

# THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

FALL 2007 VOLUME XII - NUMBER 2



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*On the cover:  
Ida Goldberg Appel  
and two of her  
children, Fannie and  
Harry, in the  
backyard of their  
home at 178 St.  
Philip Street, ca.  
1940. The A. Z. A.  
on Harry's jacket  
refers to the popular  
B'nai Brith Youth  
Organization  
fraternity, Aleph  
Zadek Aleph,  
established in  
Charleston in 1932.*

*Photo: gift of Fannie  
Appel Rones, Special  
Collections, College  
of Charleston  
Library.*

# From the President of the JHSSC

It was good to see so many of you at our spring meeting in Columbia in April. Held in conjunction with the Tree of Life Sisterhood Centennial, this gathering focused on the role of women in Jewish life in South Carolina. It was a terrific, jam-packed conference, and I deeply appreciate the assistance of Sandra Poliakoff, Lyssa Harvey, Dale Rosengarten, Enid Idelsohn, Tree of Life's Women of Reform Judaism, and everyone else who helped make the weekend informative and exciting.

Among the program highlights were insightful presentations on the roles Jewish women have played in southern culture by historian Karla Goldman from the Jewish Women's Archive in Boston, Dale Rosengarten from the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston, and Marcie Cohen Ferris, Associate Director, Carolina Center for Jewish Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill. A group of outstanding women leaders from around the state participated in panel discussions and shared their perspectives on Jewish women's activism. On Saturday evening, JHSSC presented its highest award, the Order of the Jewish Palmetto, to Max and Trude Heller of Greenville, in recognition of their leadership and extraordinary contributions to our state.

The conference in Columbia resulted in a significant increase in Society membership. If you have not already done so, please take a minute to check on your membership status and, if necessary, renew. I ask that you also encourage your friends and relations to join us in the important work we do. JHSSC depends on its members to help spread the word of our mission to conserve and propagate the story of Jewish life in South Carolina.

As I pen this letter I have recently returned from a meeting with representatives of Temple Sinai in Sumter to discuss the future of their beautiful and historic synagogue and cemetery. With diminishing membership and a less than promising influx of new Jewish families, Temple Sinai is struggling with issues that confront congregations in small towns around our state and across the South.

JHSSC Executive Director Marty Perlmutter and Vice President Ed Poliakoff joined me in Sumter to explore with Temple leaders our common interests and to brainstorm about future possibilities. One matter jumped to the forefront of my thinking—the importance of making certain that synagogue and cemetery records are preserved. Temple Sinai has made great strides in organizing and protecting its archives. It is my hope that those of us in other congregations will check on the location and condition of our respective records now, to ensure their survival for generations to come. Please consider sending your original materials to the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston Library where they will be permanently maintained under the highest archival standards.

Our upcoming annual meeting in Charleston on October 14 will focus on the subject of researching and preserving family history. This one-day session will begin planning for a larger conference on Jewish genealogy that the JHSSC board has identified as a high priority for future programs. You also will be receiving in mid-September the report of the Nominations Committee on a proposed slate of officers, to be voted on at the fall meeting.

I look forward to seeing you there!

Fondly,

Belinda Gergel, President



# Kaluszyners in Charleston

by Alyssa Neely

Amid the influx of Eastern European Jewish immigrants into the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a large number of Jews from Kaluszyn, Poland, settled in Charleston, South Carolina. Most of our information about this group of *landsmen* (people from the same town in the Old Country) comes from the published memoirs of Henry Yaschik, who immigrated as a child, and the recollections of second-generation Kaluszyner-Americans



*Kaluszyn's main thoroughfare. Sefer Kalushin (pub. Tel Aviv, 1961).*

recorded and transcribed for the Jewish Heritage Collection's Oral History Archives at the College of Charleston. These Charlestonians—among them Samuel Appel, Ruth Kirshtein Kaplan, Sam Kirshtein, Fannie Appel Rones, and Louis Toporek—recall their parents' tales of hunger and hardship in the Old Country, the result of systematic repression and persecution by their Russian rulers. Hopelessness associated with extreme poverty was the primary motivation behind emigration from the Pale of Settlement. However, conscription by the Russian army also helped to push Jews out. Sam Kirshtein's father and uncle, for example, had already been drafted when they acquired false passports and slipped out of Poland.

The means of escape from a life in which one could aspire only to mere survival was through a pattern of chain migration whereby a Kaluszyner



*Jewish residents of Kaluszyn line up to receive allotment designated for the poor. Sefer Kalushin.*



*Abe Appel outside first store on King Street between Reid and Wolfe, ca. 1935. Gift of Fannie Appel Rones, Special Collections, College of Charleston Library.*

(anglicized to Kalushiner in America), newly established in Charleston, sponsored the immigration and settlement of another Kaluszyner, usually a relative or friend. Eleazer Bernstein, according to Kaluszyner lore, was the first to arrive.

It is agreed that he sponsored A. M. Solomon, but when Solomon arrived and what his relationship was to Bernstein is not reported. Solomon, according to a Sokol genealogical chart compiled by Helene Scharff, married an Altman, and was an uncle to Altmans and Goldbergs and a first cousin to Noah Sokol. Most of these relatives were born in Kaluszyn and immigrated to Charleston.

Kaluszyners, like other Jewish immigrants, tended to congregate in the vicinity of King and St. Philip



*Ben Yaschik (l) in his store, corner Percy and Bogard with daughter Dena in arms, wife, Vera, and mother-in-law, Ida Blacher, 1930. Special Collections, College of Charleston.*

Street, north of Calhoun, an area settled by newcomers of various backgrounds. Brith Sholom, located just south of Calhoun on St. Philip, served as the focal point of Jewish life for the Orthodox immigrants. Kaluszyner fathers initially supported their families by peddling, but many progressed to owning furniture or grocery stores. Their shops lined King Street, with some families living upstairs until they could afford to move to St. Philip or Radcliffe Street. The neighborhood was run down and residences often were divided into rental units or operated as boarding houses to bring in additional income.

The children of Kaluszyners who grew up in Charleston's "uptown" neighborhood during the period between the two world wars remember the community as warm and picturesque. Their memories are filled with the sights and sounds of chickens and goats milling about the yards, children playing baseball, vendors hawking vegetables and

fish, and the smell of baking bread on Fridays. "It was just a good neighborhood to grow up in," says Sam Kirshtein. It was "very colorful," and "everyone knew everyone." Parents spoke Yiddish at home and mothers kept kosher kitchens, relying on the Zalkins' or Bakers' markets for their meat.

In the tradition of Eastern European Jews, Kaluszyner parents stressed the importance of education to their children. These sons and daughters of immigrants took their studies seriously at the local public schools, and the sons attended heder or Hebrew School every afternoon from three to five o'clock in preparation for their bar mitzvahs. Summer vacations were spent at the beach, either Folly or Sullivan's Island, or in the Piedmont. The Kaluszyners' resort of choice was Glenn Springs, near Spartanburg, as attested by the many family photos taken there (see Sandra Lee Kahn Rosenblum's article about Glenn Springs in the JHSSC newsletter, Winter 2004).

The degree of piety of the Kaluszyner-Americans varied, with some choosing to open their stores on the Sabbath. Nevertheless, Sam Appel recalls a common sight on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. "When it was time to go to synagogue, you see everybody walking toward shul, so you walked with the crowd and you went to shul." By this time, however, there were two shuls to choose from.

In 1911, Kaluszyners were among approximately 60 members of Brith Sholom who broke away and formed a second Orthodox congregation, Beth Israel. Locally the "Little Shul" became known as the "Kaluszyner Shul," or sometimes the "Greener Shul"—greener meaning "greenhorn" or immigrant. According to Abe Kirshtein, reporting through his grandson Jeffrey Kaplan in the *BSBI Messenger* (1983), when he arrived in Charleston in 1920, 90 percent of the 60 to 70 members of Beth Israel were Kaluszyners.

The aid provided to fellow immigrants was formalized in 1921 by four Kaluszyners who created the Independent Kalushiner Society—Charleston's only *landsmanshaft*, or society of *landsman*. Walter H. Solomon, Noah Sokol, M. Toporek, and J. Zucker founded the organization, and I. M. Goldberg served as first president. The society's members benefited



*Beth Israel, the "Little Shul," 145 St. Philip Street, ca. 1948. Courtesy Charleston Temple Association.*





*Kalushiner Society banquet, 1948, in the social hall of the new Beth Israel Synagogue. President Marty Chase (below clock, to the left) and Freda Chase were not Kaluszyners. Courtesy Joe Chase.*

from no-interest loans, assistance when ill, and group insurance rates. Funds to help the needy were also sent home to Kaluszyn every year. The society, which held monthly meetings and yearly social activities, was at first restricted to Kaluszyners, but in 1923 it opened its membership to all Charleston Jews. A 1927 Jewish Community Center newsletter confirms that expansion did take place in the '20s, although in the absence of early organizational records it is difficult to say what proportion of the new members were of Kaluszyn descent.

Meeting minutes and letters dating from 1947 to 1970 reveal an organization in decline, primarily due to poor attendance. In 1967, the society disbanded with the

disbursement of its funds. Its final years were marked by controversy and questions regarding its mission. On the one hand, the society had served its purpose, having helped the immigrants achieve a standard of living and a level of respect undreamed of in Poland. Charleston Kaluszyners had become well established. Their businesses were thriving and many of their children were college educated. They had built a big new synagogue on Rutledge Avenue and, like many of their fellow Americans, were poised to move to the suburbs.

On the other hand, Jews who had remained in Kaluszyn, as in most of Eastern Europe, had been wiped out or dispersed by the Nazi onslaught. Paula



*New Beth Israel Synagogue (now Brith Sholom Beth Israel), 182 Rutledge Ave. Photo: Dale Rosengarten, 2004. Special Collections, College of Charleston Library.*



*Processional bringing Torahs from the old shul to the new Beth Israel Synagogue, 1948. Special Collections, College of Charleston Library.*





*Kaluszyner Paula Kornblum (center), her sister Hannah, and a friend on their way to church in Czestochowa, Poland, 1943. Courtesy Paula Kornblum Popowski.*

Kornblum Popowski and her husband Henry were the last immigrants from the town to come to Charleston, arriving with their firstborn in 1949. Paula and her sister Hannah were the

only members of their family to survive the Holocaust. Acquiring false identities as Christians, they managed, with the help of fellow Poles, to continue to live and work in Poland. After the war, Paula returned to Kaluszyn to reclaim her family's flour mill. The mill, however, had been taken over by the government. Moreover, the town she grew up in was unrecognizable. The Jewish residents, once the majority of the population, were gone, either rounded up and murdered in Kaluszyn or taken to the death camp of Treblinka. Thus, with no more immigrants to assist, Charleston's Kalushiner Society was rendered obsolete.

This article is based on a research project conducted by Alyssa Neely for "East Side/West Side: Charleston's Ethnic Neighborhoods," taught by Dale Rosengarten at the College of Charleston, Spring 2007. Neely's term paper was one of two winners of Jewish Studies' Ludwig Lewisohn prize for the past academic year.

If anyone has photographs, memoirs, documents, or correspondence pertaining to Kaluszyn and the Kaluszyners of Charleston, please contact JHC photo archivist Joseph Rubin at [jrubin@knology.net](mailto:jrubin@knology.net).



*False German ID showing Paula Kornblum as Apolonia Barkowska, 1943. Courtesy Paula Kornblum Popowski.*

# Ruth Bass Jacobs

## "A Gentle Soul"

by Joseph Rubin

On August 9, 2007, the Charleston Jewish community and the Jewish Historical Society lost a dear friend and colleague. "Ruth was tolerant, non-judgmental, resilient, intelligent, humble, compassionate, not materialistic, empathetic, kind, caring, hospitable," wrote Rabbi David J.

Radinsky, who knew the Jacobs family as their rabbi and personal friend for over 37 years. "The best listener in Charleston," BSBI Rabbi Ari Sytner declared in his eulogy.

Born and raised in North, Ruth was the third of seven children of the only Jewish family in town.

Moreover, her parents were the only foreign-born people in North. Ruth's mother, Esther, came to America with her family from Poland when she was two and her father, Nathan, immigrated alone at age sixteen from a village in Lithuania.

Ruth's early Jewish life revolved around family and Tree of Life Reform Temple in Columbia. In 1951 she

married Isaac Jacobs of Charleston, where the couple raised a family of five daughters and two sons. "As her children became more observant," Rabbi Radinsky reports, "she and Isaac encouraged them and also became

more observant of the Torah laws and traditions. Ruth had a great feeling for Judaism and truly was a spiritual person. She loved Jewish history and loved to record it."

Dale Rosengarten, curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston, recalls Ruth as her first assistant. "She would arrange interviews and then come along with her video camera, determined to

document peoples' lives in images as well as words. She taught herself how to use a computer and helped transcribe our oral histories. She was a one-woman clipping service, keeping our vertical files up to date."

Jack Bass, journalist, professor, and the youngest Bass sibling, describes Ruth as "the family historian. She was the one who saved the letters, clipped articles, retained photographs, wrote her memories, and interviewed others."

Ruth's daughter Naomi Beck says of her mother: "Mama taught us to respect all people, no matter what race or religion, and especially to respect our parents. Mama's friends spanned all age groups. Mama taught us to have a lot of *Ahavat Yisrael*, helping others in need whom



Ruth with brothers Bernie (l) and Herbie, ca. 1924.



Ruth at 18 months, 1925.



Ruth with brother Jack and parents, Esther and Nathan Bass, ca. 1950.



Ruth, ca. 1930.





*Ruth (center), with sisters Marcia, and Frances, ca. 1945.*

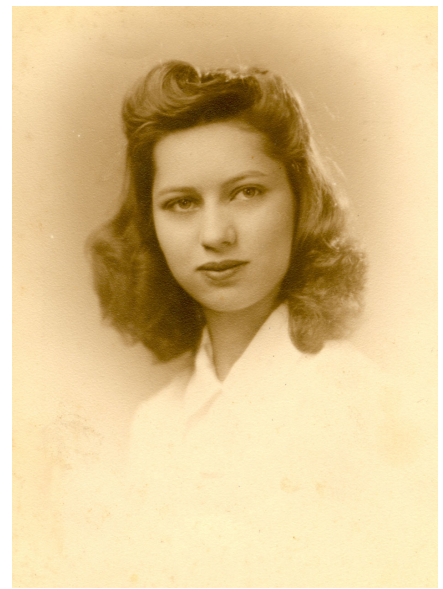
others may not have bothered with.” Ruth learned this trait in her parents’ home. In one of her many essays, “Growing up in North,” Ruth states: “Any shaliach [messenger] who passed through came by the house for something to drink and possibly to eat. We were taught to respect every person—black or white, Jew or Gentile.”

David Winner came to Charleston to study at the Citadel and found a Jewish home. Eulogizing Ruth, he said, “Ruth was my best friend. She was intuitive and clever. She had such a sense of humor—she laughed all the time. She was such a gentle soul with such wisdom.”

Daughter Sharon Steinherz praised her mother: “*Pirkei Avot* [Ethics of the Fathers] says that the best path a person should choose for oneself is a good heart. My mother had a good heart. She would have guests in her home, a listening ear for neighbors and friends and a dedication to family. I never knew what to give my mother because she was always satisfied with what she had.”

Ruth’s granddaughter Faigy Steinherz said, “Bubbe has so many children and grandchildren [7 children, 39 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren, and counting!] but she still found a way for everyone. When Bubbe lit candles she said all her children, in-laws, and grandchildren’s names. She spoke to me as if I were on the same level as her. Sometimes I would be her sister, her daughter, her granddaughter, or her best friend.”

All who knew Ruth Bass Jacobs will miss her. May her memory be for a blessing.



*Ruth as a young adult, ca. 1940.*



*Isaac and Ruth (front center) surrounded by children and grandchildren, December 1977.*



*Ruth and Isaac in later years.*



# JHSSC Meets in Charleston

## October 14, 2007

All activities take place at the  
**Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik  
 Jewish Studies Center  
 96 Wentworth St.  
 College of Charleston**

- 10:00 a.m. Continental Breakfast
- 10:30 a.m. JHSSC Board Meeting: Levin Library
- 11:30 a.m. **Welcome:** Belinda Gergel, President, JHSSC
- 11:45 a.m. **Keynote Address: Discovering Family Histories: The Sternbergers of Clio**, Karen Franklin, Leo Baeck Institute
- 1:15 p.m. **Luncheon:** Arnold Hall  
 - Membership Meeting  
 - Elections
- 2:45 p.m. **Uncovering One's Past: Real Life Stories**  
 - Larry Freudenberg, Charleston, SC  
 - Ann Meddin Hellman, Charleston, SC  
 - Harold Kornblut, Latta, SC
- 4:00 p.m. Planning for next year's Jewish Genealogical Summit in Charleston:  
 Karen Franklin and Dale Rosengarten



*Jonas Sternberger, Elias Mayer, and Bertha Sternberger, subjects of the keynote address.*



Karen S. Franklin is director of the Family Research Program at the Leo Baeck Institute. For 21 years she was director of The Judaica Museum in Riverdale, NY. Karen is a past president of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies and past chair of the Council of American Jewish Museums. She serves on many boards, currently including the ICOM-US Board (International Council of Museums). Karen was the only Jewish museum director ever to serve on the board of the American Association of Museums. She lectures throughout the world on topics of museums and genealogy.

Among many other activities, Karen is now working on a National Endowment for the Humanities grant with the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington to document the European roots of the founders of Congregation Adas Israel.

### Genealogy Preview JHSSC Meeting Charleston, SC

**Sunday, October 14, 2007**

NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

*The cost for this meeting is \$30 per person.*

**Total Amount Enclosed \$** \_\_\_\_\_

Return form to:

*JHSSC / Jewish Studies Program  
 96 Wentworth Street  
 Charleston, SC 29424*

# The Continuing Adventure of Jewish Genealogy

by Ann Meddin Hellman

As a fifth generation Charlestonian, I didn't have to go far to find my ancestors. Three sets of great-great-grandparents (PIATIGORSKY/JACOBS, FEINTUCH, RUBIN) are buried in the Brith Sholom cemetery off of Huguenin Avenue in Charleston, South Carolina. But my desire to search for my family's entry into the United



*Hannah Piatigorsky Levkoff, June 1922, wife of Henry Levkoff, b. 1854, Kiev, Ukraine; d. 1937, Augusta, GA.*

States was piqued when immigration records for Ellis Island came online. The problem was these great-great-grandparents arrived in America before Ellis Island was established. The story told about the PIATIGORSKY family was always that he hired a boat to bring him, his wife, their five daughters and husbands, and

their children directly to Charleston. Later I was informed that the family name, PIATIGORSKY, was changed at Ellis Island to JACOBS.

Cousins of mine had started a family tree, but arrival dates, locations, and other information were missing. With everyone searching the Internet, I decided to go online and find whatever new information I could. I signed up free on [www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org) and paid a membership fee to join [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). Jewishgen gave me the opportunity to correspond with discussion groups that would set me in the right direction to find my Jewish ancestors. I could enter my family names in Jewishgen Family Finder (JGFF) in hopes of connecting with others searching for the same names. In fact, looking for the LEVKOFF branch of my family through Jewishgen put me in touch with a cousin I hadn't seen in years. I added his information to the data I had already gathered and began researching the shtetls where my family lived in the Old Country.

Ancestry.com allows for searches of arrival manifests, censuses up to 1930, the Social Security Death Index, and birth and marriage records, among other data.

Keying in the names LEVKOFF and PIATIGORSKY in [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) yielded only recent information on LEVKOFF. The families did not appear in early censuses and were nowhere to be found on arrival lists for Castle Garden or Ellis Island. Then Steven Morse set up a "One-Step"



*The Levkoff boys. Front row (left to right): George, Joe, and Laz. Back row (left to right): Shier, Julian (husband of Fredrica Levkoff Wolfner), and David, June 1922.*

search site at [www.stevemorse.org](http://www.stevemorse.org). This enabled me to use a partial name or Soundex (a computer program that searches for variant spellings and sound-alike names) to find my family.

Persistence paid off and I finally found my LEWKOW (LEVKOFF), PITIGERSKI (PIATIGORSKY), and BELOURTOWSKY (BIRLANT) families arriving in Castle Garden on November 25, 1881, on a ship called the *Silesia*. The way the names were spelled on the manifest, LEWKOW and PITIGERSKI, I would never have located them without Morse's website, which searches [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), Ellis Island [www.ellisland.org](http://www.ellisland.org), and Castle Garden [www.castlegarden.org](http://www.castlegarden.org) all at once, or each website separately using Soundex. It was an exciting discovery, though I confess I was disappointed not to find the PATLA, BLUESTEIN, and WARSHAVSKY/ BERCOFF families arriving on the same ship.

Now I had another problem. Family history and all the censuses and World War I registrations



agreed that my twin great-uncles were born in Macon, Georgia, on November 15, 1881. This seemed impossible considering that they were not yet in America on that date. After searching many sites for birth records, I emailed the genealogy library in Macon and received a reply that there was no information for any LEVKOFFs in Macon in 1881. The library did have an article, however, describing a group of Russian Jews who arrived in the town on December 1, 1881. The item mentioned "a man, his five daughters, their husbands, and children" who spent their first night in Macon in the synagogue vestry. Imagine my delight! I had just documented my family's arrival in Macon. After landing in New York, the entire PIATIGORSKY family was put on a steam packet



*Hannah's daughter, Frederica Levkoff Wolfner, on her wedding day.*

around 1883. The PIATIGORSKY name was not changed to JACOBS at Ellis Island or Castle Garden; the manifest proved that. It was probably changed in Macon. The twins were not born in Macon; they were born on board ship.

The best way I knew to share my discoveries with all the LEVKOFFs was to organize a family reunion. With the convenience of the Internet and emails, I announced a gathering of the LEVKOFF clan in Charleston, May 11–13,

2007. Hannah and Henry LEVKOFF's descendants had dispersed across North America, as well as Israel and New Zealand, yet 90 family members managed to come to



*Ninety members of the Levkoff family (from US, Israel, and New Zealand) attended the reunion on May 13, 2007.*

ship to Savannah, Georgia. From there they were put on a train to Macon. Chances are, the twins were born onboard the *Silesia* on November 15<sup>th</sup>, but their birth was not recorded until they arrived in Macon.

Through my research I disputed many stories about my family's first days in the United States. It turns out that Jacob and Dvosy PIATIGORSKY did not hire a boat to bring all of them directly to Charleston; they came on the *Silesia* in steerage with a total of 1,392 people and arrived in Charleston

Charleston last spring to renew old relationships and make new ones.

It would have been wonderful to include all of Jacob and Dvosy PIATIGORSKY JACOBS' descendants in the reunion as well, but that was too big a task. I only hope the PATLA, BLUESTEIN, BIRLANT, and WARSHAVSKY/BRADY/BERCOFF families will read this article and realize that they need to have a family reunion too.

# The “Dash” between Birth and Death

by Larry W. Freudenberg

Many of my family members are buried at the historic Coming Street cemetery in Charleston. Among the weather-worn gravestones is my second great-grandfather's stone, which reads: *“Morris Israel, Born February 14, 1835, Died October 20, 1911. At Rest.”*

Just a few yards from Morris Israel's grave is the tombstone of my other second great-grandfather, Maier Triest. This one has a brass marker that shows that he was a Confederate officer, wounded in the Battle of Atlanta.

My seventh great-grandfather is buried in New York in

dates of your birth and death inscribed on your gravestone. I would hope that my descendants know more about me than that! Without a family history, my life story and that of all my family members—past and present—would be lost. You may be fascinated by a particular ancestor, a special heirloom, or the jigsaw puzzle of genealogy. Deciding to actually document your family's history by writing a memoir or constructing a



Monuments of Morris and Rebecca Israel, KKBE Coming Street Cemetery, Charleston, SC.



Hannah Reichman Triest and Maier Triest, ca. 1869.

the cemetery of Shearith Israel, North America's first Jewish congregation. His epitaph reads: *“Here lies buried The Venerable and honored married man Rabbi Abraham son of Isaac (whose memory is a blessing). From the city of Emden in Friesland, he died on the first of the middle days of Tabernacles and was buried the same day in the year 5504 (1743) (24 September) May his soul be bound up in the bond of life.”*

I became interested in family history after my great-granduncle, Sammy Jacobs, died in 1989. He was the historian of his generation and while he was alive I didn't feel a need to pursue family research. After his death I inherited my uncle's files, notes, and photos. One thing was missing, however—he never wrote a family history or genealogy. Worst of all, I couldn't ask him questions since he was already gone. Let that be a warning: we often seem to want information once it is too late.

I read recently that your life is the “dash” between the

family tree takes the venture to another level. It may be something that you want to pursue, but not right now.

When is the right time?

My grandmother, Margot Strauss Freudenberg, who recently turned 100, has not written a family history but she has been happy to answer my questions and help me construct a genealogy for her side of the family. She has given me dozens of documents, including her Nazi passport and my grandfather's World War I scrapbook. My grandfather was 17 years her senior

and had fought in World War I as a German officer. Since he died seven years before I was born, I never had the opportunity to talk to him.

“But if I had ...” Those words are where you start writing your family history. If I had talked to my grandfather, what would he have told me about his life? Indeed, if I had been able to talk to all my ancestors,



Gravestone of Abraham Isaacs, Shearith Israel, New York City.





*Nazi-issued passport of Margot Strauss Freudenberg.*

what would they have said? Every little piece of information is important. Here is how to begin compiling the data. On index cards, write down the name of each family member, living and deceased, and below the name record facts about that person's life. Don't worry about writing beautifully constructed sentences. A simple form as shown below will do.

You may be surprised how many cards you can complete. The information you gather will be invaluable to future generations, even if you never get around to writing a narrative.

Let's take this one step further. When I decided to work on my family's history I wanted to include as much information as possible about each person so I acquired a

genealogy computer program to input the information and produce genealogy reports and trees. I began with one individual, my second great-grandfather, Morris Israel, then added his spouse and their children. Working backwards, I would insert his parents and his wife's parents. The program keeps track of the generations and their kinships and can even calculate the average lifespan of family members. Today I can ask my program to determine my relationship to any of my 570 relatives.

The index cards and/or computer files are pieces of a puzzle that keeps getting larger. Don't get discouraged—just keep compiling!

The last step I suggest is a little more complicated

**Name:** Morris Israel  
**Born:** 02/14/1835  
**Place of birth:** Europe  
**Died:** 10/20/1911  
**Place of death:** New York visiting son  
**Buried in** KKBE Coming Street Cemetery  
**Married:** Rebecca Elias  
**Notes:**  
 Past president of KKBE  
 Obituary from News and Courier in my file  
 Philanthropist

**Name:** Margot Freudenberg née Strauss  
**Born:** 08/08/1907  
**Place of birth:** Hanover, Germany  
**Married:** Walter Freudenberg of Essen, Germany, 06/12/1928  
**Education:** Graduate of University of Munich, degree in Physical Education and Therapy  
**Notes:**  
 Escaped from Germany to England, 06/30/1939  
 Left England for the United States, 03/01/1940, aboard the SS Samarian (Cunard Lines), recipient of Businesswoman of the Year - 1954

but can add richness and longevity to your work. With an inexpensive scanner attached to your computer, you can scan photos and other documents into the genealogy program. When I open the file for Morris Israel I see a photo of his home on Wentworth Street and a picture of him as a young man. The file on my grandmother, Margot, reveals a whole archive of documents, awards, newspaper articles, and photographs.

Once you have accumulated a "critical mass" of information, you can start writing your family history. You can compose it yourself or hire a professional writer. Just think of how proud you will be, knowing that you've filled in some of those "dashes." Even if you never write the history, you will reap the satisfaction of completing your research and leaving this priceless legacy to your siblings, children, or the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

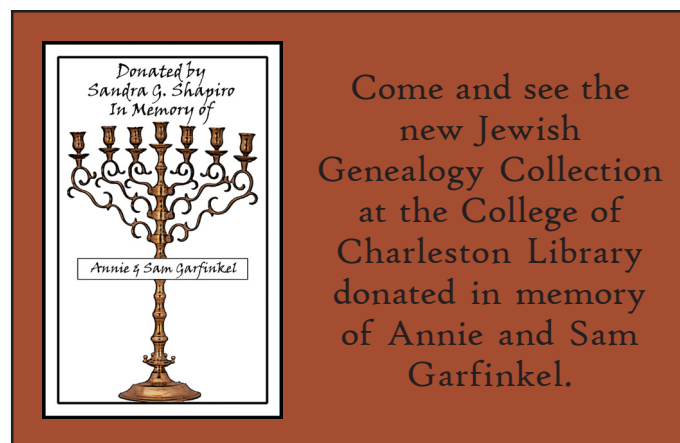
### Suggested Reading:

- **Explorations in Charleston's Jewish History** by Solomon Breibart
- **The Jew Store: A Family Memoir** by Stella Suberman
- **The Peddler's Grandson: Growing Up Jewish in Mississippi** by Edward Cohen
- **Time's Tapestry: Four Generations of a New Orleans Family** by Leta Weiss Marks

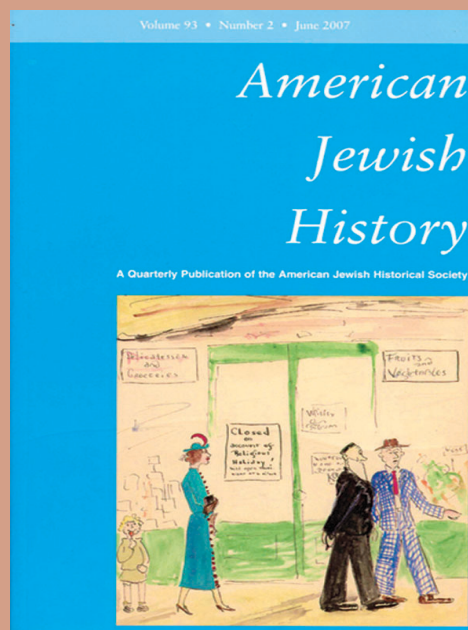
Two of my favorite non-traditional, national bestsellers show how far, with sufficient research and creative energy, you can push family history:

- **Slaves in the Family** by Edward Ball
- **Infidel** by Ayann Hirsir Ali

For more information, please contact:  
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Come and see the  
new Jewish  
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### Charleston Makes the Cover of *American Jewish History*

The current special edition of *American Jewish History*, edited by Deborah Dash Moore and Dale Rosengarten, is drawn from the Biennial Scholars' Conference held in Charleston in June 2006. It includes illustrated essays on K.K. Beth Elohim's first synagogue and Charleston's amazing Mazos. The cover features a color drawing by Norma Mazo of her family's deli at 171 King Street on the eve of Rosh Hashana, 1934. This issue marks the first time ever the journal has used artwork on its cover.

To order a copy, contact Natalie Garrity, Customer Service at Johns Hopkins University Press, email: [ngarrity@press.jhu.edu](mailto:ngarrity@press.jhu.edu) or call toll free: 800-548-1784. Individual issues cost \$18.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.



The Jewish Historical Society of  
South Carolina Newsletter  
is published twice a year.

Dale Rosengarten.....Editor  
Eve Cassat.....Assistant Editor  
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College of Charleston  
Charleston, SC 29424



# Become a Pillar: Make a Difference

*by Martin Perlmutter, Executive Director*

The **Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina** relies on its benefactors for much of its annual support. Our Pillars enable the Society to accomplish its regular tasks and also undertake big projects. Annual and regional meetings, our bi-annual newsletter, the ongoing collecting efforts of the **Jewish Heritage Collection** at the College of Charleston, and the College's yearly **Elderhostel on South Carolina Jewish History** are accomplishments that taken together constitute a full program. In serving a large and growing membership across the state and beyond, the Society performs many of the community-building functions once performed by the statewide B'nai Brith. Its main mission remains heightening awareness of South Carolina's Jewish history and developing a more complete record of this important story.

For the coming year we have set our sights high. The Society's next major goal, in partnership with the **Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program**, is to establish a **Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston**. The Center will help ensure the long-term excellence of the Historical Society by providing on-campus leadership and staff, developing the library's archives on Southern Jewish history, and making these research materials available to a growing audience. The Center will guarantee that future generations of students are afforded the opportunity to study Jewish history, work with first-rate collections, and learn from top scholars in the field.

The Society needs your support to pursue its mission. Pillars make a \$5000 commitment over five years, or \$1000 a year. Please become a **Pillar**, and help make the Jewish history of South Carolina a living legacy.

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Send us their information and we will inform them of your gift.

***Please make checks payable to JHSSC  
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