



Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Fall 1999

JHSSC - Sixth Annual Meeting and 250th Anniversary of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Charleston, South Carolina October 22-24, 1999

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina will hold its Sixth Annual Meeting in Charleston, SC, October 22-24 at the College of Charleston campus and in nearby synagogues. The meeting marks the commencement of a year-long celebration by Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) of its 250th anniversary. KKBE is America's oldest synagogue in continuous use.

Originally chartered as an Orthodox Sephardic congregation in 1749, hence the title Kahal Kadosh, KKBE became America's first Reform congregation and the only one to grow from purely native roots. The transition from Orthodox to Reform is the subject of Sol Breitbart's feature article in this newsletter.

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina is the largest statewide Jewish organ-



Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, 86 Hasell Street

ization in South Carolina, with over 300 members. Its annual meetings attract participants from throughout South Carolina and beyond.

This year's meeting promises to be especially successful. Not many American Jewish communities can celebrate a continuous and generally welcome presence of 250 years.

Details of the meeting appear on pages 7 and 8. Please make your reservations early. Hotel rooms at these special rates, dinner accommodations, and places on the tours are all limited. We expect a large turnout including a contingent from the American Jewish Historical Society who have been invited to join the celebration as our special guests.

Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

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Contents

Directory	2
KKBE: From Orthodox to Reform	3
JHSSC schedule	7
Registration	11
Newsnotes	12

Internet Updates

College of Charleston

Jewish Studies Program — Check out the calendar full of events and programs on our new Web site!

www.cofc.edu/~jwst

Jewish Heritage Collection — Oral histories and photographs from our collection can be found on the Web.

www.cofc.edu/~jhc

About the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina (JHSSC) was founded in 1994 as a result of a panel discussion at the College of Charleston. The topic under discussion was small town Jewish life in South Carolina and the conclusions the panelists reached were inescapable: Jewish life in South Carolina's small towns is rapidly disappearing and the people who remember it are passing from the scene. The only way to preserve living memories of this once vital element of the Jewish diaspora was to start recording them immediately.

The Historical Society was organized to encourage the study and interpretation of South Carolina Jewish history and to increase awareness of that heritage among Jews and non-Jews. The Society holds two meetings a year, one a large gathering in Charleston or Columbia, the other a regional event in a smaller town. To date, the group has met in Abbeville, Sumter, Greenville, Beaufort, and Florence, averaging well over 100 registrants at both annual and regional meetings.

Each spring, the Society co-sponsors two fully subscribed Elderhostels that focus on South Carolina Jewish history. Based at the College of Charleston, each session attracts 50 participants from across the United States. A busy schedule of field trips, lectures, slide shows, and social events provides a crash course in the long and largely happy story of Jewish life in the Palmetto State.

The Society's major research initiative has been the Jewish Heritage Collection, sponsored by the College of Charleston and housed in the Special Collections Department at the College library. *cont'd pg. 11*

KKBE: The Transition from Orthodox to Reform

By Sol Breibart

This essay traces the evolution of Charleston's Beth Elohim from its Sephardic Orthodox origin to its Reform status. At its inception, Beth Elohim followed the practices, traditions, and procedures adopted by rabbinical authorities in the 17th century. As it made reforms, the congregation interpreted Biblical laws in the spirit of accommodation to changed needs and circumstances, believing that no one generation can legislate for all future ages. It was not an easy or quick transition.

Jews came to America for the same reasons that attracted other Europeans: greater economic opportunity, political liberty, and freedom from religious discrimination. Jews migrated to Carolina because the spirit of the colony, under the liberal philosopher John Locke, provided just such an environment. In fact, Locke's Constitution, written for the Carolinas, provided that when seven persons wished to form a religious association, they could do so.

Jews have been in Charleston at least since 1695. At first, as a transitory group, they worshiped in private homes. Then, as Nathaniel Levin reported in 1843, "on the second day of the year 5510 (September 3, 1749)," a group of Jews led by Moses Cohen, recently arrived from London, "associated themselves as a religious society," which they called *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim*. Congregants met in a wooden house on Union (now State) Street. They elected Cohen *haham* (religious leader), Isaac DaCosta *hazan* (reader), and Joseph Tobias *parnass* (president). The leaders of the new congregation had been associated with the Orthodox Sephardic synagogue in London known as Bevis Marks. Naturally, in Charleston, they followed the beliefs, practices, and governance to which they had been accustomed in England.

As the membership grew, the congregation moved to three other

sites before renting a stone building on Hasell Street in 1780, which they renovated into a synagogue (later called the "old synagogue"). Soon they purchased this building and adjacent land on Hasell Street on which they erected, in 1792, what was then the most impressive synagogue in the United States.

In those early days, Congregation Beth Elohim was an Orthodox community. Failure to comply with its regulations and practices resulted in severe fines, loss of privileges, and even excommunication. At that time, such a system was commonplace among Jews in England where synagogue authorities were responsible to the political powers for the good behavior of their co-religionists. For Jews in Charleston in 1800 the situation was quite different. Here Jews were guaranteed full civil and religious freedom and had enjoyed such liberties practically from their arrival. They had participated in the Revolutionary War; they were not afraid to challenge authority.

The first serious effort to bring about reforms in Beth Elohim, the first in any American congregation, occurred in 1824 with the formation of the Reformed Society of Israelites. Although the movement for reform in Judaism had begun several years earlier in Germany, the movement in Charleston was "native to the place,"

having been initiated by a group of cultured American Jewish intellectuals. Influenced by the freedom of the American scene and the equality they enjoyed, they desired that their religious practices be more like their friendly non-Jewish neighbors.

The Reformers appear to have been interested at first primarily in achieving certain changes within the liturgy of Beth Elohim. They were concerned about the apathy and neglect they noticed in the congregation and petitioned the Board of Trustees for better decorum, increased use of English in the services, and an abridgement of the services to eliminate repetitious and superfluous matter. They had no desire, as they said, "to abolish such ceremonies as are considered landmarks to distinguish the Jew from Gentile"; their main goal was "to preserve and perpetuate the principles of Judaism in their utmost vigor and purity."

When their petition was rejected, the Reformers withdrew from Beth Elohim and worshiped as a separate congregation. Within their own institution, they moved beyond the changes they had requested for Beth Elohim.

They set the Five Books of Moses and the Prophets as the standard by which to judge what parts of the liturgy to revise, alter, or discard. This was an

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Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, interior, showing the bimah.

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important decision, for they no longer accepted, as their authority, the Oral Law promulgated in the Talmud. They altered Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith by omitting statements which recognized the coming of a messiah, the return to Palestine, and the bodily resurrection of the dead. They believed in the immortality of the soul and that morality and good faith toward all mankind are the basic tenets of religion. They worshiped with heads uncovered and used instrumental music in their services. They developed their own prayer book – most of it in English – the first such prayer book produced in America for a Jewish congregation.

The Society at one time had almost as many members as Beth Elohim. It might have attracted greater numbers, for as Isaac Harby wrote in 1826, "The Jews born in Carolina are mostly our way of thinking on the subject of worship, but act from a tender regard for the opinions and feelings of their parents on not joining the Society." The Society was disbanded in 1833, after nine years of existence. Most of its members returned to Beth Elohim and its Orthodox ways, but their ideas did not die.

The Reformers' time came several years later. When fire destroyed the synagogue in 1838, Congregation Beth Elohim erected a new Greek Revival style edifice. The building still stands today, the oldest Reform synagogue in the world. In July 1840, 38 members of the congregation petitioned the Board of Trustees to call a general meeting to consider the propriety of installing an organ in the new synagogue to assist the vocal part of the service. Feeling "a deep interest in our religion" they were anxious to embrace every laudable and sacred mode by which the rising generation may be made to conform to and attend our holy worship." The majority of the Board felt that the petition was a violation of the constitution which provided that the mode of worship in the synagogue should continue to follow *Minhag-Sephardi* (Spanish -

Portuguese custom) and which prohibited any alterations in the service. But, to gratify the petitioners, the Board did call a general meeting.

Abraham Moïse, at one time a president of the Reformed Society of Israelites, proposed a resolution that an organ be procured and erected in the new synagogue. With the full support of the minister of the congregation, the Rev. Gustavus Poznanski, who had once been strictly Orthodox but who had a strong interest in music, the resolution was adopted by a vote of 46 to 40. This was the first time in American Jewish history that an organ was used in a synagogue for regular services. In an emotional speech at the dedication of the new building in March 1841, the Rev. Poznanski justified the installation of instrumental music in the synagogue as "scripturally proper in praising God," and for the first time came out in defense of the Reform practice of conducting portions of the service in the vernacular of the people.

In his discourse, Poznanski angered the Orthodox by proclaiming that "this synagogue is *our* Temple, this city *our* Jerusalem, this happy land *our* Palestine." They misinterpreted his statement, claiming that it denied the long-held belief of the coming of a messiah, the return to Jerusalem, and the restoration of the Temple there. A native of Poland, Poznanski was only speaking from the fullness of his heart and with an immigrant's appreciation of the privileges and liberties enjoyed by Jews in America.

These changes at Beth Elohim caused the secession of the Orthodox, who formed a new congregation, Shearith Israel, and later built a synagogue on Wentworth Street. Moderate Traditionalists remained at Beth Elohim, hoping to reverse the trend toward Reform. When the Reformers, with Poznanski's support, sought to eliminate a special service during the Festival of Weeks and to eliminate observance of the second day of some of the holy days and festivals, the Traditionalists were able to thwart them. But Poznanski and a committee of

three appointed by the Board of Trustees to prepare a translation of Maimonides' Articles of Faith for display in the synagogue, produced a version – later identified as Poznanski's version – which seems to have followed that used by the Reformed Society of Israelites earlier. Poznanski said that he knew no stopping place to reform in this enlightened age. Nevertheless, in 1843 the Traditionalists, who were a large minority in Beth Elohim, sought to regain control of their religious destiny by inviting the old members, who had seceded, to rejoin them. They wished to form a majority to restore, as they said, "the true spirit of our religion in conformity with the Mosaic and Rabbinical laws, and so reinstate the mode of service in the Hasell Street synagogue as it was practiced heretofore in the old Synagogue."

Traditionalists regained control of Beth Elohim temporarily, dismissed the Rev. Poznanski, and abolished all reforms. But a lawsuit instituted by the Reformers eventually went before the South Carolina Supreme Court in 1846, where the justices found in favor of the Reformers on constitutional grounds and ordered the Traditionalists to return control to the Reformers. The Traditionalists capitulated, resigned from Beth Elohim and joined the Orthodox congregation Shearith Israel.

The Reformers were again in control. At the first congregational meeting following the Supreme Court decision, they abolished observance of the second day of holidays, introduced the three-year cycle of reading the Torah, shortened the service by eliminating certain readings, and elected Poznanski as minister for life. Interestingly, he had already been elected for life in 1838.

Their troubles however, were not over. Considering himself too controversial for the welfare of his congregation, Poznanski resigned as minister in 1847, but consented to serve gratuitously until a replacement could be found. Beth Elohim seems to have had some difficulty in filling the pulpit.

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Isaac Mayer Wise, who later became the organizer of the Reform Movement in the United States, was interviewed for the position but turned it down; he and his wife feared Charleston's humid weather and the yellow fever which often plagued the city.

In 1850, Beth Elohim finally selected the Rev. Julius Eckman, an able minister, who turned out to be too traditional for the congregation. Two factions developed, a liberal one around Poznanski, who remained a member, and a traditional one around Eckman. The climax came when Eckman, who had been extremely critical of certain liberal practices in Beth Elohim, made an issue of the creed which had been, supposedly, translated by Poznanski; he complained that it omitted reference to the coming of a messiah and the resurrection of the dead and that the free translation of the remainder of the Maimonidean creed did not reflect its true meaning. The outcome was that the congregation decided to remove the controversial creed from the walls of the synagogue, Eckman was forced out, and several more members withdrew to join the Orthodox congregation Shearith Israel.

When Beth Elohim sought a successor to Rev. Eckman, it tried to avoid any misunderstandings by potential candidates as to its practices and requirements. The Board of Trustees issued a circular which clearly revealed the congregation's Reform nature. It stressed the importance of English in the services and sermons; it indicated that services were conducted with the accompaniment of an organ and that hymns and psalms were sung by a choir in English as well as Hebrew. It made clear that the Torah was read through once in three years (not annually), that certain Hebrew portions of the services were omitted, and that the second days of holidays were not observed.

Eckman's successor was the Rev. Doctor Maurice Mayer, a highly educated German lawyer and a student of Jewish literature who had taken an

active part in the unsuccessful 1848 revolution in Germany. He was too liberal for part of the congregation, and was soon reproached for presenting doctrinal points in conflict with "the cherished principles of some members." At another time, he was criticized strongly for appearing in court and taking an oath with uncovered head. In his response, he chided the Board of Trustees for attempting to teach their minister the laws and usages of his religion. "If," said he, "the usages have really such a great authority, then indeed you must remove the organ from your Synagogue, reinstate the second day of festivals, in a word, abolish all Reforms introduced since the consecration of our Temple." In 1855, Rev. Mayer instituted the first confirmation ceremony in Beth Elohim, a Reform ritual which had originated in Germany about 40 years before and involved girls as well as boys.

When Beth Elohim started its reforms in 1840, it was the only synagogue in America making changes. At that time, there were few Jewish congregations in this country, but the number began increasing rapidly as a result of the large migration of German Jews to the United States in the 1840s. Since each congregation was autonomous and free to adopt whatever practices met its needs, concern arose as to what would happen in those congregations which were without easy access to learned authorities and were free of the governmental and communal controls to which they had been subjected in Europe. Accordingly, the Rev. Isaac Lesser, a respected Orthodox minister of Philadelphia, sent out a call in 1841 to all Jewish congregations to send representatives to a conference to be held in Philadelphia for the purpose of creating a central authority in the United States to provide guidelines for congregational development. Beth Elohim rejected the invitation emphatically; congregants considered the establishment of any ecclesiastical authority whatsoever as "Alien to the Spirit and Genius of the Age in which we live, and wholly inconsistent with



Silver basket, given by Joshua Lazarus for dedication of new synagogue, 1840.

the principles of American liberty." They thought it unwise to build a system "which from its very nature must be hostile to the march of progress of enlightened rational reform." The congregation's fears were justified, for although the Philadelphia conference produced no lasting results, a majority of the ministers meeting in Cleveland fourteen years later agreed to resolutions that were antagonistic to the spirit of Reform. When Isaac M. Wise and other leading advocates of Reform went along with this development, Beth Elohim's Rev. Mayer took issue with them. He reiterated the position taken by his congregation on the Philadelphia conference and said, "For the last fourteen years our congregation stood alone with its reforms and can now afford to wait a little longer until other congregations with their ministers have reached us in our progress."

As a result of its efforts to achieve reforms, by 1860 Beth Elohim had lost many of its members and was experiencing financial difficulties. Then the Civil War began and congregational matters became secondary to the war effort. Most eligible males were involved with the Confederacy and many families fled from Charleston

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families fled from Charleston, which was under heavy bombardment from Union forces. The synagogues of Beth Elohim and Shearith Israel were severely damaged by Union shells; many refugees never returned to the battered city.

In 1866, Reform congregation Beth Elohim and Orthodox congregation Shearith Israel agreed to an amalgamation. Time and the trials of the Civil War softened attitudes. Benjamin S. Lazarus, the acting president of Beth Elohim, in resigning his position to permit a new election, said, "It must be an event of mutual gratification to all of us that the initiation and progress of the amalgamation under one fold of Shearith Israel and Beth Elohim, so long estranged and separated by unsubstantial differences, has been consummated with so much harmony and reciprocity." Charles H. Moïse, a member of the Orthodox faction, at his installation as the first president of the reunited Beth Elohim, declared, "I call myself an enlightened Jew....I do not reject all propositions for changes in externals simply because they are new, nor do I favor alteration of forms because they are old"

The contract of amalgamation, which was to be reconsidered after five years, contained compromises which indicated a temporary retreat from Reform in Beth Elohim. The document stipulated that the Portuguese service was to be used, but that it would be shortened. No instrumental music would accompany the service, but a choir of men and women would sing psalms and hymns in both English and Hebrew. The synagogue was to be open on the second day of festivals, and the minister was to be present for those who wanted to attend. This bond of union was scrupulously observed. Any moves to make changes were vigorously debated and decisions to change were made by the entire congregation, not just a Board of Trustees.

Reforms thereafter came gradu-

ally and grudgingly as local conditions demanded. In 1871, when the terms of the contract of amalgamation expired, a new constitution was adopted to replace it. This document retained most of the earlier terms, with two important changes: the reintroduction of instrumental music (an organ) in the services and the use of more English.

The pace of change in Beth Elohim quickened after 1875. In that year a young religious leader came to the congregation. The Rev. David Levy, then only 21 years old and the first American-born minister to serve Beth Elohim, entered upon a tenure of 18 years. He had received his training at the short-lived conservative Maimonides College in Philadelphia, the first seminary established in the United States for the training of rabbis; but he was more liberal than its founders. Within two years he had earned such respect from the congregation that the Board of Trustees asked him to propose recommendations to make the services more attractive to the membership.

Levy suggested that Saturday morning services should begin at 10 AM instead of 9 AM, that they should be shortened further by eliminating certain irrelevant prayers, and that the practice of reading the Torah through triennially should be reintroduced. He advocated a greater use of English and elimination of the observance of the second day of festivals. His strongest plea was for the installation of family pews, permitting husbands and wives to sit together during services. The congregation accepted most of his suggestions.

In 1879, the congregation adopted a new prayer book — one compiled and edited by the Rev. Levy especially for Beth Elohim. The membership thereby abandoned the old Orthodox prayer book which they had used, with increasing omissions, since its first publication in the United States in the 1830s. Levy's new volume conformed with the order of the service which had

evolved in Beth Elohim; it retained, at the insistence of the Board of Trustees over the mild objection of Rev. Levy, the beliefs in the coming of a messiah and the resurrection of the dead. The Levy prayer book continued in use until 1896, when the congregation replaced it with the *Union Prayer Book*, edited and published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

By accepting the *Union Prayer Book*, Beth Elohim entered fully into the ranks of liberal Reform congregations. It had moved from one prayer book, which was a modification of the Portuguese Orthodox service still containing some Orthodox principles, to a new one, which embodied the Reform principles adopted by Reform rabbis at a conference in Pittsburgh in 1885 — some of which were similar to those advanced by the members of the Reformed Society of Israelites. The Pittsburgh Platform, which has been considerably altered by succeeding rabbinical conferences, held that the Bible was written by man and did not have to be accepted literally; it rejected the dietary laws as obligatory; it considered Judaism a religion, not a nationality, so a return to Palestine was not expected; it rejected the idea of the resurrection of the body and embraced the concept of the immortality of the soul; and maintained that it was the duty of the Jews to work for a better social order.

Under the ministry of the Rev. David Levy, Beth Elohim had finally returned to the spirit of progressive Judaism exhibited by the members of the Reformed Society of Israelites. It reintroduced confirmation as a meaningful ceremony and it initiated late Friday evening services. Levy's passionate defense of a faculty member, dismissed from the University of South Carolina in 1891 for being a Unitarian, reflects that spirit: "Human intelligence, weary of ecclesiastical tyranny and sick of the misty pabulum of a worn-out theology, is clamoring for a revision of religious confession and for a reasonable statement of the essentials of belief."

Sixth Annual Meeting **Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina** **October 22-24, 1999**

Friday, October 22, 1999

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| 11:30 AM – 1:15 PM | Guided Bus Tour of historic Jewish Charleston*
(Registration required, no additional charge)
Meet at Holiday Inn, Corner Calhoun and Meeting Streets |
| * If bus fills up for the 11:30 tour, we will schedule an additional guided bus tour from 9:30 AM – 11:15 AM. Please indicate if the earlier tour is feasible for you. | |
| 1:30 PM – 2:15 PM | Proclamation by Mayor Joseph Riley
Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim |
| 2:30 PM – 3:45 PM | On-Site Tours:
Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim and Coming Street Cemetery |
| 4:00 PM – 5:15 PM | On-Site Tours:
City Hall and Jewish Heritage Collection |
| 6:45 PM | Shabbat Dinner at Synagogue Emanu-El
Rabbi Edward Friedman, officiating |
| 8:15 PM | Shabbat services at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (Reform)
Rabbis Anthony Holz and Eric H. Yoffie officiating (<i>Registration is required, very limited space.</i>)
<div style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></div> Shabbat services at Synagogue Emanu-El (Conservative)
Rabbi Edward Friedman officiating |
| 9:30 PM | Oneg Shabbat: Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim
<i>All welcome.</i> |

Saturday, October 23, 1999

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| 9:00 AM | Shabbat services at Brith Sholom Beth Israel (Orthodox),
Rabbi David Radinsky officiating
<div style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></div> |
| 10:00 AM | Shabbat services at Kahal Kadosh, Beth Elohim (Reform)
Rabbi Anthony Holz officiating |
| 11:45 AM | Kiddush at Brith Sholom Beth Israel (Orthodox)
Welcoming Remarks, Rabbi David Radinsky |

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Schedule of Events cont'd

Saturday, October 23, 1999....cont'd

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| 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM | <p>“Belonging: A South Carolina Jewish Family in the ‘40s and ‘50s”
 Talk by Judy Kurtz Goldman, born and raised in Rock Hill and author of the newly published novel <i>The Slow Way Back</i>.
 Sanctuary, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim</p> |
| 2:30 PM | Coffee Break |
| 2:45 PM – 4:00 PM | <p>“Jewish Belles: Ethnic Variations on a Regional Type”
 Talk by Deborah Dash Moore, Director of American Culture Program at Vassar College and author of <i>To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.</i>
 Sanctuary, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim</p> |
| 7:00 PM | <p>Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Gala Banquet
 Charleston Place (<i>Reservations required</i>. Black Tie optional.
 Cocktails, Dinner, Dance. \$125 per person)</p> |
| 8:00 PM | <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>Film: To Be Announced
 Room 118, Education Center, College of Charleston</p> |

Sunday, October 24, 1999

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| 9:30 – 10:30 AM | Bagel Breakfast, Stern Student Center |
| 10:30 – 11:45 AM | <p>“All in the Family: Growing Up Jewish in the South”
 Talk by Jenna Weissman Joselit, winner of 1995 National Jewish Book Award for <i>The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture</i>
 Stern Student Center Ballroom</p> |
| 11:45 AM | Coffee and Sweets |
| 12:00 PM | <p>Business Meeting, Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina
 Stern Student Center Ballroom</p> |
| 3:00 PM | Organ Recital, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim |

Locations

Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, 86 Hasell Street
 Brith Sholom Beth Israel, 182 Rutledge Avenue
 Emanu-El, 5 Windsor Drive (West of the Ashley)
 Coming Street Cemetery, 187 Coming Street
 Stern Student Center, Corner of George and Glebe Streets
 Simons Center for the Arts, 44 St. Philip Street
 Education Center, 81 St. Philip Street
 City Hall, Corner of Meeting and Broad Streets
 Jewish Heritage Collection, Robert Scott Small Library, College of Charleston



Maps provided in registration packet.

A chapter from history...

A Sephardic Story

by Robert A. Moses

The Inquisition in Spain lasted some 350 years, ending about 1834. About 100 years before the Inquisition ended, there lived in Lisbon, Portugal, a Dr. Samuel Nunes who, like most other Jews in Spain and Portugal, had long professed Christianity, while secretly remaining loyal to the Jewish faith of his ancestors. Dr. Nunes was a very successful and wealthy physician, was held in high esteem, and was a prominent citizen of Lisbon. He was also chief physician to the Grand Inquisitor. However, when he was discovered to be secretly adhering to the practices of his Jewish faith, he and his family members were summarily thrown into prison.

As luck would have it, his medical services were sorely missed and he and his family were liberated from prison. There was a strict condition on this freedom: two officials of the Inquisition would reside in the Nunes home, as spies upon their religious practices.

Dr. Nunes's elegant mansion stood high upon the banks of the Tagus River. A social and friendly man, he enjoyed entertaining. It was his custom to frequently hold lavish parties at his home and he held one such dinner party on a pleasant summer day in 1732. Among the guests were a young man, David Mendez Machado, and a British sea captain whose brigantine lay anchored in the Tagus River. Six months earlier, Machado's elder brother, David, had been discovered secretly practicing Judaism and was burned at the stake for refusing to give up his faith.

During the early afternoon of Dr. Nunes's party, while the guests were strolling about the lawn, the British sea captain invited everyone to come aboard the vessel, inspect the ship, and partake of light lunch. The family and guests, including the two Inquisition spies, walked down to the river and went aboard. While they were below-decks enjoying the refreshments, the anchor was weighed, the sails unfurled, and, on a fair breeze, the brigantine shot out of the Tagus and was soon at sea, carrying the party to England.

Dr. Nunes and his family had abandoned their house and home, complete with the table set and dinner prepared for the party. Their property was seized and confiscated by the government. Some time before, Dr. Nunes had quietly converted his assets to gold and hired the sea captain for the voyage. All the men of the family had obtained special leather belts and the gold was distributed among them. The women had sewn their silver and jewels into their long and voluminous skirts.

About the time the group arrived in London, there was much exciting and favorable speculation about the settlement of Georgia in the American colonies. The Nunes family and many of the friends who had escaped with them from Lisbon set sail for Georgia aboard the "William and Sarah." They departed from London in January 1733 and arrived in Savannah in July of that year, probably about five months after Oglethorpe's landing with the first group of settlers.

Jews were not welcome in Georgia. Back in England, the 21 Trustees for the colonization of Georgia made repeated requests not to allow them in, and after they arrived, to have them expelled. However, shortly before the arrival of Dr. Nunes's group, an epidemic had wiped out a large percentage of the first settlers, including the only physician. Dr. Nunes had skills in the treatment of contagious diseases and was able to stem the tide of a new plague that threatened the community. Oglethorpe himself had never opposed the Jews; Dr. Nunes's contributions and ready acceptance set the tone for the rest of the Jewish settlers. They became responsible and contributing citizens and gradually entered into every phase of life in the struggling settlement.

The constraints of years of non-Jewish living were not easy to shake off. It was said that, for many months after their arrival in Georgia, the women of the Nunes family were unable to recite their Jewish prayers without the assistance of the rosary because of their habits acquired under the eyes of the spies.

Of personal interest to the author of this article, David Mendez Machado, the young man who had escaped with the Nunes party, married Dr. Nunes's daughter, Zipporah, and they became my great-great, great-great grandparents. Other Sumter descendants of their union include members of the William and Catherine Moses Bryan family and members of the John and Andrena Moran Ray family.

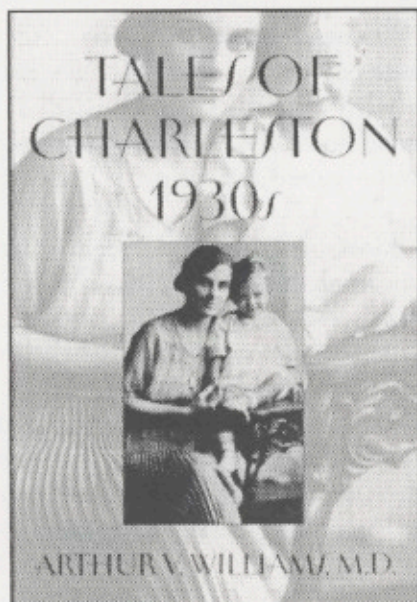
This information is drawn from three sources: the book, *Third to None, the Saga of Savannah Jewry*, by Rabbi Saul Jacob Rubin, 1983; Moses family genealogy records; and a paper entitled, "Family History of the Rev. David Mendez Machado," by N. Taylor Phillips (published by the American Jewish Historical Society, 1894)

Tales of Charleston, 1930s

by

Arthur V. Williams, M.D.

The College of Charleston Library, in association with the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, is pleased to announce the publication of *Tales of Charleston, 1930s* by Arthur V. Williams, M.D.



We had the oldest and best municipal college in the country, the oldest and best museum in the United States, famous authors like DuBose Heyward, a lot of painters, a church where George Washington had worshiped, the *News and Courier* that probably everyone in the country read, and we had the Ashley and Cooper Rivers that flowed together off the Battery to form the Atlantic Ocean. I never really believed that it formed the whole ocean, but I did believe our house was the center of everything really important geographically, spiritually, and culturally.

—from *Tales of Charleston, 1930s*

After a distinguished 40-year career at the Medical University of South Carolina, Dr. Williams retired in 1995. His many accomplishments include bringing artificial kidney surgery and peritoneal dialysis treatment to South Carolina. Upon retirement, he was named Professor Emeritus of Technical Nephrology at MUSC.

Dr. Williams says *Tales of Charleston* developed from a series of stories he wrote about his early life. The stories are told with the wide-eyed innocence of youth and in the language of the day. Williams holds few punches in the book but is also keenly aware of the positive influences of family, neighborhood, and congregation, in his case, historic Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, home of Reform Judaism in America.

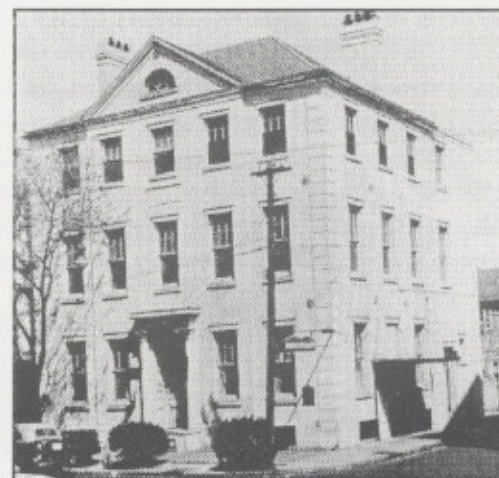
"I see *Tales of Charleston* as a work of social history," says Dale Rosengarten, historian and curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection. "Charleston in the 1930s has been painted in rosy hues; it was the era of the Charleston Renaissance and the preservation movement. But Dr. Williams strips away the patina and reveals a much harsher reality — a racist, impoverished, scrappy town."

Tales of Charleston 1930s sells for \$15. All proceeds go to Friends of the Library to help underwrite future publications of the College's Special Collections Department. It can be ordered through the Jewish Heritage Collection Web site (www.cofc.edu/~jhc) or by calling the Jewish Heritage Collection Office at (843) 953-8028.



◀ Wentworth at King Street.
Photography by M.B. Paine.
Courtesy of the Charleston
Museum.

Hebrew Orphan Society
at 88 Broad Street.
Courtesy of
Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. ▶



Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina
Annual Membership and Charleston Events Registration Form

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

DAY PHONE _____ EVENING PHONE _____

Registration for the weekend: includes meals, speakers, tours, and reception
(Does not include Gala Banquet or hotel accommodations) \$75 per person _____

JHSSC Membership (through year 2000) \$35 per family _____

Gala Banquet (Saturday night, Charleston Place) \$125 per person
(kosher food upon request) _____

TOTAL _____

Mail checks to: Martin Perlmutter, Jewish Studies Program, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC,
29424

Accommodations are your responsibility. For special rates, mention the JHSSC and make your reservations by September 27. After that, rooms are subject to availability.

Holiday Inn, 125 Calhoun Street, Charleston (843) 805-7900 Toll Free (877) 805-7900, \$129 per night
(1-2 persons)

Days Inn, Patriot's Point, 261 Johnnie Dodds Boulevard, Mt. Pleasant (843) 881-1800
Toll Free (800) 329-7466, \$55 per night (1-4 persons)

The Mills House, 115 Meeting Street, Charleston (843) 577-2400 Toll Free (800) 874-9600, \$239 per
night (1-2 persons)

About.....JHSSC cont'd from pg. 2

Since the project commenced in January 1995, historian Dale Rosengarten and a dedicated corps of volunteers have recorded some 300 oral histories pertaining to South Carolina Jewish life and culture. Project staff have been compiling an extensive manuscript archives, including records of families, businesses, synagogues, and Jewish organizations. The archives already contains hundreds of manuscripts, historical photographs, genealogical records, and fieldwork files.

The project's Web site (www.cofc.edu/~jhc) contains an easy guide to the oral history archives and topically-organized excerpts from the interviews. Artifacts, photographs, and audio segments from the collection will be featured in "...A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in South Carolina," a museum exhibition co-sponsored by the McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina. The exhibit is scheduled to open at McKissick in 2001 and to travel nationally for two years.



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

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Jewish Studies: Cooperative Venture

The Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston provides extensive programming for the larger Charleston community. Other communities in South Carolina which have an interest in participating, either by attending events or by jointly sponsoring events, should contact the Jewish Studies Office at (843) 953-5682



News Notes

Beginning in the spring issue, the JHSSC newsletter we will have a regular column of news from synagogues around the state. To do this we need your cooperation! If you have any news, announcements, or notes of historical interest about your synagogue or congregation please contact Elizabeth Moses at the Office of Jewish Studies, College of Charleston. Phone (843) 953-5682 or E-mail: mosese@cofc.edu



Jewish Heritage Collection looking for uniforms !

We need military and athletic uniforms, from before 1950, to borrow for our upcoming exhibition about Jewish life in South Carolina. We are especially interested in Confederate and World War I and II wardrobe items, and AZA and JCC uniforms and jackets. For more information, call (843) 953-8028.

