

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of SOUTH CAROLINA

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From the President Robert N. Rosen

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina has been spectacularly successful in the last six months.

- The grand opening of “A Portion of the People” at the Gibbes Museum of Arts on September 12 was a memorable occasion. The black-tie event drew well over 400 guests, including Governor Jim Hodges, Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Attorney General Charlie Condon, and other dignitaries. Special thanks to Eve Berlinsky and Sandra Lee Rosenblum for heading up the magnificent effort. The party raised substantial funds to help the Gibbes cover exhibition costs. Another \$33,000 was contributed by community sponsors, with the Pearlstine Family Fund and the Jerry and Anita Zucker Family Foundation taking the lead.
- “A Portion of the People” drew record crowds at the Gibbes. Attendance in September exceeded the ten-year average for the month by 1,100 people. The show now moves on to the Center for Jewish History on 16th Street in New York City. The gala opening on February 6, 2003 features a keynote address by Eli Evans and a special viewing of the exhibition, which has been significantly redesigned for this venue. Sponsored by Yeshiva University Museum and the American Jewish Historical Society, the exhibit will remain on display through July 20, 2003.
- At the Society’s fall meetings on October 12-13, 2002, upwards of 300 people came to hear talks by Jenna Weissman Joselit and Senator Joseph Lieberman. We joined in the dedication of the Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center at the College of Charleston, which includes a new office for the Society.
- “Land of Promise” premiered at our annual meeting and aired Thanksgiving evening on SCETV. Many thanks to Jerry and Sue Kline and to Harriet Keyserling for their support, and hats off to Paul Keyserling, Bill Pendergraft, Steve Channing, Barbara Karesh Stender, and Meira Warshauer for their creative work.

We are looking forward to an interesting board meeting in April 2003 in Camden. We will combine that session with a retreat open to all members. The purpose of this one-day get-together will be to relax and discuss the direction of the Society. It will not be a regional meeting, and there will not be a program, but it will be a day set aside to reflect on what the Society has accomplished and what it hopes to accomplish in the next several years. More information on this will be forthcoming.

I am recommending to the board that the next annual meeting take place in Charlotte, North Carolina, on the weekend of September 14, 2003, to coincide with the opening of “A Portion of the People” at the Levine Museum of the New South. We will join with the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina and other groups at the opening. This is tentative but in the works. Plans are already underway for October 28-31, 2004, when the Society will host the annual meeting of the Southern Jewish Historical Society in Charleston. Save the dates.

My goals for the Society in 2003 are 600 members (up from 540) and 25 pillars (up from 15). My long-range goals include backing a Center for Southern Jewish History at the College of Charleston and contributing to SJHS’s journal, *Southern Jewish History*. My dream is for JHSSC to acquire the historic Hebrew Orphan Society Building on Broad Street. Any fellow dreamer with the means to help?

Your support has made possible the remarkable strides we’ve taken this year. Thank you for allowing me to lead the Society in these efforts.

Sincerely,

President, Jewish Historical Society
of South Carolina

Cover photo:
Sunday School class of
Temple Beth Or,
Kingstree, SC, c.1957.

from the collection of
Sidney and Sylvia Dubin.

Jewish Historical Society of SC helps dedicate its new home: at the Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center



The new Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center

Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik was one of the early supporters of the Jewish Studies Program. In fact, along with her husband, Henry, she conceived the Jewish Studies Program, supported it, and guided the Program through its first 15 years. The Program became one of her greatest joys in later life. A native New Yorker, Sylvia became a true Southerner when she moved to Charleston to marry Henry, her devoted husband for 60 years. She was committed to her family, and was a life-long supporter of Jewish and non-Jewish causes.

The dedication of the Center on October 13, 2002 was the concluding event of the Fall meetings of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. About 500 people attended the event, much of which was moved indoors because of the rain. Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut was the featured speaker.

The 12,000 square foot, three-story facility houses the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program, the Jewish Student Union/Hillel, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, the Norman and Gerry Sue Arnold Halls, the Rabbi Hirsch Levin Judaica Library, and much more. A permanent home for JHSSC is a major accomplishment. It gives the Society a place from which to operate. The Society has graduated from a drawer in a file cabinet to a fully equipped new office with some staff support.



Senator Joseph Lieberman and Norman Arnold at the dedication ceremony.



Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik and Henry Yaschik

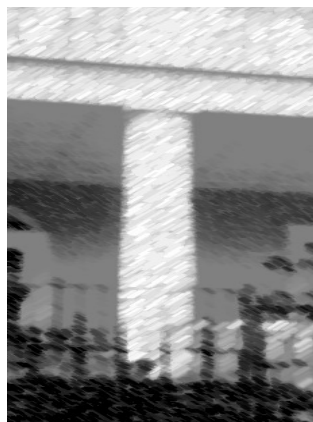
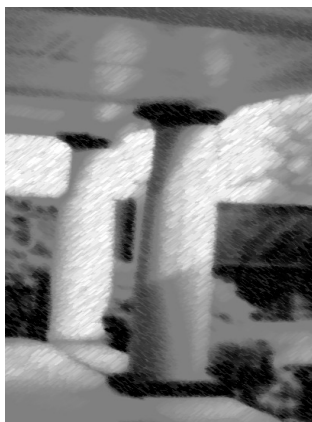


Members of the Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik and Henry Yaschik family dedicate the new Jewish Studies Center at the College of Charleston.

Come visit the JHSSC office in Room 215 of the Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center at 96 Wentworth Street (at the corner of Glebe) in downtown Charleston.
Our phone number is 843.953.3918.

Pillars: Building a Strong Foundation

By: Martin Perlmutter, Executive Director



The **Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina** has made great strides in its brief history. Less than ten years old, it has sponsored a major national traveling exhibition, an excellent historical video, regular newsletters like this one, and well-attended and excellently programmed bi-annual meetings. In fact, the Society has already become the largest statewide Jewish organization in South Carolina with 540 dues-paying members. And this year, it moved into its permanent home at the **Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center** at the College of Charleston. All of these are major accomplishments; each by itself would be a significant accomplishment for such a young organization.

The Society has no endowment yet. It will develop one, but that has not yet happened. And it needs an operating budget for all of its activities. Membership dues do not cover the Society's operating expenses.

The executive board of the Society decided on a "pillar campaign," with a goal of raising \$25,000 a year for each of the next five years. Those funds will pay for part-time staff, telephone, postage, supplies, and equipment. The Board is looking for 25 pillars to commit \$1,000 a year for each of the next five years.

Many thanks to those of you who have already come forward. It is such generous and gracious support that makes the Society so successful and my job as executive director so easy. Together we have done wonderful things and are building for the future. Please become a pillar and help sustain the Society. Please join this distinguished list.

Richard and Belinda Gergel, Columbia, SC
Harvey and Mimi Gleberman, Spring Island, SC
Mark and Judith Green, Charleston, SC
Ruth Greenberg, Florence, SC
Michael Kogan, Little Falls, NJ
Ronald and Anne Krancer, Villanova, PA
Rabbi Ted and Ina Rae Levy, Hilton Head Island, SC
Jack and Frieda Margolies, Charleston, SC
Rose Mark, Beaufort, SC
Robert and Susan Rosen, Charleston, SC
Jeffrey and Mickey Rosenblum, Charleston, SC
Steve and Harriett Steinert, Asheville, NC
Gordan and Barbara Stine, Charleston, SC
Mark Tanenbaum, Sullivan's Island, SC
Bernard and Ann Warshaw, Walterboro, SC

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____



Yes, I/ we want to be a pillar of the JHSSC. In doing so, I/ we commit to a gift of \$5,000 over a period of five years.

Check enclosed _____



Reflections on “A Portion of the People”

by Norton and Mindelle Seltzer
photos by Jack Alterman

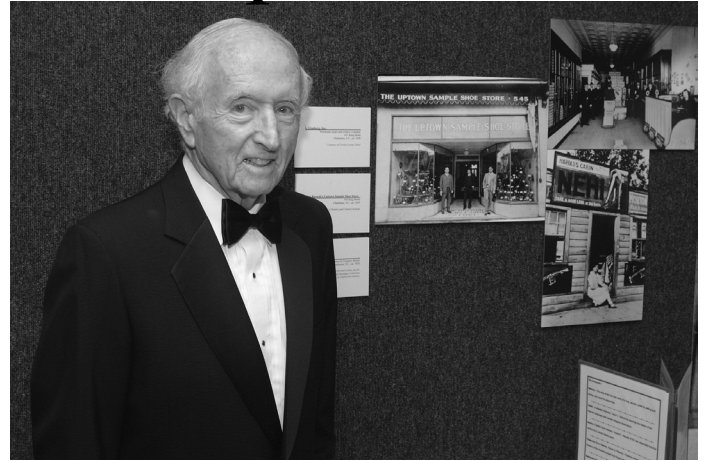
We had the pleasure of leading tours of “A Portion of the People” at the Gibbes Museum of Art this fall. Museum-goers included Charleston Jews, other Charlestonians interested in the show, Jews from many other towns in South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and tourists from all over the country. With each tour, 300 years of South Carolina’s Jewish history came alive. It was thrilling to watch the audience respond, emotionally and spiritually. People with an interest in America’s past were fascinated by the interplay between Jewish history and southern history. The ceremonial, traditional, and everyday pieces on display elicited memories from the viewers of their own ethnic, ancestral yesterdays. Candlesticks in particular held great significance, and crossed the lines of history, functionality, and aesthetics.

The manner in which the exhibit is divided into three acts allowed us to take people into a living play. We felt like directors leading the participants through three centuries of life experiences.



Gerry and Jane Meyerson with Gerry’s WW II Army Air Corps uniform

Act I was filled with beauty and the awe-inspiring tales of Jewish Carolina’s “first families.” Act II displayed happy times. Some spectators, especially Reform Jews, could imagine themselves taking part in the historic events of the 1830s and 1840s. The slavery issue and the tragic Civil War induced feelings of shock and wonder. Act III made people feel right at home. In “Little Jerusalem,” Charleston’s



Stanley Karesh at the Gibbes opening

immigrant neighborhood of the early 20th century, they recognized their own history. The artifacts that immigrants to South Carolina brought with them were poignant reminders of parents and grandparents in the not-so-distant past. The Holocaust brought Act III to a silent and mournful close.

Following this ride through 300 years of southern Jewish history, Bill Aron’s photographs suffused the historical, emotional, and artistic themes of the exhibit with hope. His images portray the mosaic of the contemporary Jewish communities across South Carolina. They anchor the exhibition in the diversity and change that continue to characterize Jewish life in this state and region.

“Unbelievable. I had no idea Jewish people lived in South Carolina so long ago and had portraits—never have seen portraits of Jewish people.”

A Few Criticisms

Some visitors to the exhibition felt that the Orthodox and Conservative traditions were underrepresented. Curator Dale Rosengarten explained that the narrative proper stops in 1945, and since Emanu-El, South Carolina’s first Conservative synagogue, did not appear until 1947, it figures only in the “epilogue”—Aron’s photo essay.

Conservative Judaism also looms large in the section of the exhibition catalogue called “Palmetto Jews.” Dale said she wished that more of the 19th-century records of Charleston’s Orthodox congregation Brith Sholom had been preserved. Brith Sholom’s earliest surviving document — Rabbi Hirsch

continued on page 6

Levine's notebook, written in Hebrew and Yiddish – was discovered in the course of the Jewish Heritage Project and is prominently displayed.

*"The first positive Jewish exhibition we ever saw." -
Antwerp, Belgium*

Some museum-goers who opted for self-guided visits were confused by the organization of the show. As docents we believe it would be helpful to have an introductory panel at the entrance to each gallery describing each of the three acts of the exhibition narrative.

"This exhibit raises wonderful questions that I think Jews of today would benefit from dialoguing about—i.e. How is it that Jews embraced slavery when they understood with their collective history how bad slavery was for society?" - Westport, CT



Dale Rosengarten and Barbara Radinsky



Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., South Carolina Governor Jim Hodges and JHSSC President Robert Rosen at the Exhibition's Grand Opening on September 12, 2002 at the Gibbes Museum of Art.



Eli, Sandra and Edward Poliakoff



Photos at right, top to bottom:

"Pledging Allegiance" display

Pincus Kolender

Betty Montgomery and Morris Rosen

Psalm of the South:

Museum Celebrates Charleston Culture

by Jenna Weissman Joselit

This article appeared in Jenna Weissman Joselit's column "The Wonders of America," in the Forward, November 8, 2002. Professor Joselit, who teaches at Princeton and New York Universities, recounts her experience as keynote speaker at JHSSC's Fall Meeting.

South Carolina is the land of promise, as one of its Jewish citizens, August Kohn, wrote way back in 1907, hoping to entice his co-religionists from up North to settle there. In South Carolina, he wrote, you can find a "good and peaceful home," "pleasant" weather and "help with all problems."

Having just returned from a trip to Charleston, where graciousness and hospitality seem to be as much a part of the natural order as palm trees, live oaks and balmy breezes, I now know just what Kohn meant.

I had come to Charleston to deliver a speech before the members of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, who had assembled over the Columbus Day weekend to participate in its annual meeting. Drawing hundreds of folks from around the state, the society's yearly get-together was also designed to coincide with two other local events: the dedication of the Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center at the venerable College of Charleston and the opening at the distinguished Gibbes Museum of "A Portion of a People," an exhibition about the Jewish experience in the Palmetto state. Eight years in the making, "A Portion of the People" lovingly and painstakingly chronicles the history of South Carolina Jewry from its inception in the 18th century to the present. It takes its name — and sensibility — from a letter written in 1816 by Isaac Harby, a loyal son of Charleston and one of its leading intellectual lights, to then-Secretary of State James Monroe. The Jews, he wrote, "are by no means to be considered a Religious sect, tolerated by the government; they constitute a portion of the people. They are, in every respect, woven in and compacted with the citizens of the Republic."

Nothing if not a project of and for the people, the exhibition makes good on Harby's description — and then some. Instead of simply relying on extant museum collections, the exhibition's curator and guiding spirit, Dale Rosengarten, with a doctorate in the history of American civilization from Harvard University and an equally strong background in community organizing, canvassed the length and breadth of the state in search of objects that reflected the singularities of the Southern Jewish experience. She found ample evidence of the "compacted and woven" nature of Southern Jewish life: leather-encased miniatures and life-sized oil portraits of the Sephardic elite; sepia-toned photographs of those who

had proudly served in the Confederate army; bracelets fashioned out of thimbles, and love letters composed in Yiddish from the pen of J.W. Mark, a cotton buyer from Burton, SC. More to the point, she found a profound and abiding awareness of history.

At every step," Rosengarten said, "I picked up a sense of urgency." South Carolina's Jews wanted their memories to survive.... More than anything else, they wanted to believe that their lives have contributed to Jewish survival."

Throughout my stay in Charleston, as I studied the hundreds of objects that make up "A Portion of the People" and chatted with proud American Jews whose ancestors had set down roots in Beaufort rather than Brooklyn, I was constantly being reminded of the expansiveness of the American Jewish experience and of the stories, large and small, that animate it. My real moment of awakening, though, came shortly before I was to deliver my speech.

Titled "Clio and the Jews," my address was designed to place the South Carolina Jewish experience in broad historical context. Invoking the name of Clio, the Muse of History, I intended to reflect on the relationship between American Jews and their past. Imagine, then, my consternation to learn only moments before I approached the lectern that many in the audience had come to my talk expecting me to speak not about the Muse of History (whom some had never heard of in the first place) but about the small South Carolina town (population: 1,000) of Clio!

Thanks to experiences like this one, I've come to realize that those of us who call the major urban centers of America our home are all too prone to forget that history is not the exclusive preserve of the metropolis or the multitudes. History is where we find it—even in Clio, SC.



Raphael Moses:

When the Civil War broke out, Raphael Moses was living comfortably on his estate in Columbus, Georgia, a property he named Esquiline after one of the seven hills of Rome. After years of struggling for financial stability, he had found success and fame as an attorney and orator.

A man well into his fifties, Moses was not obligated to serve in the field, but since he was a public figure and decidedly in favor of secession, Moses felt compelled to take an active role in the resistance effort.

Upon the urging of powerful Georgia politician Howell Cobb, Raphael began his field service in 1861 as Commissary Officer of Brigadier General Robert Toomb's Brigade. A year later he was promoted to Chief Commissary Officer of General James Longstreet's Corps, a position that saw him in contact with many of the most recognized and prominent soldiers of the Confederacy.

Several historic moments highlighted Moses' distinguished military career. He fought in the pivotal battle of Gettysburg, often referred to as the "High Tide of the Confederacy." Right beside General Lee he "bided the pelting storm" that fell on the last night of fighting there. After the Confederacy's withdrawal, Moses led his troops on an arduous trip from Virginia to Tennessee where food was scarce for his starving and injured troops. With little hope of finding the wheat that had been hidden in the Tennessee hills, Moses and his men seized the sheep in the meadows and traded their wool for food.

Moses was also present at the final meeting of the Confederate government on May 5th 1865 in Washington, Georgia. It is a testament to his outstanding service that he was asked to carry out one of the final orders of the Confederate States of America, the delivery of ten thousand dollars worth of gold to the commanding officer of the Union Army in Augusta. This was no slight task.



*Raphael Jacob Moses, Major C.S.A.
1812—1893*

As he and his men were boarding a train with the gold, they were confronted by a large group of unruly former Confederate soldiers. In a post-war atmosphere that verged on anarchy, Moses and his men might have been killed by their fellow Confederates. They had to consider whether they were willing to die protecting gold in a war that was over.

Moses read his orders to the men, speaking quietly and directly, and explained that every dollar of the gold would go to feeding their fellow soldiers and caring for the wounded. He added further that if they killed him, it would be murder, and if he killed any of them; he would be justified on grounds of self-defense and in the name of the sacred duty that had been assigned to him.

Cooler heads prevailed as a number of men who knew Moses spoke up and assured the rest that he would not steal the money. The gold was successfully delivered to Augusta and Moses had carried out the Confederacy's final order.

Would you like to become a member of the
Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina?

See back cover for more information.

A Confederate War Hero

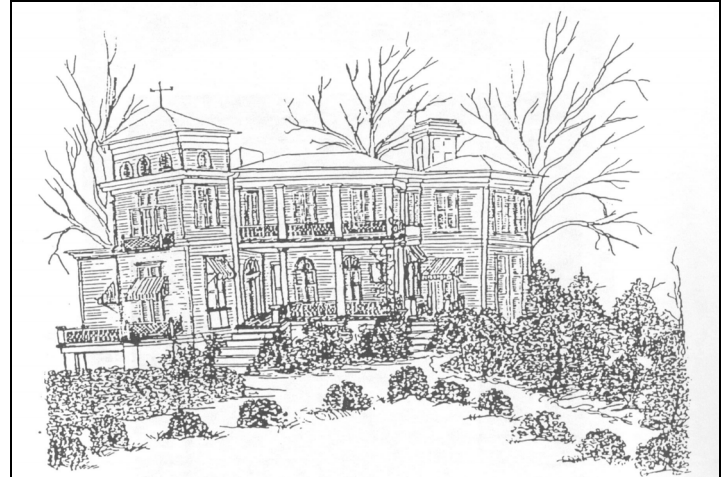
by I. Harby Moses

When the war ended, Raphael Moses returned to Esquiline in Columbus. The war had taken a heavy toll on his family. In addition to losing their son Albert, Raphael and his wife Eliza, lost three nephews and five cousins. Moreover, they had lost a way of life. But Moses did not withdraw from public service. He served in the Georgia Legislature in 1877 and was a vigorous opponent of the carpetbagger government. He was also a vehement defender of his Jewish tradition.

In the congressional race of 1878, the opposing candidates for office were a Mr. Tuggle and a Mr. Harris. Moses decided to endorse Harris and Tuggle responded by making Moses' religious heritage an issue, using the word 'Jew' in a derogatory light. In an open letter written August 28, 1878, Moses responded to Tuggle's attack:

"...At West Point (GA) during your congressional campaign, and my absence, you sought for me a term of reproach, and from your well-filled vocabulary selected the epithet "Jew".

I feel it an honor to be one of a race whom persecution can not crush, whom prejudice has in vain endeavored to subdue; who despite the powers and the combined antagonism of the combined world, protected



ESQUILINE
Columbus, Muscogee County, Georgia

by the hand of Deity, have burst the temporal bonds with which prejudice would have bound them, and after nineteen centuries of persecution still survive as a nation, asserting their manhood and intelligence, and giving proof of the divinity that stirs within them by having become a great factor in the government of mankind.

Would you honor me? Call me a Jew."

Land of Promise: the Jews of South Carolina - a Review

by Danielle Ziff

Through the eye of the camera, "Land of Promise" takes viewers on a tour of South Carolina history, combining interview footage with commentary by local scholars, under the umbrella of Blythe Danner's soothing narrative voice. The filmmakers capitalize on the ability of video to travel freely between past and present, relating historical events and trends directly to contemporary experiences.

For example, in the first section, entitled "Jews Among Us," the story of a Russian Jewish family that immigrated to Charleston twelve years ago is immediately followed by a discussion of the first Jewish immigrants to arrive in Carolina at the onset of colonization in the 17th century. This strategy captivates the audience. Rather than jumping into past events that might seem distant or foreign to the viewer, the filmmakers use modern situations to hook the audience's attention, encouraging viewers to relate personally to the material covered.

The most powerful aspect of "Land of Promise" is its discussion of Jewish involvement in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s. The narrative addresses the problems involved in reconciling the common experiences of slavery and discrimination shared by African-Americans and Jews with the fact that many Jews were slave-owners and fought fiercely in defense of the Confederacy.

Ultimately, the film points out, the Jews of South Carolina cannot be judged purely by their religious affiliation. Like the rest of the population, southern Jews operated very much within the confines of social and cultural norms, not as a "despised sect" but, as Isaac Harby so eloquently expressed it, as "a portion of the people."

Excerpts from a film review written for "Anatomy of an Exhibition," a College of Charleston course taught by Dale Rosengarten last fall, cross-listed in Jewish Studies and Arts Management.

Kingstree: The Lifecycle of a Small Jewish Community in South Carolina

by Sidney Dubin



The author outside Temple Beth Or in Kingstree, SC

In 1850, an attorney named M.I. Hirsch moved to Kingstree, SC, becoming the town's earliest known Jewish citizen. Fifty years later a migration of Jews flowed into Kingstree from northern cities and started a variety of businesses including clothing stores, drug stores, appliance stores, jewelry stores, a heating and plumbing company, and a car dealership. This influx reached its peak after World War II. At that time there were about 38 Jewish families living in Kingstree and its three neighboring towns, Lake City, Andrews, and Greelyville.

In 1948, Harry and Kitty Marcus donated a plot of land for a synagogue to be built and Temple Beth Or was born. It quickly became the hub of Jewish life in the area. There was an active congregation, a men's club and sisterhood, a yearly community seder, and frequent social events. Services were held every Friday night, conducted by William Marcus. Sidney Dubin, Jerome Moskow, and Leonard Grossman organized a Sunday school in 1951 and as the children began reaching Bar and Bat Mitzvah age, Dubin began teaching Hebrew. They received additional instruction from the conservative rabbi from Synagogue Emanu-El in Charleston who came to Kingstree once a month to conduct services. On the High Holy Days, the congregation hosted a student rabbi from a seminary in New York to conduct services and spend the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in Kingstree.

The Jewish Community integrated well into the larger Kingstree community. Congregation members became community leaders and were active in the Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, Masons, American Legion, and the Moose Lodge.

But as is typical of small Jewish communities after WWII, many of the congregation's children became professionals

and successful businesspersons and moved from Kingstree to larger communities. Of the original congregants of Beth Or, many are now deceased or have moved away. Still the congregation holds a service each month, now with a rabbi from Florence, and maintains its yearly High Holiday services with a student rabbi from New York. Of the Temple's original founding families, 20 remain in Kingstree. They carry on the Temple's proud tradition that they began 50 years ago.

These four towns and the people who lived there organized Congregation Beth Or in 1945, and built the synagogue in 1948 in Kingstree, which had the largest group of Jewish people.

Organizers of Temple Beth Or

Andrews

Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Moskow
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Moskow
Mrs. Stella Richburg
Mr. and Mrs. M. Stern
Mr. Joe Weiner

Lake City

Mr. Harry Bebergal
Mr. and Mrs. Hyman Berger
Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Bess
Mr. A.B. Brick
Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Dubin
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Dubroff
Mr. and Mrs. J.J. Heiden
Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Heiden
Mr. Horace Nachman
Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Libbert

Greelyville

Mr. and Mrs. Herman Fox
Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Grossman

Kingstree

Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Adams
Mr. and Mrs. S. S. Aronson
Mr. and Mrs. Bennie Berman
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Blakely
Dr. and Mrs. Allan S. Brenner
Mr. Harry Cahn
Mrs. Bernice Cole
Mr. and Mrs. Moses Collis
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Drucker
Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Drucker
Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Drucker
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Drucker
Mr. Max Drucker
Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Drucker
Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Dubin
Mr. and Mrs. Sam Friedman
Mrs. Tillie Gershman
Mr. and Mrs. Isadore Goldstein
Mrs. Pauline Goldstein
Dr. and Mrs. David F. Grossman
Mrs. Sadie Isquith
Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Jacobs
Mr. and Mrs. Karol Kalisky
Mr. and Mrs. Hyman Karesh
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Lesselbaum
Mr. and Mrs. David Marcus
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Marcus
Mr. and Mrs. Herman Marcus
Mr. William Marcus
Mr. and Mrs. Herman Mischner
Mr. Samuel Moskow
Mr. and Mrs. William Richburg
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Schreiber
Mr. and Mrs. Max Schreiber
Mr. Morris Schreiber
Mr. Nathan Schreiber
Mr. and Mrs. Barney Schulman
Dr. Leon Sigler
Mr. and Mrs. David Silverman
Mr. Louis Swetlitz
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Tucker
Mr. and Mrs. Lester Weinberg



Sidney Dubin blowing the shofar at Temple Beth Or in Kingstree

The JHSSC wishes to thank the following people for their contributions to the Winter 2003 Newsletter, Volume VIII, No. 1 Newsletter:

Sean Evans, Stanley Farbstein, Jeri Perlmutter, Dale Rosengarten and Aaron Voelker.

Layout by Enid Idelsohn

Notes *from Special Collections*

by Harlan Greene, College of Charleston Project Archivist

This is the third – and possibly last (!) – report on our Jewish archives project based in the College of Charleston Library. As reported in previous columns, we're operating with grant funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) – and with that, we've been able to achieve quite a lot.

It has been a remarkable project, with an incredible amount of work done; innumerable gems have been mined out of the ore of history – they've been polished up and put out in the cases, or computer screens around the world. In fact, a researcher from the University of Southampton in England, Gemma Romain, came to do post doctoral work here in the archives for the entire month of September (staff took her to services at a local synagogue, too!). She saw the wealth of what we had to offer via the Internet and came to use it for a study of "Port Jews" – that is, Jews who settled in port towns around the world during the mercantile era. Her fellowship allowed her to work in the American Jewish Archives (AJA) in Cincinnati for a month, and in the Jewish Heritage Collection (JHC) in Charleston for a month. She reported at the end of her stay that she had found more material relevant to her subject here than at AJA!

As we wrote to the NEH last summer: Between January and July of 2002, we processed over 150 linear feet of manuscript material – meaning we went through countless letters, ledgers, financial records, photographs, and the like, and put them in a order that makes sense, labeled folders and boxes, and came up with inventories of each collection. Cataloguer Annette Blum then created MARC records (machine readable catalogue records) from our work – so you can find them on the Internet, as well as in the College's catalogue. Collections we finished include those of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (200 years worth!), the Keyserling family, Gordan B. Stine, Saul Alexander, the Pearlstine family, the South Carolina Association of B'nai B'rith, the B'nai B'rith Youth Collection, the National Council of Jewish Women, Charleston Section, the papers of the



*I.D. Rubin's pawn shop, 130 Market Street, Charleston, SC
Photo by D. H. Bahr, c.1910. Gift of Anna Blythe.*

Southern Jewish Historical Society — along with many others.

For all books and archival materials catalogued, you can go to the college's web page (www.cofc.edu), click on library, then catalogue; put in "Jewish Heritage Collection" as a keyword search. You'll see that over 820 MARC records have been entered – some are 50-foot collections, some are single items; some are books and pamphlets, common and rare. The number also includes more than 75 oral histories – first person accounts from all over the state of South Carolina – with folks from Florence, Sumter, Camden, Aiken, Abbeville, Walhalla, Fort Mill, Dillon, Latta, Georgetown, Greenville, Rock Hill and elsewhere speaking of their experiences –

Notes *from Special Collections* continued

both good and bad, but for the most part good. A few people "who got away" and no longer live here were tracked down; one interviewer found her subject in Jerusalem – a former rabbi of Brith Sholom Beth Israel. Not only are the interviews catalogued, but excerpts from many appear on the JHC web page at www.cofc.edu/~jhc.

We are delighted to report that we've also become captive to our success; more and more people have heard about us and brought in family, business, and congregational papers. Archivist Zinnia Willits, with a background in museum management, has instituted rigorous policies to make sure that as new collections arrive their "paper trail" commences properly. We're proud to announce that the files Robert Rosen compiled while researching and writing his book, *The Jewish Confederates*, as well as other important collections, are now on our shelves awaiting processing.

Not content to have the world come to us, we have gone out to others. We have spoken about the Jewish archives project in several venues around the state. In October in Columbia, S.C., Annette Blum addressed the annual meeting of the South Carolina Archival Association about the project's use of Encoded Archival Description (EAD).

It's the newest way to present archival finding aids on the Internet. Other than Clemson University, the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston is the only institution in the state employing such sophisticated technology. So we're not just preserving history here, we are making it.

Annette joined Zinnia Willits, Special Collections Director Marie Hollings, and myself when we presented our project to the joint meeting of the South Carolina Library Association and Southeastern Library Association, in Charleston in October. We are not just drawing attention to our program, but helping others with theirs and advising still more.

And now – just as we are hitting our stride, as more is getting done and more is coming in – we,

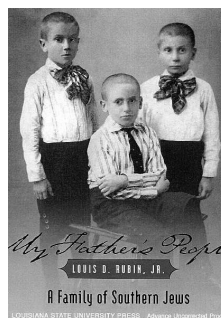
ironically, are on the point of shifting not into high, but low, gear. The funding that has kept us going for 18 months is reaching its end.

More and more people are learning of the wealth we have here. But we need something like a Hanukkah miracle to keep the momentum going; instead of just enough oil, or gelt, for one period of time, we need an infusion of more fuel – more collections, more staff, and more funding – not a Hanukkah menorah but a nair tamid.

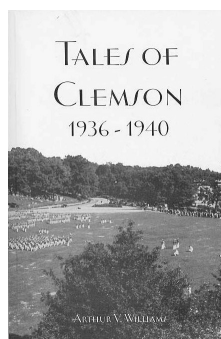
We are seeking financial contributions for the Jewish Heritage Collection. If you can help, please contact Marie Hollings
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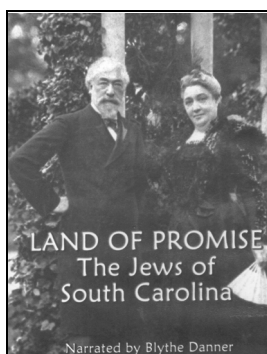
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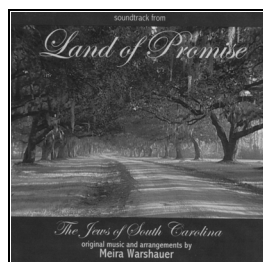
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***Land of Promise: The Jews of South Carolina* Video \$25.00**

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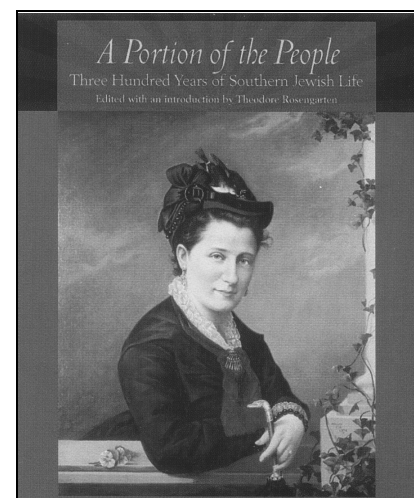
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