



THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of SOUTH CAROLINA

Fall 2015 Volume XX ~ Number 2

*A Tale of Two Cities
(and a few small towns)*

*Register now for fall meeting in
Columbia and Orangeburg, SC
November 7-8*





THE
JEWISH
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

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Cover, clockwise from top left: Jake Kalinsky with his mother, Ida, and two sisters in Trestina, Poland, ca. 1912, courtesy of Bruce Kremer; Lipman and Henrietta Block Rich on the porch of their Ellis Avenue home in Orangeburg, ca. 1932, courtesy of Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn; Blanche Cohen, dressed for a dance recital, ca. 1938, courtesy of Ronald Cohen; Sheppard and Sara Pearlstone with sons Sam and Leo and their cook at the family home in St. Matthews, ca. 1897, courtesy of Marilyn Cohn Fine; Louis and Ida Kligman and son, Melton, at Kligman's Army Store on Assembly Street in Columbia, 1935, Kligman and Firetag family papers, Special Collections, College of Charleston; Rivkin's Cash & Carry Delicatessen, Columbia, 1936, courtesy of McKissick Museum, USC.

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Historians Belinda and Richard Gergel describe Columbia's early Jewish settlers as pioneers who rose to prominence in politics and society. This remarkable record of success sets the stage for the essays that follow. Jewish merchants populated Main and, later, Assembly streets in the 19th and 20th centuries. Building "something from nothing," Jewish scrap dealers who became steel magnates benefited from exceptional entrepreneurship and a network of family and business relations. After the Second World War, Columbia's small Jewish community welcomed four families of survivors of the Shoah. The Columbia section ends with Robin Waites's report on the recent launch of Historic Columbia's Jewish Heritage Initiative, dedicated to documenting the city's Jewish history and promoting public awareness of our storied past..... 4

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Beginning in the early- to mid-19th century, a small but significant number of Jewish immigrants made their way to the rural region of South Carolina between Columbia and Charleston to start a new life. In the eight stories that follow this introduction, descendants of those who were bold enough to venture forth share their families' experiences in Orangeburg and the nearby towns of Holly Hill, St. Matthews, Elloree, Branchville, Bowman, and Eutawville. The accounts reveal strong feelings of connection to the places where the newcomers built businesses and enjoyed lives characterized by close family ties, amicable relations with non-Jewish neighbors, and concerted efforts to maintain their Jewish identity. The sense of nostalgia is palpable as the small-town Jew disappears from view..... 14

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Letter from the President



It has been my honor to have served as president of JHSSC the past two years. We have enjoyed several milestones during my tenure, among them the 20th anniversary of the Society, a long-range plan brought to fruition, and a totally redesigned website. Much has been accomplished through combined efforts.

The Society continues on an upswing. Our level of paid memberships is high, making JHSSC the largest statewide Jewish organization in South Carolina. Our financial base is strong, thanks in large part to our Pillars, who commit to contribute \$1,000 annually for five years. The Society's close association with the Jewish Heritage Collection and the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston produces win-win relationships for all and provides access to high quality academic and administrative resources for our programs and publications.

Our meeting in Charleston in May was not only historic and meaningful, but highly educational as well. As we commemorated the 70th anniversary of VE-Day, we all were inspired by remarks from Dan Puckett, Allan Lichtman, Jack Bass, Theodore Rosengarten, David Slucki, Samuel Gruber, CofC Visiting Scholar Ruth Ellen Gruber, and our many panelists. Congratulations again to Ann Meddin Hellman, who was presented with the Order of the Jewish Palmetto at a special reception. Ann is one of only four members honored with this prestigious award. It has been a privilege to work with such an amazing individual. Thank you, Ann, for all that you have done and are still doing for our great organization.

Please mark your calendars now and make plans to attend the JHSSC fall meeting, "A Tale of Two Cities," November 7-8, 2015. Historic Columbia is co-sponsoring and collaborating with us for the Columbia portion of the meeting. On Saturday November 7, we will explore Columbia's Jewish history, beginning with a presentation by Belinda and Richard Gergel

about the capital city's early Jews, continuing with a panel discussion focused on downtown merchants, and winding up with a walking tour to visit the sites where Jewish storekeepers once plied their trade. On Sunday we will travel to Orangeburg for a tour of the Jewish cemetery, the unveiling of a new historical marker, and a discussion about the Jewish families who settled in Orangeburg and the small towns in its orbit.

I want to thank those who have served with me during the past two years. The executive committee has been engaged and productive.

Thank you to Susan Altman, Ernie Marcus, Barry Draisen, Alex Cohen, David Cohen, Garry Baum, and Steve Savitz. And, many thanks to Marty Perlmutter, Dale Rosengarten, Enid Idelsohn, and Mark Swick, who keep the Society going on a daily basis. Their work and dedication is what makes us strong.

We will elect and install new members of the executive committee during the fall meeting. Please see the box to the left for the proposed slate.

In closing, I invite you to visit the renovated JHSSC website. Besides photographs of Society events, back issues of the magazine, and extensive records of Jewish burials in South Carolina, the site has a new section titled "Our Stories," as well as links to synagogues, Jewish community centers, day schools, and other useful resources. Most important, you can click on the "Get Involved" tab and fill out the volunteer form: jhssc.org/get-involved/volunteer/. We welcome your help!

With warmest regards,

David Draisen, ddraisen@bellsouth.net

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During the May 2015 meeting in Charleston, members of Sam Siegel's family pose in front of a display of the late soldier's World War II diary and memorabilia. Left to right: Herb Novit, Sam's brother-in-law, Gale Siegel Messerman, Paul Siegel, and Penny Siegel Blachman, Sam's children. Photo by Jeri Perlmutter.



Deep Roots, Lofty Branches: Perspectives on the Capital City's Early Jews

by Belinda F. and Richard Gergel

Columbia's Jewish roots extend deep into the soil of the South Carolina Midlands. Jews have been a part of the city's history from the day Columbia became the new state capital in 1786, when seven Jews purchased lots at the public auction that launched the town's development.

Even before Columbia was officially established, Jews likely lived in the area. Moving inland from colonial Charleston, which had drawn Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews from the West Indies, England, Germany, Poland, and other parts of Europe, colonists were lured by the offer of free land for settlement and bargain real estate prices for investment. London merchant Joseph Salvador, for example, purchased one hundred thousand acres in 1755 in the Ninety Six District, an area northwest of what would later become Richland County. His nephew, Francis Salvador, represented Ninety Six in the First Provincial Congress in 1774, making him the first Jew in the New World to serve in elective office.

Early Jewish settlers found a warm reception in the frontier environment of the new capital. Bringing much needed skills in business, trade, and the professions, they opened dry goods stores, grocery stores, auction houses, and saloons and were among the city's first doctors and lawyers. They also brought business ties to Charleston and other coastal cities, including Philadelphia, New York, and Newport. These were connections that any new town, especially a young state capital, would find desirable.

Columbia's first Jews embraced opportunities for public service that linked them intimately to the city's development. Charleston native Judah Barrett opened a dry goods store in Columbia in the late 1810s. Elected to the town council in 1828, he became the first of three Jewish public officials in Columbia before the Civil War.

Born in Spanish Town, Jamaica, Jacob de Leon was a Sephardic Jew who in 1789 married Hannah Hendricks, a member of two of New York's most prominent Jewish families. By 1799 the couple had settled in Charleston,

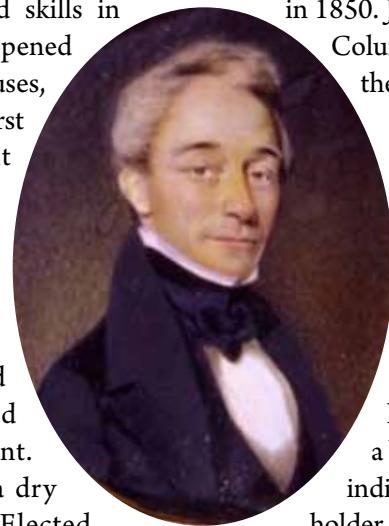
and in the early 1820s they followed their sons and moved to the Midlands. The younger son, Mordecai Hendricks de Leon, built a lucrative medical practice in Columbia, counting among his patients Dr. Thomas Cooper, president of the South Carolina College (now University of South Carolina), and Civil War diarist Mary Boykin Chestnut. In 1833 he was elected to the first of three terms as Columbia's intendant or mayor. His wife, Rebecca Lopez de Leon of New York, became an early leader of the Columbia Ladies Benevolent Society, whose members included the capital's social elite and whose mission was to aid the city's poor and needy.

Isaac Lyons, a Bavarian Jew who first settled in Philadelphia and then Charleston, arrived in Columbia in the 1820s with his grown sons Henry and Jacob Cohen Lyons. His sons opened a successful grocery store. Henry Lyons was elected to town council in the 1840s and served as Columbia's second Jewish intendant in 1850. Jacob Cohen Lyons was an early director of the Columbia Athenaeum and became the president of the Columbia Gas Works.

Chapman Levy was Columbia's first Jewish attorney. Admitted to the bar in 1806, he was a veteran of the War of 1812 who gained notoriety for his prosecution of the brother of Governor John Taylor, which ultimately led to a duel between Levy and the governor's son that Levy, a master duelist, won. An active Mason, he served as "Worshipful Master," or leader, of the Columbia Lodge #39. He owned a brickyard near the Columbia Canal, and records indicate that in 1820 he was the largest Jewish slave holder in America, owning some 31 slaves. In the late 1820s Levy returned to his hometown of Camden and formed a law partnership with his lifelong friend, William McWillie. He served in both the state house and senate from Kershaw County and took an active role as a Unionist in the Nullification Convention of 1832. In 1838 he and McWillie moved to Mississippi, where he died in 1849.

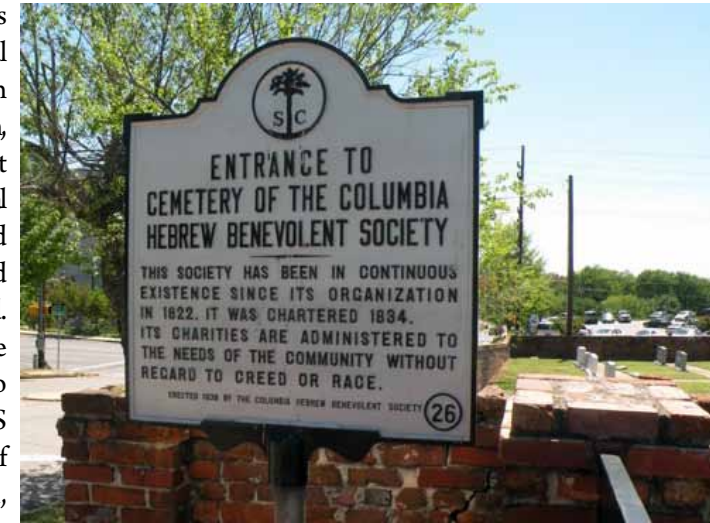


Above: Henry Lyons (1805-1858), ca. 1850, oil on canvas. Collection of Sandy Luce. Below: Chapman Levy (1787-1849), ca. 1835, watercolor on ivory. Gift of Thomas W. Crockett. Special Collections, College of Charleston.



As early as 1822 Columbia's Jews established a Hebrew Burial Society and a cemetery on Gadsden Street. Founded in 1826 by 11 men, the Columbia Hebrew Benevolent Society (CHBS) claimed 29 "Original Members." The CHBS assumed responsibility for the cemetery and provided assistance for Jews in need.

In the 1840s, when the community had grown to approximately 25 families, the CHBS spearheaded the organization of Congregation Shearith Israel, and CHBS members assumed key leadership roles. The society also erected a building on Assembly Street to house both a religious school and a synagogue. The religious school,



under the direction of Boanna Wolff, the sister-in-law of Henry Lyons, was the seventh such school for Jewish youth in the country. The congregation employed a part-time rabbi who also served as cantor and taught Hebrew.

In sum, Columbia's early Jewish residents found their new hometown a place of acceptance and opportunity. As community leader Henry S. Cohen noted in an address in 1849: "In contemplating, as Israelites, our position in this land, to us truly a 'land of milk and honey,' we may justly exclaim, with Israel of old, 'the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand... and hath given us this land.'"

Columbia's Jewish Merchants: A Storied Past

by Robert Olguin, Research Assistant, Historic Columbia

Columbia replaced Charleston as South Carolina's capital in 1786, bringing the seat of government within reach of the state's Upcountry settlers, whose numbers were increasing as pioneers ventured inland to pursue promising opportunities. The town, a planned community located on the banks of the Congaree River, was chartered in 1805. The new settlement attracted investors from the Lowcountry, Charleston in particular. By 1822 Jews were numerous enough to organize a burial society, and four years later, to found the Columbia Hebrew Benevolent Society.¹

In the first two decades of the 19th century, Columbia's business district featured several stores carrying general merchandise, including a grocery store run by one of Columbia's earliest Jewish merchants, Jacob Barrett.² Besides groceries, Barrett's employee Edwin J. Scott recalled selling dry

goods—shoes, hats, saddles—and liquors, among other things.³

Columbia's growth benefited from the business skills and commercial connections of Jewish merchants, especially those with ties to Charleston. Humphrey and Frances Marks, who opened an upscale bar named Marks Porter and Relish House, and Levi Pollock and Phineas Solomon, who together ran an auction business, all moved from Charleston to Columbia.⁴ Another important early business was operated by the Lyons family, who had come to Charleston from Philadelphia in 1811.⁵ Isaac Lyons and his sons, Jacob and Henry, moved to Columbia in the early 1820s and opened a grocery store on the corner of Richardson (Main) and Gervais streets. Their establishment occupied the same location for many years and was well known among the city's residents, whose support proved crucial in electing Henry Lyons mayor in 1850.⁶



Lourie's Department Store, Columbia, SC, 2000. Left to right: Frank, A. M. (Mick), Joel, Isadore, and Louis Lourie. Photo by Bill Aron. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Columbia had become a major commercial hub by the start of the Civil War but suffered significant damage during the Union occupation. On February 17, 1865, less than two months before the war ended, nearly one-third of the city burned. The fire's destruction centered in and around Richardson Street (today's Main Street) and destroyed the heart of the business district.

During Columbia's recovery, some of the old Jewish businesses were rebuilt and new ones were established on Assembly and Main streets. Philip Epstein, a founder and president of the Tree of Life Congregation from 1899 to 1901, opened D. Epstein's Clothing Store with his brother David in 1867 on the 1500 block of Main Street. Originally from Poland, the brothers were among a handful of Jewish merchants who helped revive the business district's vitality. Other such merchants included Henry Steele, who opened a sundry store at 1328 Assembly Street, and Mordecai David, who started several different businesses including grocery and clothing stores.⁷

Beginning in the late 1800s, the number of Jewish businesses grew with the arrival of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe. Joseph Levy, one such immigrant, worked tirelessly for years as a dry goods merchant in Columbia to sponsor the rest of his family. By 1906 Joseph had saved enough money to book passage from Russia for his wife, Sarah, and his son, Moe, to come to Columbia. Joseph's work ethic would carry on with Moe, who started a clothing store on the corner of Assembly and Lady streets in 1920. A Columbia staple for nearly a century, Moe Levy's became an icon for Levi's jeans and a retail mainstay until 2014.⁸

Similarly, Gabriel Stern, who traveled from Kielce, Poland, to Columbia in 1915, opened a shoe store on Assembly Street in the early 1930s. Initially Stern's Department Store and ultimately Stern's Shoes, the business played a valuable role in the Jewish community. According to Gabriel's daughter Anne Stern Solomon, her father hired many Jewish youngsters from the neighborhood and taught them important business skills, such as how to sell merchandise and interact with customers, skills that would remain with them for the rest of their lives.⁹

The heyday of Columbia's Jewish merchants came in the mid-20th century with expansion into the suburbs and the development of shopping malls. Arnold Levinson, who learned the clothing business working in his parent's dry goods store in Barnwell, opened his own shop, Brittons, at 1337 Main Street in 1955. Part of Brittons success, remarked Arnold's wife, Faye, stemmed from Arnold's "eye for fashion" and his "love of fabric," which explains why Brittons was one of the first Columbia stores to sell Ralph Lauren. Thanks to his fashion sense and willingness to take risks, Arnold's establishment expanded to include four locations—Dutch Square, Richland Mall, Columbia Mall, and Main Street. Today Brittons operates one store, run by two of Arnold's children, Lucky and Stacy.¹⁰

Left, top: Brittons, 1337 Main Street, Columbia, SC, 1955. Collection of Perry Lancaster. Bottom: Berry's on Main closed its doors in 1982, after more than 40 years serving Columbia. Russell Maxey Photograph Collection, courtesy of Richland Library, Columbia, SC.



Moe Levy (left) and Morris Chaplin in Moe Levy's store, the first in Columbia to sell Levi's 501 jeans, 1928. Courtesy of Florence Hirschman Levy. Special Collections, College of Charleston.



Moe Levy outside his store at the corner of Assembly and Lady streets, Columbia, SC, 1958. Courtesy of Florence Hirschman Levy. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Though one might inherit a family business, a lot of work is required to maintain its success. Ian Picow, son of Nathan Picow, who opened King's Jewelers on Main Street in 1945, remarked in a June 2015 interview about the difficulties of retail business. Not only are the hours long and the work week grueling, but merchants have to invest their entire life in the success of their enterprise,¹¹ as exemplified by Joe Berry, owner of Berry's on Main. According to Alan Reyner, the grandson of Charles Reyner, who opened Reyner, Inc. Jewelers at 1604 Main Street in 1919, Joe "was a great merchant" and "could sell just about anything."¹²

What little is left of the thriving downtown Jewish business community on Assembly and Main streets exists only in the details of the built environment and a handful of surviving businesses. Next time you are in Columbia, pay close attention to the 1600 block of Main Street. You will notice remnants of this bygone era as you pass the former location of Lourie's at 1601 Main Street, now Mast General, or the floor tiling of Reyner's jewelry store at 1604 Main Street. Continue further and you will come across the last remaining Main Street Jewish merchants: Nathan Picow of King's Jewelers, Roselen Rivkin of Marks Men's Wear, and Andy Zalkin of Zalkin's Army and Navy Store. All three fondly remember the close-knit community of merchants on Main Street. Likewise, swing by the 1300 block of Assembly Street and chat with Manny Lifchez at Star Music, Harold Rittenberg of Reliable Loan Office and Pawn Shop, or Jay Friedman of Bonded Loan Office, who, at the slightest provocation, will share their stories of Columbia's past.

Right, top: King's Jewelry Store, founded in 1946 by Nathan Picow, is one of the few remaining Jewish-owned businesses on Main Street. Photo by Robert Olguin. Middle: Reliable Loan Office and Pawn Shop., established in 1942, was managed by Moe Levy's wife, Florence Hirschman Levy. Photo by Robert Olguin. Bottom: Anne and Ted Solomon standing in front of what was once Stern's Shoes, ca. 1989. Collection of Marcie Baker.

NOTES

1. Belinda and Richard Gergel, *In Pursuit of the Tree of Life: A History of the Early Jews of Columbia, South Carolina, and the Tree of Life Congregation* (Tree of Life Congregation, 1996), xii; "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities – Columbia, South Carolina," Institute of Southern Jewish Life, <http://www.isjl.org/south-carolina-columbia-encyclopedia.html>
2. Gergel and Gergel, 3.
3. Edwin J. Scott, *Random Recollections of a Long Life, 1806 to 1876* (Library of Congress, 1884), 19–21.
4. Belinda F. Gergel, "The Israelites of Columbia, South Carolina: The Development of an Antebellum Jewish Community," *The Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (1996): 38.
5. Emily Marie Ferrara, Harlan Greene, Dale Rosengarten, and Susan Wyssen, introduction to *The Diary of Joseph Lyons, 1833–1835* (Charleston, SC: College of Charleston Library, 2005), 500–501.
6. Gergel and Gergel, 4.
7. Ibid., 57–58.
8. Terri Hodges, interview by Robert Olguin, June 24, 2015, Historic Columbia, Columbia, SC; Allison Caldwell, "Celebrating a Columbia Landmark, and a Milestone Birthday for its Matriarch, Mrs. Florence Levy," *Columbia Business Monthly*, February 1, 2013.
9. Anne Stern Solomon, audio interview by Robin Waites, June 26, 2015, Historic Columbia, Columbia, SC.
10. Faye Levinson, interview by Robert Olguin, June 30, 2015, Historic Columbia, Columbia, SC.
11. *The State*, June 15, 1961; Ian Picow, interview by Robert Olguin, June 24, 2015.
12. *The State*, Nov. 30, 1956; Alan Reyner, interview by Robert Olguin, June 24, 2015.



From Scrap to Steel: How Jewish Columbians Created an Industry That Built the Midlands

by Fielding Freed, Director of House Museums, Historic Columbia

At one time Columbia, South Carolina, produced more fabricated structural steel per capita than anywhere else in the country, and Jewish families owned most of those companies. Kline Iron & Metal Company, Chatham Steel, and Columbia Steel & Metal were just a few of the businesses that made the essential materials that fueled the post-World War II building boom in the Southeast. Each started as a scrap metal business founded by people who arrived in America with virtually no material possessions, some of whom fled persecution in their home countries.

"I never saw a piece of steel I wasn't crazy about."
—Jerry Kline, Kline Iron & Steel

Watching Jerry Kline reminisce about his family's steel business, you believe him. His eyes light up when he tells the story of his grandfather, Philip, and great uncle, Meyer—two inseparable brothers who emigrated from

the corner of Gervais and Huger streets, in an industrial and warehouse area of Columbia known for its textile mills. From 1923 to about 1935, the Klines focused on reclaiming and recycling scrap metals. When Shands Steel went out of business in 1935, the Klines bought their equipment and the fabrication of structural steel eventually became the company's focus.

At the beginning of the Second World War, Jerry's father, Bernard, knew Kline Steel was not large enough to bid successfully on navy contracts. He spearheaded the creation of the South Carolina Steel Fabricating Company, a cooperative of several steel businesses, of which he became president. The consortium ultimately fabricated major parts for 225 Landing Ship, Tanks (LSTs) that were essential to the success of amphibious invasions in both the European and Pacific theaters.

During the 1950s Kline Iron & Steel diversified into the broadcast tower business. The pinnacle of Kline's tower building, the KVLV-TV mast in North Dakota, was completed in 1963 and still stands today. The tower is 2,063 feet high—taller than the Washington Monument and the Empire State building combined. Jerry estimates that Kline built 90 percent of the broadcast towers in South Carolina.

It was not an easy decision for Jerry to sell the company in 2000 after three generations of family ownership, but he looks back with pride at all he and his forebears accomplished. Although he was in the business a long time, Jerry says, "We never stopped being a young company."

"There was a brotherhood in the scrap business."
—Samuel J. Tenenbaum, Chatham Steel

For Samuel Tenenbaum, the story of the rise of Columbia's Jewish-owned iron and steel companies in the 20th century is

one of a group of entrepreneurs who took "junk and grew that into a sophisticated, high tech, and high-end capital business with good-paying jobs in a place you would never expect."

Samuel's grandfather, also named Samuel, left Poland right before World War I and in 1915 founded Chatham Steel (named after Chatham County) in Savannah, Georgia. Tenenbaum explained that by collecting waste items like scrap metal, young Jewish men with nothing were able to turn old and castoff materials into something new and profitable.

The elder Samuel's three sons eventually joined the business, which expanded into plumbing and industrial supplies in 1937. In the late 1940s the company branched out yet again into steel warehousing.

Over the years, Chatham Steel continually sought out and incorporated the latest technologies, eventually operating five facilities in the South, including one in South Carolina. Chatham's first location in Columbia was on Shop Road across from Owen Steel. Tenenbaum was one of several third-generation descendants working for the company when they decided to sell to a larger corporation, Reliance Steel & Aluminum, in 1998, although Chatham still functions as a division within the company.

"Things are so global today..."

—Fred Seidenberg, Columbia Steel & Metal and Mid-Carolina Steel & Recycling Company

Fred Seidenberg's Mid-Carolina Steel & Recycling Company is one of the last locally-owned scrap metal businesses in Columbia. Fred started the business in 1983 after leaving Columbia Steel & Metal,

which his father, Oscar Seidenberg, started with Max Dickman and Nathan Addlestone in the late 1940s. Columbia Steel & Metal was originally located on Assembly Street across from the former Capital City baseball stadium. Oscar had gotten his start in the scrap business

after working for distant cousins, the Katz brothers, who owned two scrapyards in Augusta, Georgia, and one in Columbia.

As time went by, Fred noticed a trend: "Steel mills are getting more and more into scrap where 40 years ago they did not diversify." This has led to more competition, often from out of state, for local metal companies, which in turn led to more families selling their businesses. Larger companies also can deal with regulations more easily than smaller businesses, regulations that simply didn't exist in the early scrapyards days.

In 2000 Fred diversified his business and opened an ornamental ironwork company next door to his scrapyard. Continuing the family tradition, one of Seidenberg's three children decided to work in the field. Fred and his son Justin started a steel and scrap brokerage, American Metal Solutions, in June 2008.

When examining the history of Jewish-owned scrap metal and steel companies in Columbia, there are a few recurring themes: entrepreneurship, a network of initial support and continuous business relationships in the community, and eventually a shift away from the family business by later generations who choose to work in other fields about which they are passionate.

Speaking about his family's business, Samuel Tenenbaum concludes: "We are the great American story." The same could be said of the other Jewish scrap iron and steel businessmen who made "something from nothing" with their brains and their hands.



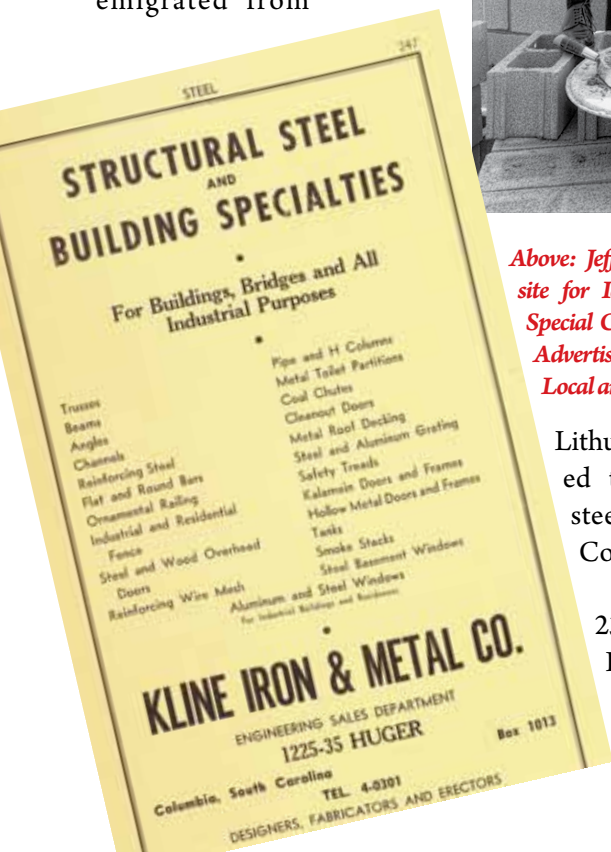
Tenenbaum cousins, 1956, standing, left to right: Davida, Barbara, Marsha, Bailee (deceased), and Bert in Arnold's arms; seated, left to right: Sheldon, Samuel holding sister Karen, and Samuel Waldman, whose mother was a Tenenbaum. Courtesy of Samuel Tenenbaum.



Above: Jeff Selig, Alan Kahn, and Jerry Kline at the construction site for Iceland U.S.A., Irmo, SC, 2000. Photo by Bill Aron. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Left: Kline Iron & Steel Advertisement, 1950 Columbia city directory. Courtesy Walker Local and Family History Center, Richland Library, Columbia, SC.

Lithuania and founded their namesake steel company in Columbia.

On February 23, 1923, Kline Iron & Metal Company was established on



Oscar Seidenberg (left) and his son, Fred, at Columbia Steel & Metal Company yard, Shop Road, Columbia, 1980. Courtesy of Fred Seidenberg.

Resettling Survivors of the Shoah *by Lilly Stern Filler*

Imagine leaving your home country, immigrating to a foreign land, and starting a new life in the United States of America. That would be a robust agenda for anyone. Now imagine the difficulties of four immigrant families who also survived the Holocaust, enduring years of horror and uncertainty, hard labor in concentration camps, and the loss of family members and friends under Nazi brutality. Their story is an American one, set within South Carolina's capital city.

In 1949, in the aftermath of World War II, as communities across America volunteered to help resettle Holocaust refugees, Columbia prepared to welcome the

Miller, Goldberg, Gorney, and Stern families. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) sponsored three of the families and American relatives hosted the fourth. The sponsorship primarily covered the logistics and finances involved with bringing the designated families to their host cities, and then the cities would take responsibility for housing, job searching, language training, etc. At the time Columbia had only 250 Jewish families in a population of 100,000. This small contingent was ready to exhibit its civic pride and sense of duty and extend a welcome to the new arrivals. The different worlds of Holocaust refugees and American Jewish citizens were to become one, but the union would take time and perseverance.

Members of Columbia's Jewish community, including Hannah Rubin and Dena Citron Bank, were instrumental in laying the foundation for the arrival of these families. It was agreed that having only a few Holocaust refugees would be easier for the community to handle. To quote Mrs. Rubin: "We wanted

to do right by these people and help them become independent as soon as possible. These survivors spoke very little English, had minimal work skills, and were not familiar with our culture, but wanted to be a part of the American dream." Columbia's

Jews offered assistance with transportation, employment skills, housing, and English lessons.

The first family arrived in March 1949 with the help of HIAS. Cela and David Miller lived initially with the Sam Gendil family. They were overwhelmed by the warm welcome of the host family and the community. An article about the Millers ran in *The State* on May 27, 1949, under the headline "Jewish Family Brought Here Amazed

at Secure US Living." The report highlighted their journey to the United States and their apparent bewilderment associated with "living in freedom."

Soon after they arrived, Ray Gendil of the host family found Cela quietly crying in her room; after some gentle coaxing they found out Cela, who was a few months pregnant, was terrified she would be sent back to Europe because she was expecting her first child. Cela and David were reassured that the pregnancy was a wonderful event and would not result in a forced return to Europe. Soon David was employed by Bob Burg of Columbia Distributors, a liquor distribution company. After a few years the Millers operated their own liquor stores, at one point owning as many as three.

Cela's sister, Bluma Goldberg, her husband, Felix, and their young son, Henry, followed the Millers to Columbia about nine months later, again sponsored by HIAS. Although trained as a printer, Felix was hired first as a janitor for General Arts, a



Above: David and Cela Miller (left) with Bluma and Felix Goldberg in Landsberg, Germany, ca. 1946. Below: The author's parents, Ben and Jadzia Sklar Stern, in Munich, Germany, ca. 1946. Courtesy of Lilly Stern Filler.



consortium of small home-supply businesses. Later he was hired by the Rothberg family to work in their company's floor-covering division. Always saving some of his hard-earned money, he was able to help his benefactors by "loaning them some money" for the business during a particularly difficult time. After a few years he was able to buy out the Rothbergs and concentrate on selling ceramic tile. In 1960 he opened the Tile Center, a company now operated by his children. Always a jokester, he would say, "It is hard to be Jewish," but continued to successfully promote and grow his business.

The third family brought to Columbia through the assistance of HIAS, the Gorneys, relocated after a short period of time.

In June 1949 my parents, Ben and Jadzia Stern, and I arrived in Columbia, sponsored by the Gabe Stern family. After living a few weeks with the family, we moved into a small apartment, and Dad, or Tata, as I sometimes called him, began working with the Sterns in retail. However, this was not his forte and he searched for employment in carpentry or construction. One day, while hitchhiking to work, he was picked up by Frank Roebuck. Mr. Roebuck worked in a building supply company where Dad was eager to be employed. Mr. Roebuck agreed to give him a chance in the business if he could "successfully collect on some bad debt." Despite language barriers, my father was able to make the collections, got the job, and then excelled in construction. Wanting greater

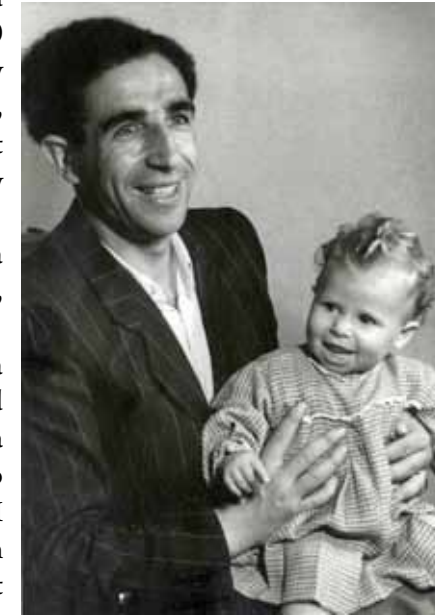
independence and thus needing a car to get to work, Dad walked into a used car dealership and purchased and drove out with a used car, never having had driving lessons.

Years later, after Dad founded Ben Stern Construction Company, Mr. Roebuck came to work for him. My father

involved himself almost immediately in the secular community and became a member of the Masons and then the Shriner's organization, becoming an active participant of the motorcycle brigade, riding in parades, dressed with hats and tassels.

It did not take long for the refugee families to become self-sufficient in their new homeland. The three that remained in Columbia prospered and grew very close because of their similar backgrounds, language, and experiences. I remember many "day trips" to Sesquicentennial Park with the Goldbergs and Millers for picnicking, swimming in the lake, relaxing, and reminiscing. They referred to themselves as the "Greeners," but did not want to hear this title used by others.

Several years later our family sponsored my mother's brother Ben Sklar from Poland, and the Felix Goldberg family sponsored Luba and Bernard Goldberg and their two children from Israel. All of the families became active in Columbia's Jewish community and civic affairs and contributed whatever they could to society. Often Dad would say, "Thank God for the American armed forces and thank God for the United States of America."



The author with her uncle, Ben Sklar, 1948. Courtesy of Lilly Stern Filler.

Columbia Jewish Heritage Initiative Is Up and Running *by Robin Waites, Executive Director, Historic Columbia*

After a year of careful planning, Historic Columbia has launched the Columbia Jewish Heritage Initiative, a multi-disciplinary project that aims to document and promote awareness of local Jewish history. Partners in the initiative include the College of Charleston's Jewish Heritage Collection (JHC), housed in Special Collections in the Addlestone Library, the Jewish Community Center (JCC) and Columbia Jewish Federation (CJF), the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, and Richland County Library.

In April 2014 leadership of the JCC and CJF approached Historic Columbia (HC) about the possibility of expanding its award-winning venture, "Connecting Communities through



History," to include a thematic exploration of Jewish life and culture. From there HC and the JCC/CJF invited representatives from various state and local organizations to discuss the community's needs and the potential for collaboration. At the top of the list, constituents felt, was an urgent desire to document the stories of Holocaust survivors who settled in Columbia and whose numbers are rapidly diminishing. Participants also noted that while Columbia enjoys a long and rich history of Jewish settlement, public access to and awareness of this heritage is limited.

Based on feedback from these and other stakeholders, Historic Columbia and the JCC/CJF established the Columbia Jewish Heritage Initiative (CJHI). A steering committee

composed of members from the initial focus groups helped define the project's goals and develop a plan of action. Organizers committed to 1) identify and fill gaps in the documentation of Columbia's Jewish history; 2) encourage dialogue by collecting and sharing stories, images, documents, etc.; 3) broadcast information to diverse audiences through print and web-based media and public programs; and 4) create an ongoing coalition to sustain the effort in the future.

With early support from a private donor, CJHI had the resources to begin recording stories of elders in Columbia's Jewish community. After gathering a list of potential interviewees and traveling to the College of Charleston for training with Dale Rosengarten, curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection, and Alyssa Neely, JHC's oral history archivist, CJHI volunteers Lilly Filler, Jane Kulbersh, and Gail Lieb began collecting stories. Once recorded, the interviews will be transcribed by Jewish Heritage College staff and made accessible through the Lowcountry Digital Library at <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/>.

A second shot in the arm came in May 2015 when the Central Carolina Community Foundation (CCCCF) awarded Historic Columbia \$20,000 to support the initiative. The grant, noted CCCC President and CEO JoAnn Turnquist, "will help Historic Columbia promote a more welcoming and vibrant community by celebrating our region's rich Jewish cultural history. We are delighted to provide funding for this outstanding program."

During the upcoming fall and winter, CJHI will host panels and roundtable discussions, bringing together people with different backgrounds and life experiences to share their stories. These interactions are also designed to open the door to greater connection and understanding, giving participants an opportunity to bond on the most basic level of respecting one another's humanity.

In May 2016 CJHI will utilize the research, interviews, and images collected throughout the fall and winter to present guided and web-based tours. Participants will be able to visit historic sites in person and to experience local Jewish history virtually via the Internet. Guided tours will include the Hebrew Benevolent Society



House of Peace Synagogue, at its second location on Marion Street, Columbia, SC, was constructed by member M. B. Kahn and dedicated in 1935. Courtesy of Richland Library.

Cemetery, the Big Apple, and many of the Jewish-owned Main and Assembly Street stores. While including the same roster of sites, the web-based tour will incorporate historic images, as well as excerpts from audio and video interviews.

Also in the spring, CJHI plans to install three historic markers at locations whose selection will be based on careful research. By providing historic context for these places, the markers will connect passers-by with familiar public spaces they may have overlooked before.

"The development of a vibrant Jewish community in Columbia was no historical accident," explain Belinda and Richard Gergel in their 1996 book, *In Pursuit of the Tree of Life*. "From the inception of the Carolina Colony, Jews were made to feel welcome and were guaranteed religious liberty and citizenship rights long before these were secured in England or in most of the other colonies." This openness was extended to Jews from the earliest decades of settlement in the late 1600s, through various waves of immigration to the present day. Still, there remains a need to break down stereotypes and demystify minority groups whose activities, cultural characteristics, etc., are often misunderstood by the majority population. Ultimately, CJHI provides an opportunity to engage the broader community in conversations about our past in a way that will help build a more cohesive, inclusive, and empathetic citizenry that is deeply and authentically connected to the place where we all live.

To learn more about CJHI, go to www.historiccolumbia.org/CJHI or visit us on Facebook: Columbia Jewish Heritage Initiative. To share your ideas or volunteer your time, contact Robin Waites, Executive Director, Historic Columbia at 803.252.7742 ext. 14 or rwaites@historiccolumbia.org.

Meeting registration

Online at: jhssc.org/events/upcoming
with Visa, MasterCard, OR Discover, or American Express
By check, payable to JHSSC c/o Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program – 96 Wentworth Street, Charleston, SC 29424

Meeting fee:

\$50 per person both days; \$30 for Saturday or Sunday only

Questions: Enid Idelsohn, IdelsohnE@cofc.edu

Phone: (843) 953-3918 ~ fax: (843) 953-7624

Hotel reservations

Columbia Marriott
1200 Hampton Street
Columbia, SC 29201
(800) 593-6465

Special rate: \$119 per night plus tax

To get the special rate you must make your reservations before midnight on October 16, 2015 and mention you are with the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.



A Tale of Two Cities (and a few small towns)



Joint Meeting of Historic Columbia and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Saturday, November 7, 2015

- 10:00–11:15 A.M. Pre-conference Roundtable with Ex-Pats of South Carolina's Capital City**
An open-mic session moderated by Robin Rosenthal, Ph.D., Professor, Columbia College
Big Apple, 1000 Hampton Street, Columbia
- 11:30** Registration – *Agape Senior Conference Center, 1620 Main Street, Columbia*
- 12:00 P.M.** Lunch
- 1:00** **Deep Roots, Lofty Branches: Perspectives on the Capital City's Early Jews**
Presentation by Belinda and Richard Gergel
- 2:00** Break
- 2:15–3:30** Panel discussion – **Moving Merchandise and Making Memories: Contributions of Jewish Merchants to Columbia's Downtown Commercial District**
Moderator: Debbie Cohn
Panelists: Marcie Stern Baker, Harold Rittenberg, Manny Lifchez, Anne Stern Solomon, Andrew Zalkin
- 3:30** Break
- 3:45–4:45** Walking tour – **Meet Jewish Merchants, Past and Present, in Columbia's Commercial District**
- 5:00–6:30** Reception – *Big Apple, 1000 Hampton Street, Columbia*
Dinner on your own

Sunday, November 8

- 9:30–10:15 A.M. JHSSC board meeting, Big Apple, 1000 Hampton Street, Columbia**
Everyone is invited.
- 10:30** Depart for Orangeburg
Lunch on your own
- 12:30 P.M.** **Sunnyside Hebrew Cemetery Tour**, Summers Avenue, Orangeburg, SC
(entrance is across from First Presbyterian Church, 650 Summers Avenue)
- 1:30** **Marker unveiling, 1161 Russell Street, Orangeburg**
- 2:15–3:45** Panel discussion – **Midlands Memories: Patches on a Fading Quilt**
Temple Sinai, 808 Ellis Avenue, Orangeburg
Moderator: Dale Rosengarten, with introduction by David Farr
Panelists: Gene Atkinson, Blanche C. Cohen, Irvin Cohen, Ronald Cohen, Brenda Yelman Lederman, Ernest L. Marcus, Rhett Aronson Mendelsohn, Becky R. Ulmer

The conference packet will include maps.

Midlands Memories: Patches on a Fading Quilt

by Ernest L. Marcus

Over the past century a dominant theme of Jewish life in South Carolina and elsewhere in the South has been rapid urbanization and the almost complete disappearance of Jews from small towns and rural areas. The stories that follow look at the history of Jewish families in Orangeburg and nearby towns—all in the sparsely populated expanse between Charleston and Columbia. Each story is



Russell Street, downtown Orangeburg, SC, 1927. Courtesy of Special Collections.

a patch in the quilt of small-town experience, an extinguished life that still tugs at the hearts of those who grew up there.

Many common threads link the essays published here. First generation immigrants coming from Poland, Russia, or Germany in the late-19th and early-20th centuries became merchants in towns that in some ways resembled the shtetls they came from, often connecting with friends and relatives from the Old Country. Shopkeepers and businessmen catered to a diverse clientele and became leaders of their communities.

Religious practice varied, with observant families making the trek to synagogues in Charleston or Columbia, or organizing

services in private homes with lay leaders. The founding of Temple Sinai in Orangeburg in 1955 offered Jews in isolated towns the option of a more or less central place to gather.

With few exceptions, all of our authors remember an easy relationship with the broader Christian community and a feeling of being an integral part of local life. Regional press, historians, and museums readily acknowledge the important contributions

of the Jewish community to the Orangeburg area in the 20th century.

The depth and genuineness of these accounts strike a chord. Are connections to “place” as strong for families from urban areas? Connection to family was deep as lives were lived in simplicity and with acceptance from neighbors. Inter-marriage, the pull of professional opportunities in big cities, and a desire for children to grow up in proximity to other Jews all were factors in the demise of these small-town Jewish populations. By the end of the second generation, the vast majority of Jews had moved on to larger metropolitan areas. Clearly though, the memories still resonate.

Orangeburg: A Life Rich in Family and Friends

by Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn

The name Theodore Kohn looms large over Russell Street, Orangeburg’s main business thoroughfare. In 1848, at the age of eight, Kohn came to Orangeburg with his parents from Bavaria. When his parents returned home, young Kohn moved in with his uncle Deopold Louis, who is considered to be the first Jewish settler in the town. Louis had arrived in the 1830s, when Orangeburg was a mere village with a few houses and little promise of growth. As a teenager Louis became the first Jewish store owner in Orangeburg, and at the time of his death in 1885, he was the oldest merchant in town and one of its most prominent and respected citizens.

Photo by Larry Hardy. Courtesy of the Times & Democrat.



Following in his uncle’s footsteps, Theodore Kohn opened his own dry goods store in 1868. Eight years later the Confederate veteran built the building that bears his name. He was an alderman, a bank stockholder, a volunteer firefighter, and became known as the “father” of the Orangeburg school system. He served on the school board until shortly before his death in 1902. Every business in Orangeburg closed for his funeral.

The Jews who immigrated to Orangeburg in the 1800s were primarily from Prussia and Bavaria. German and Yiddish would have been the common language. By the time my grandmother Henrietta Block of Camden came to Orangeburg as the bride of Lipman Philip Rich in about 1920, a number of Jewish families lived there, including the Abrams, Baums, Beckers, Furchgotts, Jareckys, Kahns, Kahnweilers, Links, Marcuses, Moseleys, Pearlstines, Walds, Sorentruess, Wilenskys, and Weatherhorns, in addition to the large Rich family that had its start in town two generations earlier with the arrival of Moritz Rich. My grandmother, although younger than many of the Jewish residents, became close friends with them and visited them with gifts of her home-cooked meals until they were all gone.

Most of Orangeburg’s Jewish families had stores on Russell Street. Some had businesses in the surrounding smaller towns. My mother, Rose Louise Rich Aronson, noted that there were 15 Jewish-owned stores when she was growing up in pre-World War II Orangeburg. When I was growing up in the 1950s and ’60s, there were only a few left. I can recall the Hat Box, where Yetta Rubenstein carried the latest fashion in hats for women. I certainly remember Fink’s, where Lester Finkelstein sold all the teenage girls their Villager skirts and blouses. Becker’s, also a clothing store, was right next door. Barshay and Marcus dealt in apparel as well. Milton Marcus was the last Jewish merchant on Russell Street. He didn’t close his store until 1996.

My father, Harold Aronson, began his business on Russell Street after the Second World War, but I wouldn’t consider him a typical merchant. He manufactured and sold aluminum awnings, carports, and storefronts. The people who bought

his enterprise in the 1980s kept the name, Aronson Awning Company, because of his fine reputation. That name can be seen on Highway 301 today.

For me, growing up Jewish in Orangeburg wasn’t very different from growing up Presbyterian or Baptist or Episcopalian. I did everything that my non-Jewish friends did except have a Christmas tree and go to church on Sunday. I never went to school on the Jewish holidays. Sometimes I saved my Chanukah presents for Christmas day so I’d have something to show. Sometimes I went to vacation Bible school with my friends just because it was fun. I didn’t sing the hymns or kneel.

Recently I asked some of my dear friends that I grew up with what they thought about me being Jewish. None of them had an answer; it simply was not important to them. We led a typical teenage life—walking to school, worrying about what we would wear to the football game, wondering whom we would dance with at the pavilion after the football game, and fretting over our

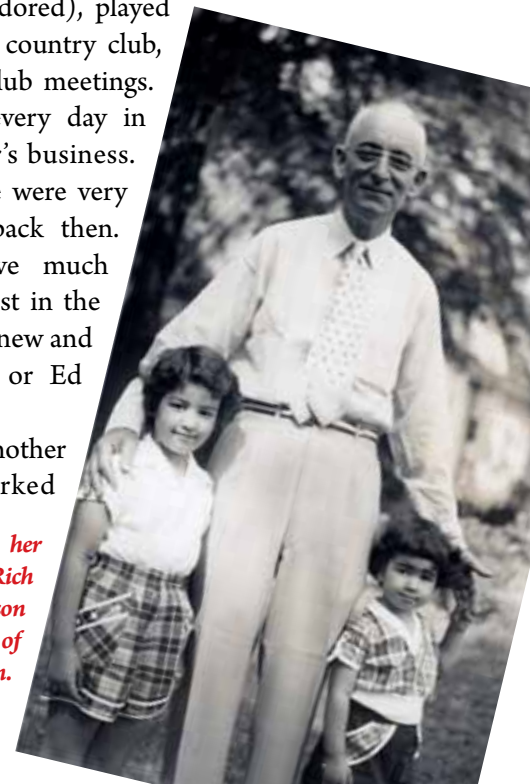


Rich's Clothing Store, with the lowered awning, was next to Feagin's Shoe Rebuilding on Russell Street, Orangeburg, SC, ca. 1928. From Images of America: Orangeburg by Dr. Gene Atkinson, Arcadia Publishing, 2001.

homework. Our mothers cooked three meals a day (or our maids, whom we all adored), played bridge and golf at the country club, and attended garden club meetings. My mother worked every day in the office at my father’s business. It seems today that we were very sheltered and naïve back then. We really didn’t have much knowledge of or interest in the outside world. TV was new and we watched Bonanza or Ed Sullivan, not the news.

In the 1950s my mother and grandmother worked

The author (left) with her grandfather Lipman P. Rich and her sister, Carol Aronson (now Kelly), 1952. Courtesy of Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn.



hard to found Temple Sinai. It was important to them to provide a Jewish education for me and my sister, Carol. So the temple was built in 1955 and we had Sunday school and Friday night services. It was then that we met the Jewish kids from the surrounding towns; the Benjamins from Bowman, the Nussbaums from Branchville, and the Yelmans from St. Matthews joined me and Carol and Martin and Faye Becker in Sunday school.

I have many wonderful memories of Orangeburg, from riding my bike between my house and my grandparents' to rocking on their porch while shelling beans or cracking pecans. My grandfather fished and my grandmother served fish and grits. He shot and she served quail. She delivered matzo balls to Jewish and non-Jewish friends all over town every spring. She made chopped liver, as well as smothered chicken.

We traveled to Columbia for orthodontist appointments,

followed always by a stop at Howard Johnson's for ice cream. My grandmother's sister Rosalie Block took me to Columbia to buy éclairs at the bakery and deli food at Groucho's. In Orangeburg we ate out at Berry's on the Hill and the Elks Club. We rarely went to Charleston, but we did vacation at Isle of Palms every summer. We drove to Kingstree on Sundays to visit my Aronson grandparents, Sam and Henrietta (Yetta), who had a general merchandise store there. We drove to Miami a couple of times a year to visit my father's brother and sister and their families. Eventually, my grandparents moved there, too.

My mother remained friends with her childhood playmates her entire life. Their daughters are my dear friends to this day. None of them is Jewish—that didn't matter then and it doesn't matter in our relationships now. That's a nice thing!



The author's grandparents, left to right, Sam Aronson, Henrietta Rich, Henrietta Aronson, and Lipman P. Rich, in front of Temple Sinai, Sumter, SC, for the wedding of Rose Louise Rich and Harold Aronson, 1944. Courtesy of Rhett Aronson Mendelsohn.

Keeping Kosher in Holly Hill

by Ernest L. Marcus and Bruce Kremer

Three generations of the Kalinsky family lived in the small town of Holly Hill, located in the far eastern reaches of Orangeburg County. Meyer Kalinsky arrived first to establish a store in Holly Hill, emigrating from Trestina, Poland, the same shtetl that was home to a number of other South Carolina settlers, including the Cohen, Pearlstine, Karesh, Krawcheck, and Friedman families.

Meyer's son Jake Kalinsky came next, in 1912, with his mother, Ida, and his sister, Lena (a second sister had died in Europe). They stopped first in Charleston where Jake learned the skills of a shohet, or kosher butcher. They soon joined Meyer in Eutawville, just seven

miles from the Holly Hill store, staying with relatives there. Aside from dry goods, Meyer went into the fur business, selling local raccoon pelts to furriers in New York.

Old Country connections between the Kalinsky and Friedman families led to Jake's marriage to Minnie Friedman in 1921. Minnie's brothers, Sam and William, along with their father, Isaac, had preceded Minnie and her mother to South Carolina. The couple found it difficult to acquire kosher meats from Charleston, some 50 miles away, so Jake's new skills proved useful. Their daughter Ethel recalled (as paraphrased in *A Portion of the People*): "If a chicken did not die in a certain length of time . . . they would give it away. If it was deemed kosher, her mother Minnie would pluck the bird, lay it on a big board on the kitchen sink, and rub it with salt." Jake would also perform his shohet duties for his sister-in-law, Annie, in nearby St. George.



Left: Jake and Minnie Friedman Kalinsky in Charleston on their wedding day, 1921. Right: Jake Kalinsky's shohet knife with sharpening stone and cloth. Images from the Adrian and Ethel Kalinsky Kremer Collection, courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Jake's Department Store was taken over in 1958 by Adrian Kremer (b. 1917), originally from New York City, who married Jake and Minnie's daughter, Ethel Kalinsky (b. 1922). The Kremers purchased goods at New York fashion houses as well as Charlotte and Charleston. Adrian was a community leader, serving on the board of the merchants association, among other organizations, and active in the Lions Club and Boy Scouts of America.

The Kremers' son, Bruce, was born in 1945 in Hendersonville, North Carolina, and grew up as the only Jewish child in Holly Hill. His parents helped him maintain a strong Jewish identity, even while he made close friends at home. As a member of Synagogue Emanu-El in Charleston, Bruce kept in touch with his Jewish buddies through AZA and summers at Camp Blue Star. This dual role was reflected at his bar mitzvah in Charleston, attended by the Methodist and Baptist ministers

from Holly Hill. Both churches also sent care packages to Bruce while he was serving in the U.S. Army in Vietnam. As an active member of Holly Hill High School, Bruce was a disc jockey for radio station WHHL. His daily three-hour show featured music and reports of school activities. As Bruce said in a May 2015 interview, "Despite being the only Jewish kid in town, I cannot think of a better place to grow up than Holly Hill." Bruce now lives in Owings Mill, Maryland, with his wife, Michele, and attends Temple Oheb Shalom in Baltimore.



Left to right: Ethel (Bruce Kremer's mother), Minnie, Jake, and Morris Kalinsky in Jake's Department Store, Holly Hill, ca. 1927. Courtesy of Bruce Kremer.

Ethel's brother, Morris Kalinsky, moved to Charleston, marrying Sybil Dickstein from Savannah, Georgia. There he started Bob Ellis Shoe Store, still operating on King Street. Their son Barry is the proprietor. The Kalinskys' move to the metropolis was an indicator of a regional, perhaps even national, trend: the future of small-town Jews is in the city.

The Good Sheppards of St. Matthews

by Ernest L. Marcus

St. Matthews, only 13 miles from Orangeburg, is a small town with a long history of Jewish life. In 1937, according to Jacob Rader Marcus in *To Count a People*, there were 34 Jews in residence, including several leading merchants. Like so many other towns in rural South Carolina, St. Matthews recently said farewell to one of its last Jewish residents, with the passing in 2013 of Margie Pearlstine Cooper, daughter of Sam and Edna Pearlstine and granddaughter of Sheppard and Sara, who moved from Charleston to the Midlands in 1896.

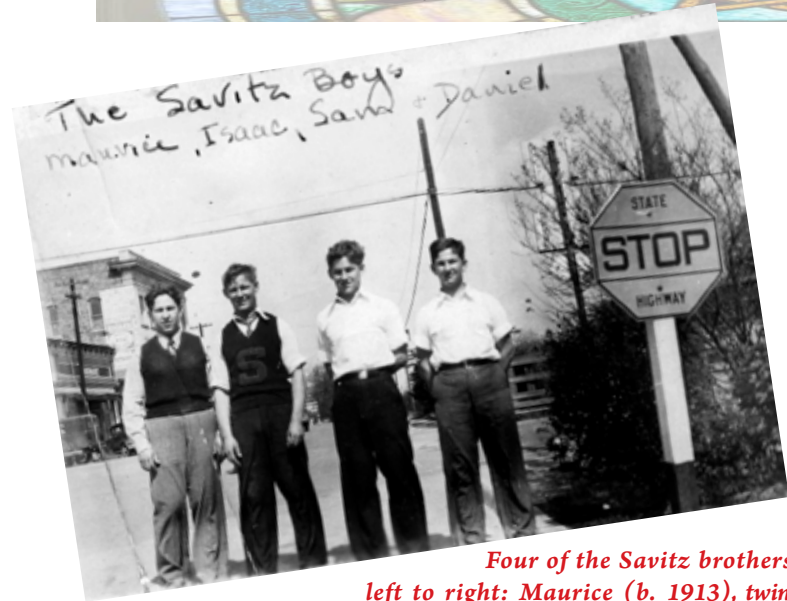
The Jewish presence in St. Matthews reaches back even earlier in the 19th century. In 1878 the town had 19 Jewish residents out of a total population of 524. Jewish family names included Jarecky, Loryea, Rich, Mortiz, Lewisohn, Wetherhorn, Jacobson, Elosser, Cohen, Yelman, Savitz, and Pearlstine.

The story of the Pearlstine family is revealed in a family memoir by Donald R. Vineburg, available on the Internet, titled, "The Vineburg Family Story." Isaac Moses (I. M.) Pearlstine arrived in the United States from Trestina, Poland, in 1854 as a child of 11. (See "Keeping Kosher in Holly Hill," page 16, for references to other immigrants from this shtetl.)

I. M.'s son Sheppard (Shep) was born in 1867, one of 12 children. After marrying Sara and moving to St. Matthews, he opened a store catering to the cotton trade, then, in 1912, started a wholesale grocery business. Shep was known as "the good shepherd of St. Matthews." Sam and Edna Vineburg Pearlstine took over his father's business. The Pearlstines and the Vineburgs of New York were friends; Edna met Sam during a visit to South Carolina. They had two children, Ben and the aforementioned Margie.

Sheppard Pearlstine. Pearlstine-Strauss family papers. Special Collections, College of Charleston.





Four of the Savitz brothers, left to right: Maurice (b. 1913), twins Isaac and Samuel (b. 1916), and Daniel (b. 1919) near the corner of F. R. Huff Drive and Bridge Street in St. Matthews, SC, 1930s. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

The Savitz family operated a store in St. Matthews from 1908 until 1992, starting with Solomon, a Latvian peddler who arrived in the United States in 1904 with his wife, Ida Read Savitz, and two small children. According to grandson Peter Savitz, Solomon bought an existing store on a handshake while visiting the town. At first it was a general store but it evolved to dry goods only. Solomon and his wife, Ida, had six sons and two daughters. Sons Maurice and Daniel ran the store after World War II and bought out their siblings in the late '50s, early '60s. The business survived the influx of big box stores to Orangeburg and elsewhere, carving out a niche with quality merchandise, catering to both African Americans and whites.

Maurice sold Savitz Department Store in 1992 and moved to Florida (Dan had died several years earlier). His children include Susan Magazine, an attorney in Bethesda, Maryland, and Peter Savitz, educated at the Wharton School of Business and a successful Atlanta businessman who started Sportime, a national mail-order business. Peter worked in the store from an early age, going on buying trips with his dad and remodeling the men's department while in college. He considered taking over the store after college but decided to move on. Susan also worked in the store, often as cashier, until she left for college at Emory University. The Savitzes belonged to Temple Sinai in Orangeburg, where Maurice was great friends with J. J. Teskey, but the family's primary membership was at the Tree of Life Congregation in Columbia, where the children received their Jewish education through confirmation. Susan and Peter were counselors at Camp Blue Star. Today, there is one remaining relative in St. Matthews from the original eight children of Solomon—Ricky Linett, grandson of Solomon.

An article in Orangeburg's *Times and Democrat* in May 2015 titled "Faces & Places/Day 90: Jewish Families

Contributed to Calhoun County's History" describes several Jewish families in St. Matthews. The reporter notes that Philip Rich, Sr., had one of the best stores in town in the late 1890s, based on a quote from *South Carolina in the 1880s: A Gazetteer*: "Sterling worth and integrity with his enterprise as a merchant make him a notable man." J. H. Loryea was president of the St. Matthews Savings & Loan and had a large business on Bridge Street. M. Jarecky had a sizable business trading in plantation supplies, hardware, furniture, hats, and groceries. Mr. Lewisohn sold fruit, hats, groceries, and dry goods. S. M. Wetherhorn, an immigrant from Germany, sold liquor and cigars. Isaac Cohen had a department store that was relocated three times, the last on Huff Drive (Isaac's father was Harris Nathan Cohen, grandfather of Ronnie Cohen, author of "Eutawville: A View from the North," and Blanche Cohen, author of "A Eutawville Table," pages 24–26). When Isaac passed away his son Harold and daughter-in-law Yetta took over, specializing in fine men's and women's clothing. In an expression of deep-seated ecumenicalism, the *Times* article closes by saying each member of the Jewish families of St. Matthews "brought a special spirit of giving, working and community. Each is remembered as a person of honor and integrity."

Gathering stories about the Jewish families who lived in small towns in the vicinity of Orangeburg and St. Matthews has been a rewarding experience for me as a native of Eutawville, as well as for my fellow "small-town" authors featured in this issue. Our connections to the past are visceral, tied as we are to a shared history and, now, shared memories. I am linked to St. Matthews through my half-brothers, Arthur and Robert Berger, the grandsons of Harry Berger. Harry, the brother of Fannie Berger Rubenstein of Elloree (see "Elloree Jews: Their Legacy Lives On," page 20), was one of the leaders of the religious community in St. Matthews; Shabbat services were held in his home. Arthur remembers that Harry's dining room was dominated by a Torah and other religious articles. (Marc Berger, Robert's son and my nephew, has lovingly embraced Torah study and prayer at Beth Shalom in Columbia over the past few years. A generational echo? – I think so.) Harry had a shoe repair business in town. Townspeople and relatives all recall a very substantial garden in his backyard. Becky Riley Ulmer noted that Mr. Berger would complain to them by waving his arms whenever she and the other children hit a ball into his beautiful garden. Hearing such vivid childhood memories made the effort of collecting stories worth its weight in gold.

For Brenda Yelman Lederman, St. Matthews elicits powerful recollections of her forebears. In her article she talks about her grandparents, Judah and Hannah Yelman, who came to St. Matthews in 1908 and established a store. Brenda's parents were Sheppard "Shep" Yelman (born in St. Matthews in 1913) and Helen Insel Yelman (born 1917 and raised in Florence). Yes, there were two "Sheps" in St. Matthews!

Lucky to Be Jewish *and* American

by Brenda Yelman Lederman

My grandfather Judah Movshevich Elman emigrated from Kruglovski District, Mogilyovski County, Russia, in 1904, after paying a tax of 15 rubles. His family name had been Elman, but this was mistakenly recorded as Yelman at Ellis Island. He remained in New York City for a few years. It was there that he first learned English and became a tailor. The only possessions I know he brought with him were his beloved Torah and his tefillin, which he used every morning. He was a devout Jew and truly missed his calling of becoming a rabbi. After Granddaddy's death in 1959, the Torah was used by the congregation in Orangeburg and stayed there even after the temple was no longer operating.

The Torah now has a home in Charleston at Synagogue Emanu-El, its final resting place.

In 1907, at the age of 25, Judah's beloved Hannah Paisya Davidova Gorodinskaya emigrated from the community of Bobrovski, Mogilyovski County, Russia, to join him in America. She also paid a tax of 15 rubles. In 1908 they settled in St. Matthews. I have no knowledge of how they found St. Matthews. On

July 15 of that year, they welcomed their eldest child, Louis. Three years later Ida was born, followed by Shep, my father, in 1913, Fannie in 1915, and Reva in 1917.

Granddaddy opened his dry goods store on Bridge Street and ran it until his death in 1959. He and my grandmother owned the house behind Richard Thornton's service station.

My grandparents were known and respected by everyone in town. When Granddaddy died suddenly, I remember thinking that all 2,000 residents must have brought food to their house—there were so many callers and condolences, and so much food. My precious grandmother did not live long enough after that. I think her heart was broken.

They kept chickens in the backyard. Those chickens provided eggs and dinner. When my grandmother asked for a chicken, Granddaddy went out in the yard, held one up by its throat, and gave it a nice clean slice, thereby allowing the blood to drain from the bird and make it kosher. Families from surrounding

areas came to get their kosher chickens from my granddaddy. Grandmother would take the bird onto her back porch and place it on a big wooden table, where she would clean the chicken—quite a process. I have many fond memories of a wonderful childhood. I was able to visit my grandparents nearly every day while growing up.

My grandparents were very proud to be in this country and

did not even want us, their grandchildren, to learn their native tongue. They wanted us to be 100 percent American. I am grateful to them, and to my maternal grandparents, Charles and Lena Insel, who settled in Florence, South Carolina, for the opportunities and freedom that are mine today because of the hardships they endured.



Above: Judah and Hannah Yelman in their dry goods store in St. Matthews, SC, ca. 1930. Below: the Yelman and Gordin (Gorodinskaya) families, ca. 1923. Yelman, Gordin, and Insel Family Papers. Special Collections, College of Charleston.



Elloree Jews: Their Legacy Lives On

by Ernest L. Marcus

Elloree appears on the surface to be a typical small southern town that has seen better days. A closer look reveals a place that is embracing its past to provide a path to revitalization, including a rich cultural history of connection between blacks and whites, Jews and gentiles. A visitor to the turn-of-the-century commercial district will find the award-winning Elloree Heritage Museum and Cultural Center, which features a permanent exhibition on Jewish businesses located in the town. An historical narrative is complemented by exhibit objects such as yarmulkes (skull caps), tallitot (prayer shawls), a menorah, prayer books, a sewing machine, photographs, hat boxes, overalls, and other dry goods in a faux storefront display of Rubenstein's Department Store.



Replica of Rubenstein's Department store in the Elloree Heritage Museum and Cultural Center, Elloree, SC. Photo by Ernest L. Marcus.

The Rubenstein family business had the longest sustained presence in the town. Encouraged by old friends from Elloree, a descendant, Sonny Rubenstein, was one of the early backers of the museum. Many of the objects noted above were provided by descendant Anna Rubenstein. The "Underselling Store" was opened in 1911 by Wolfe Rubenstein and his wife, the former Fannie Berger from Baltimore, immigrants from Poland and Russia. While working in Baltimore Wolfe was suffering from respiratory problems and was urged to move. Their family grew to eight children, including Tillie, Anna, Mordie, Sarah, David, Bernard (Bernie), Lillian, and Morris (Sonny).

In a May 2015 phone interview, Bernie said: "Elloree was a tough town to make a living in. It was a farm town and everybody was always broke. Only stores that didn't sell on credit could make it." Merchants who offered credit had trouble collecting what was owed. Mordie took over running the business after World War II and bought the building, naming it Rubenstein's Department Store. Wolfe passed away in 1949. Bernie helped run the store until leaving for Los Angeles in 1957. Mordie continued with the business until 1984 and

passed away three years later. His wife, Yetta, later operated a shop on Russell Street in Orangeburg, called the Hat Box, which was previously owned by her aunt, Mrs. Benjamin.

Reflecting on life in Elloree, Bernie Rubenstein remembers riding his bicycle to the butcher shop to pick up cowhides (Wolfe was a tanner). With the meat side facing up, he shoed away the flies as he rode to a house behind the old bank. To start the tanning process, the hides were thrown into barrels of salt to draw out the blood.

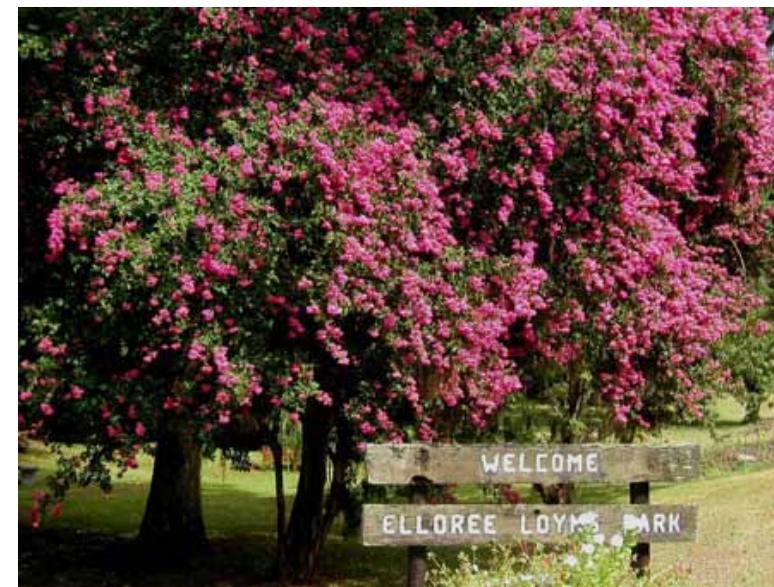
Over the course of 31 years, at least one Rubenstein kid was enrolled in the local public school system. Sonny was likely the last Jewish child to attend Elloree High School, graduating in 1950. Both Mordie and Bernie announced school ballgames and kept score. Bernie reported that throughout their childhood, he and his brothers experienced little-to-no anti-Semitic taunting, a reflection of the level of acceptance by their schoolmates and fellow residents.

Mordie, David, and Bernard Rubenstein served in the armed forces during the Second World War. Bernie notes that his mother was one of the original founders of Temple Sinai in Orangeburg, and he served on the board of directors. He also recalls that his mother helped to land the Elloree Garment Factory, a major employer in the town for a time.

Some years before the Rubensteins showed up, another Jewish family settled in Elloree. Isaac Berger, who was 35 years old in 1920 and likely from Lithuania, arrived around 1900. He married Ida Kessel, born in 1886. Children included Dora, Mordecai, Aaron, Israel, Albert, Esther, and Leonard. By 1930 the family had left for Georgia, but Isaac continued to visit his farm a couple of times a year. Isaac's sister Fannie Berger Rubenstein and her husband, Wolfe, followed Isaac to Elloree in 1911, solidifying the connection between the Bergers and the Rubensteins, which included visits to relatives in St. Matthews and Eastover for religious observance and family gatherings.

The Elloree museum is actually located in the old Berger store building, which was relocated to its present site by Mr. Berger in 1937 by rolling it on logs pulled by a team of mules. A later Berger business in the building was given to his daughter in 1963. Both the Rubensteins and Bergers lived above the store before moving to a traditional home.

Joseph J. Miller, born in 1908 in Philadelphia, worked in a Sumter shoe store before coming to Elloree to sell shoes. In leased space he expanded his business into Miller's Department Store in 1946, selling work clothes on credit. Miller was reported to be kind and generous to families that could not pay. He retired in 1973. He died six years later, never having married. His largesse in Elloree is still felt through the Joseph J. Miller Foundation, which he established to fund local churches, Joe Miller Park, a permanent exhibit at the museum, and Jewish religious and secular institutions, including Temple Sinai in Orangeburg, where he attended services, and the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston. As a publication of the museum says, "Though small in stature he is a giant to those people who are reaping the benefits of the Joseph J. Miller Foundation."



Loyns Park, named for Edgar Loyns, offers nature trails, a picnic shelter, and natural spring water. See <http://www.elloreesc.com/streets-parks.htm>.

Census records and narratives provided by the museum document other Jewish residents in Elloree, particularly during the 1920s. Wolfe's brother Joe Rubenstein was living there in



Joe Miller Park, Elloree, SC, offers recreational facilities, such as tennis courts, walking trails, playgrounds, and a picnic shelter, and is home to some of the town's holiday celebrations as well as the annual Pork Fest. See <http://www.google.com/maps>.

1920, along with Alex Karesh, who emigrated from Russia in 1910. Next door to the Rubensteins resided Aaron Galloway and his wife, Helen, who were in the dry goods business. The original Galloway store was later occupied by the Rubenstein business on Cleveland Street. Aaron was 33 at the time of the 1920 census, with two children.

Nathan Levine and his wife came around 1940 and established a dry goods store next to Dantzler Drug Store, later relocating across the street from the museum. The family moved away in the early 1970s.

There was a Hymie Gordon who operated a small business near the bank but did not stay long in Elloree. Perry Krasnoff ran a liquor store next to the bank. Mr. Jacobs was in the timber business, staying in Elloree for just a short time.

Edgar Loyns, who grew up in Manning and Sumter, moved to Elloree shortly after marrying Sophie Annie Mazursky in 1922. He was a farmer and a successful cotton broker and had an office in the old Stack Company Store on Cleveland Street. Loyns was active in local politics and showed his love for Elloree when, in 1948 and '49, he donated two acres to create a nature park on the southern edge of the town, featuring an artesian well, brooks, azaleas, pine and oak trees.

Elloree's Jewish residents, though long gone, have not vanished without a trace. It is clear today that they were a part of mainstream society and they left a tangible and lasting legacy to a community that accepted them and a town that helped them to prosper.

Jewish Life in Bowman and Branchville

by Diane Benjamin Neuhaus

In the beginning . . . my grandparents migrated to the United States during the huge influx of immigrants between 1890 and 1910. My paternal grandmother's family came from Minsk, Russia, via New York City. Her name was Matilda Goldiner—Mattie for short. My paternal grandfather, Herman Benjamin, came from Essex, England, via Baltimore, where he had relatives. (His family probably originated in the Iberian Peninsula.) Since I was not around when they met and married, I assume it all came about through the business world.

The B & G store (Benjamin and Goldiner) on Russell Street in Orangeburg could have been the beginning. Mattie and Herman settled in Bowman where their three sons were born—Irving (my father), Simon, and Milton. Granddaddy ran Benjamin's of Bowman, a general store with ready-to-wear, fabric, etc. Both grandparents had family in Orangeburg and environs—Mattie's family included the Goldiners, Mirmows, and Levines. Herman's half-brother Harry Becker also lived in Orangeburg. Later in the 1940s, my paternal grandparents would return to Orangeburg where my grandmother opened the Hat Box on Russell Street next to the

The author's grandmother Matilda Goldiner Benjamin (top) and her father, Irving Benjamin, age five (bottom).

Edisto Theater. In 1951, after she died, Granddaddy's relative Yetta Rubenstein took over the shop.

My mother's family—her name was Rachael Nussbaum—came from central Europe: Tarnopol, in Galicia, Poland; Berlin, Germany; and other places in the Hapsburg Empire. Her father, Barnie, came to America in 1906; his brother Israel arrived in the United States in the same time period. My grandfather was heading to Augusta, Georgia, but got off the train in Branchville!! There he settled down and sent for my grandmother Simmie, and their son, Morris. Once Grandmama arrived, the family multiplied fast. Mama and four of her siblings—Phillip, Sammie, Hymie, and Percy—were born in Branchville.

What is amazing to me—my parents were born ten miles apart, yet did not meet until college days, and it was at a party at Uncle Harry Becker's house in Orangeburg (Mama was with another date!!) Daddy claimed love at first sight. Daddy was at Clemson, and Mama was at Winthrop. An interesting tidbit: my mother roomed with her first cousin from Ehrhardt, Rachael (Rae) Nussbaum, one of Uncle Israel's daughters—so for a few years, around 1939 and '40, there were two Rachael Nussbaums at Winthrop.

My parents married in Augusta, Georgia. World War II had begun and Daddy was in the army at Fort Benning, Georgia, while Mama and their families were in Orangeburg County. Gas was rationed, and Augusta was in the middle. Daddy, who was planning to be a surgeon, was shipped to Anzio, Italy, as a young officer. That was the end of his professional dream. He was severely wounded and spent a year in various VA hospitals being put back together—his right hand had to be reconstructed, leaving him with three-and-a-half fingers after all that. We were so lucky to have our dad, considering what he went through. I've been told that I spent many miles sleeping on a pillow in the car as Mama followed Daddy from place to place, hospital to hospital.

Once back in Orangeburg Daddy joined the family retail business and our family grew. We stayed in Orangeburg until 1956. During those years my maternal grandmother, Simmie, who was very religious, lived with us. Mama was her only daughter, and she adored Daddy. She never missed lighting the Shabbos candles and regularly said Kaddish for the family she had lost in the Holocaust. I was 12 when she died, but she had a huge impact on my Jewish life.

In 1956 we moved to Bowman so Daddy would not have to commute, as he had the store in Bowman, as well as business ventures in other small towns. My uncle Milton

had a lumber mill in Bowman, too, so people were involved in more businesses than retail. Milton ultimately moved to Philadelphia, his wife's hometown. For years before moving north, he had a house at the beach, which was a wonderful summer gathering place.

As to our Jewish life in Orangeburg and Bowman, Daddy took us to Sunday school at Beth Shalom synagogue in Columbia for years before Temple Sinai was built. I was confirmed there. My uncle Sammie had a house on Lake Murray, so in the warm weather, we'd all go to Columbia, and after Sunday school we would go water skiing, etc., at the lake. He also had a big juke box so we'd dance for hours—what fun! Also for the holidays, the Yelmans of St. Matthews brought over a Torah and built an ark, so some services were held at their home. I have wonderful, vivid memories of those times as well. They always had a minyan, as many families came together to celebrate and keep our traditions alive. For social lives as teenagers, we were put on a Greyhound bus for events in Charleston or Columbia with AZA-BBG and NFTY. During this time I made two life-long friends.

Another Jewish activity was Camp Blue Star in Hendersonville, North Carolina. My paternal grandmother loved that area and had family nearby in the furniture business. Grandmama Benjamin played a big role in my life—she bought me a piano at age seven that I still have. Music has really enriched my life, and I think she'd be happy to know that I've subscribed to and supported the San Francisco Symphony since I arrived in California more than 40 years ago.

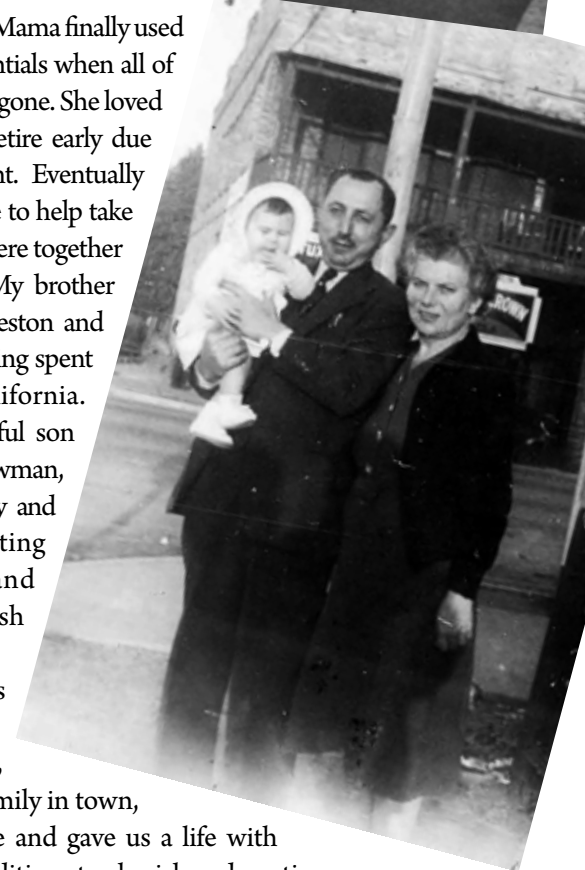
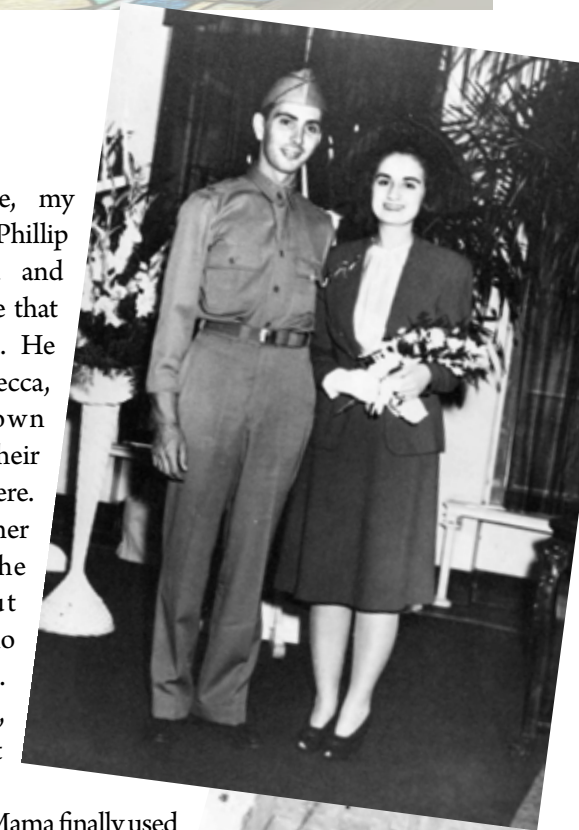
In those early years Orangeburg County had a lot of factories and manufacturing, which brought several Jewish families to town. Jimmy Teskey came to Orangeburg and Bowman from Winnipeg, Canada, to run a clothing factory. Temple Sinai was a vibrant community then. He was the lay leader of the temple for years and sang a beautiful Kol Nidre. I remember playing duets with Jimmy—he on the violin, me at the piano.

Life was good. Daddy worked, was on the town council for decades helping improve life in Bowman, and coached Little League; Mama was active in garden and book clubs, the Temple, taking us kids to anything and everything she thought would be enriching, plus school activities; and of course, they made time for bridge and golf, attending the Master's most years. Meanwhile, Daddy took my brother Matt to Columbia to meet with the rabbi regularly for his bar mitzvah studies, a very special life cycle event that took place at Temple Sinai. Mama continued to be the glue or matriarch that kept both families together, having huge gatherings at our house.

In Branchville, my mother's brother Phillip Nussbaum stayed and took over the store that his father opened. He and his wife, Rebecca, remained in town and brought up their three children there. There was another Jewish family—the Pearlstines—but today, there are no Jews in Branchville.

As for Bowman, my parents spent the rest of their lives in that small town. Mama finally used her teaching credentials when all of us were grown and gone. She loved it. Daddy had to retire early due to his loss of sight. Eventually Mama had to retire to help take care of him; they were together almost 56 years. My brother remained in Charleston and later Bowman, having spent some time in California. He was a wonderful son and still lives in Bowman, practicing pharmacy and farming, supporting Temple Sinai and keeping the Jewish holidays.

What I think is truly remarkable is how our parents, the only Jewish family in town, kept Judaism alive and gave us a life with these beautiful traditions to cherish and continue.



Top: The author's parents, Rachael and Irving Benjamin, on their wedding day in Augusta, GA, 1942. Bottom: The author with her grandparents Matilda and Herman Benjamin in Bowman. All images courtesy of Diane Benjamin Neuhaus.

Eutawville: A View from the North

by Ronald Cohen

My mother, Mary Cohen, née Cohen, was one of eight siblings raised in Eutawville, South Carolina. I grew up in the Bronx, where my mother moved after she married my father, Louis Cohen, in 1924, but I spent most of my summers in Eutawville with my mother's family. My parents would put me on a train in New York City. When it arrived in Florence, South Carolina, a Eutawville relative would meet me. My earliest memory of a trip to the small Midlands town was in 1931 when I was five years old. My memories of the visit were especially vivid since it seemed as if I had gone to another world—the differences in activities and culture were so striking.

In New York we had a heavy wooden front door that was always locked. In Eutawville, in those days, no one bothered to lock the door. In the North blacks lived in segregated areas, such as Harlem. In the southern countryside black and white residences were interspersed, although schools and many businesses were segregated.

Most Eutawville Jews were merchants and businesspeople. I remember three Jewish-owned stores—one run by Sam Zaks, a family friend from Russia, one by my aunt

Katie Cohen Karesh and her daughter Marie, and one by Aunt Janie Cohen Marcus. Her son Harry was later elected mayor of the town.

Janie Cohen Marcus also owned a 150-acre cotton farm, where a local black family by the name of Washington were sharecroppers. Typically, the white farm owners would take the cotton to the gin for weighing and payment. After deducting for expenses, the owner would split the remainder with the sharecroppers who, in turn, would visit the merchants in town to pay off their charge accounts.

Eutawville was a close-knit community. Every Saturday many of the children climbed into the beds of pick-up trucks to attend the Saturday matinee in Holly Hill, a small town less than ten miles to the southwest. At other times we traveled to surrounding rural communities to visit friends and relatives. The welcoming, small-town quality of the rural South was quite different from New York City where, often, you did not even know the names of your neighbors.

Another difference between the urban North and the rural South was the type of housing, though crowded living conditions were common in both regions. In New York we lived in multi-family buildings. Everyone had a tough time financially during the Depression. Many could not afford the rent, so families doubled up. In my five-room apartment we often had two or more families living together. I frequently slept on the sofa or a makeshift bed or the floor.

In Eutawville we lived in single-family homes, shared by multiple siblings and their children, and even boarders like Zaks. All lived together; all shared a common meal. The front door was always open to family and friends. Often the cooking and cleaning was done by blacks, whom the Jews regarded not just as helpers, but as friends.



Above: the author's mother, Mary Cohen, 1916; Ronald Cohen, about three years old, standing in front of Marcus Department Store on Porcher Avenue in Eutawville, SC, ca. 1929. Collection of Ronald Cohen. Right: Cohen siblings standing in front of the West Store, just a few feet from Marcus Department Store in Eutawville. From left center, Moses Cohen, Katie Cohen Karesh, Katie's daughter-in-law Charlotte Sanders Karesh, and Janie Marcus. Collection of Blanche C. Cohen.

Eutawville water came from a well, in contrast to the public water system we had up north. The house did not have indoor plumbing on my first few visits. When they installed inside water it was like a revolution!

I remember the outhouse in the backyard, and, in particular, a comical incident when Sam Young, husband of Katie's daughter Sadie, went into the privy and one of the children closed a lock on the door, trapping him inside. We heard his calls for help and let him out. We thought it was funny but he did not see the humor. Thinking back I wonder why there was a lock on the outside of the outhouse in addition to inside.

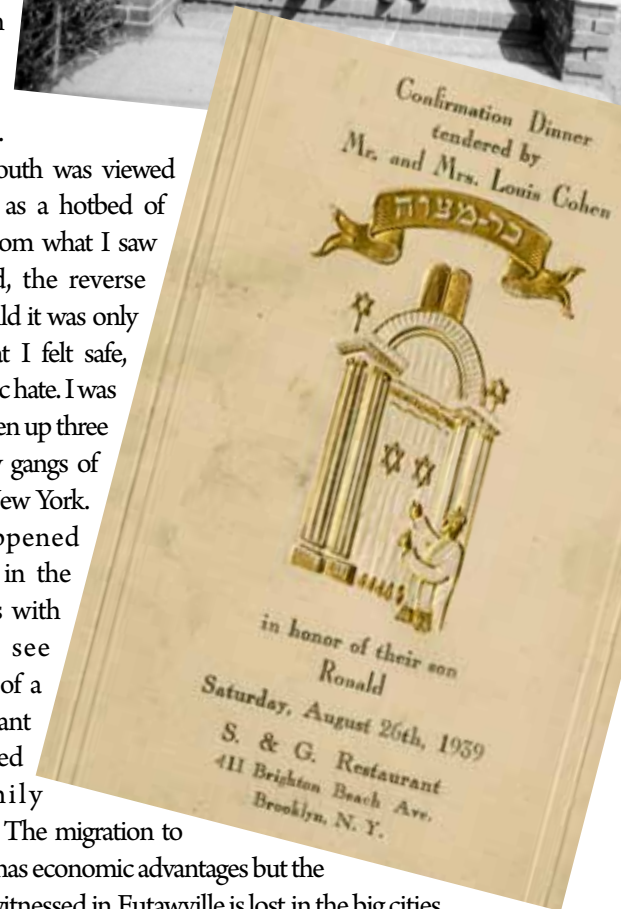
When it came to race relations, I noticed that blacks in the North seemed to feel free to express their anger, whereas their counterparts in Eutawville were afraid to speak their minds; they were always respectful to whites, being sure to say, "Yes, ma'am" and "Yes, sir." Jews got along fine with blacks in Eutawville. Perhaps it was because both groups knew what it felt like to be subjected to bigotry. I remember, as a child, on two occasions, men banging on our front door in the Bronx and yelling, "Kike—open up!" Never once did I feel the same prejudice in Eutawville.

Here's another, more subtle, example of northern prejudice: my father owned two houses in the Bronx known as 1316 and 1318 Herschel Street. He made patterns for sewing pleats in women's dresses. He sent out advertising to potential customers under two names: Louis Cohen, 1318 Herschel Street, and Al Miller, 1316 Herschel Street. One day one of my father's best customers came in from New Haven, Connecticut, to meet Louis Cohen. After they finished their business transaction, he asked if my father would introduce him to Al Miller. My father told him Al Miller and Louis Cohen were one and the same person. His client started laughing. My father asked him what was

so funny. He told my father that some of his business associates in New Haven told him not to deal with Louis Cohen. He should only deal with Al Miller, as he was honest and reliable. They warned him, "You cannot trust Louis Cohen." As a child I listened to this conversation and it made a lasting impression. I played with anyone regardless of religion. We were just friends.

The rural South was viewed by New Yorkers as a hotbed of anti-Semitism. From what I saw and experienced, the reverse was true. As a child it was only in Eutawville that I felt safe, free of anti-Semitic hate. I was attacked and beaten up three times as a kid by gangs of anti-Semites in New York. This never happened to me anywhere in the rural South. It is with

sadness I see the demise of a warm, vibrant culture, filled with family and friends. The migration to urban areas has economic advantages but the intimacy I witnessed in Eutawville is lost in the big cities.



Above: Ronald Cohen and his father, Louis, on the steps of their Herschel Street home in the Bronx; invitation to Ronald Cohen's confirmation dinner at S. & G. Restaurant, Brooklyn, NY, 1939. Left: the Cohens in the living room of the Porcher Avenue family home, Eutawville, SC. Standing, left to right: Abe, Moses, Mary (Moses' wife), Louis, and Mary (Marian, Louis's wife); seated, left to right, Corinne (Abe's wife), Raye (Isaac's wife); Katie Karesh, Abe Karesh (Katie's husband); and Janie Marcus. Collection of Ronald Cohen.



A Eutawville Table

by *Blanche C. Cohen*

Although I never lived in Eutawville, my family and I were there every other Sunday and on holidays, visiting from our home on Logan Street in Charleston. This small town holds a very special place in my heart and my memories. It was home to my daddy's family, consisting of five sisters and three brothers. We always had a feeling of belonging; it was a loving atmosphere. Attitudes in Eutawville were friendly and respectful—true Southern hospitality—among Jews and non-Jews, blacks and whites.

My relatives owned clothing stores and customers were the local farmers. Most people were paid on Friday and did their shopping on Saturday. Customers without ready cash charged merchandise on "the books," a credit plan that allowed them to make regular payments. Marcus Department Store also offered layaway to its patrons.

The Jewish storeowners traveled to Charleston on Sundays to buy goods for their stores. Before heading home, they stopped for food items that all Jewish people enjoy from Harold's Cabin, or the Mazo or Zinn delis. Labrasca's, an Italian restaurant that at one time offered Chinese food, was also a favorite place to eat.

As for the dinners served to all who came to the great house on Porcher Avenue, it was a large round table full of every type of food. Several meats were served, as well as dishes of rice, macaroni, and potatoes, and many varieties of vegetables.

A "Eutawville table" is what we called it. There was always room for anyone needing a meal or a place to stay. Adults sat at the table and all of the young cousins were fed in another room, often sitting on the floor. We loved being together!

I am so blessed to have these memories; they gave me a love of country life—the land and its people—and I learned to respect all, regardless of name, religion, race, or circumstances.

Left: Sisters Katie Cohen Karesh (seated) and Janie Cohen Marcus (on Katie's right) viewing the Azalea Parade in Charleston, SC, 1941.

Above: Blanche Cohen and her brother Harris Cohen, ca. 1943, "clowning around" on Herschel Street, in the Bronx, where they visited their cousins; Ronald Cohen and his aunt Corinne Cohen (the author's mother). All photos collection of Ronald Cohen.



Two Jews, Three Opinions

by *Martin Perlmutter*

It feels as if we don't agree on anything these days. The old adage of "two Jews, three opinions" is often heard—the punch line of jokes that suggest an ongoing debate, a lively conversation, punctuated by nervous laughter. Yet, in this age of intense and strident political divisions, where Facebook posts and e-mail chains broadcast personal opinions, essays, and articles to networks of persons who typically already share those opinions, the adage could be rewritten: two Jews, two intractable opinions.

But that is the view of a pessimist. In fact, we as Jews agree on a great many things. We recognize the need for a Jewish state, even if we sometimes disagree, at times strongly, with the policies of Israel's leaders. We agree that the impact Jewish organizations have on our communities is important, though we may favor one organization over the other, again with intensity. We agree on the importance of a Jewish future even if the nature of that future is in dispute. The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina unites us not only because we value the past and see it as part of who we are, but also because we want to safeguard our heritage and ensure it remains an important element of an ongoing communal story.

The work of the Society is incredibly gratifying to the dozens—and I do mean dozens—of volunteers who make its wheels turn. At the same time, it is not without financial cost. We are sustained by annual membership dues, but at the end of the day, \$36 memberships only go so far. We look to our Pillars to help us attain our most ambitious goals. With respect for our mission and for those who support it, I humbly invite you to become a Pillar today by pledging \$1,000 a year for the next five years. Your gift allows the Society to continue documenting our stories and the stories of our forebears, so that our history and even our various opinions may be preserved for those yet to come.

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

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See pages 12 and 13 for more information.