



Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

SUMMER 1997

JHSSC Fourth Annual Meetings held in Charleston

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina held its Fourth Annual Meetings in January on the College of Charleston campus. The meetings were held in conjunction with Synagogue Emanu-El's 50th Anniversary.

The weekend began on Friday with a City Hall Celebration to commemorate Synagogue Emanu-El's 50th Anniversary. The celebration was led by Mayor Joseph Riley, with Rabbi Edward Friedman, Judge Klyde Robinson, and Jerry Zucker participating.

Following the City Hall Celebration, visitors had the option of choosing between three on-site tours led by local members. Sol Breibart, local historian and founding member of the Jewish Historical Society of S.C. offered a guided tour of the Coming Street Cemetery, which is the oldest surviving Jewish cemetery in the South and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, the oldest surviving Reform Synagogue in the world, and the Jewish Heritage Project Archives at the College of Charleston, which now include 38 private collections ranging in size from a few documents to six cubic feet of materials, were also available for on-site tours.

Saturday's events began with Saturday morning services at Synagogue Emanu-El, a Kiddush/luncheon at Emanu-El and a panel discussion by some of the Synagogue's founders remembering the early days of Emanu-El. In the afternoon, Dr. David Goldfield, Robert Lee Bailey Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, presented an excellent lecture on "The Jewish Place in the South," highlighting both the successes and the limitations of Southern Jews. His thesis was that the Jews had a "place" in the South, allowing them considerable freedom but with some constraints on the opportunities available to them.

Saturday evening's events included the Footlight Players' presentation of "The Desperate Hours" by Joseph Hayes, The Charleston Symphony Orchestra's evening at the Pops featuring "the Fabulous Forties," and a cocktail reception and black tie dinner at the College which raised funds for the Jewish Heritage Project (story and pictures, page 4).



JHSSC Members Celebrate at City Hall; From left, Rabbi Edward Friedman, Janet Friedman, Jerry Zucker, Anna Lea Steinberg, Mayor Joseph Riley, and County Council Chair Barrett Lawrimore.

Sunday's events began with brunch at the College's Simons Center for the Arts when David Cohen, Dean of Libraries at the College, and Rabbi William A. Rosenthal, Rabbi Emeritus, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, presented Rabbi and Mrs. Theodore Levy with a plaque honoring them for their gift of a significant Judaica library collection to the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program. Immediately following this presentation, Dale Rosengarten, director of the Jewish Heritage Project, and Sandra Lee Rosenblum who oversees the Project, gave an extended update on the progress of the Project, with a wonderful slide presentation.

Sunday's keynote address was given by Jenna Weissman Joselit, currently at New York University, who spoke on "The Invention of American Jewry." She highlighted different ways in which American (and specifically Southern) Jewry accommodated itself to the somewhat alien environment of America and developed distinctive and innovative practices. The history of KKBE's organ was given as an example. A luncheon and business meeting followed.

The meetings attracted over two hundred participants again this year! Next year in Columbia.

Senator Isadore Lourie honored in Columbia

by Herbert J. Hartsook

On Wednesday, October 30, the University of South Carolina's Thomas Cooper and University South Caroliniana societies hosted a reception honoring Isadore E. Lourie and recognizing him for the gift of his personal papers to the Modern Political Collections Division of the South Caroliniana Library. The gala affair drew a standing room only crowd that included family, friends, board members of the JHSSC, and legislators and attorneys with whom Lourie has been associated. The event was highlighted by a surprise visit by Lourie's close friend and current U.S. Secretary of Education, Dick Riley.

Modern Political Collections exist to document South Carolina society and government at the state and national levels. The University is excited about Lourie's collection because his life and career span a remarkable period of change in South Carolina's government and he was among the key players in instituting change. His papers will form an important resource for future generations of scholars who will find our recent history just as fascinating as we now find the Colonial and Civil War eras.

In opening the formal remarks, Riley said: "Izzy and I have had a wonderful life together in public service.... They called our crowd the 'Young Turks.' We didn't have a big crowd, but we had a very active crowd, and I hope an honorable one.

Because we were really trying to bring South Carolina into this century.... Izzy Lourie did more to bring people together at a time that was extremely important for this country, and all of us should be forever grateful for that." The following are excerpts from Lourie's remarks:

"My parents came to this country at the turn of the century, traveling to a place of new frontiers in pursuit of religious freedom. It made a tremendous impression upon me as they discussed these efforts with me. My mother in particular had a social conscience as wide and as long as this wonderful state. She more so than any other person instilled in me a sense of caring for the needy and the underprivileged, which I hope was a mainstay of my political life.

"The highlight of my legislative career was those years when I was active with the group called the 'Young Turks'.... Through the efforts of this group and many others, we were able to be responsible for progressive legislation in the fields of education, senior citizens, consumer protection, economic development, health care, and many other areas, all of which we believed and hoped would have a lasting impression on the social progress of South Carolina. Our commitment to the cause of social and economic justice for all of our citizens was the anchor of our entire legislative program.

"My heritage as an American, as a Jew, and as a South Carolinian have been the nourishment of my life. These heritages were the cornerstone of my public service. I continue to be very proud of and cherish all three of these great heritages.... I do not want to close my remarks without saying a word about America.... We are able to pursue to the heights of our abilities the opportunities presented to us because of freedom in America. Freedom to worship, to speak, to read what we want to. Freedom to think of great ideas for tomorrow. You can feel the freedom in the air in America and South Carolina; and for that we are all blessed."

Herbert J. Hartsook is the Curator of Modern Political Collections at the South Caroliniana Library at U.S.C.

Charlotte And Alan Kahn honored By BSS Traditions

Beth Shalom Synagogue in Columbia honored Charlotte and Alan Kahn at its Traditions Dinner on April 13 at the Embassy Suites Hotel. The Traditions Dinner, which was chaired by Senator and Mrs. Isadore Lourie, honors a person or a couple who have a tradition of dedication to the Synagogue and the community.

Born in Columbia, Alan B. Kahn is the son of the late Katie and Irwin Kahn. Mr. Kahn is a graduate of Duke University and George Washington University. He is President of Kahn Development Company, which develops and manages real estate. He also serves as chairman of M.B. Kahn Construction Company, Inc., which was founded by his grandfather, M.B. Kahn, in 1927.

Charlotte Kahn was born in Port-Said, Egypt and spent her childhood in Egypt and France. She graduated from Georgetown University in 1964. In 1965, she married Alan Kahn. They have three children, Kevin, Monique and Charles, and one grandchild, Sophia Kathryn.

Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

JHSSC Officers

Isadore Lourie	<i>Founding President</i>
Klyde Robinson	<i>President</i>
Richard Gergel	<i>Vice President</i>
Martin Perlmutter	<i>Secretary</i>
David J. Cohen	<i>Treasurer</i>
Helen Silver	<i>Newsletter Editor</i>

Please Send Change of Address Notices to:
Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina
College of Charleston
Charleston, SC 29424

JHSSC and the College of Charleston sponsor Elderhostels

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina and the College of Charleston sponsored two week-long Elderhostels in June. Elderhostel is a national organization, based in Boston, which attracts senior citizens from across the country to different locations for extended study of a topic or theme. Participants were housed at the newly renovated Francis Marion Hotel, across the street from the College of Charleston, and ate at the College cafeteria. They attended presentations and discussions about Southern history with an emphasis on the Southern Jewish story.

Presenters included members of the local Jewish community and the College community as well as members of the community at large. Among the presenters were Ted Rosengarten, Sol Breibart, Robert Rosen, Dale Rosengarten, William Moore, Curtis Franks, Belinda and Richard Gergel, Ben Goldberg, Eileen Chepenik and Chief Reuben Greenberg. Janice Kahn guided a tour of Jewish sites in Charleston.

The Elderhostels received excellent ratings from the participants, who were enthusiastic about the Elderhostels, the College of Charleston, and Charleston. As a result, the Jewish Studies Program and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina will conduct two more Elderhostels in May of 1998. For more information, contact Claire Robinson in the College's Department of Continuing Education, 953-5488.

College of Charleston Library hires Dale Rosengarten as Curator of Jewish Heritage Collection

The College of Charleston has made a serious commitment to the goals of the Jewish Heritage Project by hiring a full-time curator/historian to identify, gather, and make available materials related to the Jewish experience of South Carolina. By design, the earlier Jewish Heritage Project is moving increasingly toward an exhibition and, by default, increasingly away from archival development and special collections. Since the College of Charleston is interested in archives and special collections, it was eager to continue and expand the earlier focus of the Jewish Heritage Project. Hence, the commitment to a permanent position in Special Collections of the Library devoted to the Jewish experience of South Carolina.

Dale Rosengarten, curator of the earlier Jewish Heritage Project and well-known to members of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, has begun working full-time at the Library, continuing much of the focus of her earlier work. Dale was recently awarded her Ph.D. from Harvard University, writing her dissertation on the African/American tradition of sweetgrass basketry. She has published *Row Upon Row*, a well-received and often reprinted

history of traditional sweetgrass basketry.

The College of Charleston and its Jewish Studies Program has supported the Jewish Heritage Project from the Project's outset. The College helped design the Project, it has provided the Project's facilities, it has organized the Project's funding, and it has contributed significantly each year to the Project's budget. The College's hiring a curator indicates satisfaction with the Project and a commitment to its continuation. Part of the curator's duties will be to teach regular courses related to the South Carolina Jewish experience.

The project shall bear the name "South Carolina Jewish Historical Society Jewish Heritage Collection." The Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston is committed to raising \$250,000 in endowment money for the Jewish Heritage Project. The annual proceeds of that \$250,000 endowment will help support the curator's work, for as long as the College remains committed to the Jewish Heritage Project. This is part of a million dollar capital campaign for Jewish Studies at the College that is now underway. All help is welcome.

Regional Meetings to be held in Greenville

The South Carolina Jewish Historical Society will hold its regional meetings this Fall in Greenville, S.C. from November 14th through 16th, 1997. Both the Greenville Temple and Synagogue will participate in the weekend celebration which will feature lectures, symposia, and slide presentations. An Executive Meeting of the JHSSC Board will end the weekend.

Last Fall's Sumter regional meetings were so successful that the Society committed itself then to a Greenville regional meeting in which the Greenville Jewish Community will be highlighted. Jack and Lillian Bloom, long-time Greenville residents, have been instrumental in coordinating the efforts.

Registration for the Greenville meetings is \$25 per person and covers the cost of the Shabbat luncheon and the Saturday night dinner. Not only will the meetings be fun, they will be inexpensive.

The Comfort Inn (phone: 864-271-0060) has reserved a limited number of rooms for the JHSSC at the special rate of \$49 per room (single or double), which includes a hot breakfast buffet. Participants need to make their own reservations. Make them early.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

DAY PHONE _____

EVENING PHONE _____

FAX _____

☐ **I would like to attend the Greenville regional meetings of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina!**

☐ I have enclosed \$25 for each member attending.

Number of members attending _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

☐ **Please renew my membership in the Jewish Historical Society of S.C.**
Please complete reverse side for membership

JHSSC membership fees do not include meeting expenses. Please detach and enclose this form and make checks payable to the Jewish Historical Society of S.C. Mail payment to:

Martin Perlmutter, Secretary
Jewish Historical Society of S.C.
College of Charleston
Charleston, S.C. 29424-0001

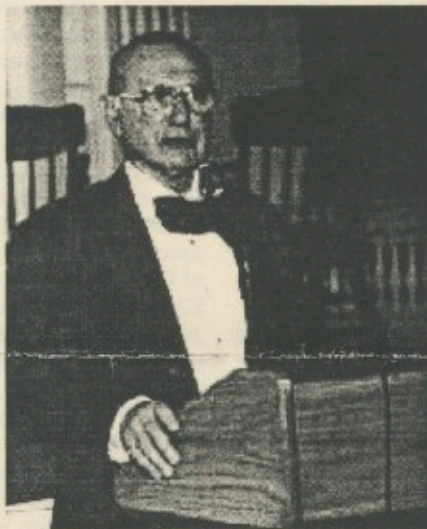
Black Tie Affair Benefits Jewish Heritage Project

In conjunction with its Annual Meetings in Charleston, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina sponsored a Black Tie Cocktail Hour and Dinner to benefit the Jewish Heritage Project.

Sue and Robert Prenner hosted a cocktail hour at their beautiful and historic Meeting Street home, formerly the home of Mordecai Cohen, a prominent Charleston Jewish citizen of the early nineteenth century. After cocktails, the group moved on to Alumni Hall at the College of Charleston for an elaborate dinner. President Alex Sanders, of the College of Charleston, gave a moving presentation on the importance of understanding and acceptance in a culturally diverse society.

The Cocktail Reception and Dinner netted more than \$18,000 for the Jewish Historical Society's Jewish Heritage Project.

Many thanks to all who supported and attended this event.



JHSSC President, Judge Klyde Robinson, welcomes guests



☐ I would like to join the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina!

☐ I have enclosed \$35 for 1998 membership (includes husband and wife)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

DAY PHONE _____

EVENING PHONE _____

FAX _____

Support the Jewish Heritage Project by considering these additions - all donations are tax exempt (dues are included):

- ☐ Friend (\$36 to \$99) ☐ Sponsor (\$500 to \$999)
☐ Sustaining (\$100 to \$249) ☐ Benefactor (\$1000 to \$5000)
☐ Patron (\$250 to \$499) ☐ Founder (More than \$5000)

Goldhagen to Speak in Columbia on September 24

The Shoftim Society of Columbia, a group of South Carolina Attorneys, will host a three-day seminar featuring those Nuremberg prosecutors that are still living. The seminar will extend from Wednesday, September 24 through Friday, September 26.

Daniel Goldhagen, a prominent historian and author of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* will be the Keynote Speaker on Wednesday evening.

The event is free and open to the public. For further information, contact Isadore Lourie at (803) 799-9805.

Don't Forget!

Regional Meetings in Greenville Nov. 14 - 16
Annual Meetings in Columbia April 3 - 5

Items collected thus far for the Jewish Heritage Project include pictures, right, (the B.J. Barnett store, Sumter, 1904), and a Havdallah spice box, below.

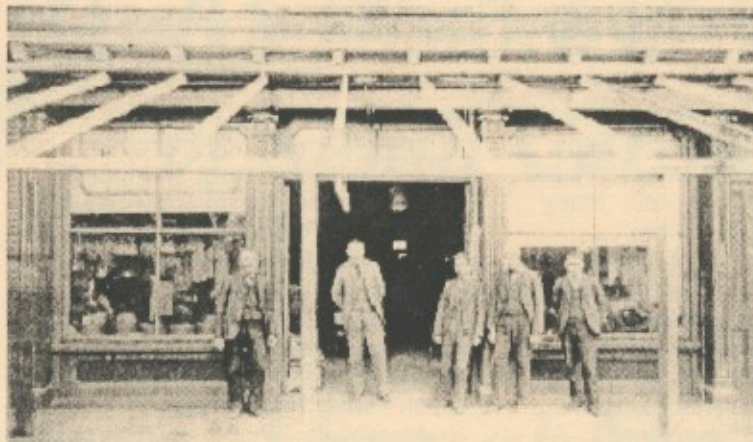


Exhibit to highlight state's rich Jewish heritage

BY CHRIS HORN

For a generation following the American Revolution, which American city had the largest Jewish Population?

One hint: before guessing New York or Philadelphia, adjust your sights further south.

"By 1800, Charleston had the largest and wealthiest Jewish contingent. The city was also the 19th-century birthplace of Reform Judaism in the United States" said Jane Prybyls, curator of research and folklife at USC's McKissick Museum and co-director of a major Jewish heritage project.

The story of how South Carolina's Jewish immigrants adapted to American culture (and the Southern sub-culture) while maintaining their own religious and social customs is the focus of a forthcoming exhibition entitled "Pledging Allegiance: Jews in South Carolina, 1695-1995."

"This is really a story about how the people who came here became American — through social, religious, and cultural adaptation. Every immigrant group wrestles with this issue," Prybyls said.

The project, now in the planning phase with a \$40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, is sponsored by McKissick Museum, the College of Charleston, and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. A traveling exhibit is expected to tour museums across South Carolina and the country, after opening at McKissick in 1999.

The exhibit will highlight 300 years of Jewish heritage in the state by presenting and interpreting:

- religious and secular artifacts brought to this country by Old World immigrants
- photographs, scrapbooks, and other memorabilia documenting the changing cultures and practices of Jewish families in South Carolina
- family papers, business records, and manuscripts that capture daily details of Jewish life in the South.

"We have already documented a number of items such as menorahs, spice boxes, candlesticks, immigration papers, and passports," Prybyls said. "And we have identified a number of memoirs and letters, too. Jews in South Carolina have kept a great record of their own history, perhaps because of their uprooting. The loss of home and the threat of extinction posed by the Holocaust have fueled efforts to preserve earlier cultural practices."

The idea for the Jewish heritage project was first suggested several years ago by Gary Stanton, a former folklorist at McKissick.

At the request of McKissick director Lynn Robertson, Dale Rosengarten at the College of Charleston has undertaken much of the groundwork, conducting archival research and interviews with families and tracking down dozens of sources for the project. The Jewish Historical Society has organized a statewide network of heritage committees that will help gather materials for the exhibit.

"Jane and I will attend the annual conference of the Council of American Jewish Museums this month. I think this show is going to be well-received," Rosengarten said. "This country is ready for a

happy story, and it really has been a happy story for the Jews in South Carolina. South Carolina has a very good record of religious tolerance."

In fact, South Carolina was the first modern community in North America or Europe to allow Jewish men to vote and to elect Jews to public office.

Along the way, Jewish immigrants in South Carolina had to choose sides on such issues as the Civil War (many Jews fought for the Confederacy), blue laws, and mercantile practices (Jewish merchants had to decide whether to open on Saturday or sell non-kosher products such as pork and shellfish).

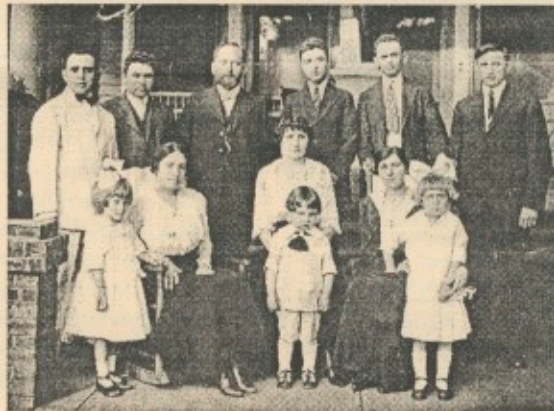
Today, Jewish populations have declined in the state's small towns, but have grown in metropolitan and resort areas.

"There is no monolithic Jewish culture anymore. There are many cultures within the Jewish community, and it continues to change with immigration of Jews from Israel, Russia, and South Africa," Prybyls said. "There is a sadness that the Jewish presence is diminishing in many smaller towns, and without that presence, there is a danger of anti-Semitism rising."

"But it's part of the American success story — their children are not returning to the small towns. They are making their way, but not in small-town South Carolina."

While other Southern states have successfully launched their own Jewish heritage exhibits, the story of Jews in South Carolina promises to be extraordinary, Rosengarten said.

"This was the gateway for many European Jews to the New World. There is a rich heritage here of which surprisingly few people — Jewish or non-Jewish — are aware," she said.



The Chaplin, Citron, and Berkovitz families, Columbia, 1916

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Searching For Your Past In The Present

by Warren A. Kohn

Are you familiar with Yizkor books? Yizkor Books are written recollections by residents of communities which were destroyed during the Holocaust. Many contain maps hand-drawn from recollection, photographs of friends, family, and neighbors. There are more than 2000 of such books in existence; JewishGen Yizkor Index has them indexed with additional information on where they may be purchased or how to obtain them by interlibrary loans. A word of caution: most of these volumes are written in Yiddish or Hebrew and there are very few English translations available.

JewishGen has special interest groups (SIG) for those of us who have interests in very limited areas. For example, there are special interest groups for those seeking information on families in Poland or parts of the former Soviet Union, United Kingdom, Flanders, South Africa, or Argentina, with direct contacts with people in those areas. Seeking information on Litvaks or CryptoJews? There may be a

special interest group for you.

JewishGen provides a mentor program for newcomers, an index to Poland from the Russia era (Russian Era Indexing Poland Project known as REIPP), an index of qualified professional translators and genealogical researchers around the world, is presently indexing Jewish Cemeteries world-wide, and supports Jewish Family Home Pages.

JewishGen is not the only resource available in Jewish genealogy. There is Virtual Shtetl on the Internet at sunsite.unc.edu/Yiddish/roots/html. There is also a JewishNet at www.jewishnet.net. You can now access the Social Security Death Indices which are available on-line at www.infobases.com/ssdi. Your local Family Center at the Church of Latter Day Saints can provide invaluable information and assistance by way of ship sailing dates, ports of sail and ports of entry, passenger lists, census tracts; they will direct you to other resources. The Church of Latter Day

Saints is reported to have the most complete Polish birth and death records outside of Poland to date.

There is a recent publication which can direct you to more Jewish sites on the Internet. The book is *The Jewish Guide to the Internet* by Diane Romm, published by Jason Aronson, (ISBN: 1568219148) and contains more than 500 Web Sites.

While the computer is a great aid in the task of genealogy, it is not the sole resource. There is still a lot of legwork to be done. Talk to older family members and record those conversations on audio or video tape; they are precious and valuable recollections. Take photographs of headstones and rubbings from those too worn to be photographed. Have old family photographs recopied. In the end, the energy will have been well used. The results will be well worth your while. Happy researching!

This is the second part of a two-part article. The author is an attorney in Columbia, SC.



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