



Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Fall 1995

President Isadore Lourie Evaluates First Two Years Accomplishments of Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

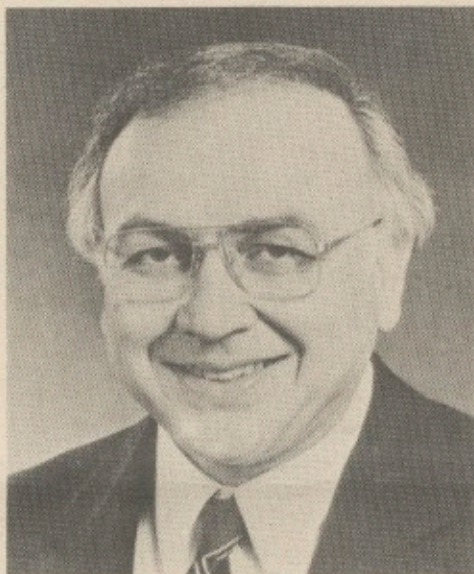
Dear Friends:

This is the first publication of the Newsletter of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, and we hope that you will read it with the interest and enthusiasm that have issued from the activities of the Society.

Our Society is part of the College of Charleston Foundation, and is under the auspices of the College's Jewish Studies Program. A special thanks should be given to Alex Sanders, president of the college, and his staff; to Dr. Martin Perlmutter, Director of the Jewish Studies Program; and to David Cohen, the Society's treasurer and the College's librarian. Sol Breibart, Benny Goldberg and Robert Rosen also deserve special recognition for helping to maintain Jewish history in South Carolina. Sol is a past president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

Jews have been living in South Carolina for over 300 years, and our state's Jewish heritage is unique and special. For instance, South Carolina was the first of the original Thirteen Colonies not to require a religious oath to hold public office. As a result, Francis Salvatore was allowed to be a delegate to the Colonial General Assemblies held in South Carolina before the Revolutionary War. Later, Salvatore became the first American Jew to die in our war for independence. Also, religious services have been held in our state almost from the beginning. Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, the Reform Temple in Charleston, will celebrate its 250th Anniversary in 1999, and we look forward to helping it commemorate that milestone.

Since the Society's founding two years ago, we have been very active. Our first annual meeting took place in Charleston in April 1994, and featured the noted author and lecturer Eli Evans as keynote speaker. Our second Annual Meeting this past spring was



Isadore Lourie, President of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, is a former South Carolina state senator.

also held in Charleston to help commemorate the 140th Anniversary of its Orthodox Brith Shalom-Beth Israel Congregation. Our keynote speaker was Dr. Leonard Dinnerstein, a prominent historian from the University of Arizona, and a panel composed of Samuel J. Tenenbaum, Gerry Sue Arnold and Max Heller discussed the issues raised.

Also this past spring we had a "mini-meeting" in Abbeville in conjunction with the 95th Anniversary of the D. Poliakoff Department Store, and also to help observe the anniversary of the last Confederate Cabinet meeting which took place in Abbeville in May 1865. Judah P. Benjamin, originally from South Carolina and a member of the U.S. Senate from Louisiana, served in the Cabinet from the beginning, and was considered by many to be the acting President during the last years of the Civil War because of the declining

health of Jefferson Davis.

In January 1996, we will hold our third Annual Meeting in Columbia and join in its Tree of Life Temple's 100th Anniversary celebration. This event is co-chaired by Dr. Belinda and Richard Gergel, whose assistance in starting our Society and continuing its activities has been invaluable.

At present, the main ongoing initiative of the Society is its Jewish Heritage Project under the chairmanship of Judge Klyde Robinson. This project is being co-sponsored with the Society by the College of Charleston, the University of South Carolina McKissick Museum, and many individual contributors. It is under the direction of Mrs. Dale Rosengarten, who has been conducting interviews throughout the state, collecting a list of artifacts, etc. All of this work will be correlated and hopefully result in an exhibit at McKissick which will later travel to Jewish museums throughout the United States.

There is much to be proud of in our heritage, and we need all of you to help us preserve it and enable it to flourish. With the arrival in South Carolina of German Jews in the 1800s, Eastern European Jews in the early 1900s, the Holocaust survivors, and now a new wave of Russian Jewish immigrants, we have a wonderful and diverse history to cherish and nourish. I have had the opportunity to speak to the Jewish communities of Greenville, Florence and Hilton Head, and at the Pee Dee B'nai B'rith Lodge. If you would like to have a speaker come to your community, please let me know and the Society will arrange for me or another representative to "tell the story."

I hope to see you in Columbia in January!

ISADORE LOURIE



COLUMBIA TO HOST EXCITING ANNUAL MEETING IN JANUARY

Make plans now to attend the third annual meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina in Columbia on January 12-14, 1996!

This year's meeting will be held in conjunction with Columbia's Tree of Life Congregation's Centennial Celebration. "We are moving out to explore the Jewish experience in communities around the state," Society President Isadore E. Lourie explained, noting that Jews first settled in Columbia in the early 1820s.

This year's program will begin with a special ceremony on Friday morning, January 12th, at 11:00 a.m. in City Hall Chambers on Main Street. Tree of Life was organized in Columbia's City Hall Chambers in 1896.

Columbia's Mayor Bob Cobie and other dignitaries will participate in the City Hall program, which will be followed with a buffet luncheon at the Capital City Club. At the luncheon, Dr. Belinda Gergel will provide a slide/lecture presentation on Columbia's earliest Jewish community, its establishment of a synagogue and Jewish Sunday School (the seventh in the country) in the 1840s, and its rich tradition of public service that produced two Jewish mayors before the Civil War. Dr. Gergel is assistant professor of history at Columbia College and is the co-author of a new history of the Jews of Columbia, *In Pursuit of the Tree of Life: A History of the Early Jews of Columbia, South Carolina and the Tree of Life Congregation*. A tour of the historic Columbia Hebrew Benevolent Society Cemetery will be available after the luncheon.

Jewish Historical Society members will attend Tree of Life's Centennial Sabbath Service on Friday evening at 8:00 p.m. Dr. Gary Zola of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati and author of the recently published *Isaac Harby of Charleston: Jewish Intellectual and Reformer* will deliver the sermon. Dr. Zola will share insights on South Carolina's role in fostering the development of Reform Judaism in America. Tree of Life's Sisterhood will host a lovely Oneg Shabbat following the service.

The Saturday morning program will begin with a brief service at Columbia's historic "Big Apple," once the synagogue of the House of Peace Congregation and later a nightclub where the dance called the "Big Apple" was first performed. The building has now been restored and our Saturday morning service will be the first at this location in over sixty years. A morning presentation on "Columbia Jewry in the Early Twentieth Century" by Belinda and Richard Gergel will follow next door at the Richland County Public Library. This presentation will focus on the lives and contributions of newspaperman and business leader August Kohn; his daughter Helen Kohn Hennig, the matriarch of Columbia's Jewish community and a noted historian; and legendary Dr. Josiah Morse, the University of South Carolina's first Jewish professor. After the morning presentations, we will tour a special display on Columbia's Jews in the library's Local History Room.

Lunch will be held at the Summit Club with presentations on the life and times of Isaac Harby, who is credited with being the guiding spirit of the first major reform effort of Judaism in America. Dr. Gary Zola will deliver a special address on Charleston's Isaac Harby, and Robert Rosen, author of *Charleston and Confederate Charleston*, will speak about Charleston in Harby's era of the early 1800s. Melvin Young, author of *Where They Lie* will discuss his research on South Carolina soldiers in the Civil War.

An afternoon session will feature a presentation on the "Jewish Confederates of the Midlands" by Jacob Greenberg, who was recently selected for participation in the Junior Scholars Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Greenberg's research has focused on the activities of Jews in the Confederacy from Columbia, Sumter, Camden and surrounding areas. Our day will conclude with a lovely Dinner/Dance Gala with Tree of Life members at the Adam's Mark Hotel in honor of the Temple's centennial.

The Sunday morning session will begin with coffee and bagels at the historic South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina campus. Dr. Herb Hartshook and other members of the library staff will discuss the library's special collections in Jewish history, and provide a display of the library's most significant holdings. Our business session will follow. We will conclude with an update on the status of the South Carolina Jewish Heritage Project by Mrs. Dale Rosengarten.

A block of rooms has been held for members of the Jewish Historical Society at the Adams Mark Hotel at the special rate of \$69 per night. Contact the Adams Mark at 803-771-7000 or 1-800-444-2326 to reserve your room.

Some interesting books depicting our South Carolina Jewish history are:

This Happy Land by Professor James Hagy;

The Provincials, by Eli Evans, Gary Zola's *Isaac Harby of Charleston*,

and *The Jews of South Carolina* by Barnet Elzas.

Jewish Heritage Project: Progress Report

Dale Rosengarten: October 1995

Did you know that in 1800 more Jews lived in Charleston, South Carolina, than anywhere else in the United States? that Georgetown had a Jewish mayor in 1818? that by 1925 Bishopville was home to some 26 Jewish families? that before World War II, many members of "ultra-Reform" congregations in communities such as Sumter and Camden had never worn a yarmulke or been to a bar mitzvah?

The Jewish heritage of South Carolina is rich, complex and full of surprises. Its study and preservation became the focus of a state wide campaign last January when, with support from the College of Charleston and McKissick Museum, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina launched the Jewish Heritage Project.

As project director, I have spent the past ten months traveling around the state, interviewing the oldest members of old Jewish families (and some newcomers too), visiting synagogues, cemeteries and historical societies. Our ultimate aim is to build a Jewish archives and research center and to mount a major museum exhibition. Meanwhile the process has proved as rewarding as any outcome we might hope to achieve.

So far I have been to Abbeville, Anderson, Andrews, Beaufort, Bishopville, Camden, Charleston, Columbia, Darlington, Dillon, Georgetown, Greensboro, Latta, Mullins, Spartanburg and Sumter. I have recorded forty 90-minute oral histories and collected documentation on more than seventy-five families. People have told me stories about where their forebears came from and how they got here. I've seen family trees and certificates of birth, naturalization, marriage, and death; portraits of illustrious ancestors; photographs, including daguerreotypes and tintypes; diaries, memoirs, scrapbooks, correspondence, business accounts, congregational minutes; heirlooms such as antique jewelry, candlesticks, samovars and kiddish cups from the Old Country. I've photocopied documents, photographed objects and accepted some originals on behalf of the collection.

Every place I've visited I've been housed, fed, welcomed, treated like family and made to feel at home.

None of this would be possible with-

out the assistance of the State Advisory Committee, recruited and chaired by Judge Klyde Robinson. Judge Robinson has accompanied me on several field trips; members of the committee have provided introductions, set up interviews and shown us around. In Charleston I've had the help of a group of able and willing volunteers.

Within the Jewish community enthusiasm for the project is strong. People seem ready and eager to talk about their lives, as if they've been waiting to be asked. Everywhere we look we find folks already caught up in the search for roots - people writing memoirs, families compiling genealogies, synagogues celebrating anniversaries, communities organizing reunions. Suburban, urban and "sun belt" congregations are expanding and becoming more observant. New arrivals bring energy, money and an invigorating activism to the synagogues they join. Oldtimers, in turn, stake their claims to history and tradition. "My family has worshipped at Beth Elohim for seven generations," a member of Charleston's oldest congregation proudly told an unwitting "come-here."

In small towns Jewish life is passing from the scene, creating an urgency to collect and record. Old families are disappearing through intermarriage, conversion and outmigration. Populations decline, synagogues close, Jewish shop owners go out of business. As sons and daughters of dry goods merchants graduate from universities and enter the professional class, nobody is left to mind the store. Saul Krawcheck, the Engel Brothers, Sonny Goldberg and Sam Siegel all have closed their doors in the past few months. What is to become of their account books and ledgers? Unless we make efforts to save these important materials, the resources for reconstructing the history of once vital communities will be irrevocably lost.

Anyone with questions, comments, or suggestions, should call me at Special Collections, College of Charleston Library, 803-953-5530.

For more information on the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program, please call Dr. Martin Perlmutter at 803-953-5682.

A note on acquisitions

Thanks to Nat Shulman, Saul Krawcheck, Maurice Nussbaum, Sol Breibart, Leon and Rita Banov, Fannie Appel Rones, Doris Baumgarten and Helen Silver for helping the Jewish Heritage Project acquire the following valuable collections:

- the files of the Community Relations and Social Service committees of the Charleston Jewish Federation
- accounts, photographs and scrapbooks (1939-1970) from Jack Krawcheck's store on King Street, Charleston
- business records (1914-1926) of Saul Alexander, Summerville
- correspondence, publications and photographs from a 1974 commemoration of Isaac Harby and the birth of Reform Judaism at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim
- photographs, reminiscences, correspondence and publicity materials from a 1990 reunion of St. Philip Street where Charleston's Russian Jewish immigrants first settled
- a scrapbook of articles and memorabilia from Synagogue Adas Yeshurun in Aiken
- the Charleston Jewish Community Center's oral history collection.

Thanks to Isidore Denemark for his father's certificate of citizenship, Ella Levenson Schlosburg for her mother's prayerbook and Carolyn Baruch Levenson for her Sunday School workbook. We've been given photographs by Harry Price of Spartanburg, Frances Bass Ginsberg and Sam Levenson of Bishopville, Jim Wood of Camden, Arnold Prystowsky of Charleston, and Alan Rosen, formerly of Charleston, now of Carmel, California. Also, Flossie Arnold, Wendell Levi, Jr., H.D. Barnett, Norman Baum, Michael Schwartz, Robert Zalkin and Stanley and Chariot Karesh have loaned photographs for us to reproduce.

The College of Charleston's Robert Scott Small Library has agreed to house our acquisitions to enhance their already substantial Jewish collections which now include the archives of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, records of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, Wendell Mitchell Levi's renowned pigeon library, H.T. Zacharias's business records (1905-1910), and the papers of prominent Jewish writers Ludwig Lewisohn, Robert Marks and Thomas J. Tobias.

REGISTRATION FORM
ANNUAL MEETING - JANUARY 12-14, 1996
Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina

Adams Mark Hotel Reservations can be made by calling: 803-771-7000 or 1-800-444-2326

Ask for special Jewish Historical Society rate of \$69 per night

For additional information, call 1996 Program Chairperson Belinda Gergel at 803-736-5139.

Please Print

NAME _____
Last First Spouse/Friend

ADDRESS _____ PHONE (____) _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

CONFERENCE FEE: GENERAL \$110 per person

CONFERENCE FEE: SENIOR CITIZENS (over 65) \$75 per person

CONFERENCE FEE: ACADEMICIANS \$75 per person

Conference fees include Friday and Saturday luncheons, Saturday morning coffee and bagels, Saturday Gala Dinner, tour, and Sunday morning continental breakfast as well as your 1996 JHS-SC MEMBERSHIP FEE. NO PARTIAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES ACCEPTED.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

___ GENERAL MEMBERSHIP (but unable to attend conference) \$35 per person or couple

___ GENERAL / SENIOR CITIZEN / ACADEMICIAN (included in Registration)

___ PATRON \$250 (includes 2 registrations)

___ BENEFACTOR \$500 (includes 2 registrations)

PLEASE FIND ENCLOSED REGISTRATION FEES FOR _____ PERSONS.

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED IS _____.

Number of people attending the following events:

___ CITY HALL CEREMONY

___ FRIDAY LUNCHEON

Please note special dietary needs

___ SATURDAY LUNCHEON

___ DINNER/GALA

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO **JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA**, AND MAIL TO:
DAVID COHEN, TREASURER, JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON, CHARLESTON, SC 29424-0001.

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina
College of Charleston
Jewish Studies Program
Charleston, SC 29424-0001



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Charleston, SC
Permit No. 464



Jewish Heritage Project: Progress Report

Dale Rosengarten: October 1995

Did you know that in 1800 more Jews lived in Charleston, South Carolina, than anywhere else in the United States? that Georgetown had a Jewish mayor in 1818? that by 1925 Bishopville was home to some 26 Jewish families? that before World War II, many members of "ultra-Reform" congregations in communities such as Sumter and Camden had never worn a yarmulke or been to a bar mitzvah?

The Jewish heritage of South Carolina is rich, complex and full of surprises. Its study and preservation became the focus of a state wide campaign last January when, with support from the College of Charleston and McKissick Museum, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina launched the Jewish Heritage Project.

As project director, I have spent the past ten months traveling around the state, interviewing the oldest members of old Jewish families (and some newcomers too), visiting synagogues, cemeteries and historical societies. Our ultimate aim is to build a Jewish archives and research center and to mount a major museum exhibition. Meanwhile the process has proved as rewarding as any outcome we might hope to achieve.

So far I have been to Abbeville, Anderson, Andrews, Beaufort, Bishopville, Camden, Charleston, Columbia, Darlington, Dillon, Georgetown, Greensboro, Latta, Mullins, Spartanburg and Sumter. I have recorded forty 90-minute oral histories and collected documentation on more than seventy-five families. People have told me stories about where their forebears came from and how they got here. I've seen family trees and certificates of birth, naturalization, marriage, and death; portraits of illustrious ancestors; photographs, including daguerreotypes and tintypes; diaries, memoirs, scrapbooks, correspondence, business accounts, congregational minutes; heirlooms such as antique jewelry, candlesticks, samovars and kiddish cups from the Old Country. I've photocopied documents, photographed objects and accepted some originals on behalf of the collection.

Every place I've visited I've been housed, fed, welcomed, treated like family and made to feel at home.

None of this would be possible with-

out the assistance of the State Advisory Committee, recruited and chaired by Judge Clyde Robinson. Judge Robinson has accompanied me on several field trips; members of the committee have provided introductions, set up interviews and shown us around. In Charleston I've had the help of a group of able and willing volunteers.

Within the Jewish community enthusiasm for the project is strong. People seem ready and eager to talk about their lives, as if they've been waiting to be asked. Everywhere we look we find folks already caught up in the search for roots - people writing memoirs, families compiling genealogies, synagogues celebrating anniversaries, communities organizing reunions. Suburban, urban and "sun belt" congregations are expanding and becoming more observant. New arrivals bring energy, money and an invigorating activism to the synagogues they join. Oldtimers, in turn, stake their claims to history and tradition. "My family has worshipped at Beth Elohim for seven generations," a member of Charleston's oldest congregation proudly told an unwitting "come-here."

In small towns Jewish life is passing from the scene, creating an urgency to collect and record. Old families are disappearing through intermarriage, conversion and outmigration. Populations decline, synagogues close, Jewish shop owners go out of business. As sons and daughters of dry goods merchants graduate from universities and enter the professional class, nobody is left to mind the store. Saul Krawcheck, the Engel Brothers, Sonny Goldberg and Sam Siegel all have closed their doors in the past few months. What is to become of their account books and ledgers? Unless we make efforts to save these important materials, the resources for reconstructing the history of once vital communities will be irrevocably lost.

Anyone with questions, comments, or suggestions, should call me at Special Collections, College of Charleston Library, 803-953-5530.

For more information on the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program, please call Dr. Martin Perlmutter at 803-953-5682.

A note on acquisitions

Thanks to Nat Shulman, Saul Krawcheck, Maurice Nussbaum, Sol Breitbart, Leon and Rita Banov, Fannie Appel Rones, Doris Baumgarten and Helen Silver for helping the Jewish Heritage Project acquire the following valuable collections:

- the files of the Community Relations and Social Service committees of the Charleston Jewish Federation
- accounts, photographs and scrapbooks (1939-1970) from Jack Krawcheck's store on King Street, Charleston
- business records (1914-1926) of Saul Alexander, Summerville
- correspondence, publications and photographs from a 1974 commemoration of Isaac Harby and the birth of Reform Judaism at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim
- photographs, reminiscences, correspondence and publicity materials from a 1990 reunion of St. Philip Street where Charleston's Russian Jewish immigrants first settled
- a scrapbook of articles and memorabilia from Synagogue Adas Yeshurun in Aiken
- the Charleston Jewish Community Center's oral history collection.

Thanks to Isidore Denemark for his father's certificate of citizenship, Ella Levenson Schlosburg for her mother's prayerbook and Carolyn Baruch Levenson for her Sunday School workbook. We've been given photographs by Harry Price of Spartanburg, Frances Bass Ginsberg and Sam Levenson of Bishopville, Jim Wood of Camden, Arnold Prystowsky of Charleston, and Alan Rosen, formerly of Charleston, now of Carmel, California. Also, Flossie Arnold, Wendell Levi, Jr., H.D. Barnett, Norman Baum, Michael Schwartz, Robert Zalkin and Stanley and Chariot Karesh have loaned photographs for us to reproduce.

The College of Charleston's Robert Scott Small Library has agreed to house our acquisitions to enhance their already substantial Jewish collections which now include the archives of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, records of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, Wendell Mitchell Levi's renowned pigeon library, H.T. Zacharias's business records (1905-1910), and the papers of prominent Jewish writers Ludwig Lewisohn, Robert Marks and Thomas J. Tobias.