck and told me to pick cotton. One family—One-Arm Taylor’s—had us for lunch. Oh, what a beautiful house, with servants. So much food!”

They were also friends with a freed slave. “She took me to her home and showed me pictures on the walls. All from newspapers. Of one man. My father said, ‘That’s Mr. Lincoln.’”

I wanted to know more but Montmorenci wasn’t even in my atlas. I googled “Happyville.” A few sentences. “Montmorenci.” Bingo! Annie’s Inn. A beautiful restored 1820s house. I *had* to go. Owner Scottie Ruark said, “You’ll need a car. There’s nothing here, just a gas station. Not even a restaurant. Everything’s in Aiken.”

I reserved for May 2003 but my research went nowhere. I called the College of Charleston. Harlan Greene knew of Happyville! He sent Arnold Shankman’s definitive article.³ Someone gave me Doris Baumgarten’s name. “Happyville?” she said. “My pet project! Come down. I’ll help.” My friend Mary Stanton⁴ joined me. Doris was our indispensable chauffeur, guide, and resource in Aiken.

I hoped to learn about a trial Al described. At age nine, he was the star witness. He explained, “This farmer let his pigs come and root up our crops. My dad shoed them—there was six—in the barn and locked it. He wanted to get paid for the damage.

“The owner came over . . . told my dad to let them out. My dad wouldn’t. My dad was standing by a tree stump. It held an ax to split wood. The man brought something out. My mother started screaming. She thought it was a knife or gun and dragged Dad into the house. The guy got the ax, chopped the lock off, and let his pigs out.



*Morris Rothman,
Oakland, California, 1915*



*Al Rothman in his World War I
army uniform, 1919.
Rothman served in France.*



*Ida (Arline) Rothman Knowlton
and her mother Bertha Rothman,
Oakland, California, 1937*

“We went to court about it. The judge says to me, ‘You know what happens to little boys who tell lies?’ I said, ‘Yes, they go to hell. The devil gets them.’” Young Al testified and the judge awarded my grandfather six dollars—one for each pig. “We won!” my aunt chortled at age 100. “We won!”

Amazingly, they did. On the word of a child. The child of Jewish outsiders and socialists. Did the neighbors cheer, or did they resent it? The Aiken library held no clue. What I did find was: “Aiken Colony Is a Success,” *Aiken Journal*, August 13, 1907. “Happyville colony is remarkable. . . .” Notices proudly invited the public to patronize the new cotton gin and saw mill.

A year later, it was over.

Ida’s explanation: “My father worked dawn to dusk behind a plow. He wanted to prove they could make a go of it. The others dressed up and went to town. It made him so mad.”

Shankman blames bad weather, internal dissension, lack of skills, poor soil, debt. And he says that intellectuals,

who staged Yiddish plays and had Tolstoy in their library, “would have longed for a richer cultural and social life.”⁵ Nowhere did I read that treating blacks as equals led to a boycott of the colony’s goods. But then, no colonists were interviewed—none stayed to tell the tale.

Happyville didn’t last long, but “failure” seems the wrong word.

¹ Interview of Al Rothman, 1982, recorded by Carol Morrison, daughter of Al’s sister, Sara Rothman Rosenblatt.

² Ida (Arline) Knowlton (1902–2003).

³ Arnold Shankman, “Happyville, the Forgotten Colony,” *American Jewish Archives* 30 (April 1978): 3–19.

⁴ Author of *From Selma to Sorrow, The Life and Death of Viola Liuzzo* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

⁵ Shankman, 19.



*At the Russian
colony in Aiken*

A Brief History of the Colony

In December 1905, ten families of Russian-Jewish immigrants left New York City's tenements to settle an agricultural colony near the village of Montmorenci in Aiken County. They were answering an invitation published by South Carolina's Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Immigration and translated into Yiddish, to come and buy "very fertile land" to be had "very cheaply." Desperate for workers to till large tracts of land abandoned during the Civil War, state officials decided that industrious Eastern Europeans would save its economy. The immigrants called the colony Happyville. It lasted less than three years.

E. J. Watson, a Columbia newspaperman active in the Chamber of Commerce, was hired to oversee the program. In New York, he enlisted Charles Weintraub, an idealist who had been a piano tuner in Russia. Weintraub was all enthusiasm. He purchased a 2,200-acre tract, seven miles from Aiken, forming the Incorporative Farming Association, and sold shares to his friends—socialists and intellectuals like himself. The land was poor, mostly forest, but had a stream, livestock, farm implements, and a few buildings. Soon the colonists were felling trees for lumber and making plans for a cotton gin and sawmill. More people came, eventually totaling around 50.

The weather the first year was terrible. A late frost damaged the cotton plants; heavy rains destroyed them. But the colonists' spirits were good. The second year, the weather cooperated and they were prospering. A school for their children opened. The public was invited to patronize their new ginnery and sawmill, powered by a 36-inch turbine using stream water. The small Jewish community in Aiken welcomed the colonists in spite of political and religious differences. The local paper pronounced Happyville an unqualified success.

But by the middle of 1908, it was over. Many problems contributed: another harsh winter, heavy debt, lack of farming knowledge, internal dissension, and lack of patronage for their gin and mill. A rival ginnery was being built by nearby farmers. The colony auctioned off its land and equipment. The colonists—who had lost their money and hopes—left. Happyville was gone, leaving no trace.

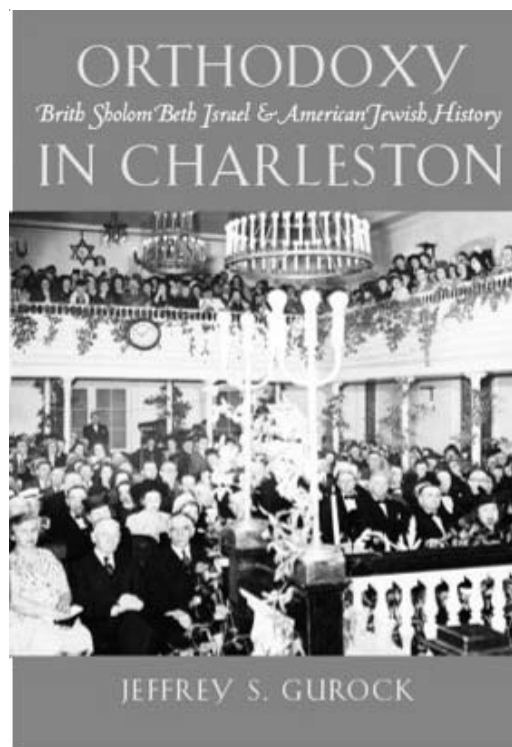
Photo credits: Portraits courtesy of Marcia Savin. Landscape scenes courtesy of Winthrop University Archives.



Scene at the Aiken colony

Marcia Savin is an author and playwright. Her children's book, *The Moon Bridge* (Scholastic) deals with the challenge of prejudice to a friendship of two fifth-graders, one Japanese-American, during World War II. It is used in schools throughout the country. She lives in Brooklyn, New York. **Anyone with information about Happyville, please contact Marcia at msavin2@earthlink.net or 718.852.2867.**

Coming in October...



Published by the College of Charleston Library in association with Brith Sholom Beth Israel. Signed copies will be available at the "Jewish Roots in Southern Soil" conference.



Julius Rosenwald

(1862-1932)

Jewish Philanthropist in the South

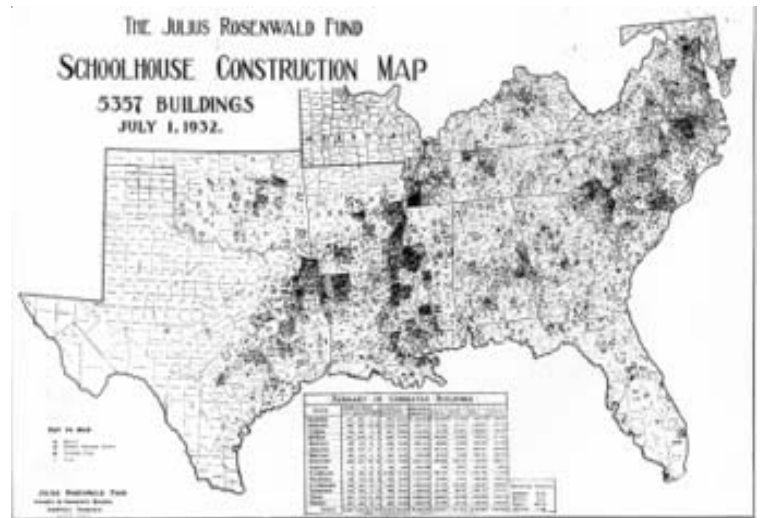
by Doris Baumgarten

As the nation celebrates the 50th anniversary of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the landmark Supreme Court decision that overturned school segregation in America, it may be difficult to imagine just how dismal the prospects were for African-American children, at the height of the Jim Crow era, to get an education. In the rural South conditions were particularly bleak.

An important force for change came from an unlikely source. Chicago-born philanthropist Julius Rosenwald allied himself with Tuskegee Institute's Booker T. Washington for the purpose of building schools and libraries for black students across the region. Son of German-Jewish immigrant parents, Rosenwald made his fortune as C.E.O. of Sears, Roebuck, and Company. Between 1917 and 1932, the Rosenwald Foundation provided seed-money for more than 5,300 schools in 15 states, including 500 in South Carolina. By 1928, one in every five schools for rural black children was a Rosenwald School, educating one-third of the school-age population.

Rosenwald not only contributed financially but also concerned himself with the construction details. He wanted the best designs for natural lighting and ventilation. Health and hygiene were not overlooked and plans included specifications for wells and privies.

Rosenwald felt strongly that the success of the schools depended on local involvement. Communities were required to share the costs of construction and equipment, as well as upkeep and maintenance of the buildings. Cost-sharing could be monetary, in-kind, or "sweat-equity"—that is, contributions of labor. The foundation's seed-money amounted to as little as one-fifth of the total cost; the rest came from local school boards, businesses, and residents, white and black.



Oak Grove School

OAK GROVE SCHOOL built in 1924 on four acres of land as a one-teacher school.

| | | |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| Total cost | | \$1,670 |
| Contributions: | Negroes | \$70 |
| | Public | \$1,200 |
| | Rosenwald | \$400 |

None of these three Rosenwald Schools built in Aiken County, South Carolina, is still standing

School photographs courtesy of the Fisk University Archives. Portrait from the Dictionary of American Portraits (Dover Publications, 1958). Map courtesy of Tom Hanchett.



Seivern School

SEIVERN SCHOOL built in 1923-24 on four acres as a two-teacher school.

| | | |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| Total cost | | \$2,708 |
| Contributions: | Negroes | \$1,142 |
| | Public | \$66 |
| | Rosenwald | \$800 |

Raised in Springfield, Illinois, young Julius had joined the fledgling Chicago concern named Sears, Roebuck and Company in 1897. Capitalizing on the Rural Free Delivery system instituted the following year by the U.S. Post Office, he helped Sears become the world's largest retailer with the publication of the "Wish Book" distributed to thousands of rural households. Through this thick, enticing catalog, anyone could order household goods and farm supplies, from clothing to canning equipment, medical supplies to tractor parts, seeds, chickens, and even an entire build-it-yourself house.

Rosenwald credited Chicago's Sinai Congregation, which he attended as a youth, for instilling in him the Jewish values of Tzedakah and Tikkun Olam. He supported many Jewish and non-Jewish causes, including the Federation of Jewish Charities, Hull House, and the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, and black YMCAs and YWCAs in cities across the country.

REFERENCES

Peter Ascoli. Address given to South Carolina Preservation Society, Columbia, S.C., April 10, 2003.

Fisk University Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *Preserving Rosenwald Schools* (Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, n.d.).

Allen Riddick, *Aiken County Schools* (Aiken, S.C.: Rocket Publishers, 2004).

Website: www.rosenwaldplans.org



Aiken Graded School

AIKEN GRADED SCHOOL built under the 1924-25 budget and outfitted for nine teachers.

| | | |
|----------------|-----------|----------|
| Total cost | | \$33,500 |
| Contributions: | Negroes | \$3,500 |
| | Whites | \$1,500 |
| | Public | \$27,000 |
| | Rosenwald | \$1,500 |

According to grandson and biographer Dr. Peter Ascoli, Rosenwald's Jewish heritage gave him a particular affinity with African Americans. "The horrors that are due to race prejudice," Rosenwald wrote in 1911, "come home to the Jew more forcefully than to others of the white race, on account of the centuries of persecution which they have suffered and still suffer."

The philanthropist refused to allow his name to be used on any of the schools he helped bring into being, preferring that their names reflect community pride. Poignantly, most of the remaining schools, whether abandoned or converted to other uses, today are referred to as "Rosenwald Schools" by people living nearby.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

Edwin Embree and Julia Waxman, *Investment in People: The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949).

Adam Fairclough, *Teaching Equality: Black Schools in the Age of Jim Crow* (Athens: University of Georgia, 2001).

Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* LXV: 4 (October 1988).

Louis Harlan, *Separate and Unequal: Public School Campaigns and Racism in the South States, 1901-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958).

Alicestyne Turley-Adams, *Rosenwald Schools in Kentucky, 1917-1932* (Frankfort: Kentucky Heritage Council and the Kentucky African American Heritage Commission, 1997).

Jewish Burial Grounds Across the State

by Stanley Farbstein

Over one hundred years ago, Rabbi Barnett Elzas of KKBE in Charleston began a survey of Jewish burial grounds across the state. This work continued for over a decade and resulted in surveys of cemeteries in Camden, Charleston, Columbia, Georgetown, Orangeburg, and Sumter. These books are not just simple lists of who was buried where and when, but also provide information about the deceased, including family, places of origin, occupations, and honors. Now largely unavailable except in archives, Elzas' books continue to serve as a valuable source on Jewish life in South Carolina in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Unfortunately, this survey by Rabbi Elzas was the last comprehensive survey of Jewish cemeteries in South Carolina. Now, a hundred years later and in the 350th year of Jewish settlement in the United States, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina (JHSSC), as a part of its mission to collect and record the Jewish history of the state, has undertaken to survey Jewish cemeteries, including the burial grounds of some South Carolina Jews in Savannah and Augusta, Georgia. Bernard Warshaw, president of the JHSSC, has asked that I plan and organize this survey. A number of individuals have already agreed to participate in the project. (See "List of Local Contacts.")

This cemetery project of the JHSSC is not a simple effort. A lot of work is required and completion is projected to take at least three years. To date, Jewish cemeteries have been identified in 14 locales across the state: Aiken, Anderson, Beaufort, Camden, Charleston, Columbia, Florence, Georgetown, Greenville, Hilton Head Island, Orangeburg, Spartanburg, Sumter, and Walterboro. Columbia and Charleston have multiple cemeteries. There are a reported 13 Jewish burial grounds in Charleston, including two now covered with asphalt.

There may be other Jewish cemeteries in the state that should be surveyed. Suggested possible additional sites are Darlington, Lancaster, and Myrtle Beach.



Beth Israel Cemetery, Beaufort, SC

Photos by Paul Keyserling.

The survey of each cemetery will be a separate effort, planned and conducted by local residents, and the result at each location will be published in a report for that area.

Copies will be distributed locally and placed in various archives in the state. Work is already underway and two of the reports should be issued late this year.

Volunteers are needed to help to organize and carry out this project. It offers the opportunity for involvement in community service by local youth groups, confirmation classes, students at colleges and universities, and retirees. When the project is completed, we expect the JHSSC to compile and publish the results.

Those interested in participating should contact :

Stanley Farbstein

14 Lockwood Drive, Apt 11H

Charleston, SC 29401

phone: 843.722.6608

e-mail at stan-farb@worldnet.att.net.

Please help us with this important project.

A Search for Information

A survey of the Beth Israel Cemetery in Beaufort has been underway for about 18 months, and the report is now in draft form and being edited. There have been 156 burials in the cemetery with the earliest in 1912.

Obituaries and biographical information on over 85 percent of those buried in the cemetery have been located. However, little or no data has yet been found for the other burials. If you have information on any of these five, including where they were when they died, please contact Stanley Farbstein.

Betty Donen (date of birth unknown, died 6/1/1953):

Widow of Isaac Donen who died in 1914. A son or grandson, Stanley Donen, once lived in Columbia and later in Hollywood and directed the movie, "Singing in the Rain."

Meir Jaffa (1866–1923): Mr. Jaffa was awarded a PhD. He is reported to have lived at Dale, and been a genius.

Phillip "Uncle Phil" Kohn (1870–1943) and Anna Kohn (1867–1943): It is believed that they had no children and had a store on Bladen Street near Bay.

Tessie Reinstein Weinberg (1878–1963): Wife of Joseph Weinberg; a native of Ridgeland.

Also, we are trying to learn more about Rabbi Jacob Silber (1845–1933) and his family who came to Beaufort from Russia in the last quarter of the 19th century. Rabbi Silber served until at least 1911 in Beaufort and several surrounding towns. His family included his wife Esther (1856–1933), daughter Rose (1890–1975), sons Mendel (or Mendall) and Raphael, both of whom, by 1911, were rabbis in other American cities. Daughter Rose married Max Citron of Columbia in Beaufort in 1911.



List of Local Contacts

So far our cemetery project has recruited the following volunteers:

Aiken: Doris Baumgarten
 Anderson: Mike Krupsaw
 Beaufort: Stanley Farbstein
 Charleston: Sol Breibart and Ruth Jacobs
 Columbia: Bernard "Nard" Fleishman
 Joe and Nancy Lipton
 Greenville: H. J. "Hy" Brand
 Hilton Head: Paul Isaac
 Orangeburg: Rhetta Mendelsohn
 Sumter: Robert and Clara Keilwert Moses
 Walterboro: Bernard Warshaw



Jewish Roots in Southern Soil:

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28

**8:00 AM - 9:00 PM REGISTRATION at Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center
96 Wentworth Street (JSC)**

8:00 AM - 6:00 PM All day bus tour of Savannah, Georgia (pre-registration required)

6:00 PM JHSSC Board Meeting at JSC, Arnold Hall

SJHS Board Meeting at JSC, Library, Room 209

7:00 PM Reception at the Historic Mordecai/Prenner House
(JHSSC Board Members and invited guests)

7:30 PM Jewish Film Program at the JSC, Arnold Hall

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29

8:00 AM - 9:00 PM REGISTRATION at Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center

9:00 AM - 10:45 AM Bus Tour of Charleston Jewish Sites (pre-registration required)

10:00 - 11:00 AM JHSSC Membership Business Meeting at JSC, Arnold Hall

11:00 AM - 12:45 PM Bus Tour of Charleston Jewish Sites (pre-registration required)

12:00 PM Lunch on your own

12:00 PM SJHS Membership Meeting at KKBE meeting room, 90 Hasell Street.

**ALL AFTERNOON EVENTS TAKE PLACE AT Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim
90 Hasell Street (between Meeting and King)**

1:00 PM Welcome: Society Presidents and Special Guests

1:30 PM **Keynote Address: Hasia Diner (New York University),
"Wandering Jews, Peddlers, Immigrants, and the Exploration of
New Worlds"**

Generously supported by Bornblum Judaic Studies Program, University of Memphis

2:30 PM **Concurrent Panel Discussions:**

Panel A **Bending Boundaries: Southern Jewish Women**

Karla Goldman, Jewish Women's Archives, Chair/Comment

Linda Borish (Western Michigan University), "Jewish Women, Athletics, and Social Change in Southern Jewish History and American Culture"

Hollace Weiner (University of Texas at Arlington; Research Fellow, Jewish Women's Archives), "The Jewish Junior League: The Council of Jewish Women, Springboard to Secular Status in Fort Worth"

Judith Shanks (Independent scholar; Associate Curator, "A Portion of the People"), "Stitching Together an Ordinary Life: Rebecca Isaiah Moses (1792–1872) of Charleston"

Panel B **Fiction as History/History as Fiction**

Phyllis Leffler (University of Virginia), Chair

Roy Hoffman, *Mobile Register*, author of *Almost Family* and *Chicken Dreaming Corn*

Judy Goldman, author of *The Slow Way Back* and *Early Leaving*

4:00 PM Tour of Special Collections at the new Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, with Dale Rosengarten, Curator, Jewish Heritage Collection

6:00 PM **SJHS Dinner** in Alumni Hall, Randolph Hall, College of Charleston (behind the Cistern)

6:00 PM Shabbat Evening at Local Synagogues: BSBI, KKBE, and Emanu-El in West Ashley

7:30 PM **Keynote Address at KKBE: Gary P. Zola (Hebrew Union College/
American Jewish Archives), "What Have We Wrought?: Reflections
on 350 Years of American Jewish History"**

Charleston, SC - October 28-31, 2004



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30

8:00 AM - 9:00 PM **REGISTRATION at Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center**

ALL MORNING & AFTERNOON EVENTS TAKE PLACE AT Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim

8:00 AM Continental Breakfast

9:00 AM **Concurrent Panel Discussions:**

Panel A **Jewish/Christian Encounters**

Scott Langston (Southwest Baptist University), Chair

George R. Wilkes (Cambridge University), "Renewing the Study of

Southern Jewish-Christian Relations: The Private Diary of Rabbi David Marx"

Lawrence G. Charap (University of Rhode Island), "A Spiritual Gulf": Rev. Charles A. Allen and Jewish-Christian Dialogue in Turn-of-the-Century New Orleans"

Natalie Ornish (Independent Scholar), "Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston"

Ellen Umansky (Fairfield University), Comment

Panel B **The How-Tos of Oral History Projects**

Dale Rosengarten (College of Charleston) and

Marcie Cohen Ferris (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Co-Chairs

Mary Lynn Mansbach (Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South)

Alan Stein (New Orleans Public Library)

Jayne Guberman (Jewish Women's Archives)

Sponsored by the SJHS State and Local Historical Liaison Committee

10:30 AM Panel **Jewish Geography**

David Goldfield (University of North Carolina, Charlotte; editor, *Journal of Urban History*), Chair/Comment

Stephen Whitfield (Brandeis University), "Is Florida Part of Southern Jewish History?"

Elliot Ashkenazi (Independent Scholar), "Jewish Bankers/Financiers and Family Ties Across National and International Boundaries, 1870-1915"

12:15 PM Luncheon - **Jerome M. Gumenick Keynote Lecture: Marc Lee Raphael, College of William and Mary**

Introduction by Lee Shai Weissbach (University of Louisville)

Generously supported by Jerome M. Gumenick Family Foundation

2:15 PM Walking Tour of Jewish Sites (pre-registration required)

continued on next page

Joint Conference: SJHS and JHSSC

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30 continued

ALL AFTERNOON EVENTS TAKE PLACE AT Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim

- 2:15 PM Panel **Jewish "Racial" Identities in the Urban Pre-Industrial South**
Leonard Rogoff (Jewish Historical Foundation of NC), Chair/Comment
 Holly Snyder (Brown University), "Jews and the Race Question in Early Savannah, 1733-1831"
Gemma Romain (National Archives, Surrey, U.K.), "Race, Ethnicity and Whiteness: Constructions of Identity within the Diaries of the Antebellum Community of Charleston"
Stephen Brown (Albany [NY] Academy for Girls), "The Lynching of Leo Frank: Defining the 'Racial' Jew in the American South, 1913-1915"
- 3:45 PM Panel **The Conservative Movement in Charleston and the South**
Eric Goldstein (Emory University), Chair/Comment
David Starr (Hebrew College, Boston), "Solomon Schechter and the Conservative Movement in the South"
Peggy Pearlstein (Library of Congress), "With an Eye Toward Zion: Macey Kronsberg and the Origins of Charleston's Conservative Synagogue Emanu-El and Zionism"
- 5:00 PM Dinner on your own

ALL EVENING EVENTS TAKE PLACE AT Brith Sholom Beth Israel
182 Rutledge Avenue (between Radcliffe and Morris)

- 8:15 PM **Lama Lo! Concert**
- 9:45 PM **Dessert Reception**



Celebrate 350
Jewish Life in America
1654 ~ 2004



Synagogue Emanu-El



*Kahal Kadosh
Beth Elohim*



Brith Sholom Beth Israel



*Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik
Jewish Studies Center*

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31

8:00 AM - 3:00 PM INFORMATION at Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center

ALL MORNING EVENTS TAKE PLACE AT Brith Sholom Beth Israel9:00 AM **Meet The Authors****Ronald Bayor** (Georgia Institute of Technology; editor, *Journal of American Ethnic History*), Chair**Alan Kraut** (American University), "*Goldberger's War: The Life and Times of a Public Health Crusader*"**Ray Mohl** (University of Alabama, Birmingham), "*South of the South: Jewish Activists and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, 1945-1960*"

Co-sponsored by the American Immigrant and Ethnic Historical Society

10:00 AM Brunch

11:30 AM **Keynote Address: Jeffrey S. Gurock (Yeshiva University),
"A Commentary on a Synagogue History: Brith Sholom
Beth Israel and American Jewish History"**

Introduced by David Patterson (University of Memphis)

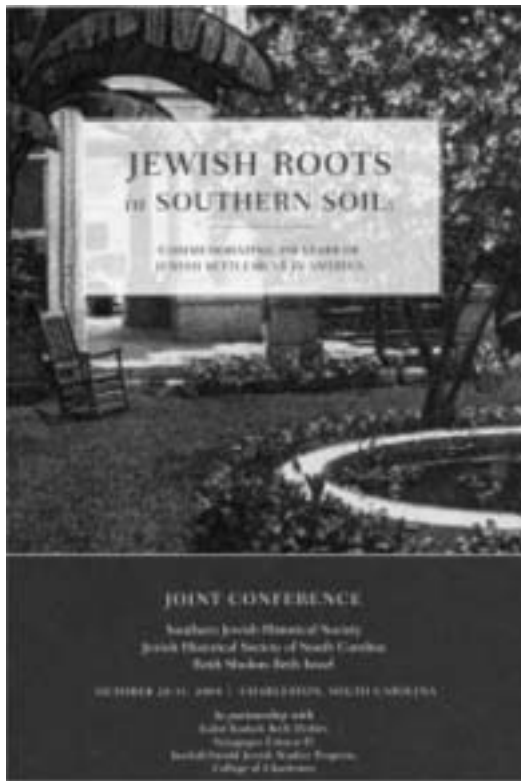
Generously supported by Bornblum Judaic Studies Program, University of Memphis

12:45 PM

**150th Anniversary
Rededication of BSBI**1:30 PM - 5:00 PM **The celebration moves
to the center of Charleston.
Join us for the festivities in Marion
Square Park.****RELIGIOUS HARMONY:
A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY****See bottom of page 14
for more information.**

7:30 PM

Rabbi Gerald I. Wolpe will speak at Synagogue Emanu-ElThe famed Rabbi Gerald Wolpe of Philadelphia will offer his thoughts on Stephen Fried's page-turner, *The New Rabbi*. Rabbi Wolpe plays a starring role in this book that has taken the Conservative rabbinate by storm.**Keynote Speakers***Hasia Diner*
Friday, October 29
1:30 pm*Gary P. Zola*
Friday, October 29
7:30 pm*Marc Lee Raphael*
Saturday, October 30
1:00 pm*Jeffrey S. Gurock*
Sunday, October 31
11:30 am



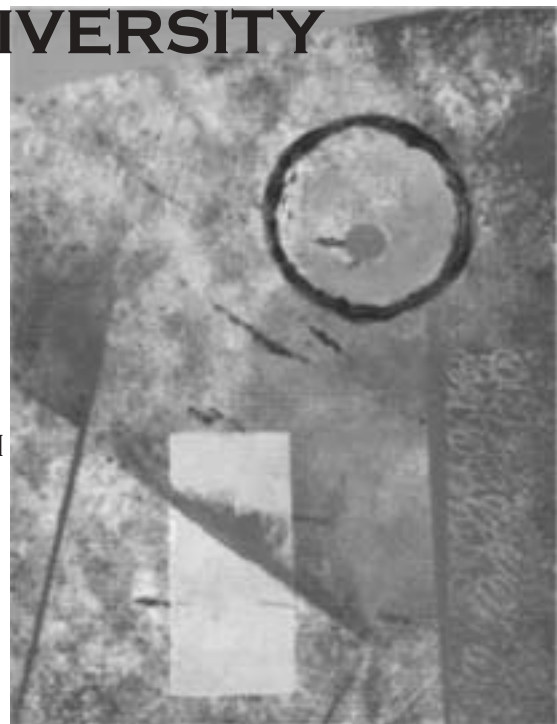
Charleston boasts one of the oldest Jewish communities in America. Just 40 years after a boatload of refugees from Recife, Brazil, sailed into the port of New Amsterdam, Jews began making their presence felt in the young colony of Carolina. In 1697, four Jewish men secured the rights of citizenship; in 1749, Charles Town's Jews founded Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim; and by 1800, the port city counted more Jews than any place else in the United States.

This landmark conference commemorates both the 350th anniversary of Jewish settlement in America, and the 150th anniversary of Charleston's Orthodox congregation Brith Sholom Beth Israel. The weekend also marks the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. The Southern Jewish Historical Society and JHSSC have put together an extraordinary array of scholarly and social events. Charleston is proud of the close working relationship among its synagogues and rabbis. KKBE, BSBI, and Emanu-El are all participating in the programs. Offerings include tours of Charleston and Savannah, lectures and panel discussions featuring prominent scholars, Shabbat services, book signings, and a gala musical concert. The weekend will conclude on Sunday with a rededication of BSBI, and a community block party at Marion Square.

RELIGIOUS HARMONY A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY

**MARION SQUARE PARK
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2004
1:30 - 5:00PM
FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

**FEATURING:
LAMA LO!, THE COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON
GOSPEL CHOIR, NA FIDLIERI,
JEWISH CHORAL SOCIETY, CHARLESTON
CHILDREN'S CHORUS, ARTS AND CRAFTS,
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ARTWORK COURTESY OF BEA AARONSON

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OCTOBER 28-31, 2004

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

REGISTRATION FORM

REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 15, 2004.

Last Name _____ First _____

Spouse/Friend _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____ E-mail _____

I request meals that are: [] Vegetarian [] Strictly Kosher.

Name(s) on name tags _____

I WISH TO MAKE RESERVATIONS FOR THE FOLLOWING:

(fees are per person; advance reservations are mandatory)

Thursday, Savannah, Georgia Tour with lunch \$ 96 _____

Friday, Charleston Bus Tour 9:00 AM \$ 10 _____

Friday, Charleston Bus Tour 11:00 AM \$ 10 _____

Saturday, Charleston Walking Tour \$ 5 _____

Friday Shabbat evening activities (no additional charge):

 BSBI services & dinner

 KKBE musical service & oneg

 Emanu-El dinner (transportation provided)

SJHS dinner at Randolph Hall, CofC (prior to KKBE service)

Registration fee: current JHSSC/SJHS member (circle one) \$ 150 _____
per person

Additional fee for non-members (per family) \$ 35 _____

SPECIAL PACKAGE - BSBI ONLY \$ 125 _____

LATE REGISTRATION FEE (after 9/15/04) \$ 25 _____

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:
JHSSC
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College of Charleston
Charleston, SC 29424

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Temple Beth Israel – Then and Now

by Beatrice K. Rogol

“To unite the Hebrews of Florence and surrounding country into a fraternal and benevolent association and to assist needy Israelites.”

“The purchasing and maintaining of a suitable burying ground.”

These were the two objectives of the Florence Hebrew Benevolent Association, stated in the organization’s constitution and by-laws in 1887. Today the fraternal and benevolent association continues under the name Beth Israel Congregation. The methods of operating may be different, but the intended purposes of the original constitution remain the same.

Situated in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina, Florence has seen great change over the past 117 years. As the city grew, so did the Jewish population – from the Lyons and Jacobi families, who were the earliest known Jewish settlers in town, arriving before 1865, to a total of approximately 70 families living in Florence and surrounding towns today.

Travelers to the city a century ago could find a comfortable bed and a hearty welcome at the Jacobi house, which was a well-known hotel located on what is now Front Street. In 1881, the only Jewish children in Florence were those of Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Cohen, Bea and Edna. To receive a Jewish education, they traveled to Darlington, where worship services also were held.

As more Jewish families settled in Florence, the need arose to reach out. So, on October 26, 1887, D. Sternberger, J. Dejongh, S. Elias, and Harris Joseph applied for a charter for a charitable and religious association to be known as The Florence Hebrew Benevolent Association, with a capital of 25 shares at \$10.00 each, for the purpose of “creating and maintaining an Israelites’ burial ground, and for education and religious purposes.” Leadership was provided by Chairman D. Sternberger, Secretary-Treasurer J. Dejongh, and Director E. Salmonsens.

A cemetery lot was soon purchased for \$50.00 from the Northeast Railroad. In the tradition of his father, Charles Insel, Secretary-Treasurer, Herman Insel



Groundbreaking for addition to Temple Beth Israel, Florence, SC, February, 1969. Left to right: Herb Levy, Nat Rosenfeld, Ray Wolpert, Herman Insel, Arthur Siegal, Rabbi Charles Lesser, Eric Heiden.

Photo courtesy of Lois & Ray Wolpert.

scrupulously maintained the records of the cemetery. After Herman Insel’s death in 1999, Mark Schemel took over the task of record keeping.

On June 2, 1889, A. A. Cohen made a motion to “order Sunday School books, that a Sunday School be established and all children of Israelite parents, who were or were not members of this association, were cordially invited to send their children to participate in the exercise of the Sunday School lessons and that also the parents be invited to attend.” That was the beginning of a religious school that continues today, providing for more than a hundred years the Judaic foundation for our area young people.

A Certificate of Incorporation was filed with the State of South Carolina on September 27, 1912, establishing a congregation to be known as Beth Israel, with B. Patz, M. Rosenfeld, and I. Silverman signing as trustees.

During the years 1906 to 1922, a small number of Orthodox Jews found their way to Florence. They held services, conducted by Rabbi Silver, in various places around the city. Then, sometime around 1922, a compromise was reached between the Orthodox Jews of Florence and those who chose to follow Reform Judaism.

The two groups decided to hold Reform services and Sunday School classes monthly, and Orthodox services on the High Holy Days. The latter took place in the homes of Orthodox Jews of the community and were conducted by lay leaders, including Louis Greenberg, father of Dr. S. A. Greenberg. Rabbi Jacob Raisin of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim in Charleston was hired to conduct Reform services in various halls, beginning over what was then Zeigler's Drug Store, better known as the store on the corner of Dargan and Evans streets. Rabbi Raisin remained a spiritual leader of Beth Israel for 25 years. Sam and Hannah Semless of Philadelphia, grandparents of Nathaniel Rosenfeld, donated the first Torah in honor of Nat's parents, Maurice and Mae Rosenfeld.

Around 1927, congregants decided to build a synagogue. Land on East Elm Street was purchased for that purpose, but was subsequently sold to the city for the erection of Florence High School. In the meantime, Reform services continued in the Rainwater Building, moved to the YMCA before World War II, then to the Masonic Temple, and finally, in 1947, returned to the YMCA. During these itinerant years, the president's car trunk served as storage space for prayer books and the Torah.



Junior choir with Rabbi Avery Grossfield, 1956.
Photo courtesy of Beth Israel.

In February 1949, congregants began discussing construction of a new religious facility on land located on Park Avenue, donated by Dr. Michael M. Morse. Dr. S. A. Greenberg, Dr. Morse, and Isadore Stein were appointed to a committee to manage construction. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations provided building plans and the facility was completed in July 1949. In September Rabbi Philip Frankel of Charlotte, North Carolina, presided over a formal dedication.



Religious school, 1971. Left to right: Sheryl Fram, Bari Heiden, and Beth Sopkin. Photo courtesy of Beth Israel.

Religious services in the new building continued on a monthly basis, led by rabbis from Sumter and Columbia, South Carolina, and from Charlotte. At that time, Beth Israel's 25 families could not afford to hire a full-time rabbi. However, in 1953, with more Jewish families moving into the area, Rabbi Fabian came to serve as the congregation's first full-time spiritual leader.

Rabbi Fabian helped reorganize the Sunday school and began conducting weekly services on Friday nights. Rabbi Morris Clarke followed, bringing music to the congregation. Rabbi Avery Grossfield came next, introducing Hebrew into the Sunday school and holding adult education classes. He performed the first bar mitzvah services in the Temple. When Rabbi Grossfield left, student rabbis Jay Krouse and then Paul Kushner from the seminary in New York began making the trip to Florence every two weeks for weekend services, Sunday school, and Hebrew classes. Next came Rabbi Gottesman, a circuit-riding rabbi who traveled in a bus outfitted as a mobile shul. He served until 1961, when Rabbi Charles B. Lesser arrived and stayed until 1970.



Plaque commemorating addition and renovation of Temple Beth Israel, 1969. Photo courtesy of Beth Israel.



Confirmation, 1974. Left to right: Patrice Horinbein, Bonnie Sopkin, David Lovit, Rabbi Howard Folb, Cathy Cohen, Marcy Wolpert, and Ann Radin.

The congregation continued to grow, and during Rabbi Lesser's tenure, made plans for expansion. In 1967, Beth Israel bought two houses close to the Temple and a year later undertook to remodel the original building, adding a kitchen, classrooms, and social hall. The houses were demolished and a building committee was appointed, consisting of Chairman Dr. Eric Heiden, Nathaniel Rosenfeld, Dr. S. A. Greenberg, Herman Insel, and Dr. Raphael Wolpert, who also served as chairman of the Future Expansion Fund. Spring 1969 saw a groundbreaking ceremony, and the building was completed in June 1970. The congregation's new rabbi, Howard Folb, was present for the dedication ceremony and led High Holy Day services in the new structure.

Rabbi Folb remained for about 11 years, followed by Rabbi Sidney Strome, who served five years. Rabbi Lawrence N. Mahrer replaced Strome and stayed for ten years, succeeded by Rabbi Marc Kline. Rabbi Kline left in 2003, after which a student rabbi, Malcom Cohen, was hired on a part-time basis.

In 1986, Temple Beth Israel underwent another change. With Dr. Eric Heiden spearheading a committee made up of Dr. S. A. Greenberg, Ruth Greenberg, Herman Insel, Dr. Raphael Wolpert, Melvin Siegel, Patricia Siegel, Sandra S. Levy, Selig Levine, and Rabbi Lawrence Mahrer, the sanctuary was renovated and the pulpit remodeled.

During these years of growth and expansion, Temple Beth Israel's Sisterhood and Men's Club came into their own. The Sisterhood's precursor, known as the Beth Israel Ladies Aid Society, began in

1922. Concerned with Sunday school and community activities, the 13 original members served as a nucleus. Mrs. Abraham Schafer, elected as the first president of the new Sisterhood in 1928, saw to it that the Society became affiliated with the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. Monthly meetings were held in members' homes until 1949, when the group moved to the new Temple Assembly Room, presided over by Mrs. Chester Heimlich.

Sometime around 1958, the Men's Club was established with Marvin Fine as president. The club affiliated with the National Federation of Brotherhoods and, like Sisterhood, became a vital fund-raising arm of the Temple, as well as organizing social activities for the men of the congregation.

In 1973, because the work of Sisterhood and the Men's Club overlapped, the decision was made to merge the two organizations, and The Affiliates was born. While each group kept its own identity with the two National Federations, members of The Affiliates shared equally in its leadership and work, alternating between a male and female president and vice president. Frederick Levy served the first presidential term, and Patricia Lovit the second. Beth Israel's Affiliates was a pioneer in the merger of Sisterhoods and Mens Club—indeed it was the first organization of its kind in the nation. At a convention in Savannah, Georgia, circa 1975, the two presidents reported on its success. Today, The Affiliates continues to raise funds and sponsor social activities.

In recent years, Temple Beth Israel was the beneficiary of two significant mergers. The Darlington congregation, whose membership was slowly diminishing, decided to join Beth Israel. Then, in 2000, Dillon's Ohav Shalom, whose numbers also were declining, decided to unite with Beth Israel. This merger took place during the tenure of Rabbi Marc Kline. With the incorporation of the two nearby congregations, Beth Israel's membership grew to 100 family units, and many committed and active people came under the Temple's umbrella.

Today, the congregation draws from Florence, Darlington, Marion, Dillon, Kingstree, and Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, and Laurinburg, North Carolina. The expanded religious school is turning out young people with a well-rounded Jewish education. A choir enhances services. The Affiliates is a mainstay of the Temple. A full-service house of worship has become the center for Judaism in the Florence area.

Pillars: Our Campaign Continues

Pillars are the backbone of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. Our pillars fund *all* the operational costs of the Society, except for printing and mailing expenses, which are covered by membership dues. Pillars also provide essential supplemental funds for the Jewish Heritage Collection, the ongoing research archives at the College of Charleston Library.

Pillars commit \$1000 a year for five years. Membership to the JHSSC is included in the gift.

Please join this distinguished list. (Parentheses indicate the year in which donations began.) See membership form on the back page.

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* Anne Krancer, a devoted member of JHSSC and an original pillar of the Society, passed away in April. She will be sorely missed. May her memory be a blessing.

Additonal photography by E. B. Heston, Dale Rosengarten, and Gordon H. Scheck Jr. Postcard images from the collections of Rabbi William A. Rosenthal and Leah D. Greenberg. Thanks to Rost Beyder, Rachel Garrett, Marwa Shideed, Andrew Woods, and especially Dale Rosengarten, for their help.

Rabbi Wolpe Remembers Pastoring in the Pee Dee

--from a letter by Rabbi Gerald I. Wolpe to JHSSC, April 14, 2003.

"I received the Winter 2003 Newsletter of the Historical Society. All of it was very interesting but I was particularly intrigued with the Kingstree story. I was the Conservative rabbi mentioned in the article. Once a month, Cantor Renzer and I would travel over 300 miles. First we would go to Kingstree where the congregation consisted of people from Kingstree and Lake City. The visit would consist of a class with children and then a short service for adults and children. Then he and I would go on to Dillon and Myrtle Beach where the same program took place. We returned late at night, exhausted but with a feeling of great satisfaction.

There were so many wonderful stories that accompanied the tour. I found it fascinating to see how Northern Jews – who came to the area during WWII – adapted to their new surroundings. Some assimilated to the degree that their Southern accent was more extreme than the natives. Others hated every moment and yearned for their return to the shtetls of Baltimore and New York.

I became the rabbi of the area and was called for many secular communal events. That put me in touch with the non-Jewish community. It was the volatile period of the desegregation battle and I had to walk a narrow path when speaking to Lake City Kiwanis or Dillon Lions. It was a trying but meaningful period of reaching out to so many who were in the midst of possible violence. One week, for example, there was the shooting of a Black minister in Lake City for his activism. The tension was brutal and I was warned to skip the visit that month.

I remember meeting a man who was an official of the Carolina Baptist Church. He was a sophisticated urbane physician who showed me his impressive library. He showed me a collection of Mahzorim and the sermons of Isaac Leeser. His ancestress' name was in it. He was a bachelor and he asked for the name of a Jewish institution to which he could give them. I suggested the Seminary Library and he sent them there. He gave me the Leeser books, which I still cherish."

Rabbi Gerald Wolpe and his wife, Elaine, will return to Charleston in October. Emanu-El discovered Rabbi Wolpe long before he became nationally known as rabbi at Har Zion in Philadelphia and the "hero" of Stephen Fried's just published *The New Rabbi*. Emanu-El's conference weekend begins with a Shabbat dinner on Friday, October 29 at 6:00 pm, and concludes with Rabbi Wolpe's reflections on Fried's book on Sunday, October 31 at 7:30 pm.



Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program
College of Charleston
Charleston, SC 29424
phone: 843.953.3918
fax: 843.953.7624
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