

# THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of SOUTH CAROLINA

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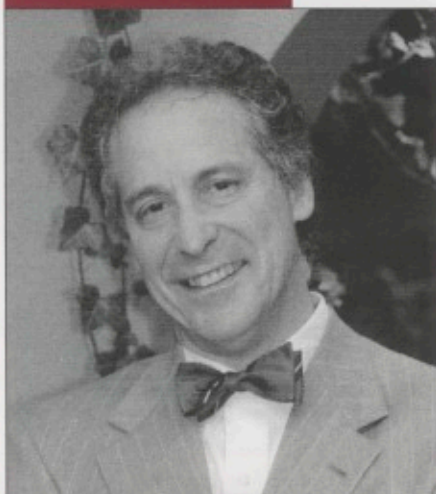
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# From the President

Robert N. Rosen

Exciting things are happening at the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. **"A Portion of the People": Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life** has been a big hit at McKissick Museum on the University of South Carolina campus in Columbia. On March 26<sup>th</sup> the exhibition was featured on National Public Radio's Morning Edition, and on April 9<sup>th</sup> appeared on page 12 of the *New York Times*. The show closed at McKissick in May, and will move to Charleston for the fall season. **A grand opening party at the Gibbes Museum of Art will be held on September 12<sup>th</sup> – MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!** We are working hard to make it a memorable evening and a landmark event in the history of South Carolina's Jewish community.

After a nine-week stay in Charleston "A Portion of the People" moves to the Center for Jewish History on 16<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City. Because of the events of last September 11<sup>th</sup>, our co-sponsors, Yeshiva University Museum and the American Jewish Historical Society, have struggled to raise the necessary funds to bring the show to New York for a six-month venue. I am happy to report that everything is on track and the exhibition is scheduled to open at the Center early in February 2003, and run through July 20<sup>th</sup> of that year.

#### OTHER IMPORTANT DATES:

- JHSSC Board of Directors will meet in Columbia on Sunday, August 11, 2002. Place and time to be announced.
- Our next members' meeting will be held in Charleston on October 12-13<sup>th</sup>, with high profile lectures and a special tour of "A Portion of the People" at the Gibbes Museum of Art. We will visit the College of Charleston's new Jewish Studies Center on the corner of Glebe and Wentworth Streets and have a chance to view the documentary video on Jewish South Carolinians currently in production by Paul Keyserling and Big Pictures, Inc., of Beaufort.

All in all, this young organization has done a marvelous job. We do, however, need volunteers, especially on the Finance (i.e., fundraising) Committee. If you are willing to volunteer, or need additional information before you raise your hand, feel free to e-mail me at [RNRosen@RRHLawfirm.com](mailto:RNRosen@RRHLawfirm.com).

President, Jewish Historical Society of  
South Carolina

Cover:  
*Fifth Anniversary,  
Key Klub,  
Charleston, S.C.,  
1932.*

*Gift of Michael E.  
and Joanne  
Schwartz. Jewish  
Heritage Collection,  
College of  
Charleston Library.*

# “A Portion of the People”



## Exhibition Highlights and Upcoming Catalogue

What began eight years ago as a modest oral history project has grown into a major traveling exhibition, soon to open at the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston. “Little is known about Jewish life in the South,” said curator Dale Rosengarten. “We feel we have a big story to tell.”

The title of the exhibit, “A Portion of the People,” has gained an unexpected relevance since September 11<sup>th</sup>. The quote comes from a letter journalist and playwright Isaac Harby wrote in 1816 to then Secretary of State James Monroe. Provoked by the dismissal of a Jewish diplomat in the North African country of Tunis, Harby defended the rights of all religious groups – Quakers and Catholics, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Jews – to be considered as “one great political family.” He issued an eloquent defense not of religious tolerance but of full acceptance into the body politic, championing ideas of pluralism and civil rights that are still lacking in our broken world.

Co-sponsored by JHSSC, McKissick Museum, and the College of Charleston, “A Portion of the People” is studded with exciting objects, many never before seen in public. Documents such as Carolina’s *Fundamental Constitutions*, written by John Locke in 1669, and an 1803 Masonic patent signed by two of the four Jewish founders of Scottish Rite Masonry in Charleston, demonstrate the ways Jews were integrated into civic and economic life. Dozens of paintings, including a pair of miniature portraits of Sarah Moses Levy and her son, Chapman Levy (*see above*: she is wearing his miniature), create a picture of South Carolina’s early Jewish elite. A predominantly Sephardic community, these early settlers were welcomed as white people in a colony with a growing black majority and were accepted by polite society as “a portion of the people.”

The dark side of this embrace was the Jews’ full participation in the system of slavery. Historical

characters in the exhibition portray the contradictions of their age. Abraham Mendes Seixas, for example, was president of congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim and brother of the best known Jewish religious leader in the country, but at the same time a dealer in slaves and warden of the work house. Franklin J. Moses, Jr., Christian son of a Jewish father, was a loyal Confederate during the Civil War, but served as “scalawag” governor of South Carolina under Republican rule during the tumultuous years of Reconstruction.

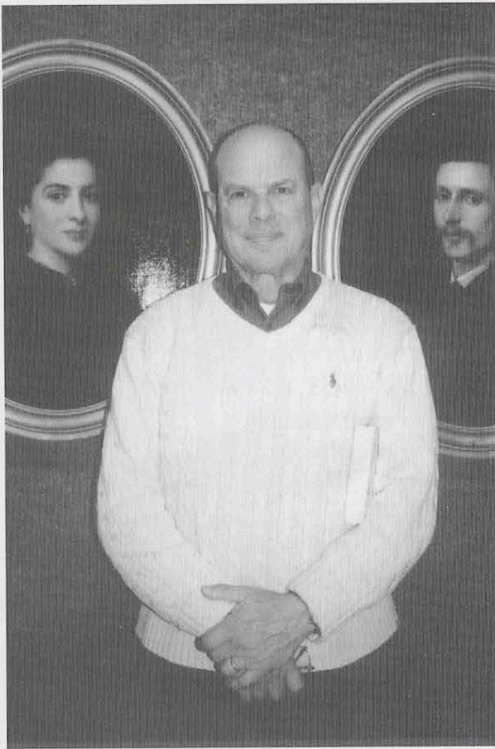
Later eras have larger-than-life characters as well. “Jew Joe” Truere was a bootlegger in Charleston during Prohibition, with a reputation as a good Samaritan. Reuben Siegel of Anderson, who boxed for Clemson under the name “Jew Boy” Siegel, became one of the state’s leading proponents of facilities for the mentally ill. Ben Bodne of Charleston, who married a daughter of deli owner Elihu Mazo, made millions delivering oil and wound up buying the Algonquin Hotel in New York.

A large-format, full-color exhibition catalogue will be available from the University of South Carolina Press in September. The volume features a preface by Eli N. Evans, an introduction by Theodore Rosengarten, and original essays by Deborah Dash-Moore, Jenna Weissman Joselit, Jack Bass, and Dale Rosengarten. A heavily illustrated exhibition narrative provides histories of each object and image reproduced in the book.

Both the exhibition and catalogue conclude with a rousing rendition of contemporary Jewish life across the state: a photo essay shot by Bill Aron in a whirlwind seventeen-day tour of South Carolina in the fall of 2000. Taken one year before the terrorist attacks of last autumn, Aron’s black and white photographs document a lively, vital world that now strikes one as impossibly carefree, deeply rooted yet moving fast into the future.

# Pictures at an Exhibition: The Meaning of Things

by Elizabeth Keith



My grandmother passed away a few years ago. While going through her things, my mother, with great importance, handed me a small white box containing two butterfly pins and a long metal chain that had hearts dangling from every link. She told me that my grandmother always gave me the chain to play with when I was a baby, so I would be quiet while my mother did her hair. My sister, who is ten years older, had played with it also for the same reason, as had my brother, who is twelve years older. All three of her great-grandchildren knew this chain as well. Since 1968, six babies had held the necklace, dandling on my grandmother's knees while my mother curled and styled her hair, which changed from chestnut brown to snow white as the years passed. I take the necklace from its drawer whenever I want to remember her or the way her house smelled or the deep fear I held for her cat, a moody tabby named Poppy.

The objects on display in "A Portion of the People" have a similar place in the lives of their owners. Remembrance is at the heart of the exhibition, even for those generations-old objects that hold no place in living memory. The letters, paintings, textiles, kiddush cups, and candlesticks on display symbolize much more than personal memories for their owners; they represent a spectrum of emotion that colors peoples' lives. Most significantly, they represent endurance. The memories survive with the objects and they can inspire and be drawn upon for strength. These smiling lenders stand beside artifacts that have been points of pride for generations and will continue to endure.

*Above: Charles "Chuck" Whitehead with portraits of his maternal great-grandparents, Adeline Cohen Phillips and Isaac Phillips. Married in 1860, the Phillipses settled in New York where Isaac ran a wholesale fur business. Adeline was a daughter of Hartwig Cohen, who was the hazzan (religious leader) of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim between 1818 and 1823.*



*Left: Rosemary "Binky" Read Cohen in front of a photograph of opening day at Read & Dumas, 1912, still in business on the corner of King and Spring Streets in Charleston, S.C.*



*Left: Judith Weil Shanks with an album quilt that has been passed down in her family. Sewn in the early 1850s for Eleanor Israel Solomons, of Georgetown, S.C., the quilt contains 63 blocks, each dated and inscribed with the name of its maker.*



*Right: Evelyn Rosenberg Gross-Brein with the wedding dress of her grandmother, Rebecca Winstock, who in 1885 married Abraham Rosenberg, proprietor of Rosenberg's Mercantile in Greenwood, S.C.*



*Barbara Karesh Stender and Mary Kohn Strasburger in front of a portrait of Caroline Agnes MoVse Lopez, of Sumter, S.C., painted in 1875 by Caroline's grandfather Theodore Sidney MoVse.*



*Mary Lourie Rittenberg with the cash register from the L. Lourie Department Store, established by her parents in St. George, S.C., in 1912.*

***Photographs taken by Jeri Perlmutter at the premiere of "A Portion of the People" at McKissick Museum, Columbia, S.C., January 12, 2002.***



Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut visited "A Portion of the People" at McKissick Museum on Monday, April 15, 2002.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DON'T FORGET TO MARK YOUR  
CALENDARS FOR THE SEPTEMBER 12th  
GRAND OPENING AT THE GIBBES!**

# Save the Date!

The Gibbes Museum of Art  
and  
The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina  
cordially invite you  
to the opening reception of

*A Portion of the People*  
*Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life*

**Thursday, September 12, 2002  
7 p.m.**

Entertainment by the Joe Clark Big Band  
Cocktail Buffet

\$125 per person  
For more information call  
(843) 722-2706, ext. 27  
Black Tie

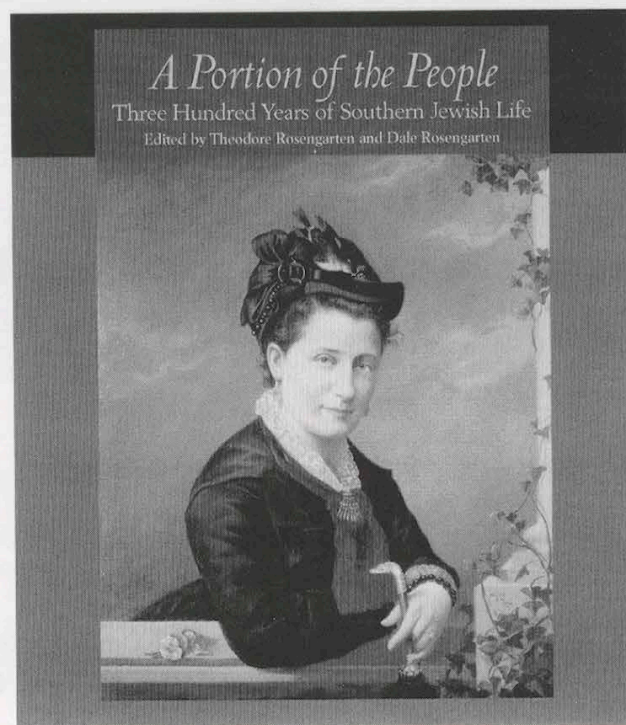
"Until 1830, Charleston was the capital of American Jewry; Christians in South Carolina elected the first professing Jew to office; Reform Judaism first came to the United States in the Palmetto State. These and many other fascinating facts are explored in this handsome treasure trove, a 'must-read' for anybody interested in the complex relationship of Jews and the South. Theodore and Dale Rosengarten have lovingly and movingly compiled a masterpiece, a delight for both the mind and the eye."

— Philip Morgan, Johns Hopkins University

*A Portion of the People*  
**Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life**  
Edited by Theodore Rosengarten  
and Dale Rosengarten  
with a preface by Eli N. Evans

Oversized, approximately 288 pages  
86 color plates, 74 halftones  
cloth, #1-57003-445-1, \$34.95  
Pub. date: September 2002

Available at local bookstores or directly from  
University of South Carolina Press  
718 Devine Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29208  
Toll-free telephone orders: 800-768-2500  
Toll-free fax: 800-868-0740  
www.sc.edu/uscpress



# Temple Sinai:

## A Brief History

by Robert and Elizabeth Moses



Temple Sinai, Sumter, S.C.

The first Jewish citizens of Sumter came from Charleston, South Carolina around 1815. By 1895, the Reform Jewish congregation had become established and well-organized, holding regular meetings and Sunday school. In 1904, Rabbi Jacob Klein came to Sumter to serve as the community's first resident rabbi. The congregation met in a wooden structure, but this was replaced by a brick building, dedicated in the spring of 1913. The synagogue was enlarged several times over the years and the sanctuary substantially remodeled and rededicated in 1969.

Temple Sinai is blessed with eleven exquisite stained glass windows, certainly the most striking aspect of the building. A set of ten matched windows, each measuring five feet wide by twenty feet tall, adorn the exterior walls of the

sanctuary. High on the rear wall is a single round window. Figurative scenes depict Biblical stories, each accompanied by a quotation from its respective book in the Hebrew Scriptures. The windows are in late Victorian style with interweaving patterns on their side borders. Large, circular arches top these windows, giving them a Moorish look. The glass is handmade with thick, rolling folds used to create deep colors and a dimensional effect. The windows are particularly breathtaking in the afternoon sunlight, but are beautiful at any time of day.

Temple Sinai's membership currently numbers about fifty and is served on a regular part-time basis by Rabbi Robert A. Seigel, a native of Charleston. In the last year, the temple has offered two well-attended "Taste of Judaism" courses and hosted the Upton Trio, with guest vocalist Meira Warshauer. In addition, Rabbi Seigel teaches two ongoing adult education classes, one for temple members and one open to the public. Temple Sinai has an active Sisterhood and Men's Club and hopes to start a Sunday school class in the near future. Shabbat services are held every Friday evening at 8:00 p.m. with an *oneg* following. All visitors are welcome.

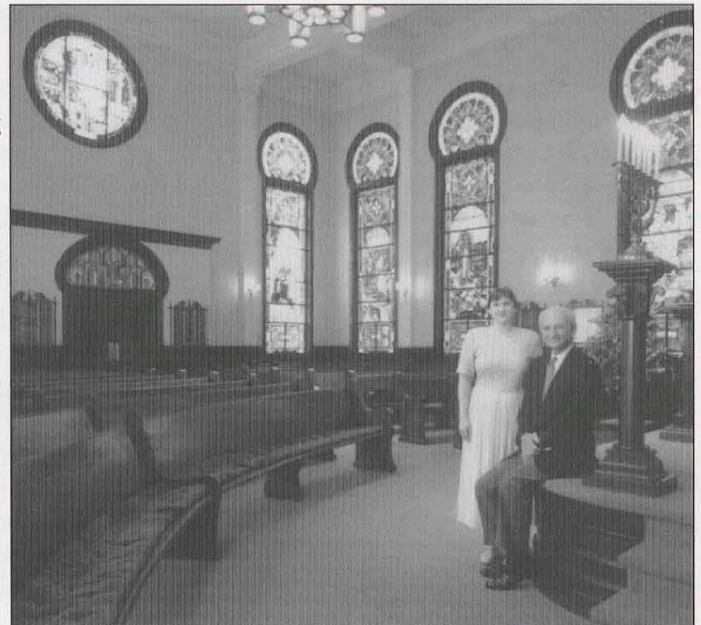
The congregation invites you to visit Temple Sinai, located at 11-13 Church Street, Sumter, S.C., 29150. The temple office is open Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tours of the temple can be arranged by calling 803.773.2122.

### Your Turn To Do the Research



Where did Temple Sinai's windows come from? Similar windows have been spotted in Florida and Ohio. If you have any information regarding these windows, please send your findings to:

The Jewish Heritage Collection  
Robert Scott Small Library  
College of Charleston  
Charleston, S.C. 29424



Elizabeth and Robert A. Moses  
in the sanctuary at Temple Sinai.  
Photos: Bill Aron, 2000

# B'nai Israel: *A History from the Upstate*

by Rabbi Ben Romer, Marsha Poliakoff, and Ben Stauber

Prior to 1900, the Jewish community in Spartanburg was small, consisting of a few families who gathered in homes or in the backs of stores for prayer and observance of holidays. The Price and Spigel families were among those founders, and both remain today as members of Temple B'nai Israel. In 1905, newcomers moved into the area and provided enough members to support regular services. Rabbi Craft was the first spiritual leader to begin formal services and religious training of the congregants' children. Sunday school was conducted in a private home, and when the house could no longer accommodate the number of children, parents decided to build a synagogue with classroom facilities.

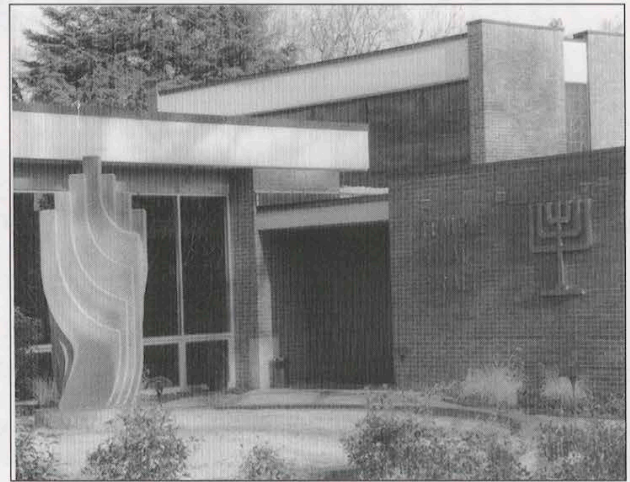
In 1912, a building committee was formed, an executive board of directors was elected, and plans were made to erect the first synagogue in Spartanburg. Rabbi Jacob Raisin of Charleston came to Spartanburg to inspire a fundraising effort and our families donated amounts ranging from 50 cents to five hundred dollars. In 1917, the cornerstone was laid, and the next year services and religious training for children began in the new building. Pews and stained glass windows were furnished by the fundraising work of the Sisterhood.

Despite the economic hard times of the Depression, the community maintained a rabbi. Thirty-six members belonged in 1936 and in 1937 the mortgage to the Dean Street synagogue was paid off and burned.

During the world wars, Jewish soldiers stationed in the area worshipped at Temple B'nai Israel. One of the army's most important training camps was located just outside of Spartanburg and quite a number of Jewish soldiers passed through the city. Following the war, a group of them came back, settling in the community and establishing downtown businesses. To this day, some of their descendants are still active members of the temple.

In 1953, Mr. Abe Smith donated a seven-acre tract of land and the house situated on it to be used for educational and social activities. In 1955, Rabbi Max Stauber joined the congregation and served as spiritual leader for more than 28 years. During his tenure temple facilities were greatly improved. A new synagogue was built in 1963, and a formal educational building, a parsonage, and chapel in 1971.

In the 1960s, Andrew Teszler (1931-1971) moved from New York and opened Butte Knits, the



*Temple B'nai Israel, Spartanburg, S.C.*

first racially integrated textile plant in the South. He brought with him his "team," including many Jews, which gave a huge boost to the Spartanburg Jewish community.

In the early 1990s, Congregation B'nai Israel became the first congregation in South Carolina to hire a woman rabbi. In 1994, after many years of belonging to the Conservative Movement of Judaism, B'nai Israel elected to affiliate with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Rabbi Samuel Cohen was the first Reform rabbi in Spartanburg.

As in many small southern Jewish communities, the old backbone of the Jewish community consisting of businessmen and merchants began to retire and close their stores. But Spartanburg has had significant growth rather than decline. With a hospital in the community, Jewish doctors have been locating here over the past decade. Recently, a major national hotel chain moved its headquarters to downtown Spartanburg, bringing a number of Jewish families to the area. Over 50 percent of the Jewish community arrived in the last decade, joined by children of previous generations who have returned to Spartanburg, creating a fascinating mix of new and old. As a result, the congregation continues to experience steady growth. Since 2000, Rabbi Ben Romer has served Congregation B'nai Israel's 135 member families.

For the first time since 1971, the temple is substantially expanding and enhancing its facilities. The renovation project is the latest facet of B'nai Israel's long-range building plan. As the upstate city of Spartanburg grows, the Jewish community will continue to depend on services and events provided by the temple.

# Names and Faces of Spartanburg

Descendants of our founders, Harry Price and David and Joseph Spigel, have remained active and generous supporters of Temple B'nai Israel over the past hundred years. Prices' Store for Men will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2003, although the store, previously known as Harry Price's Men's Store, has been in business even longer.

In 1913, Dr. Joseph Goldberger was drawn to the Spartanburg area by the mysterious prevalence of severe illness and early death among the mill workers. The disease was called pellagra, but at that time no one knew its cause. Dr. Goldberger opened a hospital on Church Street, where he treated mill workers and conducted research. He even used himself and his wife as guinea pigs for testing injections of body fluids taken from the sick. His persistent research led to the discovery that malnutrition was the cause. Workers, forced to buy their food from company stores, had a diet restricted to corn meal, fat back, and molasses. Dr. Goldberger made his findings known and, despite difficulties with the local mill owners, he succeeded in ending pellagra in the Spartanburg area and across the nation. The story of Dr. Goldberger and his battle against pellagra is the subject of a book in progress by Dr. Charles Gershon of Asheville, North Carolina.

Dr. Rosa Gantt (1876-1935) was the first woman to graduate from South Carolina Medical School in 1901 and the first woman physician in Spartanburg. She practiced medicine there for 35 years, specializing in illnesses of the eye, ear, nose, and throat. A pioneer in public health, Dr. Gantt was active in the prevention of tuberculosis. As the only woman on the Draft Board during World War I, she advanced to a position on the District Advisory Medical Board of Appeals. Dr. Gantt was acting surgeon for the United Public Health Service and held a commission from the United States Department of Commerce as medical examiner of air pilots. She served as president of the Spartanburg branch of the American Medical Association for nine years and became president of the American Medical Women's Association in 1932.



Photo: courtesy of Harry Price

Gantt received appointments from five governors of South Carolina and three United States presidents. A widely published author of medical works, she had numerous articles in *The Southern Medical Journal*. In 1916, Dr. Gantt was instrumental in the building of Temple B'nai Israel, Spartanburg's first synagogue, and helped found Temple Sisterhood B'nai Israel, known then as the Women's Auxiliary. Under her leadership, the Auxiliary raised funds for stained glass windows, pews, and flooring for the children's classrooms. She served many terms as president of the Sisterhood and negotiated for the first Jewish section of a local burial place, Oakwood Cemetery, in 1924.

Marion Feinstein has operated Miss Marion's School of Dancing for more than 50 years and has trained most of the dancers in Spartanburg, including several "Miss Spartanburg" winners. Her yearly dance recitals at Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium have been major events. She has received numerous awards and has several times served as president of Dance Masters of America.

*Continued on next page...*



Marion Feinstein with daughter Lori F. Axelrod and granddaughters Shauna and Marisa Axelrod.

Photo: Bill Aron, 2000



Left: Wofford College President Dr. Benjamin B. Dunlap and members of the college's library and administrative staffs, with a portrait of Sandor Teszler.

Photo: Bill Aron, 2000

Right: Charlotte Brenner Himber.

Photo: Dale Rosengarten, 1997.



## Names and Faces of Spartanburg

....Continued

The Sandor Teszler Library at Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina, is named in honor of Mr. Teszler (1904-2000). Like Oscar Schindler, he saved the lives of hundreds of Jews by employing them in his factory in Hungary during World War II and giving them "indispensable" status. His son, Andrew Teszler was CEO of Butte Knit and greatly advanced double-knit technology in this country. Butte Knit was of Spartanburg's leading industries in the 1960s and 1970s. Andrew contributed greatly to the building of the Education Building at Temple B'nai Israel, which is dedicated to his memory.

Matthew Poliakoff (1919-1979) was elected to seven terms in the South Carolina House of Representatives, was chief counselor to Senator Olin Johnston, and served as chairman of the Spartanburg County Democratic Party. A pioneer in environmental concerns, in 1944 he authored legislation to compel mill owners to clean up their chemical and dye pollution from streams. He lobbied for an appropriation from the United States Senate to build the Greenville-Spartanburg Airport. Described as a "Southern Jewish Statesman" in Eli N. Evans's *The Provincials*, Poliakoff served as president of Temple B'nai Israel.

Charlotte Himber (1907-1997) wrote *How to Survive Hearing Loss*, with an introduction by actor Richard Dysart, published by Gallaudet University in hardcover and paperback. The nationally famous *All-of-a-Kind Family* series of books written by her sister, Sydney Taylor, includes stories about Charlotte as one of the five young Jewish girls growing up in New York City's Lower East Side during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Rabbi Max Stauber served as spiritual leader of B'nai Israel from 1955 to 1983, conducting services and officiating at all of life's passages for members of the congregation. With great expertise, he served as *mohel* at *britot milah* (circumcisions), and as *shohet*, or ritual slaughterer, he provided the community with kosher meat. Rabbi Stauber published *Temple Topics*, then known as *The Bulletin*, printing out the publication on a hand-cranked mimeograph machine. His parsonage on the temple grounds offered hospitality to all, with wonderful food prepared by Rebbitsin Phyllis Stauber. The rabbi was active in community affairs, including those of other denominations, and was a frequent guest on inter-faith radio programs. He struggled to have Temple B'nai Israel recognized by the Ministerial Association, and was so beloved by other clergymen that he subsequently became president. The sanctuary of Temple B'nai Israel is named in his honor. His son, Ben Stauber, is currently the congregation's president.

Harold Cohen earned the Distinguished Service Cross for heroism in World War II, 50 years after the fact. A biographer of General Creighton Abrams found Harold Cohen's war record in the archives of the Library of Congress. It had been misplaced and was fire-damaged but still legible. Impressed with Cohen's extraordinary courage, Abrams submitted his findings to the State Department. Harold Cohen was then called to Washington and awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest award in the nation. His father, Max Cohen, was a founder of Temple B'nai Israel. Out of deep appreciation for the good life that he and his family led in the United States, Max Cohen urged son Harold to go to war and fight for this country.

Award-winning playwright Marsha Poliakoff wrote *Jacksey's Lawyer*, a drama concerning the death penalty for the retarded and insane. The play ran during the month of August, 1984, in Spotlighters Theatre in Baltimore, Maryland. Based on her husband Matthew's first murder case as a court-appointed defense attorney, *Jacksey's Lawyer* received phenomenal reviews from the *Baltimore Sun* and played to a sold-out crowd for its last two weeks at Spotlighters. Poliakoff is a Hub City Writer and has been published in *Hub City Christmas Collection* as well as being awarded first place in the Hardegree Nonfiction Contest. She is historian for Temple B'nai Israel.

Gary Poliakoff, one of the Poliakoffs' sons, is an environmental attorney and was twice named Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year. Their other son, Andrew, following in the footsteps of both parents, is an attorney and author. He won the South Carolina Fiction Project and published a short story entitled "Midwifery," in *Inheritance Selections from the South Carolina Fiction Project*.

Did you know that Al Rosen, the Cleveland Indians' all-star infielder from 1947 to 1956, was born Albert Leonard Rosen on February 29, 1924, in Spartanburg, South Carolina?



*Mizrah (detail) made by Charlotte Hember's father, Morris Aaron Brenner, in Wisnicz, Austria-Hungary, 1887-1891. Papercut painted with natural dyes. Collection of Susan H. Baker. A mizrah, meaning "east," is hung on the east wall of a house to indicate the direction for Jews to pray, facing Jerusalem.*

## Our State: The Jewish Experience

Past president of JHSSC, Jeffrey Rosenblum, suggested that a fact sheet should be compiled, detailing significant events and occurrences within the South Carolina Jewish experience. Sol Breibart of Charleston and Rabbi Ben Romer of Spartanburg have been called upon to compile these facts, representing events that took place in both the lowcountry and upcountry of the state. The search for these facts continues. If you have information that should be included in this listing, please send your suggestions to Sol Breibart, 251 Confederate Circle, Charleston, S.C. 29407 or e-mail to sbreibart@aol.com.

- ♦ Founded in 1670, South Carolina has had Jewish settlers since at least 1694.
- ♦ Francis Salvador, elected to the South Carolina Provisional Congress in 1775 and the South Carolina General Assembly in 1776, was the first professing Jew in the western world to be elected to public office.
- ♦ Georgetown, the second oldest Jewish community in South Carolina, has had six Jewish mayors.
- ♦ In 1841, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim of Charleston became the first Jewish Reform congregation in the United States.
- ♦ About two hundred South Carolina Jews fought for the Confederate cause in the Civil War.

# Notes *from Special Collections*

*by Harlan Greene, Project Archivist*

We of the archival processing and cataloguing team of the Jewish Heritage Collection are happy to report we have made great progress in our first seven or so months of work here at the College of Charleston. We made our first report to the National Endowment for the Humanities (which is funding our project) in January 2002. We listed our progress: nearly *sixty-five linear feet* of manuscript collections processed (think of a piece of paper and how thin it is to get an idea of how much work that is!). Whereas a volume of business records, for instance, could be assessed in a few minutes, other information, such as a series of letters between engaged lovers in Walterboro and Laurens in the 1870s took more time to read and absorb. There were disparate handwritings to decipher (with some materials written by those just learning English) and mentions made to topics and objects long forgotten to be understood, among other obstacles. But that is part of the fun – peering into the lives of others.

After becoming familiar with the contents of a collection, we have to figure out how to establish intellectual control over it. Do we put everything in chronological order? Do ledgers and journals go side by side with cancelled checks? Where does the love poetry go?

As a general rule, archivists try to maintain the original order the creators of the records made, but if the collection is scrambled, we have to figure out the best way to put all those hundreds or thousands of papers in order – within folders and then boxes. Always bearing in mind the researchers who will use these collections, we arrange the series of diverse materials in a way that will support them physically – and intellectually. If someone is researching how Jewish merchants on King Street were impacted by boycotts in the 1960s, for example, he or she will not want to have to jump from box to box or folder to folder to find this out. We balance a number of concerns as, like Noah, we group like with like.

Once materials are physically in order, we face another challenge: using as few words as possible, we must give precise clues as to what these individual collections include. We try to rank

what is important in the papers we have just read – we have to provide footholds in the mountain of materials so that people can get to where they want to be. We archivists – Zinnia Willits and myself – write up in basic English a description of the collection, decide on name and subject added entries, and create hierarchical outlines, stating what types of materials are in each folder and box. Then Annette Blum, our cataloguer, marries two levels of archival description by first taking the collection summaries and translating them into a tagged, machine readable format so that computers will index the information in certain ways. She also does “authority work,” making sure we cite a person or an organization in the appropriate way – a crucial thing in these days of computer searches.

This inputting of data in software packages is very technical and precise – almost like writing computer code. But once this is done and the data is sent off, the summaries are suddenly available not just in the College’s on-line catalogue, but truly available all over the world, to anyone with an Internet connection. Making these collections even more accessible is the fact that Annette links the inventories we have written to the collection summary.

So, for instance, if someone in Hong Kong is researching Palestine foreign relations, and puts that term into the right search engine, the Thomas Tobias Collection summary will eventually bob up. The researcher can then link to the Tobias inventory; reading all the folder descriptions, (or searching the display with a “find” command present in most software packages), he or she will then come to the diary that describes David Henry Mordecai’s adventures as an aid to Edwin DeLeon in solving a diplomatic conflict there in 1858.

Such work is exciting. We are now doing the same level of cataloguing for many of the oral history records here – living resources that have a wealth of information to add to the field. We know that our work is bearing fruit, for more and more researchers are coming into Special Collections to look at the materials that have gone on-line, and email inquiries are growing by leaps and bounds.

Harlan Greene's most recent book is *Mr. Skylark: John Bennett and the Charleston Renaissance*. It is a biography of the writer and the city in the period when Charleston came into national prominence, waking from its silence after the Civil War and helping launch the Southern Literary Renaissance.

*If you have any questions, or comments, you can call us at 843.953.7428. We encourage you to browse at the College library's web page – [www.cofc.edu/library](http://www.cofc.edu/library). The web page for the Jewish Heritage Collection is [www.cofc.edu/~jhc](http://www.cofc.edu/~jhc). That will show you the type of materials here in the archives, but to search for the record types we've just described, go to the library's catalogue.*

*Can you help identify the people in the photograph to the right?*

*This image was donated to the Jewish Heritage Collection, but the subjects are unknown. The donor, Ella Levenson Schlosburg, suggests they might be from Camden, South Carolina; the clothing appears to be circa 1900 - 1910.*

*Please help us if you can.*



*If you have photos like these and would consider donating them to the archives, please contact the Jewish Heritage Collection. All items documenting Jewish life in the state are welcome.*



*Confirmation class at Tree of Life in Columbia, S.C., 1930s. Gift of Ruth Bass Jacobs. Left to right: Helen Kohn Hennig, Floyd Newman, Ruth Bass (Jacobs), Carolyn Halford (Green), Stanley Donen, Ruth Katz, Betty Jean Rosen(?) and Melvin Gergel. The rabbi is unnamed. At age 16, Stanley Donen left South Carolina and later became famous as a Broadway and Hollywood choreographer and director of such film classics as "Singin' in the Rain," "The Pajama Game," and "Damn Yankees."*

# The New Jewish Studies Center

by Martin Perlmutter

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina will take a giant step forward when it moves into the new Jewish Studies Center at the College of Charleston. The Historical Society will occupy an office on the second floor of the new Center when it opens in August 2002. Located on the corner of Glebe and Wentworth Streets, near the heart of the College campus, the Jewish Studies Center's three million dollar facility will also house the Jewish Student Union/Hillel, the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program, a Judaica Library, a Hebrew language lab, the Arnold Hall, a state-of-the-art conference room, and much more. The College of Charleston has been altogether supportive of this project and we are happy to have Samuel Hines, the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, as our third-floor neighbor.

The Jewish Historical Society was founded at the College of Charleston in 1994 as a result of a dynamic panel that featured Paul Siegel, Jack Bass, and Isadore Lourie discussing small town Jewish life in South Carolina. The overriding sentiment of those who attended was that an important era of southern Jewish history was passing, as Jews moved to larger cities and suburbs, with few Jewish merchants left in small towns. The Society was formed in part to make sure that this history was documented. In partnership with the College of Charleston and McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina, the Society inaugurated the Jewish Heritage Project and hired Dale Rosengarten to collect and record the state's Jewish history.

The Society has done amazing things in its short history. With four hundred dues-paying members, it is now the largest statewide Jewish organization in South Carolina. Since 1994, it has held two well-attended meetings each year, helped to create a nationally significant Jewish archives at the



College of Charleston, co-sponsored a major museum exhibition, and developed a video on the South Carolina Jewish story called "Land of Promise," scheduled for release on public television this fall, with a shorter version available for classroom use. The Society will now have a permanent home at the College of Charleston.

The Jewish Historical Society has pledged to raise a quarter of a million dollars for its new home. A major gift will entitle the donor to a significant naming opportunity at the Center.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to the Arnolds, the Kareshes, the Zuckers, Michael Kogan, Terry Fisher, Rosenblum Coe Architects, Kahn Construction, Tom Ervin, Stanley Farbstein, and countless other individuals who have contributed to making this long-awaited project a reality. I would be remiss not to mention Sylvia and Henry Yaschik, who are at the heart of the Center and the Jewish Studies Program and whose memory lives on through our work.

\* \* \* \* \*

## WANTED: PILLARS

The JHSSC is seeking at least 20 "pillars." These donors will commit to a gift of \$1000 a year for five years, helping to provide office support to the JHSSC as it moves into the new Jewish Studies Center. This is an important transition. If you are able to help, please contact the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program at 843. 953.5682 or e-mail [jwst@cofc.edu](mailto:jwst@cofc.edu).

*Above: Jewish Studies Center under construction.*

*Left: Dean Samuel Hines and Martin Perlmutter in the director's future office.*

Photos: Annette Godow, 2002



# College of Charleston



## Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program

*The Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston is offering four courses for the Fall 2002 semester of special interest to those with a passion for Jewish history. In addition we offer Hebrew Language classes, Hebrew Bible courses, and an Introduction to Jewish Studies. Continuing education students are welcome.*

### **JWST 300.002 *Anatomy of an Exhibition***

**Dale Rosengarten**

Using as the core text the exhibition catalogue, *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life*, we will explore the subject of southern Jewish history topically and chronologically. The class will visit the exhibit "A Portion of the People" at the Gibbes Museum of Art at least four times during the semester, the first time during installation at the beginning of September. Guest speakers will include museum director Lynn Robertson, curators Barbara Karesh Stender, Judith Weil Shanks, and Ellen Smith, conservators Catherine Rogers, Marion Hunter, and Marie Hollings, and photographer Bill Aron. **Tu/Th 12:15-1:30 p.m., Library 301**

### **JWST 300.090 *The Southern Jewish Experience***

**Jack Bass and Robert Rosen**

This course will examine the distinctive history of Jews in the American South. Major themes of the course include Jewish accommodation and contributions to the dominant culture, one that is primarily Protestant, and the Jewish place in southern racial dynamics. Students will compare and contrast the culture, self-perceptions, and historic experience of Jews living in the South with the experience of Jews in other parts of the country. The Jewish experience in the South is a story of simultaneous adaptation and separation, and reflects the tensions of creating an identity that is both Jewish and Southern. **W 5:30-8:15 p.m., Ed. Ctr. 110**

### **HIST 359.001 *Modern Jewish History***

**Stuart Knee**

Developments in Jewish civilization from 1789 to the present. Topics include societal, economic, intellectual, cultural, political, and diplomatic developments. Treated in this course are international communities, including Israel, remnant communities in the Arab world, Latin America, North and South Africa, Europe, and the United States. Prerequisites: HIST 101-102 or 103-104 **MWF 12:00-12:50 p.m., Maybank 303**

### **300.001 *The Jew in American Culture***

**Larry Krasnoff**

During the 20th century, Jews became prominent in all areas of American cultural life, helping to transform a mainly Anglo-American culture into a multi-ethnic, multi-religious one. In this class, we will examine how this happened, and how it has changed what it means to be an American. We will focus mainly on examples drawn from literature, comedy and film, but we will also pay close attention to the historical and sociological background of these examples. **Tu/Th 9:25 - 10:40 a.m., Bell 416**



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