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Family Matters — Rachel Gordin Barnett — As Rachel Barnett steps down from her term as JHSSC’s tenth president, she looks back to Isadore Lourie’s desire to create a place for our collective memories, and she looks forward to the Center for Southern Jewish Culture as a way to further the mission of the Society’s founders. ……….. 16

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JHSSC Celebrates Two Decades of Remarkable Growth — Martin Perlmutter — From the small acorn planted by Isadore Lourie and friends in 1994, a mighty oak has grown. Resting on the strong foundation of its statewide membership, JHSSC has inspired the College of Charleston to become an intellectual hub for the study of everything southern and Jewish. ……….. 18

Letter from the President

Thank you for electing me president of this great organization. With the help of our immediate past presidents, Rachel Gordin Barnett and Ann Meddin Hellman, treasurer David Cohen, secretary Garry Baum, archivist Steven Savitz, and our standing committees—Funding and Membership chaired by Alex Cohen, Education and Publications chaired by Susan Altman, Archives and Historical Sites chaired by Barry Draisen and Ernie Marcus—I hope to have a productive year ahead. I also want to congratulate new board members Susan Brill and Sandra Conradi. Welcome aboard!

My first official action as the Society’s president was to speak at the dedication ceremony of a historical marker commemorating more than 100 years of history of Beth Israel Congregation in Beaufort, South Carolina, sponsored by the Beaufort County Historical Society and Beth Israel. The ceremony, held on January 12, was well attended by local historians, longtime residents, political leaders such as Mayor Billy Keyserling, and representatives of JHSSC, including Marty Perlmutter and Dale Rosengarten. Dale outlined the history of Jews who settled in Beaufort and vicinity and quoted extensively from a talk Joseph J. Lipton gave at a JHSSC meeting in his hometown some 15 years ago. Lipton remembered Beaufort’s main thoroughfare, Bay Street, lined with Jewish-owned stores, and High Holiday services in the very sanctuary where we were sitting, conducted entirely in Hebrew, with women sitting apart, the patriarchs on the bimah, and Max Lipsitz davening.

The Society is approaching its 20th anniversary, to be celebrated in Charleston on May 17–18, 2014. Please make every effort to attend the festivities marking this important milestone in JHSSC’s history. We are busy making the final preparations for what promises to be a very fine gala. Saturday afternoon the program will begin with a panel of past presidents, to be followed by a dinner reception and remarks by Richard Gergel. Sunday we will reconvene with a bagel breakfast and open board meeting. The weekend concludes with a presentation by Stuart Rockoff, executive director of the Mississippi Humanities Council, on “The Changing Face of the Jewish South.”

All our meetings have been highly informative, and I have learned a great deal about South Carolina’s Jewish past. Last fall’s conference in Columbia, titled “A Summer to Remember,” brought back boyhood memories of growing up in Anderson. Even though I attended Camp Blue Star only one year, many of my Jewish friends and relatives went there or to other Jewish camps in the area. The presentation by Macy Hart from the Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) was inspiring. I wish the great resources ISJL offers had been available when my now 25- and 27-year-old sons were attending religious school in Anderson.

I encourage all readers of this newsletter to join us as members at whatever level you can afford, to support the work we do, and to help us pay tribute to JHSSC’s past 20 years and look forward to the next 20.

See you in Charleston in May!

David Draisen
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Only in America
by Joel Lourie and Susan Lourie

“Only in America”—these words were uttered by the late Isadore Lourie throughout his life. He would speak passionately about how immigrants of all backgrounds, by persuasion could come to this country, get an education, find a job, and have an opportunity to live the “American dream.” He lived and saw, firsthand, this dream become a reality. In so many ways he would connect the American dream with the journey and success of Jews in the South. He, too, was a creation of this path. Both his parents came to this country in the early 1900s. They married and settled into a small, southern rural town in South Carolina—St. George. Like many of their kind, the Louries ran a clothing store on Main Street and lived in an apartment above their business. Isadore’s parents, Louis and Ann Lourie, raised six children who all were excellent students and observant Jews. The boys would be sent to study for their bar mitzvahs, either in Charleston, Savannah, or Columbia. Each of them went on to be successful in medicine, business, or the law. This small-town experience played a major part in shaping Isadore Lourie’s views and principles. He once said that he never experienced any sort of prejudice until he left St. George. In St. George people of different races and faiths were trusting and helpful to one another. The barriers that exist even today were somewhat invisible then. From this upbringing, Isadore became a pioneer leading a new generation of progressives—popularly known as the Young Turks—in the South Carolina General Assembly in the 1960s. He is recognized as one of the few legislators who could serve as a bridge between the African American and white communities during the era of the Civil Rights Movement.

Through all of his political and legal success, Isadore never forgot his small-town, Jewish roots. More than anything, that is what inspired him to help create the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. He felt it was critical to study and honor the Jewish links throughout our state. Families who had landed in South Carolina from different places, in different circumstances, overcame similar obstacles to settle here. Many started businesses, educated their children, contributed to society, yet maintained their commitment to Judaism. It is these stories that Isadore Lourie wanted to preserve forever.


Focus on Oral History
by Klyde Robinson

I have always loved history, in particular the history of the Jewish community of Charleston, which has made such significant contributions to the state of South Carolina. I’ve been told that my family has been here since the early 1800s, but much of our early history was lost during the Civil War. In those years the Robinsons were farmers and lived in Round O and Cottageville, near Walterboro. When General Sherman’s Union troops appeared to be marching to destroy Charleston, Walterboro authorities moved their records to Columbia to preserve them. Sherman unexpectedly changed course and burned Columbia instead, including our family records. And that is why I feel it is so critical to document the living histories of the Jewish people in the South.

According to family legend my great-grandparents, the Louris, started our family business in Charleston in the 1880s. For more than a century, Robinson’s Bicycle Shop was a mainstay on upper King Street. It may have been the largest bicycle store in the Southeast. My brother Rudolph (Chops) designed a bicycle—the Newsboy Special—for Westfield Manufacturing Company, the maker of Columbia bicycles. At its height Robinson’s carried more than 1,000 bikes in inventory.

During December every member of the family would work in the store, no matter who we were or what we were doing. I did this all through college, law school, practicing law, and when serving as a public official. On Christmas my brothers and I would deliver bicycles to customers’ homes between midnight and 5:00 a.m. so the children would be surprised when they woke up. To this day my brother Melvin cannot walk downtown without being greeted by Charlestonians who remember buying their first bike from Robinson’s.

Learning and preserving the history of the Jewish community has always been very important to my family. I am pleased to have played a role as the initial chairman of the Jewish Heritage Project in preserving that history. In 1991 I traveled with Dale Rosengarten, director of the project, to communities across the state to collect oral histories, including anecdotes about what it was like to be Jewish in the South and stories about contributions Jews have made to our state. With audio tapes donated by Betsy Sonenshine, equipment provided by McKissick Museum, and an archival home at the College of Charleston Library, the project was underway. When I was elected JHSSC president, Sandra Lee Kahn Rosenblum began accompanying Dale on these field trips, and the two continued recording interviews with great success.

By the end of my term of office, the Jewish Heritage Project had collected and preserved almost 300 oral histories of South Carolina Jews. These histories immediately became popular: everyone wanted to add his or her family history to the collection. The project generated significant interest in southern Jewish history. It helped the Society recruit members and, at the same time, attracted the attention of researchers far and near. The oral history archives—now accessible online through the College’s Lowcountry Digital Library, lclldigital.org/—is truly a legacy for future generations. It has helped fill the information gap on southern Jewish history, a field that is just now coming into its own.

I hope we will always collect oral histories and that a Jewish museum, administered by the College’s Jewish Studies Program, will eventually be built in Charleston to house this collection of invaluable recordings and other memorabilia.

Another project for the future is to raise the public profile of the Hanover Street Cemetery, one of Charleston’s first Jewish burial grounds, predating the extant Coming Street Cemetery. My great-grandfather was buried in the cemetery in 1858, along with other family members. My aunt Rachel Robinson was also buried there after dying of cholera, following the earthquake of 1886. She was the last female born in the Robinson family until my daughter, Amy, in 1954. Although a church and another building now occupy the property, it may be possible to put a memorial marker on the site, preserving the names of all 29 persons of the Jewish faith who were buried there.

I am grateful to the Society for supporting vital efforts to discover and preserve the heritage of the Jews of South Carolina over all these years, and I am confident it will continue to do so for generations to come.
Reflections on the First Twenty Years

by Belinda and Richard Gergel

As we reflect on the first 20 years of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, we remember the tremendous energy and creative ideas of the early organizers as they fused distinct but related interests into a coherent organizational mission. First and foremost came the dream of Senator Isadore Lourie to create a statewide organization to tie together urban and small-town Jewish communities in South Carolina, replicating the role that B’nai Brith had played in an earlier era. Senator Lourie recognized that small-town Jews were becoming an endangered species and he wanted to preserve their memories. He also understood that Jewish people—especially southerners—could be enticed to attend thoughtful lectures and visit interesting towns and historic sites, and would find any excuse to meet over good food and conversation. Thus, the Jewish Historical Society was born, with its twice-a-year meetings featuring noted speakers, panel discussions on local Jewish history, celebrations of historic anniversaries, and plenty of time to kibitz.

Simultaneous with Senator Lourie’s efforts to start a statewide society, visionary philosophy professor Dr. Martin Perlmutter was seeking support for the College of Charleston’s Jewish Studies Program, which had been founded in 1984 with an initial pledge from Henry and Sylvia Yaschik. When Marty became director of Jewish Studies in 1992, the College leadership had yet to appreciate the program’s benefits—on campus and off—through its strong community focus. Alex Sanders, who was Senator Lourie’s lifelong friend and political ally, needed little persuading. With Sanders’s unqualified support, Perlmutter’s tireless efforts, and Lourie’s skilled leadership, both Jewish Studies and JHSSC were soon on a firm foundation.

Around this same time a young historian named Dale Rosengarten, who was working toward a Ph.D. degree from Harvard, approached Senator Lourie with a proposal she and her colleagues at the University of North Carolina—Charlotte, North Carolina. With help from co-curators Barbara Karesh Stender and Judith Alexander Weil Shanks, Dale and her writer/historian husband, Theodore Rosenzweig, produced a big, beautiful book to accompany the exhibit. South Carolina native Paul Keyserling created a documentary titled Land of Promise: The Jews of South Carolina, sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society with funding from the Humanities Council of South Carolina, Jerry and Sue Klein, Harriet Keyserling, and other private contributors. The video was premiered on statewide television by South Carolina ETV and traveled to each of the museum venues.

JHSSC meetings have celebrated anniversaries of congregations in Charleston, Columbia, Aiken, Beaufort, Anderson, and Florence and have held programs in Sumter, Georgetown, Greenville, Abbeville, and Spartanburg. All of this was made possible by the commitment and skill of a broad array of leaders, including Klyde Robinson, Bernard Warshaw, Jeffrey Rosenblum, Ed Polakoff, Robert Rosen, Ann Meddin Hellman, Rachel Gordin Barnett, Sol Breibart, Harriet Keyserling, Robert Moses, and many others.

Twenty years have passed since we first sat on the porch at the College of Charleston’s Philosophy Department with Professor Perlmutter and Senator Lourie and dreamed great dreams about what our efforts might produce. It is fair to say that the achievements of the Jewish Historical Society, the Jewish Studies Program, and the Jewish Heritage Collection have far exceeded our expectations. This story of remarkable success in so many areas demonstrates the power of great ideas and the potential of talented people working together for a common purpose. May JHSSC continue to build on its accomplishments for the next 20 years and beyond.
How Far We Have Come
by Jeffrey Rosenblum

How can I forget the historic meeting with Senator Isadore Lourie when a handful of us agreed to form a Jewish historical society? To me, an immigrant from Long Island, Isadore’s tales of growing up in St. George were both strange and heart-warming. Both my in-laws—Mickey Kronenberg’s parents—were from outside South Carolina, one from Virginia and the other from Maryland. My family was from New York. Because of my affiliation with Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, I had long known the history of Jews in Charleston, but I did not know there was so much Jewish history in the rest of the state or that Jews throughout the country, from New Orleans to New York, were one family that, in many ways, blossomed from Charleston and South Carolina.

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina became an instrument of understanding my own northern roots and my wife’s dual origins in a southern and a border state. My paternal grandfather, an immigrant, had a fresh fruit and vegetable pushcart on Manhattan’s East Side. As times improved he graduated to a horse and buggy and later to a truck, moving into the business of supplying restaurants. My maternal grandfather was a skilled diamond cutter and jewelry designer. Both my grandparents were primarily housewives, though my paternal grandmother was also a dressmaker for Upper East Side Jewish and Italian women.

JHSSC helped me comprehend my own heritage, as Jewish life in South Carolina was not so different from my family’s, with one major exception. The exception was that I grew up as a member of the majority while the mid-20th century Jews in South Carolina were a small minority of the population. All my grandparents came to this country during the great wave of immigration of the 1880s and ’90s when the mass of America’s Jewish population settled in large northern cities. Three sets of my wife’s and my grandparents came from Eastern Europe (Poland and Russia), while the fourth came from Western Europe (Holland) with a distinctly different set of cultural and educational backgrounds. With this pedigree I took charge of South Carolina’s relatively new Jewish Historical Society—was fading into history in front of our eyes, and I was excited to be involved with people who loved history and were eager to tell the story of South Carolina Jewry. We were talking, writing about, and preserving our own ethnic and religious history. We were doing something new. It was a heady and productive project. Creating archives, books, exhibitions, lectures, and documentaries are expensive and time-consuming activities but it was joyous work.

I had the honor to be the Party President of the JHSSC. We held a black-tie gala at the Gibbes Museum of Art to introduce the greater Charleston community to our proud Jewish history. The mayor and governor attended, as did hundreds of supporters.

American Jewish history has come a long way in the past 20 years. Once the province of amateurs remembering their ancestors, it has become a respected professional field. The JHSSC has helped create an important legacy to teach our children and our children’s children, and I am proud to have participated in this worthy endeavor. Jewish history is now part of the broader American experience, exactly as it should be.
Growing up in Walterboro was really just delightful. . . . We’ve had the best of all worlds. “In his 1996 interview for the Jewish Heritage Collection, Bernard Warshaw recalled a childhood free of antisemitism, where “there was no difference” between him and his Christian friends. He was “involved in nearly everything” as a boy, although his Saturdays belonged to his father, who insisted his son work in the family business, a clothing store in downtown Walterboro. In 2000 Warshaw’s of Walterboro closed its doors for the final time, following a pattern that the founding members of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina viewed with alarm: the shrinking Jewish presence in small towns throughout the Palmetto State.

As JHSSC president in 2004 and 2005, Warshaw encouraged members to become actively involved in collecting objects and information—“photos of congregations, Jewish artifacts, cemetery records, and information on marriages and bar and bat mitzvahs”—that tell the story of South Carolina’s Jews. He sought to bring Jewish residents of the state together under an umbrella of “common history and heritage. . . . My project for my term as president,” he wrote in the Summer 2004 JHSSC newsletter, “is to turn the Historical Society into a grassroots movement. . . . To encourage each community to become engaged in preserving its history, I am implementing structures to coordinate local efforts. ”

Warshaw’s family typified the experience of Jewish immigrants of the early 20th century who became small-town southern merchants. His dad, Murray Warshaw, emigrated from Warsaw, Poland, “My father got to Charleston at the insistence of my uncle Mr. Hyman Berinsky, who married . . . my mother’s sister. Hyman invited my daddy to come down to Charleston from New York; they were friends in New York.” Hyman and Murray married sisters Tillie and Dotty Bebergal, daughters of Cecilia and Abraham Bebergal. The Bebergals were from the outskirts of Warsaw, Poland, and had followed family to Charleston. In Charleston Murray Warshaw worked for wholesale supplier Hyman Karesh in his Star Bargain House. In the spring of 1920, he got wind of an opportunity in a small city about 50 miles west of Charleston; Philip Bogoslow was selling his Walterboro store. Murray and Dotty took the leap, bought the store, and moved to the seat of Colleton County. Bernard was born that fall.

Murray and Dotty “were deeply involved in the community,” coming forward to help people in need in their adopted hometown. Warshaw took his civic-mindedness to heart. Besides serving multiple terms as president of Walterboro’s Temple Mount Sinai, he dedicated his time over many decades to numerous local and state organizations, including the South Carolina State Development Board, the South Carolina Mental Health Commission, the Walterboro Chamber of Commerce, Shrine Club, Elks Club, Lions Club, Masons, Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion Post #93, and the Colleton County Literacy Council, to name just a few.

In 1973 Governor John West awarded Warshaw the Order of the Palmetto, the state’s highest civilian honor, acknowledging his “extraordinary lifetime achievement and service to the state and nation.” Colleton County recognized his local contributions in 1998 by naming its health and human services buildings the Bernard Warshaw Complex. The following year Governor Jim Hodges bestowed upon

“Jewish communities south of the Mason-Dixon line.”
Stuart Rockoff ~ Looking Away from Dixie: the Changing Face of the Jewish South ~ Exploring how
10:30
9:30
9:00 a.m.
Sunday, May 18
7:00
and Jeffrey Rosenblum
Participants: Rachel Gordin Barnett, Belinda Friedman Gergel, Richard Gergel,
Moderator: Martin Perlmutter, JHSSC executive director, 1994–present
5:00 p.m.
Saturday, May 17
5:00 p.m.
Past presidents panel, Arnold Hall, Jewish Studies Center
Moderator: Martin Perlmutter, JHSSC executive director, 1994–present
Participants: Rachel Gordin Barnett, Belinda Friedman Gergel, Richard Gergel,
Ann Meddin Hellman, Edward Poliakoff, Klyde Robinson, Robert Rosen,
and Jeffrey Rosenblum
7:00
Dinner reception, Alumni Hall, Randolph Hall, second floor
Remarks by Richard Gergel, JHSSC president, 1998–99
12:00 P.M.
Adjourn

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Stuart Rockoff was born in Fort Worth and raised in Houston, Texas. He graduated from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, with a B.A. in history. He received his Ph.D. in U.S. history from the University of Texas at Austin with an emphasis on immigration and American Jewish history. He has taught courses in American and ethnic history at such schools as the University of Texas and Millsaps College. From 2002 to 2013 he served as the director of the history department at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life in Jackson, Mississippi. In November 2013 he became the executive director of the Mississippi Humanities Council, where he works to develop and support public humanities programs around the state. He lives in Jackson with his wife, Susan, and their two daughters.
You cannot live in a community and not become involved." The cemetery project was one example of Bernard's push for statewide involvement at the community level. In the Winter 2006 newsletter, Bernard described it as "a major work in progress... aimed at documenting Jewish burial sites across the state. Our most capable chairman, Stanley Farbstein, heads the project, assisted by a committee of hard-working and efficient volunteers." The initiative took off, and today information and images documenting thousands of burials in 32 Jewish cemeteries across South Carolina are readily available on the Society's website.

Not willing to rest on his laurels, Warshaw saw the need to recruit young members, increase the participation of JHSSC's board and membership, and add to the list of $1,000-dollar-a-year donors. He was proud of the Society's accomplishments: "Most important," he wrote, "I have put South Carolina's long and significant Jewish history in print..."

As a longtime member and a former president of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, I welcome the opportunities the Society has provided to learn more about the richness of Jewish people in the Palmetto State. Among JHSSC's many accomplishments over 20 years is a program started during my term to co-sponsor historical markers at sites of Jewish interest across the state. I have been happy to attend marker dedications in Columbia, Sumter, and Anderson. These markers and those to come are but one example of how the Historical Society achieves the purpose stated in its bylaws: "...to promote the study and appreciation of the history and culture of the Jews of South Carolina."

I was asked to write about my family history, how my people got to South Carolina, and how that affected my interest in JHSSC—big subjects for a short essay. How and why grandparents Israel and Bertha From settled in Union and grandparents David and Rachel Poliakoff settled in Abbeville, and how and why their siblings and cousins settled in nearby towns is a research project for another day, but it resulted in my having cousins throughout northwest South Carolina.

My parents, Myer Poliakoff and Rosa From, were born and raised in Abbeville and Union, respectively, and now they rest in Allison's F'Nai Israel Cemetery, near the graves of many other Poliakoffs.

 Bernard Warshaw was the second person to receive the Exchange Club of Charleston's Defender of the Constitution Award.

After graduating from The Citadel in 1942, Warshaw spent three and a half years in the U.S. Army, serving in an anti-aircraft unit in the European theater. His experiences at the end of the war profoundly affected his outlook. "I had the fortune or the misfortune of being at Dachau the day after it had the fortune or the misfortune of being at Dachau the day after it was taken, when the ovens were smoldering... . there were literally piles and piles of bodies, and the stench was such that you wouldn't believe. The thing that sticks in my mind the most is a little girl you see in one of the piles, about six years old, and I've seen that face since 1945."

When he joined the Society, Warshaw's goal was to foster "a more cohesive Jewish community" in South Carolina. "The lifeline of the Jewish people down south, wherever you are, is word of mouth. People down south, wherever you are, is word of mouth. Warshaw's goal was to foster "a more cohesive Jewish community" in South Carolina. "The lifeline of the Jewish people down south, wherever you are, is word of mouth. When he joined the Society, Warshaw's goal was to foster "a more cohesive Jewish community" in South Carolina. "The lifeline of the Jewish people down south, wherever you are, is word of mouth. When he joined the Society, Warshaw's goal was to foster "a more cohesive Jewish community" in South Carolina. "The lifeline of the Jewish people down south, wherever you are, is word of mouth.
People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life, the superb exhibit produced by JHSSC, the College of Charleston, and USC's McKissick Museum.

Another favorite JHSSC memory is the day I drove to Abbeville to meet Dale Rosengarten, founding director of the College’s Jewish Heritage Collection, Lynn Robertson, executive director of McKissick Museum, and Jane Prezbyza, a curator at McKissick, who were traveling the state collecting items for the exhibition they were developing. They expressed polite interest when I invited them to the town's visitors’ center to see the collection of American Western art donated by my late uncle Dr. Samuel Poliakoff. But on the way to the cases where the collection was installed, we walked under a huge mural hung high on the wall depicting an event in local history: the final meeting of the disbanning Confederate cabinet. In the painting President Jefferson Davis was addressing his military advisors, with Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin seated to his left, just below a portrait of John C. Calhoun.

Any interest in the collection disappeared! McKissick convinced the city of Abbeville to lend the mural, arranged funding for its restoration, and it became a centerpiece of A Portion of the People.

Looking ahead, my hope and expectation for JHSSC is that its programs, website, and publications, plus its close connections with the Jewish Heritage Collection and the Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston, will continue to help each of us understand how our own family narratives fit in the rich history and culture of the Jews of South Carolina.

Barnett Rubin's grandsons, Ben, Mitch, and Isadore Rubin, and his great-grandson Abner Levkoff in the French Boot Shop, King Street, Charleston, SC, ca. 1940.

*Roots and Branches*

My interest in southern Jewish history grew out of a passion for genealogy, which simply means the study of family history with an emphasis on lineages—who begat whom. I began to document the history of my family and my husband's family, lineages—who begat whom. I began to document the study of family history with an emphasis on lineages—who begat whom.

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By Ann Meddin Hellman

In the United States in 1868. His wife, Hannah Frank Rubin, and their son Abraham followed three years later. The first documentation I found of Barnett in Charleston dates by Ann Meddin Hellman from September 16, 1873, when he performed the Jewish Marriage Rabbi Barnett Elzas's book S.C., 1775–1906. His wife's mother—my maternal great-grandfather. In 1883 Charleston's Jewish Historical Society, held at the College of Charleston, will continue to help each of us understand how our own family narratives fit in the rich history and culture of the Jews of South Carolina.

Genealogical research tells you about births, marriages, and migrations, and also about what people did for a living and how they moved up (or down) the social ladder. In 1883 Charleston's city directory lists Henry Levkoff as a peddler. From 1886 to 1894 he was in dry goods. In 1895 he was working for Marks and Needle, and three years later moved with his family to Augusta, Georgia, where he eventually opened H. Levkoff and Sons, a clothing store. After Shier Levkoff died in 1935, his wife Rebecca, his daughter Doris (my mother), and his son Abner Harris Levkoff moved to Charleston. A second daughter, Estelle, was married and lived in Greenville.

I was deeply involved in family history when, in 2003, Marty Dellmutter asked me to do something with a batch of Jewish Historical Society photographs that he had acquired over the years. I posted these pictures of Society events and activities on a website—jhssc.org—and have continued to add pages over time. You can now look online and find back issues of our newsletter, data on South Carolina synagogues and cemeteries, a list of resources for research, links to relevant sites, and information on upcoming events.

Also available at jhssc.org is a database of Jewish burials in South Carolina, a project initiated by the late Stanley Farbstein, which evolved into a concerted effort by the Society, with volunteers across the state documenting and photographing Jewish cemeteries. I have integrated this information into an online spreadsheets which lists burials by town and burial ground, and I continue to add photographs of gravestones and memorial plaques as they become available.

In 2010, during my first spring as JHSSC president, we visited Bluffton, where a brand new congregation called Oseh Shalom had grown from 17 to 500 members in four short years. In Anderson the next fall, we listened to a panel of local people talk about what it was like being Jewish in the Upstate. In spring 2011, in partnership with the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program, we co-sponsored a conference on “Jews, Slavery, and the Civil War.” The program, commemorating the sesquicentennial of America's bloodiest conflict, attracted academic heavyweights from far and wide, and the newsletter featured original essays by leading scholars in the field. In my last season as president, I presided over a joint meeting with the Southern Jewish Historical Society, held at the University of South Carolina, where four special exhibitions had been mounted to commemorate the sesquicentennial of America's bloodiest conflict, attracted academic heavyweights from far and wide, and the newsletter featured original essays by leading scholars in the field. In my last season as president, I presided over a joint meeting with the Southern Jewish Historical Society, held at the University of South Carolina, where four special exhibitions had been mounted to complement the conference.

When I moved over JHSSC's reins to Rachel G. Barnett, who had proven her talents organizing the Columbia meeting, I was proud of our accomplishments and happy to have more time to devote to my work as the Society's webmaster. Please visit the site and let me know if you want to get involved!
Family Matters

My college-age daughter, Emily, recently sent me an email asking about her family history. I was thrilled, of course, to share what little I know about my grandparents and how they arrived in South Carolina. This got me thinking about how fortunate we are to have the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina not only as a repository for our state's history, but as a headquarters for learning and engagement now and for coming generations.

The Society’s founding president, Isadore Lourie, aimed to create a place for our collective memories. Over the past twenty years, his vision has become a reality. Because of Izzy’s foresight, Emily can now go online and hear her great-grandmother Libby Levinson reminisce about her journey from Białystok to Charleston. She can check cemetery records at jhssc.org and find out who in the family was buried where and when. She can check cemetery records at jhssc.org and jhssc.org and find out who in the family was buried where and when. She can check cemetery records at jhssc.org and jhssc.org and find out who in the family was buried where and when.

The College of Charleston has the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina Special Collections, an exhibition produced in conjunction with our May 2013 meeting, I relished the planning process and welcomed the opportunity to encourage others to share their stories.

I hope that JHSSC will deepen the commitment of its current members and spark the interest of younger audiences. We need to find ways to inspire and engage the rising generation in meaningful ways. The center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston provides a vehicle for us to expand our outreach both to students and to the wider world. Isadore Lourie, I feel sure, would be delighted, but not surprised, by this next chapter in our evolution.

As a historian I don’t have to predict the future, just the past—an easier task, though scholars don’t always get that right either. Whatever my limitations as a voter, I know enough to tell that the grim tidings in the Jewish and the general press about Jewish life in the South are misplaced.

Every six months or so, a journalist stumbles across a synagogue in a small town in the Mississippi Delta that is either shuttered or on its last legs. Returning to New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, the reporter pitches a story about the decline of Jewish communities in the South to the editors. The resulting copy is almost always maudlin, lamenting the imminent demise of southern Jewish life. Last year the Forward eulogized southern Jews as a “dying breed.” BBC News predicted “The end of a Deep South way of life.”

Judging by these headlines, you’d think that newspaper editors are delighted to have finally found something more endangered than the newspapers themselves. If we are to believe the morbid theme that runs through these articles, southern Jews are not in need of historians

Tour of historic sites, Charleston, SC, October 1998.
Jews. It will be a source of distinction for the College of South Carolina to promote teaching, research, and the creation of the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture, the result of a generous gift from Edwin Pearlstine, his daughters, and their families, is a further sign of the vitality of the Jewish South, especially in Charleston. The Center will build upon the successes of the Jewish Heritage Collection and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina to promote teaching, research, and publication on the culture and history of southern Jews. It will be a source of distinction for the College of Charleston—no other university has anything like it—and an intellectual hub for the study of everything southern and Jewish. Dale Rosengarten and his team have already put together a full slate of programs for the next two years—lectures and walking tours, oral history interviews and group discussions, film screenings and cultural events—enough to keep even the most tireless enthusiasts busy in 2014–15.

Far from breaking out the mourning rags, this is a moment to celebrate Jewish life in the South and, more generally, about the disappearance of the “country Jew.” In 1994, two years after Alex Sanders, Izzy’s longstanding friend and desk mate at the state senate, became president of the College, the program in 1993, Jack Bass, Charleston’s Jewish Studies Program, initiated with a sense of urgency about the decline of Jewish life in the state senate, became president of the College, the time seemed right to realize the dream of founding a new statewide Jewish historical society.

The Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program, initiated in 1984, would be a natural home for the Society, while the College library, headed by David J. Cohen, was an able and willing partner. Thanks in large measure to Sol Breibart, the library’s Special Collections department had just received the congregational records of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elehim—arguably the most important collection of its kind in the South—and David saw the virtue of building a Jewish heritage archives on this base.

Twenty years have passed since then, and JHSSC has benefitted from consistently excellent leadership, from Klyde Robinson, who had the unenviable task of following Izzy’s footsteps, to David Draisen, our vigorous current president. Under Richard Gergel and Jeffrey Rosenblum’s guidance, the exhibition A Portion of the People was developed by historian and curator Dale Rosengarten in partnership with USC’s McKissick Museum. Richard and Jeffrey secured financial support from the South Carolina Arts Commission, Jerry and Sue Kline, and Harriet Keyserling for the companion video, Land of Promises, created by Paul Kyeseryng. Robert Rosen launched the pillar membership program to secure JHSSC’s budget. The late Bernard Warshaw advanced the Society’s agenda as a grassroots organization, supporting local initiatives such as the statewide cemetery survey. Belinda Gergel and Ed Poliakoff promoted historical markers and Ann Meddin Hellman built the Society’s impressive website. Rachel Gordin Barnett made my job as executive director easy, taking charge and orchestrating our bi-annual meetings with imagination and membership.

Others, too, played important roles. Elizabeth Moses worked as Dale’s research assistant and JHSSC’s administrative aide for several years, before moving to Georgetown and returning, with a sense of urgency about the decline of Jewish life in the Sunbelt. And more organizations and groups than ever before are working to sustain Jewish life in the South. David and Andrea Draisen, Anderson, SC

Lowell and Barbara Epstein, Charleston, SC

Harold I. Fox, Charleston, SC

Phillip and Patricia Greenberg, Florence, SC

Ann and Max Hellman, Charleston, SC

Alan and Charlotte Kahn, Columbia, SC

Michael N. Kogan, Charleston, SC

Ronald Gasser, Blythewood, PA

Allan and Jeanne Lieberman, Charleston, SC

Susan R. Lourie, Charleston, SC

Sandra Pearlstein, Charleston, SC

Edward and Sandra Poliakoff, Columbia, SC

Benedict and Brenda Rosen, Myrtle Beach, SC

Robert and Susan Rosen, Charleston, SC

Sandra Lee Rosenblum, Charleston, SC

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Pillars are our backbone; without them we could not fund our operations. They enable the Society to do its work day in and day out. Pillar members commit to donating $1,000 a year for five years. To continue and to expand that list, we encourage you to add us to your list of staunch supporters. Please join us as a Pillar and watch the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina prosper for another 20 years. Go to jhssc.org for more information. All contributions are tax deductible.

The JHSSC Celebrates Two Decades of Remarkable Growth

by Martin Perlmutter

The seeds Senator Isadore Lourie planted for both a Jewish historical society and a Jewish archives were sown in fertile soil. While he was painfully aware that a mercantile conducts class of small-town Jews was aging and their children were heading off to careers as professionals in the cities, he believed that Jewish South Carolinians understood the value and merit of preserving the record of this distinct cultural demographic. The Jewish community in Izzy’s hometown of St. George— as well as in places like Kingstown, Dillon, Walterboro, Georgetown, Sumter, Camden, and Abbeville—was rapidly shrinking by the 1980s.

During a panel discussion sponsored by the College of Charleston’s Jewish Studies Program in 1993, Jack Bass, Paul Siegel, and Izzy spoke with a sense of urgency about the decline of Jewish life in the small towns where they grew up and, more generally, about the disappearance of the “country Jew.” In 1994, two years after Alex Sanders, Izzy’s longstanding friend and desk mate in the state senate, became president of the College, the time seemed right to realize the dream of founding a new statewide Jewish historical society.

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Sandra Shapiro, Wilsonville, OR

Lois and Raphael Vezina, Palm, PA

Anita Zucker, Charleston, SC

Left to right, standing: Saul Viener, Isadore Lourie, Klyde Robinson, Jeffrey Rosenblum, Martin Perlmutter, Sol Breibart, and Richard Gergel; seated: Leah Chase, Belinda Gergel and Ed Poliakoff; promoting historical markers at sites of Jewish interest, and maintain an informative website (jhssc.org). Our biannual meetings have surpassed B’nai B’rith gatherings of years past in bringing together people from across the state and well beyond for enjoyable weekend get-togethers. Our newsletter, edited by Dale and her associate Alyssa Neely, is mailed to more than 8,000 households every spring and fall. The Jewish history of South Carolina is now on the national map.

The recently announced Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture represents our next big step forward. The Center establishes southern Jewish history as a priority at the College of Charleston and promises to bolster resources for research, teaching, and community outreach. JHSSC’s success was instrumental in launching the Center, and the Center will assure the Society’s success in the future.

Yes, I/we want to become a Pillar of the JHSSC.

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Make checks payable to JHSSC
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Register now for the May 17–18 meeting in Charleston.
See page 10 for more information.