

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of SOUTH CAROLINA

Register for the Fall Meeting
in Florence,
see pg. 15 for details

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On the cover:
I. Cohen
Department
Store in Latta,
South Carolina,
ca. 1930.
Isadore Cohen's
son, Leonard,
is sitting on
the counter.
Courtesy of
Leonard and
Mildred Cohen.

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Letter from the President



I have many fond memories of Beth Israel Congregation in Florence. Living in Summerton where I was one of four Jewish kids in town (the other three being my younger siblings) made it tough to connect with Jewish kids my age. Especially in my teenage years, Temple Youth Group (TYG) became a big part of my life. Through Sumter's Temple Sinai TYG, I had opportunities to meet kids from across the region

and enjoy a Jewish social life. Florence's TYG group in the mid to late '70s was similar in makeup to Sumter's, pulling from smaller communities such as Latta, Dillon, Marion, and beyond. We had some great TYG times in the Florence temple and the friendships we forged there continue to this day.

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina will meet in Florence the weekend of November 2–4 to celebrate Beth Israel's 100th Anniversary. I will be happy to return to a community that was part of my growing-up years and that holds such good memories for me. I expect many of you have your own memories of the Florence congregation to bring to the meeting and I hope you will make plans to join us.

Speakers and panel discussions—like the essays in this newsletter—will explore the stories of Jewish families who settled in the Pee Dee, stories echoed across America. In town after town, the first generation of Jewish immigrants went into the retail trade, acquired land for a cemetery, and eventually built a synagogue. The second generation prospered and produced enough children to fill Sunday school classes and fuel TYG's lively social life. Most members of the third generation went away to college, some earning high degrees—MDs, LL.Ds, PhDs—and wound up settling in larger cities with more career choices.

Some native sons and daughters, however, came home and stayed. Among our authors, Alex Cohen in Darlington, Phil Greenberg in Florence, Harold Kornblut in Latta, Robin Schafer in Loris, and Evelyn Schafer

Hechtkopf in Dillon, represent this contingent. But the dominant trend is one of attrition: Jewish populations in nearly all small towns have declined and their synagogues have been sold. Beth Israel stands counter to this trend, which as I say, is national. Florence has benefitted from infrastructure and commercial development and from an influx of members from congregations across the region that disbanded, such as Darlington, Dillon, Kingstree, and Bishopville.

The meeting in Florence will begin Friday night with dinner and Shabbat services at Beth Israel. Saturday afternoon will feature a full program of speakers and panel discussions, followed by a gala celebration, including a cheese and wine reception, havdallah service, and dinner. The full schedule of events and registration information is included in this newsletter and also is available online at: www.jhssc.org.

On Sunday, November 4th, the program will conclude with a JHSSC membership meeting at which the board will present a strategic plan outlining the Society's goals and objectives for the next five years. We look forward to presenting the draft document to the membership and welcome everyone's comments, questions, and suggestions.

The response of attendees to the Society's spring meeting in Charleston was unanimous—the conference was both interesting and enjoyable. From Robert Rosen and Richard Gergel's historical duet, to Hollace Weiner's keynote, to panels highlighting women in public service and the sons of prominent public servants, speakers peppered their thoughtful remarks with humor and personal insights.

Finally, thanks go to those who work tirelessly for the Society. Marty Perlmutter, Enid Idelsohn, and Dale Rosengarten are true treasures and I appreciate their commitment and dedication to JHSSC.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Florence in November!

Rachel Gordin Barnett

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A History of the Jewish



Jacobia Hotel by William H. Johnson. An African American and a native of Florence, Johnson reportedly was arrested in 1930 while painting the Jacobi House, which by then had become a brothel. From Homecoming: the Art and Life of William H. Johnson by Richard Powell. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1991.

1850–1949

The town of Florence was founded in the mid-1850s as a crossroads depot for three railroad lines competing to provide service to the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. Ten miles from Darlington, the county seat of Darlington County established in 1785, Florence was named for the daughter of the president of the Northeast Railroad Company. The town was laid out between 1858 and 1860 and within a decade boasted some 700 residents, more than half of whom were railroad employees and their families.

By 1865 approximately 85 Jewish families were living in Florence and other Pee Dee towns. In 1857 Moritz Jacobi, an emigrant from Denmark, moved to the village of Florence and established a hotel on Front Street called the Jacobi House (1857–1938). Pharmacist John Kuker opened a successful store in 1866 and served as a warden (councilman) and as Florence's second intendant (mayor). Abram Weinberg moved to Florence in 1871 and launched a general merchandise store. He also served as a warden. David Sternberger arrived in 1872 and established a retail store. He and Isaac Sulzbacher, a jeweler, joined other community leaders in lobbying for the creation of Florence County—an effort that proved successful in 1888.

On October 26, 1887, David Sternberger, Julius De-Jongh, S. Elias, and Harris Joseph applied to the state of South Carolina for incorporation of the Florence Hebrew Benevolent Association “to unite the Hebrews of Florence and surrounding country into a fraternal and benevolent association, to assist needy Israelites, and to purchase and maintain a suitable burying ground.” Within a month the association had purchased land for \$50.00 from the Northeast Railroad Company and the first burial had taken place—six-year-old Rebecca Sternberger of Darlington, David Sternberger's niece. In 1889 Adolphus A. Cohen made a motion to order books and establish a Sunday school for “all children of Israelite parents,” whether or not they were members of the association. Thus began a religious school that continues today.

Part of the vast emigration from Eastern Europe at the turn of the 20th century, a small number of Orthodox Jews found their way to Florence. In 1912 Beth Israel Congregation was incorporated, with B. Patz, M. Rosenfeld, and I. Silverman named as trustees, holding services in various places around the city. The same year five women formed the Ladies Aid Society with the primary purpose of providing Sunday school classes for the children. Within ten years it became clear that the community could not support two congregations and, in 1922, the Hebrew Benevolent Association and Beth Israel agreed to merge. Sunday school classes and Reform services were to be held once a month; High Holy Day services would follow the Orthodox tradition. Rabbi Jacob Raisin of Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim was hired to make the trip to Florence one Sunday a month and served as Beth Israel's spir-



Community in Florence

compiled by Alexander H. Cohen, MD

itual leader until his death in 1946. He had been coming to Darlington since 1919 to lead Sabbath services and started splitting his day between the two communities.

Worship services were held on the second floor of Zeigler's Drug Store on the corner of Dargan and Evans streets. Sam and Hannah Semless of Philadelphia, grandparents of Nathaniel Rosenfeld, donated the first Torah in honor of Nat's parents, Maurice and Mae Rosenfeld. In 1926 the Beth Israel Sisterhood, formerly the Ladies Aid Society, affiliated with the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. The following year land on East Elm Street was purchased to build a temple, but was later sold to the city to build Florence High School. The congregation met in various buildings in Florence, including the Rainwater Building, the YMCA, and the Masonic Temple. In April 1931 Beth Israel affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC).

In February 1949 plans were laid to construct a new religious facility to be located on land on Park Avenue donated by Dr. Michael Morse, a pharmacist. With blueprints provided by UAHC, Dr. Morse, Dr. S. Abe Greenberg, and Isadore Stein managed construction of the temple, which was completed in July 1949. Rabbi Philip Frankel of Charlotte led the formal dedication service for the congregation, numbering about 25 families at the time.



J. Stein's rendering of Beth Israel, 1956. Photo courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.

1949–1970

The small congregation could not afford to hire a full-time spiritual leader and relied on the parttime services of rabbis from Columbia, Sumter, and Charlotte. As Florence grew after World War II, the Jewish population increased and, in 1952, Beth Israel was able to hire Rabbi Tibor Fabian. The next year Rabbi Morris Clarke assumed the pulpit and added a musical dimension to services with performances by a newly organized choir.

Rabbi Avery Jonah Grossfield served the congregation from 1954 to 1958, followed by two student rabbis, Jay Krouse and Paul Kushner, both of Hebrew Union College in New York City. Every two weeks one of these young men flew to Florence to lead services and hold religious school classes. Next came Rabbi Eli Gottsman, a circuit-riding rabbi who traveled by bus among congregations in the Carolinas. Rabbi Charles B. Lesser arrived in 1961 and served the congregation as full-time rabbi until 1970.

During Lesser's tenure the congregation grew from some 50 families to 70. Over this de-



Beth Israel's Junior Choir, 1956, with Rabbi Avery J. Grossfield. Lois and Raphael Wolpert photograph of Beth Israel Congregation, 1956–1974. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

cade the Jewish community of Florence increased from 160 to around 285 and the occupational profile shifted from mercantile pursuits to the professions. The Men's Club of Beth Israel, established in 1958 and affiliated with the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, agreed in 1973 to amalgamate with the Sisterhood and the Temple Affiliates was born—the first merger of its kind in the nation and a model for this type of cooperative effort.

In 1967 the growing congregation, needing room for expansion, purchased two small houses adjacent to the temple and made plans to add classrooms and a new kitchen and to enlarge the social hall and sanctuary. Funds were raised, the small houses demolished, and in early 1969 a groundbreaking ceremony was held. Construction was completed in June 1970, and Beth Israel's new rabbi, Howard Folb, ordained only four months earlier, officiated at the dedication service in October of that year.

1970–1994

Rabbi Folb remained with Beth Israel for 11 years and brought a youthful spirit to the congregation. Young Jewish families moving to the area found the active congregation with its newly renovated facilities met their social as well as spiritual needs. The religious school was flourishing, offering a well-rounded Jewish education for their children. In the late 1970s Beth Israel absorbed the membership of Darlington's congregation, which had slowly been diminishing, and became a full-service congregation and the center for Judaism in the Pee Dee area. Though affiliated with the Reform movement, the congregation and its rabbis have tried to be flexible regarding tradition and practices so that everyone would be comfortable in the synagogue.

Rabbi Sidney Strome, who replaced Rabbi Folb in July 1981, was a learned scholar who gave lovely ser-

mons. Well liked by the congregation, he and his wife enjoyed socializing and often entertained congregants at their home. His health failing, Rabbi Strome retired in July 1984, but remained in Florence until his death in 1990.

Strome's successor, Rabbi Lawrence Mahrer, remained with the congregation until January 1995. During his tenure the face of the congregation changed. Many children who were raised in Beth Israel, having graduated from college, settled out-of-state to pursue careers. Older congregants, who ran stores or worked in manufacturing, especially textiles, were outstripped by young

professionals, such as physicians, recruited by local medical centers or newer industries. Ohav Shalom, Dillon's Conservative congregation, had been slowly shrinking in size; the congregation closed its doors in 1993 and sold the building, bequeathing its artifacts and most of its congregants to Beth Israel. By the mid-1990s Florence's membership numbered over 90 families, with more than 50 children attending religious school.

Rabbi Mahrer understood what UAHC had to offer and how to utilize it for a small

congregation. He encouraged congregants to become involved in regional and national committees; he pushed hard to establish Beth Israel's endowment fund, started in 1991 with seed money donated by Arthur and Shirley Siegal, interest from which now provides a significant portion of Beth Israel's operating budget. Mahrer saw the importance of endowing small congregations, as young congregants tended to move to the larger cities after their education. Recognizing the importance of lay leadership, he arranged for two congregants to be trained as "rabbinic aides" in a UAHC program, enabling them to assist the rabbi and be able to perform life-cycle events in his absence. His ten years in Florence helped stabilize the congregation.



A groundbreaking ceremony, held in early 1969, prepared the way for construction of an addition to Florence's Beth Israel. Left to right: Nat Rosenfeld, Herb Levy, Ray Wolpert, Herman Insel, Arthur Siegal, Rabbi Charles Lesser, Eric Heiden. Courtesy of Beth Israel Congregation.

1995–Present

Rabbi Marc Kline came to Beth Israel in the summer of 1995, introducing more Hebrew and more traditional practices, a strong commitment to social justice, and deep involvement in community activities. To boost participation he helped organize a volunteer choir and encouraged the children to take part in worship services, some of which he wrote himself. With his departure in 2003, the congregation struggled to find a full-time rabbi willing to lead a small-town southern temple. Malcolm Cohen, a student rabbi at the Leo Baeck School in London, came to Beth Israel twice a month for a year while he took courses at Hebrew Union College in New York. Rabbi Alvin Sugarman, retired senior rabbi from The Temple in Atlanta, filled in as parttime rabbi, with lay leaders teaching in the religious school and conducting many worship services.

In 2005 Beth Israel succeeded in hiring Rabbi Jeffrey Ronald who, during his six-year tenure, brought a deep knowledge of Jewish thought, wisdom, and works to the congregation. He set a shining example in personal morals and kindness. Actively representing the congregation in community affairs, he brought a Jewish presence to interdenominational events and social justice activities.

Since 2011 Beth Israel has employed two parttime rabbis—Rabbi Aaron Sherman of Charleston and Rabbi Leah Doberne-Schor of Columbia—both of whom were brought to their respective cities by the jobs of their spouses in the rabbinate and academia. Each rabbi comes to Florence once a month to lead services, officiate at life-cycle

events, and teach in the Sunday school. Based in Jackson, Mississippi, the Institute of Southern Jewish Life supplements their leadership with periodic visits from an education fellow who conducts services and provides religious school and adult programs. When no rabbi is present, lay leaders officiate on Friday nights.

Beth Israel maintains its affiliation with the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ, formerly UAHC) and has been represented on its North American board of trustees since 1999. Synagogue members attend URJ events and the congregation continues to serve as a pilot site for the newest generation of prayer books issued by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Beth Israel also prides itself on its choir, comprised of both congregants and non-Jewish singers and musicians who offer a large repertoire of Jewish music.

Over the last decade the congregation's membership has dwindled as textile and apparel manufacturing has moved overseas and retail businesses have lost their lure among the younger generation of more highly educated Jews. The children of professionals, whose influx in the

1980s and 1990s swelled the religious school, are now grown and gone. In 2012 membership hovers just above 50 families hailing from the Pee Dee towns of Florence, Darlington, Marion, Mullins, Latta, Dillon, and Clio, as well as Laurinburg, North Carolina.



Bar mitzvah of Charles P. Levy, son of Aaron and Dean Levy of Marion, South Carolina, with Rabbi Howard Folb officiating, August 1980. Courtesy of Congregation Beth Israel.



Torahs from the ark in Beth Israel's sanctuary. Photo by Dale Rosengarten, 1998. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Sources:

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Jewish Settlement in

To understand the history of Jewish settlement in the Pee Dee, you need to know a bit about the history of northeastern South Carolina. My definition of the region is much like the *New Yorker* magazine cover “A New Yorker’s View of the World”—that is, northeastern South Carolina is everything north of Charleston and east of Columbia. The area is divided by the Pee Dee River, which flows out of the North Carolina Yadkin River basin and accounts for the swampy topography of much of the region.

Jewish families have lived in this area from the mid-1800s through the present. I trace my own family history back to the 1840s when four brothers named Iseman (Eisenmann) emigrated from the town of Stebbach in the German region of Baden. Part of a vast migration from the German states to America in the 1840s, many immigrants settled in South Carolina, especially in the Midlands. In fact,

so many came that the Lutheran Church established a seminary and school in Columbia to serve the Protestant newcomers. This wave of immigration also included a significant number of Jews, mainly merchants and tradespeople, who were looking for business opportunities or just a new life in a freer country. Manuel and Iseman Iseman settled in Marion, South Carolina, and Isaac and Marks (or Marx) Iseman moved to Darlington, before eventually settling in Charleston around 1870.

German-Jewish immigrants generally arrived as single young men, often under the age of 25. Much of what I have been able to learn about the Iseman family was written by Joseph Seeman Iseman, an attorney in New York City and partner in the Paul Weiss Rifkind law firm, which specializes in the field of intellectual property law. I discovered Joe’s history of the Iseman family in the office of Beth Israel Congregation in Florence—he had sent a copy to the temple after visiting Florence

and Marion to research family history. My wife, Susan, and I visited him in New York shortly before his death and had a lovely lunch at an exclusive club on 50th Street and Lexington Avenue.

Jewish communities in the Pee Dee towns of Georgetown, Darlington, Florence, Dillon, and Kingstree, at one time or another, all organized congregations or burial societies. Actual synagogues exist or existed in Georgetown, Florence, Dillon, and Kingstree. The Darlington Hebrew Congregation never built a synagogue

but did acquire burial grounds.

Georgetown appears to have the oldest Jewish community in the Pee Dee, probably because of its location at the intersection of two navigable rivers and its proximity to Charleston. Its seaport serviced ships from ports along the North American coast, the Caribbean, Bermuda, and South America. Major exports included indigo, rice, cotton, and forest products, such as timber from the



Manuel and Sara[h] Iseman and their children, 1900. Left to right: Back row – Ben, Rose, Dee [Israel DeWitt], Mike, Estelle, Myer, Isadore. Front row – Jay, Sara (her image superimposed by photographer), Emanuel, Mollie, Sam, Hannah. The photograph was taken at the time of Sara’s funeral. Courtesy of Neal Gosman.

hinterland that was floated downriver to Georgetown. Heiman Kaminski, a major timber merchant, owned a fleet of ships designed specifically for lumber transport: they opened from the bow to enable logs to be loaded directly into the hold.

A Hebrew cemetery was established in Georgetown around 1772—the second in South Carolina. For more than a century and a half, Jewish Georgetownians worshipped in private homes or at the Winyah Indigo Society. In 1904 congregation Beth Elohim, named after its colonial counterpart in Charleston, was officially organized, but not until 1949 did the community build a synagogue, still in operation on Screven Street.

As far as my family relations go, exploring Georgetown’s Hebrew cemetery I discovered that the ancestors of Heiman Kaminski’s first wife, Charlotte Emanuel, came from the same German town as the forebears of the Schafers of Little Rock, South Carolina. Accord-

the Pee Dee *by Harold Kornblut, CPA*

ing to Richard Schafer's research, Abraham Schafer was born in Ob-
righeim on the Main River, and his
mother's maiden name was Eman-
uel. It therefore appears that Mrs.
Kaminski was a cousin of Abra-
ham Schafer's mother, Theresia, or
Esther, which could explain why
the Schafers settled in the Caroli-
nas—Abraham in Little Rock, his
brother Solomon Schafer in Tim-
mons ville, Henrietta Schafer De-
Jongh in Florence, and their neph-
ew, Siegfried Schafer, in Mt. Airy,
North Carolina.

Family legend claims that
Abraham—the oldest of 12 chil-
dren born in 14 years—"won the
lottery" in Obrigheim and used the
funds to relocate his family. Per-
haps the Kaminskis in Georgetown
helped the Schafers identify places
in the Pee Dee with economic opportunities. Abraham
Schafer married Rebecca Iseman, the youngest child
of Isaac and Hannah Iseman of Marion, and the couple
purchased a mercantile store in Little Rock from Tom
Dillon, who was relocating his business to the newly es-
tablished town of Dillon.

On my paternal side, my grandfather Leon Kornblut
(originally spelled Ko-
rnbluth) emigrated from
Gorczyze, Poland, in 1896
at the age of 14 to join his
brother Joe Kornblut in a
business in Dillon called
King's Clothiers. He was
sponsored by the Fass
family of Dillon who were
landsmen—they came
from the same town in
Poland. My grandfather
worked in his brother's
business until Joe re-
turned to Poland. Leon
married Lizzie Schafer,
daughter of Abraham and
Rebecca Schafer, who
gave the couple as a wed-
ding present the Latta Dry
Goods Company business



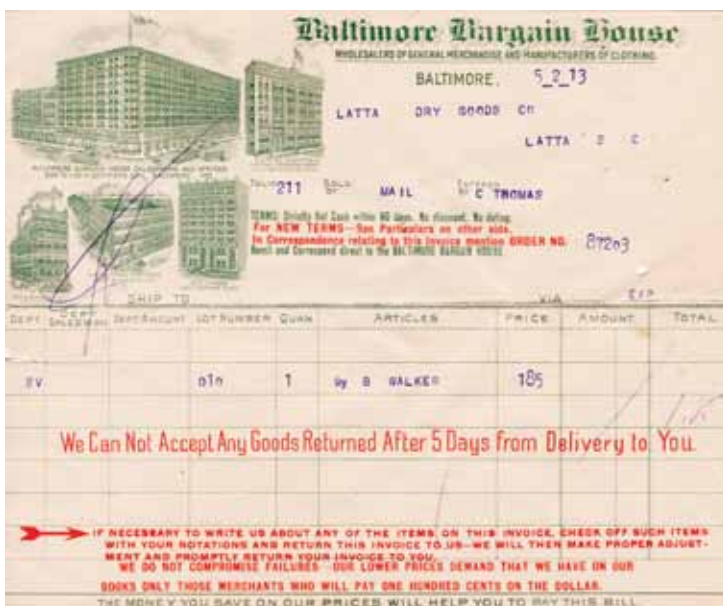
The children of Abraham and Rebecca Iseman Schafer, clockwise from lower left: Fanny, Lizzie (the author's grandmother), Samuel, and Belle, ca. 1898. Courtesy of Harold Kornblut.

and stock in trade.

Lizzie's sister Belle Schafer had married Isadore Blum and the two brothers-in-law founded the mercantile business Blum & Kornblut, at one point operating stores in Latta, Dillon, Mullins, Cheraw, Chesterfield, and Lake View, South Carolina, and Rowland and Tatum, North Carolina. The business operated on credit granted by the main supplier, the Baltimore Bargain House, as well as other suppliers who offered liberal terms. Paying in October for the entire year's credit allowed the stores to carry the accounts of their customers, mainly farmers, until the fall when the crops had been sold and land owners settled up with their tenants.

The stores accepted script issued by the landowner that allowed tenants to purchase usually specific items up to a specified amount. As long as most accounts were paid, business thrived, but when crops failed, for example during the boll weevil infestation in 1927, many could not pay. Blum & Kornblut went bankrupt in 1928, well ahead of the Great Depression. Leon managed to hang on to the store in Latta, which was in Lizzie's name, and to the Dillon store, although he lost the building in foreclosure and had to rent the space from the new owner for the next 25 years.

Leon's sons, Moses (1915–2009) and Sigmond (b. 1926), operated the stores in Latta and Dillon—Moses starting right out of high school in 1932 and Sigmond after returning from The Citadel and World War II. Sigmond eventually retired, closing the Dillon store; Moses operated the Latta store until his death in January 2009, six months after losing his wife, Freda Baker Kornblut. My wife, Susan, and I kept the business going for another year, but in March 2010 we shut the doors for good.



Baltimore Bargain House invoice received by Latta Dry Goods in 1913. Kornblut family papers. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Jewish Geography: Textile and 1900–2012

In the 20th century, the center of gravity of the American textile industry shifted from the Northeast to the South. Jewish families in the Pee Dee figured prominently in both textile manufacturing and retail apparel shops. Here is a selection of businesses, past and present, from across the region.

DILLON: Morris Fass settled in Dillon before the lines for the new Dillon County had been drawn in 1910. The Austrian immigrant to the United States as a child and lived in Charleston and Lake City for a time. He and Rosa Nachman of Charleston married, moved to Dillon, and opened a small store that, over the years, grew into the large **Fass Department Store** on the south side of Main Street next to the SCN bank.

The Dillon branch of **Kornblut's Department Store**, operated by Sigmond Kornblut, closed in 1999. (See p. 9 in "Jewish Settlement in the Pee Dee" for details.)

Franco Manufacturing Co., Inc., headquartered in Metuchen, New Jersey, opened a plant in Dillon in 1980. Founded in 1952 by David E. Franco and his three sons, Louis, Morris, and Jack, the company continues today to manufacture home textiles.

LATTA: **Kornblut's Department Store**, founded around 1900 as the Latta Dry Goods Company, originally rented space on the first floor of the Latta Hotel. In 1910 Kornblut's moved into its own building. Owner Leon Kornblut partnered with his brother-in-law Isadore Blum during the 1920s, opening as many as eight stores scattered throughout the area, staffed by Jews they hired out of Baltimore. Bankruptcy forced them to close their doors in 1928 and the two went their separate ways. Blum opened a store just across the state line in Rowland, North Carolina. Kornblut operated Kornblut's Department Store with "fashions for the entire family" in two locations, Dillon and Latta.

Isadore Cohen opened **I. Cohen's Department Store** in Latta in 1923. Born in Lithuania, he was 15 when he traveled from Hamburg, Germany, to Baltimore. His brother, who operated a successful store in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, sent him money to take the trip south. Izzy worked as an peddler in Dillon and Marlboro counties. He was hired by Mr. Blum, who had a department store in Latta, then fired for replacing a pair of defective shoes for a customer. To open his own



Pee Dee region of South Carolina

store, his wholesaler in Baltimore gave him a credit line of \$8,750, equivalent to \$100,000 today. After one year in business, he was able to purchase the building. His son and daughter-in-law, Leonard and Mildred Cohen, took over the store in 1965 and ran it until their retirement in 1987.

Apparel Businesses in the Pee Dee,

compiled by Sheri Misner and Dyan Cohen



Nathan and Evelyn Epstein opened **Ideal Furniture Co.** in Latta in the late 1940s, selling furniture, appliances, and, on the cusp on the TV era, installing TV antennas. They later opened an upscale clothing store, the **Village Square**, that drew a large following from the entire Pee Dee area of South Carolina. People lined

up around the block for the shop's after-Christmas sale.

Owned by Abe Cohen and later by his sons, Robert and Jack Cohen, **Craftex Creations** opened in the early 1960s. The company, which had abandoned its plant on 7th Avenue in New York, manufactured ladies and children's robes under the Gilligan & O'Malley label. In the early 1990s Craftex sold the label to Target and went out of business.

DARLINGTON: With successful stores in Timmons-ville and Lamar, Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Larry's Department Store** in Darlington around 1959 and, 20 years later, launched a second location in the town, Larry's Outlet Store. The Weintraubs closed all their stores ca. 1994 when Larry became ill (See pp. 23–24 in "Success of a Salesman" for details.)

Julia Leff (later Kent) ran **Julia's**, a ladies' apparel shop, during the later decades of the 20th century.

BISHOPVILLE: **Ginsberg's Ladies Retail Shop**, established on Main Street in Bishopville in 1929, went out of business in 2008. Owner Frances Bass Ginsberg's father-in-law ran the shop until his death, when she and her husband, Arthur, took over. After Arthur's sudden demise, Frances was on her own, later joined by her daughter Nancy Thornton. "You can't make a living," Thornton said as the store prepared for its final sale. "Mom and pop shops are a thing of the past right now and that's sad."

Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Larry's Department Store** in Bishopville around 1980.

LAMAR: Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Richard's Department Store** in 1952. In 1961 the name was changed to Larry's Department Store.

TIMMONSVILLE: Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Larry's Department Store** in Timmons-ville in 1951—the first of several stores in the Pee Dee.

FLORENCE: Owned from 1930 to 1970 by Oscar Glass, then by Freddie and Morton Glass, **Furchgott's** sold fashionable ladies' clothing. The store remained open until ca. 1990 under different owners.

Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Larry's Department Store** in Florence ca. 1961.



From top to bottom: Kornblut's Department Store, "The Store of Better Values," Latta, 1956. Courtesy of Harold Kornblut • Leon Kornblut ordered a "soft straw" hat, size seven and a half, from the Markel Bros. in New York, in June 1927. The Blum & Kornblut letterhead lists five South Carolina locations: Cheraw, Dillon, Latta, Chesterfield, and Mullins. Kornblut family papers. Special Collections, College of Charleston • Kornblut's ladies' department, Latta, 1956. Courtesy of Harold Kornblut.

Larry and Merle Arazie sold clothes in addition to a variety of other goods at **Larry's Discount Store** on Evans Street in Florence. It operated in the 1960s and '70s and maybe later. Larry Arazie was a Sephardi from Syria, in contrast to most Jewish store owners in the Pee Dee who were of East European descent.

Mi-Lady Shoppe, established in 1969 by Morris Blum and Ray Wolpert, sold ladies' apparel until its closing in 1994.

Thomas Grossman opened **PanTom Ltd.** in Florence in 1973. The plant manufactured ladies' elastic-waist slacks until its closing in 1996. He eventually became known in the business as the "pull-on pant king"—it was the '70s! PanTom was a large cut-and-sew operation employing hundreds of people over the years. **CamillApparel** and **JessiCasuals**—named for Grossman's daughters—were in business in the same period. JessiCasuals was located on North Irby Street and PanTom at 1719 South Irby until it outgrew the space and expanded. Relocated to N. B. Baroody Street, operations were shifted to one of the subsidiaries, **Century Manufacturing Co.**, which remained in business until around 2001.

MARION: In 1951 Herbert and Martha Levy moved to Marion and started a knitting operation, manufacturing men and boys' shirts and sweaters under the name of **Herbert Mills**. Signal Apparel purchased the business in 1968, changing the name to **Heritage Sportswear**.

A formidable employer in Marion County, at one time its workforce numbered 700. In 1984 women's knitwear was added under the label Joan Vass, USA. Rick and Les Levy purchased the business from Signal Apparel in 1999 with the hope of saving the jobs of some 300 employees. Between NAFTA, 9/11, and overseas competition, the business could not survive. Heritage Sportswear, LLC closed in 2005.

Ida Horinbein opened a ladies' dress shop in 1953 under the name of **Horinbein's**, located on Main Street. It closed in 1959.

Elliott and Bertha Baumrind started a men's store on Main Street in 1953 called **Baumrind's**. In 1957 they opened a ladies and children's shop next door, which remained in business until 1963.

Morris Blum opened **Diane's Dress Shop** on Main Street in 1957. The shop closed in 1968.

Sidney and Dorothy Lewis inaugurated **Lewco Mills** in 1958, manufacturing men and boys' swimwear. They later changed the name to **Sun Fun Sportswear**. The business closed in 1995.

Rick Levy and Aaron Levy opened **Glenn Sportswear** in 1965. The business produced shirts and had a

textile printing operation. Heritage Sportswear purchased Glenn Sportswear in 1972. Rick and Aaron went to work at Heritage Sportswear.

Harry Blumenthal established **Blumenthal Mills** in 1975, producing mattress ticking fabric, with an initial workforce of 90 people. At its height the company employed up to 200 people, closing in 2009.

Herbert Levy and Aaron Levy opened **Carolina Classic** in 1983. They contracted and manufactured men and boys' T-shirts. The business closed in 1996.

MULLINS: Hyman Polan's clothing store was open from the 1930s until the 1960s. Ruth Blum Epstein operated her own store in the same location into the 1980s.

Thomas Grossman, a native of Hungary who survived the Nazi camps of Theresienstadt, Birkenau, and Flossenbergl, moved to South Carolina in 1968, and within two years inaugurated a dress manufacturing company in Mullins called **Skandia Fashions**, named in homage to his Scandinavian wife whom he met after World War II in Sweden, where he studied textile engineering.

LORIS: Bernard and Kate Wolpert opened **Wolpert's Department Store** in 1927 with ownership passing to their son Robert in 1964 when Bernard died. Initially the store specialized in farm clothing—durable and affordable overalls, work pants and shirts, brogan shoes, and Hanes underwear, which sold for a quarter. In the 1930s, when the streets in Loris were paved, Wolpert's moved to Main Street, next to Shorty's Grill. In 1991 Eugene Mills bought the business.

LAKE CITY: **Wentworth Manufacturing**, in Lake City and Florence, was founded by Ronald and Doris Sopkin, possibly with other relatives, around 1960. The first manufacturers in the Pee Dee to employ an all-black labor force, the Sopkins hired African-American managers and gave them equal pay. Wentworth manufactured house dresses until it closed ca. 1980.

Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Larry's Department Store** in Lake City ca. 1980.

*If you can provide additional information about these or other Pee Dee textile and apparel businesses, please contact Dale Rosengarten by email at rosengartend@cofc.edu or phone, 843-953-8028.

From top to bottom: Isadore Cohen outside his department store in Latta, advertising "Crazy Days," ca. 1960. Courtesy of Donna Cohen • Mildred and Leonard Cohen pose outside Cohen's Department Store during their "Going out of business sale" in 1987. Courtesy of Leonard and Mildred Cohen • Larry's Department Store, Timmonsville, ca. 1969. Courtesy of Richard Weintraub.



Four Generations of Greenbergs in the Magic City

by Phillip H. Greenberg

In 1906 Louis Greenberg, a 26-year-old Russian immigrant, moved to Florence, South Carolina, after working for four years for his cousins in Connecticut. He was a peddler, initially, and came south because selling to farmers was supposed to be a good business. He quickly found that opportunities for tanning cowhides and dealing in furs were better than selling door-to-door in the countryside. He established a tannery on North Dargan Street, complete with a railroad spur to load boxcars of tanned hides and furs to ship north to be made into leather shoes and beaver and muskrat coats.



Left to right—back row: Abe Greenberg, Murray Lovit, Ray Wolpert, Sam Rogol, Arthur Siegal, Larry Weintraub. Front row: Herb Levy, Elliot Finger, Melvin Siegel, Herman Insel, Nat Rosenfeld, Florence, South Carolina, ca. 1970. Courtesy of Beth Israel Congregation.

Before he established L. Greenberg and Co. in 1914, he went to Philadelphia and married Fanny Horowitz, whom he brought to his home at 234 S. Dargan Street. Over the next four years, she bore three children, Sam, Stephen Abraham, and Judy. Louis was trained in the Old Country as a kosher butcher and a rabbi, and his house in Florence was the site of many religious services until the synagogue was built in the 1940s.

Florence began as a railroad crossing and during the Civil War housed the largest Confederate prison outside Andersonville. In the 1890s it developed into a "new town" with newcomers equaling or outnumbering older families. Its economy was propelled by rail yards, industry, and highway networks, and it later became a medical and commercial center, supporting hotels, restaurants, and other urban amenities. Florence was called the Magic City because it grew rapidly, especially compared to Darlington, Marion, and Kingstree, which seemed to enjoy the status quo and resist change. Many Jewish families participated in its growth, the DeJonghs, A. A. Cohens, and Jeromes, to name a few.

My father, Stephen A. Greenberg, was born in 1915 in Florence and grew up there. He went to the University of South Carolina and the Medical College in Charleston, then served as a colonel in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in World War II. Returning home, he married my mother, Ruth Brody, from Sumter, and began his medical practice with Dr. John Bruce at a clinic that became Bruce Hospital, now Carolinas Hospital.

My brother Stuart and I are the third generation of Greenbergs in Florence. After attending prep school at Phillips Exeter, Duke University as an undergraduate, and medical school at MUSC, I came back to Florence and have practiced surgery there for 27 years. I married Patricia Barnett, of Sumter, and we have been blessed with three great children, Barnett, Andy, and Patty—the fourth generation of the family in Florence.

18th Annual Meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Beth Israel Congregation Florence, SC | November 2 – 4, 2012

All events will be held at **Beth Israel**, 316 Park Avenue, Florence, SC 29501. Tel: 843-669-9724

Friday, November 2

6:45 pm Shabbat dinner
8:00 Shabbat services with Oneg Shabbat following

Saturday, November 3

11:00 am Registration
12:00 pm Luncheon
1:00 Tribute to Ruth Greenberg
1:15 A History of the Jewish Community in Florence, Alexander H. Cohen, MD
2:00 Pee Dee Pioneers
 Moderator: Joseph H. Rubinstein, Professor Emeritus at Coker College
 Panelists: Donna Cohen, Rick Levy, Bruce Siegal, Richard Weintraub
 3:30 “South of the Border and the Legend of Alan Schafer”: film and discussion
 Moderator: Harold Kornblut
 Panelists: Evelyn Schafer Hetchkopf, Richard Schafer, Robin Schafer
 6:30 Wine and cheese reception
7:00 Gala dinner and 100th anniversary celebration

Sunday, November 4

9:00 am Breakfast
10:00 Stories from the Pee Dee: short takes by community members
11:30 JHSSC open board meeting

Register online at www.jhssc.org/events

Visa, MasterCard, or by check payable to JHSSC
Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Center
College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424

Conference fee: \$70 per person

Questions:

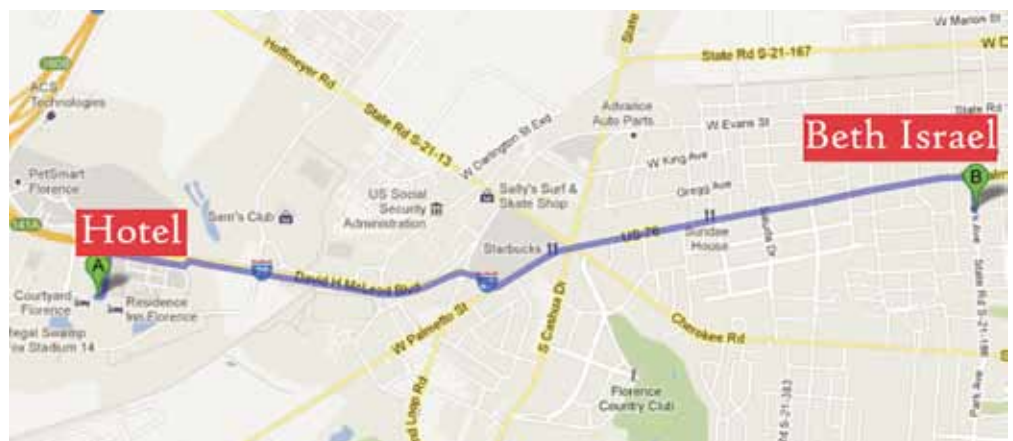
Enid Idelsohn
phone: 843.953.3918

Email: IdelsohnE@cofc.edu
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Hotel Reservations

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reservations. Ask for the
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group rate of \$89.00+tax/night.



Dillon's Ohav Shalom: A Small

“**A**nd this Torah shall not be the property of any one member but shall belong to all regardless of each individual's contribution.” Thus, in 1920, a unique contract was scripted that expressed succinctly the spirit of the early 20th century worshipers in the area around Dillon, South Carolina.

The vast sum of \$300 was raised to purchase a Torah for a congregation that owned no property but in whose hearts burned a need and a memory and a hope.

The first services on record in Dillon were held in 1915 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Fass—High Holiday services conducted by Mr. Fass, assisted by local residents and guests who were learned in the Torah and the Talmud. Three years later the small group began meeting at the home of Morris's brother, Max Fass. During this period, many out-of-towners attended, including traveling salesmen, or peddlers as they were called in those days.

What was first

known as the Dillon Hebrew Congregation was renamed for Teresa Witcover Fass in 1928, in honor of Max's wife, who died the previous year at the age of 48. Around this time an appeal for funds to build a synagogue ran in the *Dillon Herald*. Listed as donors were: Leah Krawitz, Morris Fass, David Fass, P. Witcover, Paul Witcover, Max Fass, Phillip Leinwand, David Fleishman, Abe Cohen (my father), H. Polan, Nathan Snyder, Ben Snyder, Sam Levine, Julius Blumberg, Max Blum, Joe Simon, Mordecai Nachman, Nathan Carliner, and David Witcover. The Dillon Sisterhood pledged \$300 and organizers expected to raise \$5,000.

With the death of Max and Morris Fass in 1935, the struggling congregation lost two faithful, founding members. Services continued to be held in the Dillon Masonic Temple, a tribute to the spirit of religious solidarity in the community. Elder members recall that the City of Dillon also offered use of city hall chambers for services.

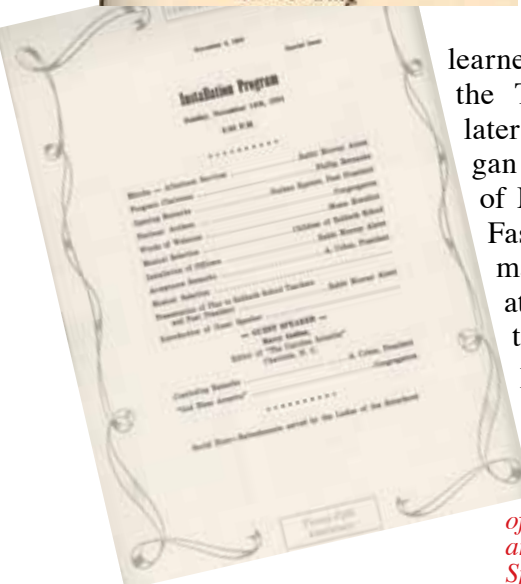
In 1939 years of wandering came to an end. Julius Blumberg, Leon Kornblut, and Nathan Bernstein, acting as incorporators, executed a certificate of incorporation on February 14, 1939, establishing the Ohav Shalom Congregation.

A building committee was appointed and a site at 10th and Calhoun streets in a residential section of Dillon was selected, coincidentally, only one block from one of the early meeting places. The purchase price—\$400.

Fund raising became the order of the day. Progress was slow, but on February 12, 1942, Ohav Shalom held “Services for Laying of Cornerstone.” The \$7,000 expenditure, plus hours spent planning and soliciting funds, paid off. Some 20-odd families had persevered to raise an altar unto the Lord—without a mortgage!—and on November 22, 1942, the synagogue was dedicated in an impressive ceremony.

Ohav Shalom's first officers were Sam Schafer, president; David Fass, vice president; Julius Blumberg, treasurer; Nathan Bernstein, secretary; and Leon Kornblut, director. All were from Dillon except Schafer, who hailed from Little Rock, South Carolina.

Over the next 25 years, the presidency was held by Leon Kornblut, Nathan Epstein, Abe Cohen, Reuben Goldman, Arthur Riemer, Harry Elfland, Phillip Bernanke, and Mortimer Bernanke. There were confirmations, bar mitzvahs, weddings, anniversary celebrations,



From top to bottom: The author, about eight years old, with her father, Abe Cohen. Courtesy of Cecile Cohen Waronker • Pages from Ohav Shalom's Golden Book and the congregation's anniversary booklet titled Twenty Five Years of Jewish Life, 1939-1964. Gift of Harold Kornblut. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Town's Dream Come True *by Cecile Cohen Waronker*

and testimonials. In 1956, during my father's tenure, a Jewish Community Center was added to the small synagogue. The keynote speaker for the afternoon dedication was Hyman Rubin, who at the time was mayor pro tem of Columbia, and later a state senator. For another event father invited Harry Golden, editor of the *Carolina Israelite* in Charlotte, North Carolina, as guest speaker.

Ohav Shalom means "lovers of peace." The years have borne out the truth of the name; the deeds of the members and the testimony of neighboring churches give evidence of the warm relationship between the synagogue and the community.

Sadly, this wonderful little congregation no longer exists. Like small-town Jews elsewhere in the United States, the congregants' economic mainstay was retail business and the proverbial "Jew stores" have, by and large, disappeared. When only seven Jewish families remained in the area, Ohav Shalom disbanded and the building was sold. Its members now go to Beth Israel Congregation in Florence. You can close down a building but you cannot erase memories. Those of us who are descendants of the founding members will never forget.

Biographical note

I was the only child of Abe Cohen and Betty Mark Cohen. My mother was born in Anderson, South Carolina, and grew up in Greenwood. My father was born in Lithuania and came to this country when he was four years old, settling in Baltimore. He had older brothers in Latta, South Carolina, and in Gibson and Winston-Salem, North Carolina. That's how he came south and opened his store.

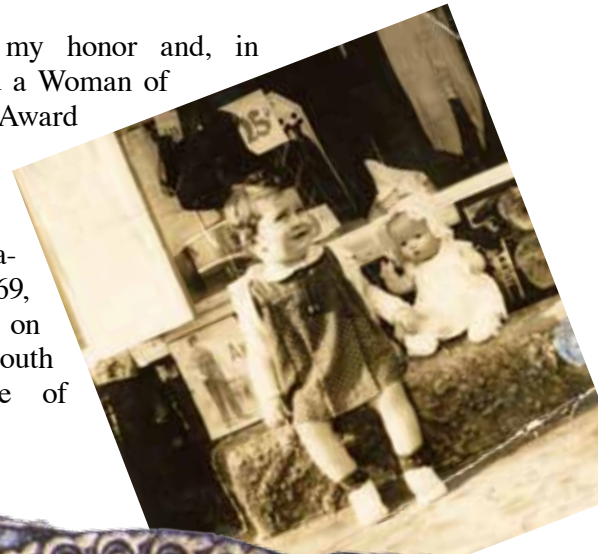
My parents were introduced to each other by Hymie and Sammy Rubin's father in Columbia and married by Rabbi David Karesh. I graduated from Clio High School and the University of Georgia, then married William (Billy) L. Waronker from Atlanta in a ceremony conducted by Rabbi Karesh. We have three children and five grandchildren. Billy died in 2007.

Growing up in Clio was wonderful. We never had any problems being Jewish. I had the first bat mitzvah at the shul in Dillon. It was a close-knit Jewish family. My husband and children loved visiting the town.

I served on the Commission on Presidential Scholars under Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and presently serve on the Coca-Cola Scholarship Committee. In 2004 I was honored by the College of Education at the University of Georgia with the outstanding alumni service award. The following year the College of Education named a

scholarship in my honor and, in 2006, I received a Woman of Achievement Award from the Jewish Federation of Atlanta.

When my father died in 1969, he was honored on the floor of the South Carolina House of Representatives.



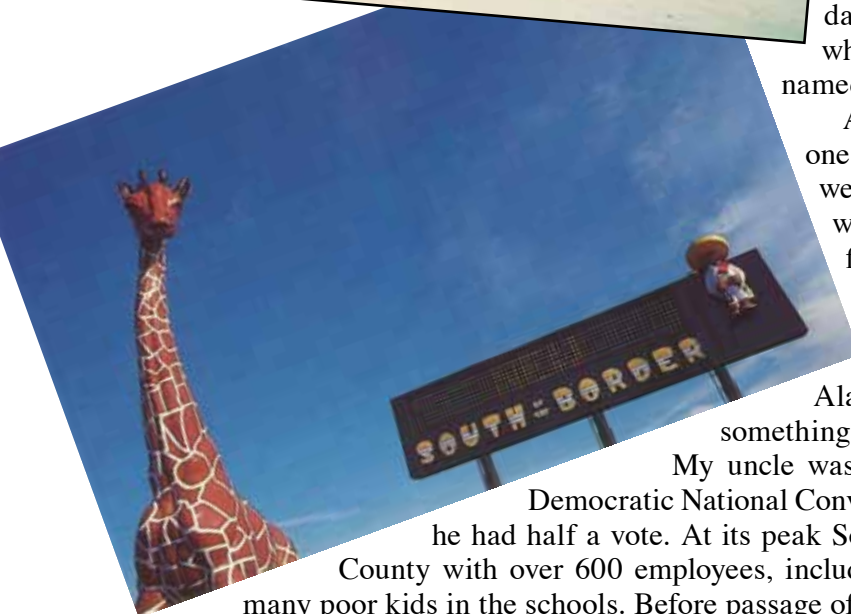
He had served as vice mayor of Clio and was well respected. My mother continued running the store for almost 30 more years. Then she moved to Atlanta and lived here for ten years before she passed away. My mother was the middle child of Yetta and Louis Mark. Her siblings all settled in South Carolina—her eldest sister, Annie Pinosky in Charleston, her brother, Bill Mark in Williamston, her sister Rose Sonenshine in Ware Shoals, and her youngest sister, Fannie Widelitz in St. George.

From top to bottom: Three-year-old Cecile Cohen with her doll sitting in front of her parents' store in Clio, South Carolina • Members of the Mark family, Ware Shoals, South Carolina, mid-1940s. Left to right: Back row – William and his wife, Fannie Zalin, storeowners in Williamston, Yetta, Louis. Front row – Rose, Betty (the author's mother, the first in her family to be born in the United States), Fannie, and Annie. Courtesy of Cecile Cohen Waronker.

***An earlier version of the article appeared in the Jewish Georgian, July–August 2000.

South of the Border

by Robin Schafer with Evelyn Schafer Hechtkopf



I have been told that South of the Border—the brainchild of my uncle Alan Schafer—began in 1951, the year that I was born. But the seeds had been planted two or three years before that, when neighboring Robeson County, in North Carolina, passed a law prohibiting the distribution of beer in stores and restaurants. Alan was the owner of Schafer Distributing Company and a Miller High Life wholesaler and was well off financially. He could no longer distribute beer north of the state line, but buyers could drive a few miles south and purchase what they pleased at the cinderblock shack Schafer built in 1949, painted pink and dubbed “South of the Border Beer Depot.” It was an accident that northern tourists stopped there in droves. That was not what he was looking for but he took full advantage of it. To the six-stool beer bar he added a grill room selling hot dogs and burgers, then in 1950, a motel, and the next year, a gas station.

The Schafer family was raised in Little Rock, South Carolina, but was scattered by this time. My uncle Ray was in Manhattan and my uncle Charles was in Augusta, Georgia. Aunt Evelyn had settled in Norfolk, Virginia. My dad, Joe Schafer, had come home after graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and was living in Dillon. As early as I can remember he owned the South of the Border gas station, which, at one time, was reputed to be the busiest gas station on the East Coast. I remember the first building. It was made of tin and had no insulation. My dad put it on a flatbed truck and brought it to our house where he opened it up and it became a stable for a pony named Diamond.

As a teenager I helped my dad at the gas station, and one time, when he had a helicopter ride, I ran that on the weekends. I remember South of the Border when there was nothing on the west side of Highway 301 except fields of cotton and peanuts. Uncle Alan added a zoo and a Putt-Putt golf course, and then just kept going. The fireworks outlet, I have been told, is or was the busiest in the United States. I have also been told that

Alan did not believe in borrowing money. He did not build something till he had saved the money to build it.

My uncle was very involved in politics. He was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago that nominated Hubert Humphrey—he had half a vote. At its peak South of the Border was the largest employer in Dillon County with over 600 employees, including many locals. Before there was welfare Alan fed many poor kids in the schools. Before passage of the Civil Rights Act, he hired all races—whites, African Americans, and Lumbee Indians. In the era of Jim Crow, I can remember black people coming to the door of my dad’s business and asking if it was okay for them to come inside. My dad’s answer was “only if your money



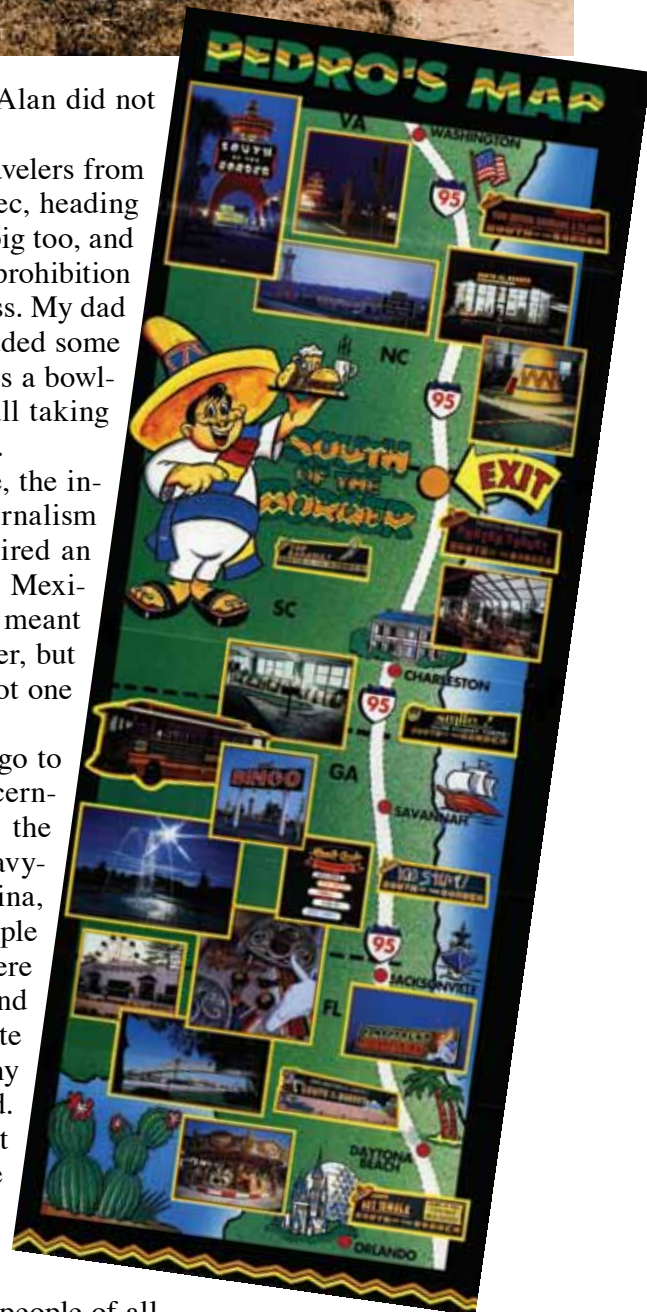
is green.” My dad never discriminated and I am willing to bet that Alan did not either. The county benefitted greatly from SoB being there.

Most of the customers that I remember were from the North—travelers from New York, New England, and Canada, especially Ottawa and Quebec, heading to Florida or Myrtle Beach. Traffic from Highway 501 and I-20 was big too, and the truck stop business has really picked up. Once North Carolina’s prohibition against alcohol sales ended, Alan never really went after local business. My dad told me he felt that this was a mistake, that the Border could have added some things the residents of Dillon would have greatly appreciated, such as a bowling alley. As it is, the local business is not that strong, though I recall taking my high school dates there to play Putt-Putt and eat at the restaurant.

Alan’s innovative approaches to advertising—the Mexican theme, the infamous highway billboards—were entirely his ideas. He was a journalism major in college and obviously very smart and creative. He never hired an advertising company though he did rent some of the billboards. The Mexican theme was a play on the name South of the Border, which really meant we have beer here because we are south of the North Carolina border, but some Mexicans who stop in expect the staff to speak Spanish and not one of them can.

South of the Border has a huge following. All you have to do is go to YouTube and look at the number of videos that have been made concerning the place. Some of the visitors were celebrities like Bert Lahr, the actor who played the cowardly lion in *The Wizard of Oz* movie. Heavyweight champion boxer Joe Frazier, born in Beaufort, South Carolina, stopped at my dad’s gas station on a fairly regular basis. Lots of people come back when they are grown to see what they saw when they were kids. SoB is an amusement park, shopping mall, roadside oasis, and tourist stop rolled into one. I cannot think of any place on the interstate as entertaining as the Border. It’s a perfect break from the monotony of the road on the way to more famous destinations like Disney World.

Though most people don’t ask, a few of the customers know that South of the Border is a Jewish-owned business. Alan did not practice Judaism if you mean going to temple; he did practice if you mean doing the right thing, which is what he did with regard to his hiring practices at the Border. Evelyn tells me that there really was a Klan protest at SoB during Jim Crow because her brother employed people of all races. Alan met the Klansmen armed with a rifle and told them to go away. To me that is a mitzvah on steroids.



Memories of a Congregation That

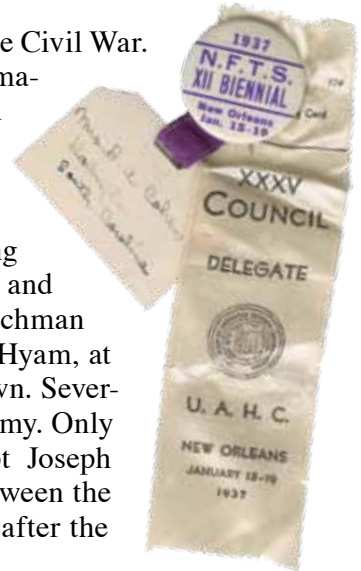
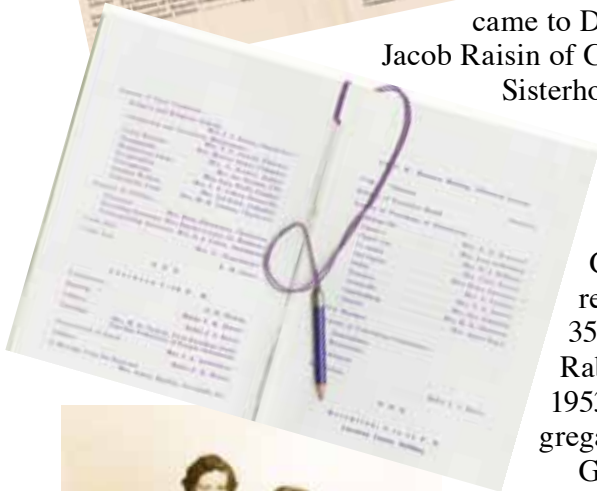
Jews began settling in Darlington well before the Civil War. In 1845 Joseph and Charles Frank from Germany made their home in the Pee Dee town and were soon followed by their cousins Isaac and Marks (or Marx) Iseman. They did business for a number of years, acquired a large amount of downtown property, and, judging from public records, were good citizens. Hyam and Henry Hymes, Samuel Marco, and August Nachman opened stores in Darlington in the mid-1850s. Hyam, at one time, served as intendant (mayor) of the town. Several Darlington Jews served in the Confederate army. Only one was reported killed, but everyone except Joseph Frank and Isaac Iseman left during the War Between the States. Among the Jews who moved to the area after the war, only a few became longtime residents.

Numbering about 50 at the turn of the 20th century, the Jews in Darlington constituted approximately one percent of the population, but their taxable property was nearly 20 percent. They were described as very active in business and were public spirited in all progressive movements for the uplifting and development of the town. In 1896 the Darlington Hebrew Cemetery Association purchased land for a burial ground and, in February 1905, a congregation called Darlington Hebrew Association was organized. Rabbi Jacob Klein from Temple Sinai in Sumter came to Darlington one Sunday a month to lead Reform services, followed by Dr. Jacob Raisin of Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. In 1925 the Darlington Temple Sisterhood, formerly the Ladies Aid Society, affiliated with the state and national sisterhoods and, in league with the Darlington Hebrew Association, took over the functions of the Cemetery Association.

As the congregation grew there were thoughts of building a synagogue in Darlington. Efforts were made but the financial realities of the Great Depression halted the idea. The Jewish population of Darlington reached as high as 85 during the late 1920s, then shrank to an estimated 35 by 1937, hard times no doubt forcing many families to move. When Rabbi Raisin died in 1946, organized religious activity all but ceased. In 1953, however, the congregation reorganized as the Darlington Hebrew Congregation and hired Rabbi J. Aaron Levy of Sumter to lead monthly services.

Growing up in Darlington I have memories of Rabbi Levy coming to lead services on a Sunday afternoon. Jewish families, young and old, would gather at someone's home (usually in Mrs. Fannie Want's living room) and Rabbi Levy would lead us using the old Union prayer book. He sometimes would call on the older children to show off their reading skills. A sermon or discussion would follow, which at times seemed long and boring, but as I got older made more sense. Services were always followed by an oneg, with cookies and sweets for the

Photo of State Sisterhood Convention held in Darlington, South Carolina, 1954. • Artifacts from Temple Sisterhood conventions in New Orleans, 1937, and Darlington, 1928 and 1941. David A. Cohen, Jr. Collection. Special Collections, College of Charleston. • Darlington native Fannie Weinberg Want and her future daughter-in-law, Sadie Bogoslow, of Walterboro, South Carolina, ca. 1937. Courtesy of William Want and Robert Want.



Was: The Jews of Darlington

by Alexander H. Cohen, MD

children. But the big celebration each year was Passover. The whole congregation would gather in the meeting hall at the Masonic Lodge for a community seder. It was an evening of delightful smells as the Passover story was retold and children got restless, feeling they were starving to death, as they waited for the festive meal. After dinner came playtime and then the mad rush to find the afikomen.

As time passed I noticed the congregation was shrinking. Some people moved away, some died, and few came to replace them. The children went to religious school at Beth Israel in Florence, so their families also joined that congregation, which was growing and vibrant. When sons and daughters went to college, few returned home to live in Darlington. It was awkward at times being in school where there were only one or two Jewish children. We knew that we were different. When it came to morning devotionals, we got equal time at Hanukkah and Passover to tell the class our holiday stories. Though an occasional slur was heard, I never really encountered any antisemitism while growing up in Darlington.

As I grew older and heard the stories of members of the congregation both present and deceased, I was impressed at how active a role they played in the community. Darlington Jews have worked in every phase of community life, adding up to over a century and a half of Jewish participation in local, state, and national progress. Jews have served as officers of the Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, Pee Dee Area Boy Scouts, Darlington Country Historical Society, and Darlington Country Club. They have served on the city council and as mayor. They have also headed the Red Cross, and polio, civil defense, tuberculosis, and mental health organizations in Darlington. Jews from Darlington fought in the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. This congregation has produced attorneys, judges, physicians, and even two PhDs who were professors at the University of Pennsylvania.

Darlington's Jewish organizations soldiered on until 1980, then essentially disbanded. On May 5, 1981, the four remaining members of the Darlington Temple Sisterhood met for the last time and their monies were transferred to the Darlington Hebrew Congregation. The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods was notified of the dissolution of the chapter. On June 9, 1981, the Darlington Hebrew Congregation met with seven members present. For the sum of \$14,108, perpetual care was arranged for the Jewish section of Grove Hill Cemetery. The combined congregation and sisterhood funds were placed in savings with my father, David A. Cohen, and a sisterhood member as trustees. It was suggested that the congregation have a dinner meeting once a year, which turned out to be an annual community seder. This was the last recorded meeting of the congregation. Only a couple of families remain from a congregation that, in the 1890s, was the largest in the area. We who are left depend upon Beth Israel in Florence for weekly services and life-cycle events, but we continue to hold our community seder each spring.

A more detailed history can be found on the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life website, History Department, Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities. See "Darlington, South Carolina" by Alyssa Neely at: <http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/sc/darlington.html>

Additional sources:

- Eliza Cowan Ervin and Horace Fraser Rudisill, *Darlingtoniana* (Columbia, SC: R. L. Bryan Company, 1964)
- *Minutes of the Darlington Hebrew Congregation and Darlington Temple Sisterhood*



David A. Cohen, Sr., a charter member of the Kiwanis Club, at a meeting in Darlington, South Carolina, 1955. Courtesy of Alexander H. Cohen.



Hennig Cohen, air force (middle), and David A. Cohen, Jr., army (r), sons of David A. and Hilda Hennig Cohen, with their cousin Julian Hennig, Jr., marines, son of Julian H. and Helen Kohn Hennig. All three served in World War II. Courtesy of Alexander H. Cohen.

Success of a

In 1906, to escape being drafted into the tsar's army, Dad's father, Benjamin Weintraub, hid in a barrel on a horse cart and traveled from his native Poland (then part of the Russian empire) to Hamburg, where he boarded a ship called the Nieuw Amsterdam for America. In Brooklyn he and a brother made and sold expensive blouses. They did well enough so that Benjamin, his wife, and their three children could leave the business and Brooklyn. In the mid-1920s they moved to the more congenial town of Red Bank, New Jersey, where he opened LaRose Dress Shop, named after his wife.

One of those three children was my father, Lawrence ("Larry") Weintraub. After his discharge from the Army Air Corps in 1946, Dad and his brother, Morty, went to work with their uncle Harry Zahl as traveling salesmen based in Walterboro, South Carolina, about 50 miles from Charleston.

One of Dad's customers was a Mullins clothing store owner, Hyman Polan, who had emigrated from Lithuania about the year 1919. Shortly after landing in America, Polan worked



for relatives in West Virginia. Then he moved to Baltimore and worked for other relatives in an umbrella-manufacturing operation. Polan's daughter Sylvia was a civilian employee in the war bond department at Fort Jackson in Columbia during and after World War II. Her parents' ill health called her back to Mullins, where she and her sister, Dot, worked in the store—hence Sylvia was on duty on a cold February morning when salesman Larry arrived in town.

That very day Larry asked her if she would go out with him. After they dated for a few weeks, Dad proposed. A half century later my mother recalled her response. "I said, 'Larry, this is going to break up a beautiful friendship.' . . . [H]e didn't call me for several weeks because I had kind of discouraged him. When he called two weeks later, I cannot tell you how happy I was to hear from him. So then I knew that I liked him." That July they were married. They moved to Petersburg, Virginia, where my father managed a shoe department, but they disliked life in an army town, so they soon returned to Mullins

From top to bottom: Benjamin Weintraub in front of his store, LaRose Dress Shop in Red Bank, New Jersey, ca. 1930 • Rose and Benjamin Weintraub with their children, Larry (front), Adele, and Morty, ca. 1930 • Hyman Polan, the author's maternal grandfather, before emigrating from Lithuania, ca. 1916. • Larry and Sylvia Polan Weintraub, Reading, Pennsylvania, ca. 1950.

Salesman *by Richard Weintraub*

where Dad worked for his father-in-law. In 1951 they moved some 50 miles to Timmonsville, where they opened Larry's Department Store, selling all manner of clothes for men, women, and children.

Despite its small population of roughly two thousand, Timmonsville had a thriving downtown, with perhaps five clothing stores in the 1960s. A year after opening his first store, Dad started a similar but smaller shop, Richard's Department Store, in Lamar. Like Mullins and Timmonsville, Lamar was a small town whose economy depended heavily on tobacco farms and tobacco warehouses. By the early 1960s he had added stores in the larger population centers of Darlington and Florence and, in the 1970s and 1980s, launched outlets in Lake City, Bishopville, and a second location in Darlington.

At first my mother stayed home to raise my sister and me, but at some point after my father established his first store, she hired Mary Louise, a quiet, young—possibly teenaged—African American to take care of us while she worked in the business. After we moved to Florence, Mom hired her again, this time to clean house. That required Mom to drive back and forth to Timmonsville, which shows how much Mom liked her. Mary Louise worked for our family for, perhaps, a half dozen years and in all that time, we always pronounced her name "Mare-Louise." I didn't know her name was Mary until years later.

We moved to Florence in 1960 in order to live in a better school district, to be nearer the synagogue, and to take advantage of the livelier city life. Mom managed the Florence store for many years. Until my sister went to college, she and I

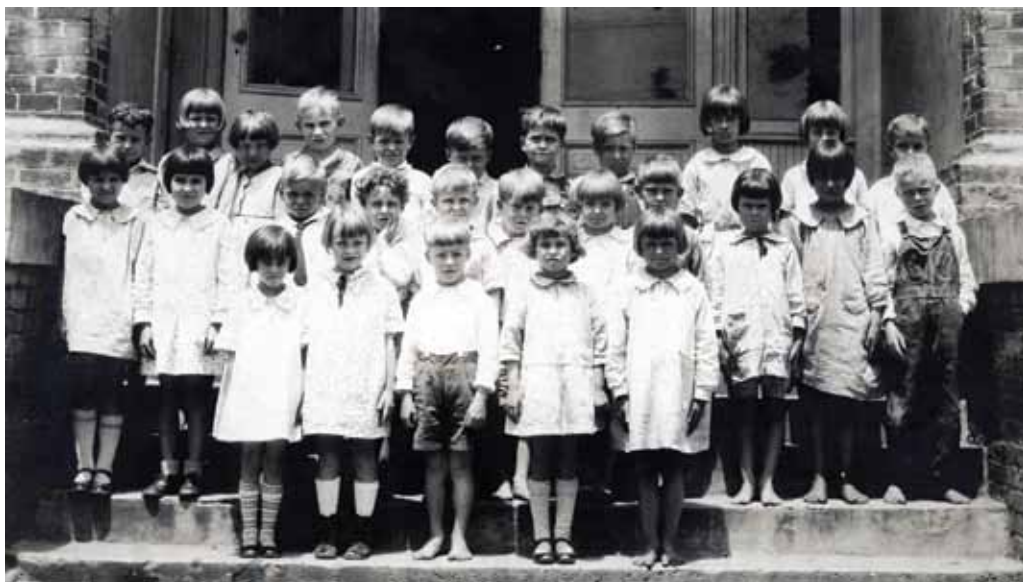


Rose Levine and her children (left to right), Minnie, Sam, Joe, and Gertrude, the author's maternal grandmother, ca. 1898.

generally worked in a store on Saturdays—Gail in Florence and I in Timmonsville. During summers until I finished college, I regularly put in six days a week, unless I had a particular reason to be absent. That didn't include goofing off.

In the 1950s Dad bought some of his inventory through traveling salesmen (yes, they were all men), a fair proportion of whom were Jewish. Dad had grown up in a bilingual household, but he made a point not to speak Yiddish with the salesmen in front of employees or customers so that they wouldn't think they were talking about them. Some of the salesmen became family friends and visited our home. By the 1970s traveling salesmen were rare.

From the 1950s on, Dad traveled to New York City about four times a year on buying trips. (In 1956 his hotel bill for ten days totaled \$53.17!) When we children were older, he and Mom went together. The heart of operating successful retail is knowing what to buy. While Dad's stores sold low-priced clothes, many customers demanded the latest fashions. Dad said that Mom was



Sylvia Polan (first on left, front row) with her class at the Mullins Graded School, Mullins, South Carolina, 1929.

excellent at buying ladies' dresses. I always thought that the stores succeeded because my parents were so skilled at picking stylish merchandise at low prices. Dad pointed out to me stores that were like his but which offered slightly out-of-date items or just missed out on the most popular items. It was risky to buy fashions that might sell for only a few months, but it was even worse business to stick to conservative styles that wouldn't sell. Dad knew when to buy and when to stop buying Nehru jackets, platform shoes, hot pants, and Converse basketball shoes.

Nearly all employees, including managers, were women. Dad was able to find capable store managers who stayed with him for many years (in two cases for decades) and who were able to find hard-working employees, many of whom also remained for years. One manager embezzled but, as far as I know, the rest were honest. Over the decades Dad engaged Jewish and non-Jewish lawyers, accountants, and others.

Shipments were received at a warehouse around the corner from the Timmonsville store. Dad and I spent a lot of time there. One or two employees, mainly black teenagers, were stationed in the warehouse. Other clerks might have objected to hiring black salespeople, but Dad sneaked them in by letting the warehouse employees do some selling.

They often personally knew customers and they knew what items had recently arrived at the warehouse, so they could be effective salesmen, making it hard for white co-workers to protest. Several warehouse employees soon worked full days in the store. Dad said that he was the first white employer to hire a black saleswoman in Timmonsville. At first she probably used the men's restroom, which all the males shared, until the white female sales clerks lost whatever concern they imagined and accepted her use of the ladies' room.

One might think that some African Americans would have objected to our not going further and faster, and that some whites would have thought we went too far, but if that happened, I never heard it.

Some Pee Dee towns—Timmonsville for some years, Lamar always—had no Jewish residents. I'm sure the employees knew our family was Jewish, and some of the customers would have known. The stores opened on Shabbat and we worked those days. By far, more sales were made on Saturdays than any other day. On Yom Kippur the stores were open but the family didn't work. When the Florence synagogue held Rosh Hashanah services for two days, we attended and let the stores run themselves. My mother's father was quite observant and I don't know whether he tried to close on Saturdays. It would have been difficult.

You'd think in a highly religious environment like the Pee Dee that Judaism would be mentioned by customers fairly often. Not so. The only mention I remember is when I was perhaps 14 or 15 years old: an old white farmer wearing bib overalls said he had heard that Jews were smart and asked me how many continents there are. He thought I was dodging when I said different people count them in different ways. (For example, Europe and Asia can be counted as Eurasia.) I didn't sense any

negative feeling but only that he saw Jews as rare birds.

It was an extraordinarily unusual week if Dad did not work six days. The size of the operation was too small to allow him to hire and train someone to do what he did. While Dad would have liked the stores to continue after him, he never pressed me to take over, and I became a lawyer in North Carolina. Dad suffered a serious decline in health in 1994 and we closed all the stores. They joined the ranks of Jewish-owned businesses in the Pee Dee that have passed into history.



Virginia Parnell managed Larry's Darling-ton store from the 1960s until the 1990s.



Rose Mae Wright, shown with husband, Roland, worked in Larry's store in Florence before becoming manager. All images courtesy of Richard Weintraub.

Growing up with Ben Bernanke

Chairman of the Federal Reserve since 2006, Ben Bernanke is without doubt Dillon's most famous and influential native son. His hometown friends remember him well.

Robin Schafer

I was in college at the time Ben Bernanke worked as a waiter at South of the Border, but I have many earlier memories of him. He was one of my favorite childhood friends—three years younger than I am but only two classes behind me because he skipped the second grade. I was on the safety patrol in the fifth grade. Ben used to come to my crossing on his way to East Elementary School. I knew that he had placed ninth in a national spelling bee, so I would make him spell the largest word I knew—"encyclopedia"—before I let him cross the street. He always carried a brief case. Ben could multiply two four-digit numbers in his head as fast as you can punch the numbers into a calculator. We were in a few bands together in Dillon High School—Ben on the saxophone and me on guitar. We introduced rock music to the Pee Dee playing "Light My Fire" by the Doors on Channel 13 in Florence. We were also in a band called the Muchachos. We played Herb Alpert music. Ben was a great guy. Everyone in town really liked him and his family. He could have become Dillon's dog catcher and I would still say that.

Claire Goldman Putterman

I remember how Ben and my brother Nathan spent every waking hour together. They were inseparable because they were both geniuses and no one else could relate to them! I remember finding millions of sheets of paper in our home with numbers written all over. It was some sort of math game they'd play.

I also remember that my mom took Ben to the South Carolina State Spelling Bee in Columbia. He lost in the finals with the word *edelweiss*. He also went with us to the premier showing of *The Sound of Music* in Columbia. That was a big deal!

We used to play baseball together. We were in band together for a number of years. Our families were best of friends so there was a lot of time spent together—synagogue, holidays, etc.

Nathan Goldman

I have so many stories about Ben. He is literally like



Ben Bernanke and Nathan Goldman, Dillon High School marching band, 1968. Courtesy of Claire Goldman Putterman.

a brother to me. I was ten when my father died, and the Bernankes became my second family. I am three years older than Ben, but we spent a lot of time together. I would go to his house for Shabbat lunch probably two to three times a month. They were the only family in the county that kept kosher, and we would do the full benching after lunch.

My senior year in high school, Ben would walk the four or five blocks to my house and we would walk together to the school about six or seven more blocks away. He and I played together after school most days and during the summer. We played baseball nearly ten months of the year—at the playground or in his back yard. We played football in his front yard and basketball in his driveway. Ben's father, a wonderful man, often played basketball with us. The Bernankes had a Ping-Pong table in their converted garage and we'd play there too.

I often spent the night at Ben's house. I remember one night we watched the Democratic primary returns and went to bed. Ben's father woke us in the middle of the night to tell us Robert Kennedy had been assassinated.

I can remember once when the new synagogue was built in Myrtle Beach. Ben's grandfather, Jonas Bernanke, drove Ben and me to the Beach for the dedication of the sanctuary. Another time we went to a youth conven-

tion at the Conservative shul in Charlotte, and I stayed with Ben in his Friedman grandparents' home. We used to talk baseball (our joint passion), politics, and religion. In the days before Wikipedia, it was a full-time job to find out who was Jewish—baseball players and other celebrities. One final comment, Ben was and is the smartest person I've ever known.

Harold Kornblut

My recollections of Ben are primarily from religious school—we were the only two boys in our age group at Ohav Shalom Synagogue in Dillon. I remember struggling with Hebrew to such a point that Mrs. Epstein offered to give me private lessons in the back of the family's furniture store in Latta to catch up. Ben, on the other hand, seemed to master Hebrew by the fourth grade and could read and translate the text with confidence and ease.

When we were of driving age—I had my beginner's permit at 14 and a daytime special restricted license at 15—I would drive Ben, Nathan Goldman, Claire Goldman, and Janis Kornblut to Florence to meet with the

rabbi for youth group. I remember Rabbi Howard Folb would ask a question and Ben would answer it before the rabbi could finish the sentence. In youth group functions Ben was popular and mixed well with the other teens. He was reasonably athletic, adept at pickup basketball, which I think he still plays.

As seniors in high school, Ben and I hung out at the beach with the local crowd from Dillon and Latta. While attending college at the University of Georgia, I went up to Boston with some friends and visited Ben who was living across the Charles River in Winthrop House at Harvard. I remember his three-room suite with a fireplace, kitchen, and common living area, which compared favorably to my accommodations at U.Ga. in a 20-room dorm with a lavatory at the end of the hall. I remember having a good time socializing, eating pizza, and drinking beer at local pubs, and going with Ben to the Boston Garden to watch the Celtics play. I also remember that Ben was busy working on computer modeling in microeconomics, a relatively new field at the time, so he could not go on to Montreal with us to party.

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Together with the College of Charleston's Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program and the Jewish Heritage Collection at the Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library, JHSSC is promoting both South Carolina's Jewish history and its academic resources. Through the Center for Southern Jewish Culture we are bringing eminent scholars from across the country to present their research on southern Jewish life. Thanks to the Society's efforts, South Carolina's Jewish influence stands out in the greater community—a community that takes to heart the significance of its past. The long and important Jewish history of South Carolina has never had the statewide and national attention that it is now receiving.

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Tribute to Ruth Brody Greenberg:

August 6, 1920 – July 13, 2012

by Rabbi Aaron Sherman

It is with sadness that we mark the passing of Ruth Brody Greenberg, a complicated and generous woman who was a leader of the Florence Jewish community and whose family was well known throughout the Carolinas. Ruth was an early Pillar of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

Ruth leaves behind a legacy of success. Her two sons, Phillip and Stuart, both are accomplished physicians. Ruth had five grandchildren: Andy and Barnett who live in Charleston, Laura who was recently married in Kiawah and currently lives in New York City, Brody who lives in Florida, and Patty who lives in Washington DC and plans to be married in Charleston next spring. Nanny, as Ruth was known to her grandchildren, taught her granddaughters to be strong, independent women. She taught them to challenge themselves and never to settle in life. She also taught her grandchildren to value family and Judaism. Ruth believed in God and Judaism. She was strongly, actively, and proudly Jewish.

Ruth's father, Hyman Brody, and his brother immigrated to the United States from Russia to escape religious persecution. Soon after Hyman brought his wife, Bessie, and their six children to America, he was ready to move from Brooklyn to a more rural location. Hyman and his family relocated to Anderson, South Carolina, where he had a friend, but soon moved to Sumter, where Ruth was born.

Hyman was a cobbler and opened a shop in Sumter. From this small shop the Brody department stores grew. Ruth's brothers opened and managed stores across the region. By the time the business was sold to Proffitt's in 1998, the Brodys had stores in Kinston, Greenville, New Bern, Jacksonville, Rocky Mount, and Goldsboro, North Carolina, as well as Sumter, South Carolina. Ruth's grand-

children remember buying clothes in those stores. Ruth's brothers were instrumental in creating a medical school at East Carolina University. In 1999 the school was renamed the Brody School of Medicine.

Ruth's mother was not well, so Ruth was raised by her ten older brothers, who treated her like a princess. In these early years when the family did not have much money, her brothers worked extremely hard and would pool their funds to buy something special for their sister. They would leave Hanukkah gifts on her bed. When she woke up, she was surprised and thrilled. Later in life Ruth took care of her brothers. Whenever they needed to, they could crash at Ruth and Abe's house in Florence.

Ruth outlived all ten brothers. She was an independent woman who left home in 1938 to attend Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, graduated from Ohio State University in 1942 and, until 1945, ran the family's department store in Greenville, North Carolina, while her brothers served in World War II. In 1946 Ruth married Stephen Abraham Greenberg and moved to his hometown of Florence, where he set up practice as a general physician.

Ruth loved playing golf, eating healthily, and staying fit. She was dedicated to community service. She gave generously to the Florence Public Library, the Florence Symphony Orchestra, and the Pee Dee Coalition for Sexual Abuse, and was a multi-year member of the Florence Medical Auxiliary. An active member and sustainer of Beth Israel Congregation, Ruth took charge of a major renovation of the sanctuary. Many of the stained glass windows were donated by Ruth and her family.

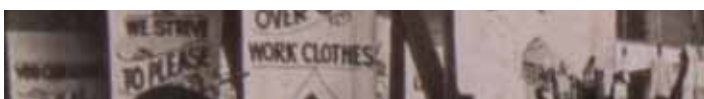
The Jewish and non-Jewish communities both benefited from Ruth's big heart and open hand. Many people turned out for her funeral on a hot summer day in Florence.

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