JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of SOUTH CAROLINA

Fall 2001 Volume VI - Number 2

From the President
Jeffrey Rosenblum
page 2

Exhibition Opening
page 3

JHSSC Annual Meetings
Information and Registration
pages 4 - 5

Matzah Ball Memories in
the Jewish South
Marcie Cohen Ferris
page 6 - 7

Reading List
page 8 - 9

The Grand Strand in June
Elizabeth Moses
page 10

Notes from Special Collections
Harlan Greene
page 11

A Portion of the People:
Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life

Gala Opening and Annual Meetings
January 11 - 13, 2002
Dear Fellow Members,

In this last newsletter of my term as president, I want to reflect on what I have learned about American, southern, and South Carolina Jewry as a result of my participation in the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. The JHSSC has helped me to better understand my heritage as a transplanted New Yorker, and to gain insight into the phenomenon of the northern Jewish experience — growing up in a community where Jews were in the majority. I understand much better the heritage of my wife and her family and how different their upbringings were from mine. The southern Jewish experience is unique, interesting, and largely unknown outside the region.

The JHSSC is now completing its eighth year. Not only have we created the largest Jewish organization in the state, but we are about to launch a spectacular museum exhibition and, in the spring, a pair of educational videos — a fifty-minute documentary for ETV and a fifteen-minute version for use in public and religious schools. We have accomplished a great deal in a short period of time, and the best is yet to come. We have an excellent base to build upon.

I cannot say enough about Dale Rosengarten, curator of A Portion of the People, and her scholarly approach to the exhibit. Working with McKissick’s Director Lynn Robertson and her staff has been exciting and eventful. As the culmination of nearly eight years of research and development, the exhibition represents a major milestone in the life of the organization. Our success would not have been possible without Senator Isadore Lourie’s foresight in founding the Society and Dr. Martin Perlmutter’s energetic efforts to maintain its momentum.

Many individuals are helping to make the January meetings possible. Arline Polinsky is coordinating the weekend events in Columbia. My thanks to Arline and her committee for all their hard work. Lyssa Harvey is organizing our second Cultural Arts Award to be presented at the Sunday brunch. Her commitment and drive have made the Cultural Arts Committee a vital part of the Society. I also want to thank our past presidents, Isadore Lourie, Klyde Robinson, and Richard Gergel, for their leadership and steadfast support.

I want to express my appreciation to the Society for allowing me the chance to serve as your president. It has been a privilege, a challenge, and a wonderful opportunity to learn.

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy New Year.

Jeffrey Rosenblum
A Portion of the People:
Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life

Premieres January 12, 2002

by Elizabeth Moses

I don’t quite know what draws me to Caro Moïse. Is it her extraordinary beauty or simply the clarity and glow of the newly restored portrait? Is it the haunting quality of such a peaceful gaze from one who was to die so young? Is it that she was captured in youth forever by her loving grandfather, the painter Theodore Sidney Moïse? Or maybe it is the pansy at her elbow signifying fond memories.

Caro and two hundred other heirlooms will be on view in a landmark exhibition opening January 12, 2002, at McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. Through portraits, photographs, original documents, diaries, family memorabilia, military uniforms, business records, and Sabbath candlesticks, the long and eventful history of Carolina’s Jews will be recounted in A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life.

The title comes from a letter written in 1816 by Isaac Harby, journalist, playwright, and leader of the Jewish Reform movement in America, to Secretary of State James Monroe. Protested the removal of the American consul to Tunis because he was a Jew, Harby reminded the future president, “They [the Jews] are by no means to be considered as a Religious sect, tolerated by government; they constitute a portion of the People.”

The long-awaited opening will be heralded in an event-filled weekend organized in conjunction with the Annual Meetings of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. (See pages 4-5.) Sponsored by the Society, the College of Charleston, and McKissick Museum, A Portion of the People presents a remarkable group of objects and a new view of a neglected subject.

How many people know that South Carolina was the first place in the western world where a Jew was elected to public office, or that in 1800 more Jews lived in Charleston than anywhere else in North America? The show addresses the implications of the Carolina Jewish experience for people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds who have made a place for themselves in a pluralistic society. The exhibition turns on events that compelled Jewish South Carolinians to ask what it means to be a Jew, a southerner, an American.

Make your reservations for the gala weekend now. Caro Moïse awaits you.

A Portion of the People will run through May 2002 at McKissick, then begin a two-year tour that will take it to the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, the Center for Jewish History in New York, and the Museum of the New South in Charlotte, North Carolina.


Program of Events

Friday, January 11
4:00 - 5:00 pm
Board Meeting
at Adam's Mark Hotel

6:30 - 7:30 pm
Shabbat Dinner
at Tree of Life

8:00 pm
Joint Services of
Tree of Life & Beth Shalom
Followed by Oneg Shabbat
Sponsored by both Sisterhoods
at Tree of Life

Saturday, January 12
11:00 am - 2:00 pm
Lunch and
Panel Discussion:
Jews in South Carolina Politics
at the Summit Club
100 Gervais Street

4:30 - 7:00 pm
Exhibition Premiere
& Cocktail Reception
at McKissick Museum

7:30 pm
Dinner & Entertainment
at Adam's Mark Hotel

Sunday, January 13
9:30 am
Brunch
Keynote Speaker: Eli N. Evans
Cultural Arts Award
and Business Meeting
at the Palmetto Club
1231 Sumter Street

1:00 pm
A Portion of the People
opens to the public
at McKissick Museum
University of South Carolina

Jews in South Carolina Politics

A panel discussion on Saturday, January 12, will feature five Jewish activists who have made a mark in South Carolina politics. Panelists will address the question of how being Jewish affected their campaigns and the issues with which they became involved. The discussion will be motivated by audience participation.

Max Heller, former mayor of Greenville, fled his native Vienna a step ahead of the Nazis and settled in the upstate where he went on to found the Maxon Shirt Company. Married to the former Trude Schonhal, Heller is credited with revitalizing Main Street in his adopted city.

Harriet Keyserling, a native New Yorker, moved to Beaufort after World War II. A liberal northerner in a conservative political world, Keyserling served on the Beaufort County Council before being elected in 1977 to her first of eight terms in the South Carolina House of Representatives.

Joel Lourie, son of longtime South Carolina Senator Isadore Lourie, is currently serving his second term in the State House of Representatives. A partner in Lourie’s department store, he represents Richland County District 78.

Sam Tenenbaum is a retired steel executive from Columbia who is active in Democratic Party politics. An ardent supporter of the Anti-Defamation League, he is the husband of Inez Tenenbaum, South Carolina Superintendent of Education. Tenenbaum directed planning for the inaugurations of governors Richard Riley and Jim Hodges.

Jack Bass, panel moderator, has authored seven books about the American South. The son of immigrant Jewish parents, he grew up in the town of North, South Carolina. Between 1963 and 1973, Bass covered South Carolina state politics as governmental affairs editor of The State and Columbia bureau chief of The Charlotte Observer. In 1978, he ran for U.S. Congress. Two years ago, he joined the College of Charleston faculty as professor of Humanities and Social Sciences.
Eli N. Evans
To Give Keynote Address:

“...This City is Our Jerusalem;
This Happy Land
Our Palestine”

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina is pleased to welcome Eli N. Evans as the keynote speaker for its gala weekend.

Evans is the award-winning author of *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South*, *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate*, and *The Lonely Days Were Sundays: Reflections of a Jewish Southerner*. He was born and raised in Durham, North Carolina, where his father, E. J. “Mutt” Evans, served six terms as mayor. His mother, Sara Nachamson Evans, was a lifetime member of the National Board of Hadassah. Evans was graduated from the University of North Carolina and earned his law degree at Yale. He served in the United States Navy and worked as an aide and speech writer in President Lyndon Johnson’s administration. He is currently president of the Charles H. Revson Foundation in New York City. In October 2001 he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Evans will address the Society on Sunday morning, January 13, at the Palmetto Club. The public is invited to attend.

Free Time Suggestions for Saturday

Services at Beth Shalom
9:45 am - noon

“When the Big Apple was a Jewish Synagogue”
Tour the Big Apple nightclub
with Belinda and Richard Gergel
Corner of Hampton and Park Streets
9:00 - 10:30 am, on the half-hour

Holocaust Memorial
Memorial Park, Corner of Washington and Park
South Carolina State Museum
301 Gervais Street
10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina
Annual Meetings
Columbia, S.C.
January 11 - 13, 2002

Adam’s Mark Hotel room reservations can be made by calling (803) 771-7000 or (800) 444-2326. Mention the JHSSC for special rates.

Registration fee: $95.00 per member includes meetings, panel discussion, lecture, exhibition opening and reception, and meals, with the exception of Shabbat dinner on January 11, which requires an additional fee of $12.50 per person. All meals are “Kosher-style.”

Name

Address

Phone

Fax/e-mail address

2002 Family Membership dues - $36.00

Registration fee - $95.00 per person

Please help defray the costs of these special events by becoming a patron - $750.00
sponsor - $350.00
friend - $200.00

Shabbat Dinner, Friday, Jan. 11
$12.50 per person

Total Amount Enclosed: $
Matzah Ball Memories in the Jewish South
an update on research in South Carolina
by Marcie Cohen Ferris

Were grits a common side dish at your southern Jewish table? Did holiday meals include fresh butter beans and stewed tomatoes and okra? Were relatives expected to bring bagels and rye bread back home from New York and other cities? Did you buy kosher supplies or Passover foods by mail order or drive some distance to find them? Were African-American food traditions mixed with your Jewish food traditions, or strictly separated? Were the Settlement Cook Book and cookbooks published by the Sisterhood well-used texts in your family’s kitchen? Did the local shohet, or Jewish butcher, work out of the Piggly Wiggly grocery store? Did your family have a treyf garage or beach cottage where forbidden shrimp, barbecue, and other southern specialties were eaten? If any of these scenarios feels familiar, your taste buds were most likely shaped by the world of the Jewish South!

Since the first arrival of Sephardic Jewish immigrants in the South during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Jews have blended their regional identity as Jews and as southerners through the foods they eat, the holidays they celebrate, and the products they buy. As a doctoral candidate at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., I am researching this unique world for my dissertation, “Matzah Ball Gumbo, Gasper Goo Gefilte Fish, and Big Momma’s Kreplach: Exploring Southern Jewish Foodways.” I am examining how food has defined daily life for southern Jews, from foods prepared in the home and the synagogue to food-related businesses that Jews built and patronized.

I recently spent a week in Charleston, South Carolina, where I explored food traditions in this historic Jewish community. My time was divided between archival research at the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston and oral history interviews with local members of the Jewish community. I also was privileged to attend Rosh Hashanah services at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, one of the South’s earliest and most influential Jewish congregations. Thanks to the efforts of Dale Rosengarten and a corps of dedicated volunteer interviewers, the Jewish Heritage Collection has assembled one of the most comprehensive “memory banks” of Jewish oral histories in America. This rich resource contains colorful descriptions of Charleston institutions, such as Zalkin’s, Lash’s, and Baker’s kosher meat...
markets, Ruddich’s bakery, and Mazo’s delicatessen, as well as photos of these and other Jewish food-related businesses in South Carolina.

During my week in Charleston I interviewed Fred Bernstein and his daughter Teri Lash, who shared their stories of Mildred and Anita Bernstein’s kosher catering business, including their famous “mile-high” babkas. Jack Kahn described his father Morris Kahn’s coffee roasting business in Charleston, which Jack later expanded into a food manufacturing business, now famous for its delicious fresh-packed “half sour” and “bread and butter” pickles. I observed Marcie Rosenberg and her assistant Earl McCallum as they braided 150 kosher challahs for their weekly order at Charleston’s Jewish Community Center.

Sandra Goldberg Lipton described her parents’ early involvement in Synagogue Emanuel and the many meals her mother served to visiting Jewish dignitaries and scholars, such as Mordecai Kaplan. Sandra’s husband, Dr. Morey Lipton, shared his brother Joe’s descriptions of the “Beaufort Shtetl.” Jack Bass and his sister, Ruth Bass Jacobs, recalled Jewish life in North South Carolina, including their weekly drive to Columbia in the back of their parents’ Chevrolet to attend Sunday school, followed by a mandatory stop at the local delicatessen. Sydney Solomon Richman explained how the Charleston congregational sisterhoods organize a “meal of condolence” for bereaved Jewish families, an act that evokes both a Jewish tradition and a strong sense of southern family. Sandra and Raymond Rosenblum described Charleston Jewish weddings where the powerful combination of southern and Jewish traditions of hospitality are clearly apparent in celebrations that begin on Friday evening and go non-stop through a closing brunch for out-of-town guests on Sunday.

Historian James William Hagy suggests the early Jews of Charleston “adopted the way of life of other white southerners.” Nowhere is this process revealed more clearly than at their tables. Jews from Barbados, Germany, England, Poland, the Netherlands, France, and Eastern Europe brought the foodways of their countries with them to Charleston, and then mingled these culinary traditions with a southern cuisine shaped by African-American cooks, Anglo-American and creole influences, and native plants and animals. Dr. Rosenblum, who was raised in Anderson, describes the kosher kitchen of his Eastern European mother, who prepared collard greens with schmaltz and gribbenes, instead of the usual “fatback.” And Sandra Lipton speaks of her aunt who prepared “hoppin’ John,” a mixture of rice and field peas traditionally served on New Year’s Day. Sandra’s aunt served it for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and flavored it with fried salami instead of pork.

Throughout their history, observant Jews in South Carolina kept kosher homes that were supported by businesses like Lash’s kosher meat market in Charleston. Alex Lash says, “as long as a person wanted to keep kosher, they sent the meat to them.” Those with more flexible attitudes created elaborate southern versions of kashrut that allowed “forbidden” foods to be eaten outside the home. Some families prepared two versions of the

Continued next page...

---


Matzah Ball Memories

... Continued from page 7

same dish cooked with and without treyf, such as gumbo with shrimp and sausage, and a kosher version with chicken and salami.

If your congregation or individual members and families within your community would like to share food memories for my study of southern Jewish food traditions, please contact me either by e-mail, marcieferris@erols.com, or by telephone, (202) 364-4088. My research is affiliated with the College of Charleston’s Jewish Heritage Collection and the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience in Utica, Mississippi.

Marcie Rosenberg and Earl McCallum bake over 150 kosher challahs each week for the Charleston Jewish Community Center. To order, call the Center’s “challah hotline”: (843) 571-6565.

Reading

A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life

This full-color catalogue documents the upcoming exhibition of the same name. The product of an eight-year collaboration by the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, McKissick Museum of the University of South Carolina, and the College of Charleston, the volume will be published by USC Press in September 2002. Edited by Theodore and Dale Rosengarten, with a preface by Eli N. Evans and essays by Deborah Dash Moore, Jenna Weissman Joselit, Jack Bass, and the editors, A Portion of the People is an important addition to southern arts and letters. A photographic essay by Bill Aron, who has documented Jewish communities around the world, brings the story into the present.

— USC Press, fall 2002

The Slow Way Back

Judy Goldman

This remarkably crafted first novel by a native of Rock Hill, South Carolina, traces three generations of a southern Jewish family. It is a story about deeply rooted family secrets, the complex love between sisters, and the constant human struggle to keep one’s history alive.

“A luminous, achingly beautiful novel that makes you shiver with delight. Judy Goldman is a lace-maker with her lovely words, and her novel made me happy to be alive. Her ending thrilled me and surprised me. Please read this book.”

— Pat Conroy
Against the Tide:
One Woman’s Political Struggle
Harriet Keyserling

This autobiography is the story of an unconventional politician’s impact on the world of “good ol’ boy” southern politics. When Harriet Keyserling arrived in the small town of Beaufort in 1944, after marrying native son Dr. Herbert Keyserling, she was a liberal northerner in the conservative South, a Jew in a predominantly Christian world, a New York City girl in a very small town. These differences intensified her feelings of being an outsider—a thread that ran through much of her life and career.

“Against the Tide is the story of changing times in southern politics.”

— The Washington Post

The Jewish Confederates
Robert N. Rosen

“An eye-opening, myth-shattering, stereotype-breaking work of originality, elegance, and wisdom. A must-read for Civil War buffs, Jewish history fans, and all Americans interested in learning—and you will learn much—about Jewish southerners who placed loyalty to their adopted states above the moral teachings of their tradition (at least as we now interpret them). You may not agree with these Jewish Confederates, but you will surely understand them better.”

— Alan M. Dershowitz
The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina’s combined annual/regional meeting was held in Georgetown and Myrtle Beach, June 22-24. About 40 Society members attended, voted in a new board, and enjoyed a relaxed, set-your-own pace weekend. The weather cooperated perfectly, holding off threatening rain Saturday until everyone was convened for the reception.

The weekend began with services Friday evening hosted by Temple Emanu-El in Myrtle Beach. Eleven members of the Society braved the Myrtle Beach traffic, under the care of Society President Jeffrey Rosenblum, who did double duty as our chauffeur. We were warmly welcomed by Rabbi Mitchell Kornspan and Temple President Lorraine Wachter. Temple Emanu-El is experiencing rapid growth and will soon be expanding. There to remind everyone of the early days of the congregation were Hugo Schiller and Raymond Schild, who regaled us with stories of what it takes to be southern and Jewish and to start a synagogue against the odds.

Returning to the original aim of our regional meetings – to highlight smaller Jewish communities around the state – the Society did not schedule a keynote speaker or gala banquet for the weekend. Instead, members were on their own to explore the fascinating story of Georgetown’s historic Jewish community. Jews settled in Georgetown in the 1760s; by 1800, the port town was home to a thriving Jewish community, almost ten percent of Georgetown’s white population. Congregation Beth Elohim formally organized in 1904 and the present temple was built in 1950. The cemetery was established in 1772, making it the second oldest Jewish burial ground in the state. It is the final resting place of three of Georgetown’s six Jewish mayors.

Society members enjoyed free tours of the Kaminski House. This colonial home, overlooking the Sampit River, was built in 1769 by merchant Paul Trapier and bought by Harold and Julia Kaminski in 1931. It is filled with American and English antiques, many from the late 1700s, and was left to the city of Georgetown as a museum upon Julia Kaminski’s death in 1972.

The highlight of the weekend, judging by participants’ comments, was a three-hour tour of the former Baruch family estate, Hobcaw Barony. Originally several rice plantations, the land was purchased in the early 1900s by stockbroker and presidential advisor Bernard Baruch, son of Confederate surgeon Simon Baruch. Upon her death, Belle W. Baruch, Bernard Baruch’s daughter, deeded the 17,500 acre property for the “purposes of teaching and/or research in forestry, marine biology, the care and propagation of wildlife, flora and fauna in connection with colleges and universities in the state.”

We wrapped up the weekend with a panel discussion held at Temple Beth Elohim on Sunday morning. Panelists were Rita Fogel, longtime member of Beth Elohim, Hugo Schiller, member of Myrtle Beach’s Emanu-El, and Rabbi Doron Aizenman of the Chabad Lubavitch Center of Myrtle Beach.
In August of 2001, just as students started to fill the College of Charleston campus, there was new activity, as well, in Special Collections at the College library. As sort of a SWAT team, we, new members of the Jewish Heritage archival staff, began to arrive, make plans, and get to work.

According to the terms of our grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, we have 18 months to go through literally hundreds of feet of manuscript, printed, photographic, ephemeral (and you name it, it’s here) material. Our job is to touch each sheet of paper, analyze it, put it in some kind of order, identify the creator and intuit its importance. After we have organized the materials in folders and boxes, we draft descriptions and assign added entries that will then be smoothed out by a cataloguer who will transform our worksheets into an electronically readable format. Once the information is on-line, readers around the world can search by subject, author, content, etc. We are part treasure hunters, part trash collectors, and part technicians. We’re all ready and already at work.

I am the head archivist, on a generous leave of absence from the South Carolina Room of the Charleston County Public Library. My assistant is Zinnia Willits, a recent arrival to Charleston, who brings enthusiasm and greatly needed experience in museum work. Manuscript librarian Annette Blum, retiring from the public library, brings her knowledge of cataloguing Caroliniana to the team. We already have three student helpers labeling folders and photographs, putting materials in chronological order, and doing a lot of the “busy work” for us.

We’ve processed fewer than ten collections so far, but we are getting up a head of steam. Before beginning, I tried to peek in every box and see what sort of work was in store for us. It is a truly amazing collection of materials and it certainly justifies the NEH grant — for the Endowment only funds work on materials of national importance.

What I saw was amazing: a true panoply of Jewish life in South Carolina (and elsewhere). Jews not only came from everywhere, but once here, they couldn’t get the wandering out of their system. I’ve come across the diary of an antebellum Charleston Jewish gentleman visiting Germany, comparing synagogue services there to those in Charleston. A few years later, there he is on a diplomatic mission in Palestine, visiting Jerusalem, where he muses on the homeland of his forefathers. Another earlier diary contains the frank, self-effacing confessions of a young man just graduated from college and starting the study of law. He makes fun of himself (and others), and is so modern in his sensibilities that I almost expected the ink still to be wet. It whetted my appetite to sit down and read the whole diary from cover to cover.

But I could not; there were too many other people “to meet,” too many other families to visit, images to ponder and exclaim over, documents in Yiddish or German to decipher — or find someone to do it for us. In these next few issues, we look forward to telling you more of our discoveries.

If you have questions concerning the project, please contact me at (843) 953-7428 or e-mail me at greeneh@cofc.edu. We will need volunteers for some projects, but please bear with us; we need to get everything set and assess all possible tasks before that call goes out.
The Jewish Studies Center at the College of Charleston is scheduled for completion in August 2002, in time for the 2002-2003 academic year. It will house the offices of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. The estimated cost of the 12,000-square-foot, three-story facility is three million dollars. The center is being built with private funds. Contributions may be sent to the Yashik/Ardold Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston.