

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of SOUTH CAROLINA

Volume XXIV Number 2 ~ Fall 2019

In Search of Jewish Spartanburg
November 9–10, 2019





THE
JEWISH
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

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The JHSSC newsletter is
published twice a year.

Current and back issues
can be found at
jhssc.org

On the cover: Temple B'nai Israel congregants prepare to transfer the Torahs from their community center on Heywood Avenue, Spartanburg, SC, to their new sanctuary, also on Heywood, for the dedication ceremony, February 9, 1964. Courtesy of Temple B'nai Israel.



Correction: In the Spring 2019 issue on page 13, we mistakenly identified this gentleman as Harry Appel. He is Abraham "Abe" Appel, husband of Ida Goldberg and father of Harry, Fannie "Faye," Sam, and Sidney.

In this issue

In Search of Jewish Spartanburg ~ Joe Wachter ~ A marble tablet inscribed with the names of Temple B'nai Israel's founders inspired the author to find out who they were. Wachter's childhood memories and his tenacious research reveal a tightly-knit Jewish community, fostered by involved parents and a beloved religious leader of nearly 30 years, Rabbi Max Stauber. 4

Memories of Our Father and Temple B'nai Israel during the Youthful Time We Lived in Spartanburg ~ Ben Zion Stauber, Naomi Miriam Stauber, Alvin Stauber, and Lynn "Honey" Stauber Greenberg ~ The children of Rabbi Max Stauber, transplants from Patchogue, New York, recall the family's move to Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 1955, when their father was hired to lead Temple B'nai Israel. Even as a boy in Austria-Hungary, Max demonstrated his devotion to Judaism and family, according to his youngest child Ben's account. Naomi describes her father's "inner circle," the Uptown Nine, a group of locally prominent Christian ministers—resounding evidence of the city's ecumenical atmosphere. Alvin entertains with tales of his father's minyan-making exploits, and Honey fondly remembers twirling in the foyer of "the Rabbi's Parish," visiting Jewish-owned stores along Main Street, and her mother's challah—no guest left her house without one. 7

Price's Store for Men: "Ends Your Quest for the Best" ~ Harry Price ~ The author's grandfather Harry Price arrived in the thriving textile town of Spartanburg in 1900, and immediately launched a men's clothing store—first called The New York Bazaar—that flourishes to this day. Harry made a name for himself in civic organizations—the Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club, Woodmen of the World, and Loyal Order of Moose—and was a charter member of Temple B'nai Israel. 11

In Search of Jewish Spartanburg ~ JHSSC meets in Spartanburg, November 9–10, 2019 . . . 13

The Froms of Union: Merchants on Main Street for 100 Years ~ I. Allan From and Gloria From Goldberg ~ Israel and Bertha Kessler From of Lithuania raised six children in the small town of Union, South Carolina, where, in 1917, the Jewish population numbered 40, as reported in the *American Jewish Yearbook*. All the From children followed their parents into retail and, by the 1940s, the Carolina Upcountry was dotted with From family members and their relatives running stores. Siblings Allan From and Gloria Goldberg, grandchildren of Israel and Bertha, describe growing up in Union at a time when only two Jewish families remained. 14

The Teszlers of Budapest and Spartanburg: Pioneers in Textile Engineering ~ Diane C. Vecchio ~ Hungarian textile manufacturer Sandor Teszler, after surviving the Holocaust, attempted to rebuild his business in Budapest, but fled to America with his wife, Lidia, and their sons Andrew and Otto, after the government seized his factory. Sandor and Andrew became leaders in the textile industry, while setting an example for fair hiring practices and philanthropy in their adopted hometown of Spartanburg. 19

Growing up in Gaffney ~ Benjamin Franklin Sheftall III ~ Small town life for this Jewish boy in the 1950 and '60s was one of contrasts. He had plenty of friends who made no issue of his religion, but the Ku Klux Klan was much in evidence and discrimination against African Americans was overt. Ben traveled to Spartanburg to attend religious services, participate in youth group activities, and train for his bar mitzvah at Temple B'nai Israel, yet among his Jewish peers, he felt like an outsider. 21

Endowing our Future ~ Mark Swick ~ The strength and vitality of the JHSSC is evident through its meetings, public programs, archives, and special projects. Sustained by its members and its partnership with the College of Charleston, the Society has created a new endowment fund to insure its future growth and development. 23

Letter from the President



It's been a tough summer in the United States. Shootings, discord in Washington, and racist rhetoric that hasn't been heard since the 1960s remind us of Winston Churchill's words (paraphrasing philosopher George Santayana): "Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it." In the spirit of remembering our history, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina was established in 1994 "to encourage the collection, study, and interpretation of South Carolina Jewish history and to increase awareness of that heritage among Jews and non-Jews." Over the past 25 years, JHSSC has developed into the largest Jewish statewide organization and worked steadily to fulfill its mission.

With the Society's support, the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library has recorded more than 500 oral histories and accessioned thousands of archival documents. In partnership with the College's Jewish Studies Program and the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture, we offer an array of public programs and learning opportunities. Historic Columbia's Jewish Heritage Initiative has fueled our research and fieldwork on merchants across the state and assisted in the production of the exhibit *A Store at Every Crossroads*, on view this fall at both Addlestone Library and the Temple Sinai Jewish History Center in Sumter. Our website and biannual magazine help spread the word about the history we are uncovering.

In our conferences, we strive to stay current, covering contemporary and sometimes controversial subjects.



*This early 20th-century cash register from Worthmore in Spartanburg, South Carolina, is one of many merchant artifacts on display in the exhibit *A Store at Every Crossroads*, in *Special Collections*, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, through December 1, 2019.*

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Our meeting on "Memory, Monuments, and Memorials," for example, followed the Alt Right demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia, which turned deadly. Last spring's 25th anniversary gala was indeed a celebratory event but also

engaged serious conversation among top scholars about what the future holds for American Jewry in the decades ahead. As I complete my second term as JHSSC president, I am proud of the work we are doing and confident the Society is in good hands.

Our fall 2019 meeting is scheduled to take place in Spartanburg on November 9–10. The planning committee, headed by Spartanburg native Joe Wachter, has been hard at work designing the program. Spartanburg's Jewish history will take center stage on Saturday, with a talk and panel discussion, a site visit to the old synagogue, and dinner at Temple B'nai Israel with entertainment by Cap and Collar. On Sunday we will commemorate the 81st anniversary of Kristallnacht, the Nazis' "Night of Broken Glass," with a tribute to the Teszler family, refugees from Budapest, Hungry, who developed double-knit textile manufacturing in Spartanburg.

I want to thank the Spartanburg community for welcoming us with true southern hospitality. As always, hats off to the professionals, staff, and volunteers who help us run a highly successful organization. Without them there would be no Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

I look forward to seeing you all in Spartanburg in November!

Jeffrey Rosenblum, FAIA,
JHSSC President

In Search of Jewish Spartanburg

by Joe Wachter

I was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, at Mary Black Hospital on February 17, 1946. My parents, Joseph and Margaret Wachter, met while both were stationed at Camp Croft, a World War II-era infantry training camp in Spartanburg County. Growing up in Spartanburg, my brother, Charles, and I were aware that we were part of a Jewish family and members of Temple B'nai Israel Congregation. When I was six years old, I started attending Sabbath services and Sunday school at what was then

called the Dean Street Synagogue in downtown Spartanburg. Eleven concrete steps led to the synagogue's two large front doors, and each time I entered the building I saw a large marble tablet on the wall facing those doors. Engraved in stone were the names of the individuals who founded my Jewish community and built our first synagogue.

About 14 years ago, while visiting Spartanburg, I decided to find out more about the people whose names were on the marble tablet. I was familiar with

the names Spigel, Price, and Hecklin. Some of their descendants were still living and working in Spartanburg. I also knew the Greenwald name. A clothing store by that name had operated in downtown Spartanburg for over 100 years. However, I knew nothing about the others. There are 24 family names on the tablet, representing 27 families, and I have uncovered a great deal of information about all of them. I have spoken to more than 250 descendants of Spartanburg's early Jewish settlers and later arrivals, including those not affiliated with the temple, and I am amazed at what I have thus far uncovered. I continue to discover new information about them. They were and are a remarkable group of people. (Some of their stories are forthcoming at jhssc.org. See p. 12 for details.)

My parents' generation at the temple did an outstanding job of creating and nurturing a Jewish community for me and the other kids who grew up there. That sense of belonging meant a lot to me and it has a lot to do with why I wanted to find out more about the families of Temple B'nai Israel. Rabbi Max Stauber, who led our congregation for almost 30 years, contributed significantly to the sense of belonging we experienced. In many ways, he was the face of Spartanburg Jewry. He was respected by everyone in the city, Jews and non-Jews alike. He reached out to every member of our Jewish community and always saw the best in every person. He never uttered an unkind word about anyone. He was a father figure to us all.

Our youth group, the Spartanburg Chapter of the B'nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO), made up of members of Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA) and B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG), also fostered feelings of kinship. I was a member from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, along with about 50 other teens. Our advisors were Joel Tanenbaum, Kathy Steinberg, and Helga and Herb Moglin. We were extremely active during that time period. We had meetings every two weeks and we wrote and published *The Shmooser*, our own monthly newspaper, which was loaded with stories about who we were and what we were doing.

Because most of our parents were busy making a living downtown (and despite none of us being particularly

religious), our youth group made up the minyan at Saturday morning services conducted by Rabbi Stauber. Every Sunday we held a brief morning service, followed by a brunch catered by our mothers and a cultural hour featuring talks by local attorneys, doctors, and college professors.

We had a debate team and participated in competitions. We also had a basketball team (with AZA emblazoned on our jerseys) in the local church league and were one of the best teams in the league each year. Our coach was Jack Steinberg. We organized social activities on a regular basis and visited and befriended other Jewish kids at weekend events in cities in Georgia and the Carolinas.

Those were special times. Some of the people reading this will remember that in 2003 we had a 40-year BBYO reunion in Spartanburg, which lasted three days. For those three days, we ate together, laughed together, and celebrated our friendships, memories, and collective history. It was truly a moving and memorable event, so much so that my wife openly cried when she saw how much like a family—a big Jewish family—we all were. Of the 50 or so kids I knew, 44 attended, traveling from far and near. Another four wanted to come but could not because they were on business outside the country or were ill and could not travel. That stands in my mind as a remarkable statement about how much the temple meant to all of us and how much we meant to each other.

No one yet knows when the first Jews arrived and settled in Spartanburg. Jacob Rader Marcus, in *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585–1984*, notes that nine Jews lived in the city in 1878. *The Carolina Spartan* reported in September 1888 that the city's "Hebrew friends" met for Yom Kippur. By 1912, Marcus indicates the number of Jewish residents had increased to 80.

In 1912, a congregation was formally organized in downtown Spartanburg when a small group of men met in a tailor shop owned by Abe Levin, located at 113 ½ East Main Street. Levin's shop was above a clothing store owned by Joe Miller called The Standard Cloak Company, known to locals as "The Standard." At that meeting Levin was elected the first president. Between 1912 and 1916, the group held services at the Herring Furniture Store (115 East Main Street), The Standard, and other downtown business establishments, including Goldberg's and the second floor of the Floyd L. Liles Department Store, both located on Morgan Square.

Rabbi Hyman Samuel Cohen was hired in 1914 as the first full-time rabbi. He died unexpectedly in October 1916.

Earlier that year, at the invitation of temple member Joseph Spigel, Rabbi Jacob Raisin of K. K. Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina, came to Spartanburg to organize

fundraising to build the congregation's first synagogue. In May 1916, the board filed for incorporation under the name Temple B'nai Israel (Sons of Israel) and, two months later, the congregation purchased a lot and house located at 104 Union Street (the corner of Union and S. Dean streets) for \$2,560.00, the home of local photographer, A. T. Willis. That same



Top: Greenwald's storefront, 1930s. Middle: Postcard image of the Camp Croft USO building operated by the Jewish Welfare Board at 291 E. Main Street, Spartanburg, SC. Bottom: B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (Spartanburg Chapter) members getting ready to hit the streets to raise money for the March of Dimes, Spartanburg, SC, 1965. Left to right: back row, Mark Tanenbaum, Ben Stauber, Charles Wachter, Helene "Sweetie" Cohen, Charles "Moose" Finkelstein; middle row, Michael Yoffee, Ellen Yogman, Sandy Gilpin, Sherrie Silverman, Saul Tanenbaum; front row, Larry Abelkop, Elaine Abelkop, Susan Price, Terri Massey, Lee Tanenbaum. Holding sign: Ricky Tanenbaum.

Top: Temple B'nai Israel's AZA basketball team, ca. 1961. Left to right: back row, Harold Jablon, Harry Gray, Tom Shapiro, Coach Jack Steinberg, Bill Shapiro, Alvin Stauber, Michael Gelburd; front row, Mark Tanenbaum, name unknown, Ben Stauber. Missing from the photo: Ed Gray, Larry Minkoff, Joe Wachter. Middle: Postcard image of Temple B'nai Israel at the corner of Union and Dean streets, Spartanburg, SC. Bottom: The Spartanburg Chapter of B'nai B'rith Youth Organization 40th reunion in 2003.

All photos courtesy of Joe Wachter, except where otherwise noted.

year, a Sunday school was operating in Isabelle Fuchter's house across the street at 162 S. Dean Street.

Temple B'nai Israel hired Spartanburg architect Luther Douglas Proffitt and construction of the synagogue started in the spring of 1917. Joseph Spigel, then serving as president of the temple, chaired a committee that oversaw the project. On

May 10, once the exterior of the building was completed, a formal dedication ceremony was held and a cornerstone placed at the northeast corner of the building. The public was invited to the event and Rabbi David Marx of The Temple in Atlanta was the featured speaker. Two local Spartanburg officials



Rabbi Samuel Wrubel presiding over confirmation ceremony, Temple B'nai Israel, Spartanburg, SC, ca. 1953.

decline. However, starting in the early 1930s—and for the next 15 years or so—the membership steadily increased. Several rabbis served the community during those years, but none for a long period of time.

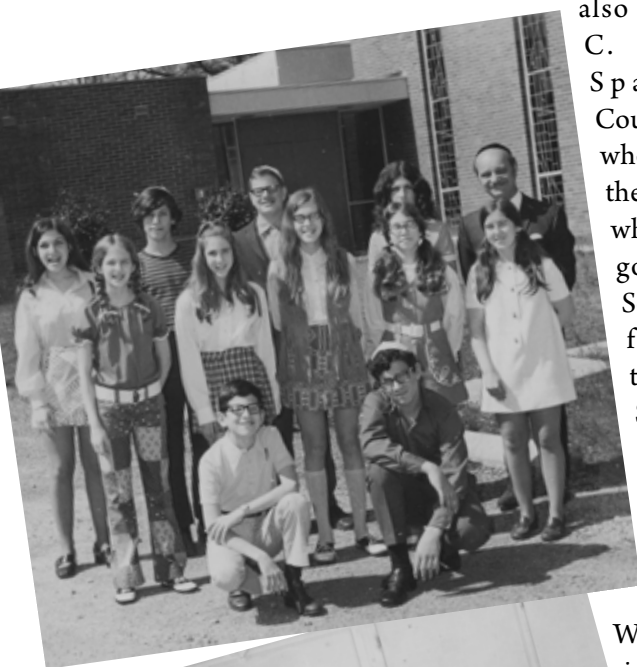
In 1942, as the temple's membership grew, B'nai Israel hired Rabbi Samuel Wrubel, who remained in the pulpit until 1954. An accomplished writer and speaker, he was frequently invited to address civic and religious organizations in the Spartanburg area. Prior to Wrubel's arrival, the congregation was not affiliated with any one branch of Judaism and tried to meet the needs of all its members. Sometime during Wrubel's tenure, the temple became affiliated with Conservative Judaism and the United Synagogue of America. In 1955, Rabbi Max Stauber came to Spartanburg from a congregation in Patchogue, New York, on Long Island, and he served our community until he passed away in 1986. During his lengthy tenure as rabbi, the membership in the congregation continued to grow.

In the early 1950s, our congregation purchased a large tract of land for a community center and Sunday school. The property included a three-story Victorian-style home and was located on Heywood Avenue, about two miles from the Dean Street Synagogue. The building was designed and built by Luther Douglas Proffitt in 1907, the same man who designed and built the synagogue in 1917. Abe Smith, who had been active in temple affairs since the 1930s, was primarily responsible for securing that property.

The Dean Street Synagogue operated at the corner of Union and Deans streets until 1961, when it was sold to a local church. After the sale, a ceremony was held to move the Torahs from the building and place them at the community center on Heywood. Two years later a new synagogue was built on the Heywood Avenue property. My father, then the president

led by Rabbi Isaiah Sobel, who became B'nai Israel's second full-time rabbi.

From the end of World War I till 1930, the temple's membership declined as many of the founding families moved away. The congregation was without a full-time rabbi at that time. A bad economy in South Carolina in the mid-1920s, followed by the onset of the Great Depression, contributed greatly to the



Above left: Rabbi Max Stauber and Sunday school class, Temple B'nai Israel, Spartanburg, SC, 1971. Left: Sisterhood members in their new kitchen on Heywood Street, 1964. Courtesy of Temple B'nai Israel.

of the congregation, was heavily involved in planning and designing the new building, along with Henry Jacobs, Andrew Teszler, Max Massey, Joel Tanenbaum, and Abe Smith. It was one of his most cherished memories and accomplishments. In 1971, largely through the generosity of Andrew Teszler, the congregation constructed a Sunday school building adjacent to the new synagogue.

The Dean Street building is now being used by a congregation called The Bread of Life Christian Fellowship. When I go inside, however, it still has the look and feel—even the smell—of the synagogue I remember as a child. I have not been affiliated with Temple B'nai Israel since the 1960s. Since that time, the congregation has continued to grow and prosper, and it has been served by a number of rabbis. In



Morgan Square in downtown Spartanburg, ca. 1917. From left is Greenewald's (men's and women's clothing store owned and operated by brothers Moses, David, Max, and Isaac Henry Greenewald); Globe Sample Co. (a discount shoe store operated by Meyer Levite); and Spigel Bros. Jewelers (owned and operated by brothers Joseph and David Spigel).

1995, the membership at Temple B'nai Israel voted to affiliate with the Reform Movement and join the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Since 2003, Rabbi Yossi Liebowitz has served with distinction as the spiritual and religious leader of the community.

As noted above, I am still researching Spartanburg's Jewish history. If you would like to discuss any of that history with me or if you have any information you would like to share, please do contact me. I would be happy to hear from you at any time. Thank you.

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Memories of Our Father and Temple B'nai Israel during the Youthful Time We Lived in Spartanburg

by Ben Zion Stauber, Naomi Miriam Stauber, Alvin Stauber, and Lynn "Honey" Stauber Greenberg

Ben

My father was born in Austria-Hungary in or around 1905. He would tell each of us a different date, probably because he didn't remember what he had told us before, which became a running family joke. In those days, very few male babies were registered at the government office for fear that in 18 years they would be drafted. He also told me that every time there was a war, he changed nationalities: Austro-Hungarian, Hungarian,



The Stauber family in Vishel de Sus, Romania.

All photos courtesy of Ben Stauber, except where otherwise noted.

Romanian, and probably others he didn't bother to share with me. Also, since births were not registered, he didn't know the actual day he was born, but he knew it was around Shavuot. It was cold, he said, and I always wondered how a newborn remembered this.

I will share a story he told me that shows his bravery and his devotion to Judaism. Some of the details may need a stretch of belief but he said it was true, and, knowing my father, I believe every word.

Of course it was cold, very cold in Austria-Hungary in winter. Snowing, winds, and even worse, Cossacks. A war was going on, World War I, I imagine, which works out to around his pre-bar mitzvah age. My grandfather called to Mordechai Shlomo (Max)—my father—and told him to tend to the horses and the buggy. Not long after the words were out of Zaidie's mouth, a group of not-so-friendly soldiers told Zaidie they needed the horses because their horses were exhausted. He also said that they would return Zaidie's horses when they were done with them. *Hah! Ptooeey! Liars!*

Zaidie told my father to go with the soldiers and bring his horses back home. Young Max obeyed and walked with the soldiers, gripping the reins as tight as he could. For many miles and days, he kept a watchful eye for anything that did not appear kosher. Finally, one day when the sun set and the darkness came over them, the captain of the Cossacks gave Max the full reins for the horses and told him to hop up on the buggy seat. A very exhausted young man declined the offer to ride. When he was asked why, he replied, "It's Shabbos, I can't ride an animal on Shabbos."

When the soldiers were done with Zaidie's horses, Max turned them around and, step by step, village by village, he led the horses back home. He not only knew the laws of Shabbos, he lived them at great peril. This is one of my favorite Father stories because it exemplifies his obedience to his father, obedience to the laws God gave us, and his devotion to his family.

This is how my father lived his life.

Naomi

Moving from Patchogue, Long Island, New York, to Spartanburg, South Carolina, in August, 1955, was beyond culture shock. What we knew of "The South" was from the movie *Gone with the Wind*, which my Spartanburg High School history teacher convinced the local movie theater to show once a year, every year. Going from a congregation of 200 families in a tiny town to 50 families in a much larger town required its own adjustment.

Temple B'nai Israel was a shul and a home to and for the

local congregation. Gatherings, celebrations, holidays, mitzvahs, Sunday school and Hebrew school classes, men's and women's organizations all were held at the temple.

The rabbi before my father occupied a respected place in the Spartanburg community and my family was pleased to continue that position. Daddy was asked to join the Spartanburg County Ministerial Association and, at appropriate times, he gently encouraged the group to include black ministers. It took five years for this to happen and another five for an African American to become association president.

The largest white churches in Spartanburg were located on Main Street—truly the main thoroughfare through the life of the area. The Christian ministers of those churches were called the "Uptown Nine," and Daddy was invited to join them. When Daddy was turning 70, the oneg after Friday night services was his birthday party. Unbeknownst to him, right before services started, in walked the Uptown Nine Ministers, a real powerhouse in Spartanburg life, and took their seats on the front row. Many of our relatives from the New York area had flown or driven down to Spartanburg to help share in the milestone.

The Uptown Nine were Daddy's inner circle, dealing with the same issues with their congregants, no matter what the religion, as he did with his. When Daddy was dying from a stroke, Mother allowed only the congregation president and the ministers of the Uptown Nine to visit in the hospital. They were paying their respects, with many honest tears and much affection. The local Spartanburg newspaper called Daddy the "Little Giant" in its editorial page obituary and devoted a third of a page that day to describing his contributions to Spartanburg and South Carolina. Governor Richard Riley had asked Daddy to write the "Ten Commandments of Mental Health for South Carolina" and he did. He had served on the Spartanburg County Mental Health Association for years.

Somewhere in the middle of the 28 years of Daddy's tenure in Spartanburg, faculty from Wofford College and Converse



Above: Wedding of Rabbi Max Solomon Stauber and Phyllis Weiss, Brooklyn, NY, 1941. Below: The Stauber children, Patchogue, NY, 1952. Left to right: Ben (4), Alvin (8), Naomi (10), and Lynn (6).



College asked him to teach them the Old Testament from the Jewish perspective. He became an adjunct professor at Converse College and taught faculty courses for years. He also taught Hebrew to the rare Converse student who wished to learn the Bible in the original language.

Alvin

College asked him to teach them the Old Testament from the Jewish perspective. He became an adjunct professor at Converse College and taught faculty courses for years. He also taught Hebrew to the rare Converse student who wished to learn the Bible in the original language.

From time to time the Sisterhood held bake sales to raise money. Temple B'nai Israel's reputation for delicious goodies spread. The temple parking lot was full of cars the day of the sale with visitors from across Spartanburg County. My mother baked eight challahs in the beginning years and cringed at the high price the women running the sale charged for her homemade challahs. Each year they asked Mother to bake more and more as there was such a calling for them. Her strudel and rugelach flew off the tables. Everyone had a good time: there was lots of fun, lots of laughter, and the entire Spartanburg community was represented.

Twice a year Mother and Daddy would host a luncheon in their home for eight to ten of the Uptown Nine Ministers: mid-February for Black History month and another significant time six months later. Mother's menu was that of a Yom Tov dinner, including several courses and many dishes no one had previously tasted in their lives. The guests each went home with a fresh baked challah, looking forward to the next time, they exclaimed.

The four years I spent in Spartanburg before departing for college left indelibly etched moments and experiences that influenced the rest of my life. My frequent return visits—for holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, my three sons' bar mitzvahs, and my parents' burial services—were always extraordinary and soul-enriching.



Above: Rabbi Max Stauber (left, rear) oversees the first meeting of Young Judea, Spartanburg, SC, ca. 1961. Left to right: seated, Elaine Abelkop, Ben Stauber, Saul Tanenbaum; standing, behind Ben's right shoulder, Charles Wachter, Larry Abelkop, Lee Tanenbaum, Sara Beth Bernanke; standing (rear), Marc Tanenbaum (with rabbi's hand on his shoulder), Bennie Sheftall, Joel Spigel, Helene Cohen, Mrs. Smith (advisor), Sandra Gilpin.

Below: Preparing to leave the Dean Street synagogue in 1961. B'nai Israel's Torahs were moved to the house serving as the community center on Heywood Street, Spartanburg, SC, until the new sanctuary was dedicated in 1964.



Making a minyan is a big deal in Judaism. A synagogue in San Francisco has, from time to time, issued to members a "Summons for Jewry Duty" to encourage them to attend the shul's morning minyan. And who/what should be counted as part of the quorum of ten—Women? Children? The Torah scroll? A sleeping congregant?—has been hotly debated among Jewish scholars for centuries. In the reminiscences below, I present memories of a minyan or two or three where my father, Rabbi Max Stauber, was a central character.

When I was only ten years old, before our family's move to Spartanburg from Patchogue, New York, my father would sometimes call me at home as I was preparing to go to school to serve as the tenth man for the 7:30 A.M. weekday minyan at my father's synagogue located right next door to our house. I was glad to attend and happy I could be the tenth man. At the end of the service, I trotted next door, finished my breakfast (wolfed it down!), and do not remember ever being tardy for school.

I also recall a "minyan mitzvah"—some might call it "minyan chutzpah"—after we moved to Spartanburg.

During Sukkot, Shavuot, or Passover morning weekday services

at the synagogue's downtown location on Dean Street, with my family in attendance,

my father would sometimes send me to the high school, conveniently located next door, to ask the administrative staff for permission to "yank" the Shapiro twins out of class (only for an hour or so), so we could make a minyan and thereby be

able to recite certain prayers, as well as read the Torah portion for the day. This Make-a-Minyan effort was usually successful and did not seem to impair the Shapiro twins' academic or professional success as they went on to illustrious careers in law and medicine.

When I told my parents I would be visiting them in Spartanburg during my law school semester break in 1968, my father invited me to deliver the sermon at Friday evening services. I respectfully declined because I was exhausted after end-of-semester exams. I did go to Shabbat services on Friday evening and felt relaxed there and felt my stress level diminishing. Said stress level reduction was short-lived. When it was time for the sermon, my father announced, "My son Alvin will now deliver the sermon, a D'Var Torah." I was in shock! I was stunned! Somehow I organized some thoughts on my way up to the bimah and followed one of the guiding principles of Jewish public speaking, which is: "When in doubt, KVETCH."

So I babbled on for ten minutes about the malaise that Jewish university students felt in the turbulence of the '60s. After the service, I asked my father why he called on me to give the sermon after I had told him that I couldn't do it. With a mischievous smile, he replied, "I was confident that you would come up with something. Anyway, you're going to be an attorney, right? Eventually, every lawyer needs to develop the ability to think on his feet, right? Tonight I gave you the chance to develop that ability." More smiles . . . all around!

Honey

My first memory of Spartanburg, South Carolina, where we moved when I was nine years old, was twirling around in the foyer of our new home at 844

E. Main Street, dubbed "the Rabbi's Parish." Across the street was a small outdoor market where my siblings and I were sent to pick up milk and eggs for our mom who was always baking challah and rugelach to have on

hand for the endless trail of visitors to our house. The owner of the store was so southern and nice, and one day after my purchase, he said, "Ya'll come back." So I did, and he said "Did you forget something?" Friday nights and Saturdays we walked the one and a half miles to Temple B'nai Israel downtown for Shabbat services. Someone driving by would always stop and ask if we wanted a ride. Real southern hospitality!

We eventually built our new synagogue on Heywood Avenue, and I was the first to become bat mitzvah there. Years later, I was married in that same sanctuary. My fondest memories as a child were babysitting for Helga and Herb Moglin; buying clothes from Mac Massey's store, The Kiddie Korner; getting gas at Junie White's gas station; and walking down Main Street with my dad, visiting

stores like Marion's (Speedy Feinstein's lady's clothing store), Joseph H. Wachter, Sr.'s Elliott's Jewelers, and Sheila Rose's bakery. Saturday nights were filled with playing cards at the Sun 'n Sand Motel, run by Aunt Flo and Jack Price. Cooking with the women of our temple was a blast and listening to Alan Silverman play the piano for our spectacular shows leaves my heart so warm. And who can

forget Mozelle Harris? There could be no function without Mozelle's help. Our door was always open and all visitors left with a challah loaf under their arm. B'nai Israel is a warm and welcoming place and my childhood reflects that.



Above: Kiddie Korner, Spartanburg, SC. Courtesy of Joe Wachter.

Below: Phyllis Weiss Stauber (l), Alvin Stauber, and Rabbi Max Stauber celebrate Alvin's bar mitzvah, Spartanburg, SC, 1957.



Price's Store for Men: "Ends Your Quest for the Best"

by Harry Price

It was said he bore a resemblance to George Gershwin, with whom he shared New York City beginnings and Lithuanian heritage. They both died too young in 1937, and they obviously had a South Carolina connection: Gershwin's "working vacation" * at Folly Beach, near Charleston, to research Porgy and Bess, and my grandfather Harry Price's random selection of Spartanburg to start his business.

Visiting his brother-in-law, J. J. Saul, in Hartwell, Georgia, Harry heard that Spartanburg "was a good town for business," bustling from the thriving textile industry. Marketer that he was, he adjusted his business plan several times. In 1900, his first store was named The New York Bazaar, sounding sophisticated to him, but not so much to the Spartanburg market, a mere 35 years after the Civil War. By 1903, the year of Spartanburg's great flood, with a name change and a new location on the square, Harry Price's store for men was launched.

Harry became known for his gracious and courteous manner and he easily made friends with Mayor John Floyd, who owned the neighboring dry goods store and sold caskets from his back door. Price's targeted Wofford College students, who would come to school from small South Carolina farming communities without proper dress clothes.

In the 1920s, sporting goods and a boy's department were added on the second floor. In his late 90s, Mr. Robert Pickens stated it was the "proudest day of his life, when his mother took him to Harry Price for his first pair of long pants." The Pie Eater's Club was created for local boys, circulating monthly comic books that showcased new styles.

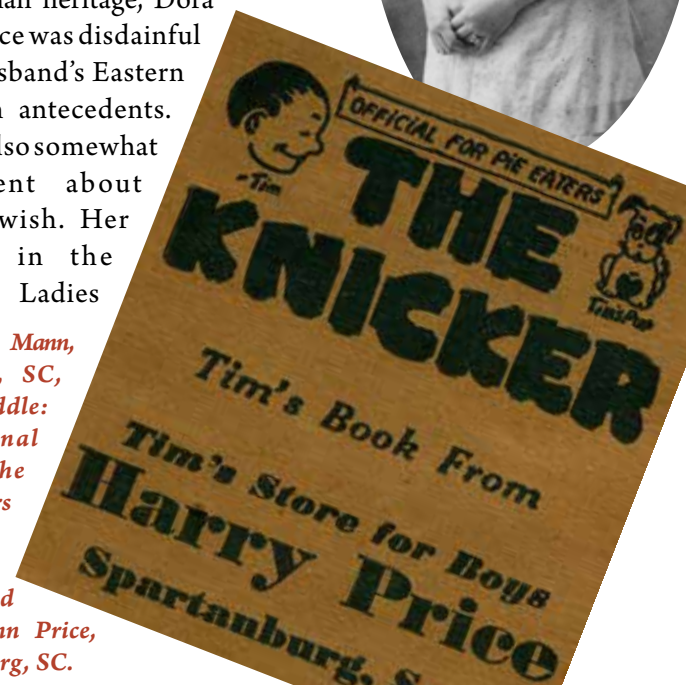
As would be expected, Harry Price was civically engaged. Landrum's 1933 book of South Carolina biographies states that he was a founding member of the Chamber of Commerce and the Kiwanis Club and affiliated with the Woodmen of the World and the Loyal Order of Moose. He was a founding member of Congregation B'nai Israel and served on the building committee for its first temple.

At the home of the bride's

parents, Harry Price married Dora Mann in 1909 in Newberry, South Carolina. Worthy of note, two future South Carolina governors were in attendance—Ibra Blackwood, a friend of the groom from Spartanburg, and Cole Blease, a friend of the bride's father from Newberry. Each governor became notorious in his own right.

Not surprising given her German heritage, Dora Mann Price was disdainful of her husband's Eastern European antecedents. She was also somewhat ambivalent about being Jewish. Her interest in the Temple's Ladies

Top: Dora Mann, Newberry, SC, 1903. Middle: Promotional logo for the Pie Eaters Club. Bottom: Harry and Dora Mann Price, Spartanburg, SC.



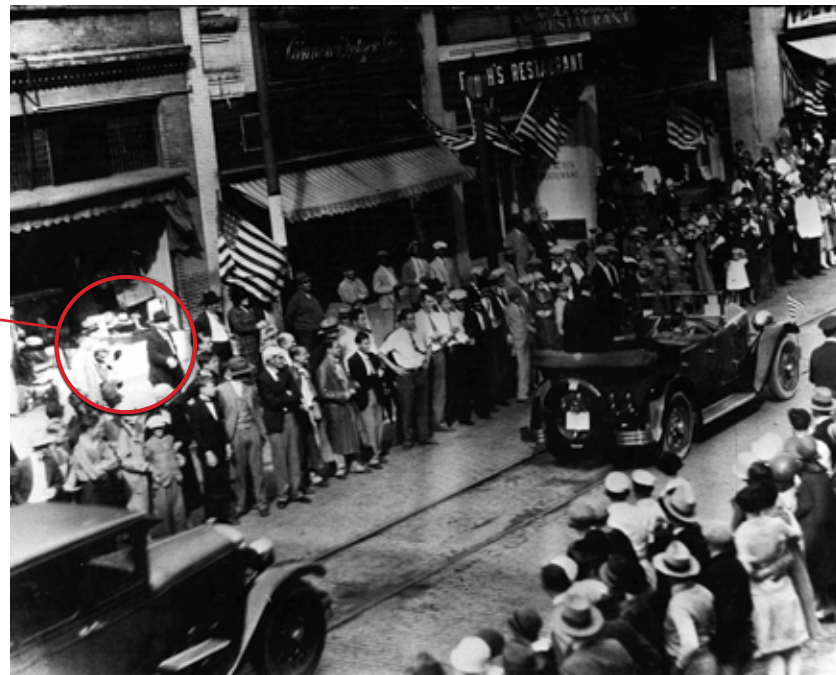
* David Zax, "Summertime for George Gershwin," *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 8, 2010.

All images courtesy of Harry Price.

Auxiliary was primarily to provide readily available bridge partners. After her husband's death, she remained the cashier at Price's for more than 30 years.

While Harry Price never met George Gershwin, he was able to meet another notable 20th-century American. Spartanburg was Charles Lindbergh's only stop in South Carolina on his national tour after his triumphant flight across the Atlantic. At that time, Spartanburg had the only airport

in the state. Harry Price attended the formal banquet held in Lindbergh's honor at Converse College. There is an iconic photograph of Spartanburg's best attended parade. It shows Lindbergh in an open-air car riding down Main Street, Harry Price standing in the cheering crowd in front of his store with his young daughter, Anne (later Gray), and his father-in-law, Joseph Mann. There wasn't a parade when Harry Price first arrived in town, but certainly Spartanburg cheered him on.



Parades were held across the country in honor of Charles Lindbergh after he made history by piloting the first solo non-stop trans-Atlantic flight in 1927. The parade in Spartanburg, SC, was attended by Harry Price, his daughter, Anne, and his father-in-law, Joseph Mann (inset).

Spartanburg Stories

To learn more about the lives and careers of notable Jewish people who are part of the history of Spartanburg, see Joe Wachter's upcoming "Spartanburg Stories" at jhssc.org. Profiles will include:

~ Anna Kramer Blotcky, life-long music and voice teacher, recognized as a skilled contralto in the world of opera

~ Harold Cohen, whose World War II partnership with Creighton Abrams earned them the moniker "Roosevelt's Highest Paid Butchers"

~ David Max Eichhorn, U.S. Army chaplain who conducted religious services at Dachau after the concentration camp was liberated in 1945

~ Dr. Love Rosa Hirschmann Gantt, first woman to graduate from medical school in South Carolina and Spartanburg's first female physician, who fought pellagra, worked to combat delinquency among young girls, and found time to crusade for women's rights

~ Dr. Joseph Goldberger, epidemiologist who ran the Pellagra Hospital in Spartanburg between 1914 and 1920, and was nominated five times for the Nobel Prize

~ Simon Hecklin, basketball star and team captain at Wofford College in the early 1920s; considered one of the best guards in college basketball in the South

~ Al Rosen, a feared slugger for the Cleveland Indians between 1950 and '56, who came to be known as "the Hebrew Hammer of Major League Baseball"

~ Seymour Rosenberg, whose column for the *Spartanburg Herald*, called "The Stroller," entertained and sometimes angered readers for more than 33 years

~ Bill Shapiro, track & field champion at Spartanburg High School and Tulane University, who brought home two gold medals from the 1965 Maccabiah games in Israel

~ Abe Simon, who fought with the Jewish Legion in Palestine during World War I, married Lottie Geffen, daughter of Atlanta Rabbi Tobias Geffen, and operated a women's clothing store in Spartanburg for 20 years

In Search of Jewish Spartanburg

November 9–10, 2019 ~ Spartanburg, South Carolina

All events take place at Temple B'nai Israel, 146 Heywood Avenue, unless otherwise noted.

Saturday, November 9

11:30 A.M. Registration and lunch

12:00 P.M. Welcome – Jeffrey Rosenblum, JHSSC president

12:30 – 1:30 **In Search of Jewish Spartanburg**
Joe Wachter

2:00 – 3:30 **Hub City Reminisces**
Moderator: Joe Wachter
Panelists: Dot Frank, Allan From, Gloria Goldberg, Andy Poliakoff, Harry Price, Gary Smiley, Sandy Smiley, Ben Stauber

4:00 **Tour of former Temple B'nai Israel**, 191 S. Dean Street (a short drive from current synagogue)

6:00 **Reception, buffet dinner, and entertainment by Cap and Collar**
For more than three decades Rabbi Yossi and Pastor Paul have brought their musical talents, charm, and humor to their respective pulpits. Joining forces in 2003, they perform a mix of traditional folk, country, and original songs that serves as a bridge among faiths and peoples.

Sunday, November 10

9:00 A.M. **Membership meeting and executive committee elections**—everyone is invited!
Coffee and bagels will be served.

10:30–12:00 **From Budapest to Spartanburg: The Teszlers, Textile Giants in the American South**
Moderator: Diane Vecchio, Professor Emeritus, Furman University
Panelists: Mr. Oakley Coburn, former Head of the Library Department & Archives, Wofford College, and Dr. Charles D. Kay, Professor Emeritus, Wofford College

Hotel reservations

Spartanburg Marriott
299 North Church Street, Spartanburg, SC 29306
800.327.6465

Special rate: \$129 per night + tax

To get the special rate, make your reservation by 5:00 P.M. on October 17 and mention Group JHSSC2019.

Meeting registration

Online at:
jhssc.org/events/upcoming
with Visa, MasterCard,
Discover, or American Express

Or by check: payable to JHSSC
c/o Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies
Program – 96 Wentworth Street
Charleston, SC 29424

Meeting fee: \$60 per person

Questions: Enid Idelsohn, idelsohne@cofc.edu
Phone: 843.953.3918 ~ fax: 843.953.7624



Main Street at Morgan Square, Spartanburg, SC, ca. 2015. Photo by Joe Wachter.

The Froms of Union: Merchants on Main Street for 100 Years

by I. Allan From

On Friday, October 7, 1927, the front page of the *Union Daily Times* featured a picture of Israel From and an article about his life in Union. “To tear loose from the land of your Fathers, leave all of the surroundings of the childhood’s happy days and jump from Lithuania, in Northern Europe to Union, South Carolina, is no little jump,” the story began. “Then to realize that you are burning all of your bridges behind and that you are landing in a strange country without money or knowledge of the language, nothing between you and darkness but your own determined efforts, requires unbounded confidence in your capabilities and plenty of physical energy.”

Israel From was born in Lithuania in 1878; his wife, Bertha Kessler, was born in 1879. They knew each other growing up and fell in love. Israel immigrated to Worcester, Massachusetts, in the 1890s and lived with relatives, possibly one or more of his brothers. (Eventually three of his brothers, his sister, Eva, and his parents all settled in Worcester.) By 1900, Bertha had joined him and the couple were married.

What brought the Froms to Union? The tale is a typical one of chain migration. Bertha’s cousins Hyman and Phillip Berlin lived in Baltimore and, in the 1890s, decided to make their way south. They peddled in North Carolina, with their base in Moncure, near Raleigh, then in Burlington, and later in Haw River. Hyman married his first cousin Alte Kessler, who was Bertha’s older sister. After trying their hand at dairy farming and a stint in Baltimore, the brothers moved to Union, peddling in the countryside and then succeeding in opening small stores in town.

The Berlins told Israel and Bertha, then living in Worcester, about

opportunities in Union, and the Froms moved there around 1901. Israel began peddling in the northern part of Union County in an area called Pea Ridge, walking from house to house selling cloth, clothes, kitchen items, and sewing supplies. He later purchased a horse and then a wagon and, in 1904, he opened a dry goods shop on Main Street. Soon thereafter he welcomed his brother Solomon Fram* who had been a cobbler in the Old Country and who now opened a store across the street in Union.

Israel had a reputation as hardworking, fair, and civic minded. He and Bertha reared six children, all of whom ended up in the retail business. Lena, the eldest child, married Louis Reimer from Augusta, Georgia, and they operated a store on Main Street in Woodruff, South Carolina, for more than 60 years. Ellis, the first son, married Maie Meyerson from Rock Hill; after attending Clemson, he worked with his father in Union: “I. From” became “I. From & Son.” Mary From married Harry Antopolsky from Augusta, Georgia; along with other family members, they operated one of the largest hardware stores in Georgia. Sarah From married Joe Freedland of Wilmington, North Carolina, where the family

ran a fine clothing store for more than six decades. Rosa From married Meyer Poliakoff and was actively involved in running D. Poliakoff Department Store on the square in Abbeville, South Carolina, a business that spanned the 20th century.

*Fram, From, Frem: The family’s original name was Fram, pronounced “From” in Europe. Hence Israel became From in America, where the name was sometimes pronounced and spelled Frem. There were five brothers and one sister, Eva. Among the brothers, three became Fram, one From, and one Frem. Two Frams and the Frem stayed in Massachusetts; one Fram and one From ended up in Union, SC.



Above: Israel and Bertha Kessler From, ca. 1907. Below: The From family, Worcester, MA, ca. 1921. Israel From is seen on right holding son Harry on his lap, with his wife, Bertha, standing at his right shoulder. Courtesy of Allan From.



My father, Harry, the last of six children, married Edith Small of Asheville, North Carolina, and opened Harry From’s on Main Street in Union. The store sold men’s, women’s, and children’s clothing and shoes, mostly to lower and middle class whites and African Americans. My father always said, “Treat everyone with respect. Money is not white or black, it’s green.”

My grandmother rarely worked in the store; according to Israel, he could hire people to sell goods but couldn’t hire someone to rear his children. Bertha was deeply religious. Both she and Israel were proud of their Jewish heritage and faith and never shied away from telling their neighbors in Union County how much Judaism meant to them. In Lithuania Bertha’s mother had taught Hebrew and Bertha was well versed and observant. She kept a kosher home, ordering meat from Atlanta, which sometimes arrived in not the best condition. She learned to properly salt the meat so it was edible. She served chickens raised in the backyard and slaughtered according to the laws of kashrut.

Bertha davened three times a day until the day of her death in 1969. She also recited Musaf whenever necessary. I can remember my parents encouraging me to stand next to my grandmother when she prayed but not to disturb her. Israel, on the other hand, was not so Orthodox and would eat non-kosher food outside the house. Family lore has it that if Israel brought home treyf (non-kosher) food, Bertha would send him to the backyard where he would sit on a tree stump and eat in the company of the horse he kept from his peddling days.

My aunt Rosa Poliakoff, in an oral history recorded in 1995, claimed the only time she heard her parents disagree was when Bertha wanted her children to stay home from school for all Jewish holidays and Israel wanted them to go to school, except on the High Holidays. I believe Israel won this discussion. All the children attended college except my father. Ellis went to Clemson, Lena, Mary, and Sarah attended Winthrop College, and Rosa matriculated at Agnes Scott College in Atlanta. My father was headed to Georgia Tech, but when his father died his

last year in high school he decided to stay home and work in the store with Ellis.

Photographs show Israel to be a sharp dresser. He loved the latest in inventions and was one of the first in Union to acquire an automobile, a radio, and an electric shaver. He learned to speak English without a European accent and enjoyed taking an occasional drink and playing cards with friends, Jewish and non-Jewish. My father remembers driving with his father into the country during Prohibition to purchase bootleg whiskey.

During Israel’s time, when the Ku Klux Klan would parade on Main Street in white robes with their faces hidden under hoods, it is said he would call them by name. Afterwards the marchers confronted Israel and asked how he knew who they were. “I sold you your shoes,” he replied. Versions of this story are told about other Jewish

merchants elsewhere in the state—clearly the tensions between small town shopkeepers and their Klan customers hover not far beneath the surface in the collective consciousness of southern Jews. Indeed, my sister remembers essentially the same encounter in our father’s generation, as described in Gloria’s account below.

When our family closed my father’s store, I was told by an elderly African American that my grandfather was the first merchant on Main Street to allow people of color to try on shoes. I asked him how African Americans bought shoes in other stores

and he explained they would measure the length of their foot with a string, go to the store and ask for a shoe of that length. I was proud to hear my immigrant grandfather had treated all people with respect.

The Belk family opened a store in Union around the same time Israel opened his. It was one of their earlier stores, perhaps the second. Israel and Mr. Belk knew one another and when other stores went out of business, the two of them would purchase the merchandise together and share it. Obviously, this did not last very long, as Mr. Belk went on to create the largest department store chain in the Carolinas.



Postcard (postmarked 1908), Main Street in Union, SC. Courtesy of Allan From.



Harry From’s Mens Store, Union, SC, ca. 1982. Courtesy of Gloria From Goldberg.

Other Jewish merchants in Union, apart from the Froms and Berlins, included the Kassler family, who lived in Buffalo, a few miles from Union. Two of their children were Norma Shapiro and Ethel Bernstein of Gaffney. Jacob Cohen owned a fine store in Union and was well established before my family arrived. There were also the Berelovits family (Mr. Berelovits had married a cousin of Bertha From); the Levine family; the Krass family; the Nathan Shapiro family, whose son Louis married Norma Kassler and lived in Gaffney. Solomon Fram also came to Union, owned stores in Union and Lockhart, and lived with his wife, Katie, in Union until the late '40s.

In 1917, the *American Jewish Yearbook* counted 40 Jews in Union, likely enough to make a minyan (a quorum of 10 Jewish men required to hold prayer services). Jacob Cohen and my grandfather Israel are said to have held services at their homes, using a Torah Israel bought. According to my aunt Rosa Poliakoff, after the congregation in Spartanburg was established, Israel gave the Torah to B'nai Israel since there were more Jews in Spartanburg than Union.

When Israel and Bertha arrived in Union, they joined the Conservative congregation in Charlotte, North Carolina, where they had relatives, then began attending services in Spartanburg once B'nai Israel was formed. Israel died in 1934 at age 56. At that time, Ellis had been working at I. From & Son for several years. My father worked there until the United States entered World War II, enlisting the morning of December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl

Harbor. After two weeks of basic training, he was put on a ship in Charleston and ended up with the Flying Tigers, one of the first 150 Americans soldiers to go to China.

Harry served his time, came back to Union, and rejoined his brother Ellis at I. From & Son, later opening his own business. Both stores continued to flourish. Following in their father's footsteps, Ellis and Harry were among the first store owners in Union to hire African Americans to wait on customers. They and their wives were deeply involved in civic affairs. Ellis and Harry were co-founders of the Union Country Club in the late 1940s. My mother, Edith, was a volunteer for the Junior Charity League. And Maie was a founder and served on the local board of the University of South Carolina at Union.

The Froms and our Berlin relatives were scattered across the Upstate, with stores in Union, Abbeville, Woodruff, Greer, Belton, Wagener, and Greenwood, South Carolina. Today, none are left. I. From closed in 1974 and

Harry From in the latter part of 2005, marking 100 years of Froms on Main Street in Union. My sister and I gave the old Harry From building to Union County, which built offices in most of the space. In 2018, the remaining unused space was sold by the county to a developer from Columbia, who turned it into dormitory-style rooms for students at USC-Union, where Ellis, Harry, and their children have established four scholarships.

Union County has been good to the From family and its relations. We have always been proud to be Jews, proud to be respected for our faith, and we've tried to give back in kind.



Gloria From Goldberg (l) and her brother Allan From gave Union County the building that housed their father's store, after it closed in 2005, in memory of their parents Harry and Edith From. Courtesy of Gloria From Goldberg.

Being Jewish in Union

by Gloria From Goldberg

Belonging to the only Jewish family in Union, South Carolina, gave my brother, Allan, and me a unique perspective. We were taught at an early age that we were Jewish and different. Our parents drove us 30 miles to Spartanburg and waited two hours for us to attend Sunday school. My dad hired a driver to take us to Hebrew school in Spartanburg during the week.

We were always proud of our Judaism and we got along well with our Christian friends. At the age of four I attended kindergarten at the First Presbyterian Church near my house. I'll always remember the Christmas program when I was chosen to be the "star" on the Christmas tree. It was my

teacher, the late Sara Sutherland, who chose me. I'll bet I was the only Jewish star on a Christmas tree in history.

It was drilled into Allan and me that we were Jewish. When my dad closed his store for the High Holidays, he placed a sign on the door: "Closed for the Jewish Holidays." I remember as a little girl watching the Ku Klux Klan march down Main Street on Saturday afternoon with covered faces. I was scared and would run into Dad's store. He would assure me no one would hurt me and would take me into the window of the store and tell me some of the people's names as they walked by. I asked him one time how he knew who they were with their faces

under hoods. He replied, "I look at their shoes—they buy their shoes from me."

One incident I will never forget is the time in middle school I went to my science teacher to tell him I would be absent for a test that was to be given on Yom Kippur. He looked me in the eye and told me if I missed the test he would give me a failing grade. I was very upset and told my parents. The next morning Dad went to the school. I don't know exactly what happened but I got no failing grades.

When it was time to go to college it was important to my parents that we attend a school with a large Jewish population. I attended the University of Georgia and my brother attended George Washington University. We were expected to marry within the faith and keep the religion, and indeed we did. My husband, Henry Goldberg, was born in Germany after World War II. Both of his parents are Holocaust survivors. He impressed upon me, even more than before, the importance of Judaism.



Gloria From Goldberg and Harry From's Going-Out-Of-Business Sale made front-page headlines in the November 15, 2004, Herald-Journal, Union, SC. Courtesy of Gloria From Goldberg.

All the Bases Covered: Memories of my Childhood in Union

by I. Allan From

Even though the only Jewish families in Union while I was growing up were that of my father and his brother, I experienced a wonderful childhood. I was born in Union in 1950 and can remember growing up in a large house on South Street. My grandfather Israel From had purchased this home in the early 1920s from a prominent banker in town. The house was big, painted white, with a wrap-around porch. This is where my father and his brother and sisters spent most of their childhood.

To the best of my memory, the house had three bedrooms downstairs, along with two kitchens, and there were five bedrooms upstairs. Having a milk and meat kitchen made things easier for my grandmother and was probably a major reason why this home was purchased. Obviously, with six children, the family needed a much bigger home than the two- or three-bedroom house where they lived before.

My grandmother lived with us for the first three or four years of my life, so my memories of her are vague. She had the back room in the house with an adjoining kitchen. I remember her praying, and when I had a cold, I remember her making

Henry and I are both very involved with the Jewish community. He has served on the boards of numerous organizations, including Beth Shalom synagogue and the Columbia Jewish Federation. He has been president of the Columbia Jewish Community Center. He has taught Haftorah lessons when Beth Shalom had no rabbi. I belong to Hadassah, Beth Shalom Synagogue and Sisterhood, and other Jewish associations. Our sons Jason and Adam both practice Judaism. Adam married a young lady who converted and

their son attends a Chabad school, which Adam's wife, Toni, has served by heading up fundraisers and attending Shabbat services with son Jack. Jason and Samantha are very involved with D'or Tikvah in Charleston and send their boys to the Addlestone Hebrew Academy. I am amazed at their knowledge of Jewish history and of Hebrew. Both families celebrate Shabbat every Friday night. We did as our parents expected.

me drink whisky and honey. Evidently, this was a cure for anything.

When I was five years old, before South Carolina had public kindergartens, I was sent to First Presbyterian Church for pre-school. My sister and I were the only Jews. I don't remember any bad experiences; in fact, our teachers were wonderful ladies. I attended public schools in Union from 1st through 12th grade. I belonged to a Cub Scout troop associated with First Presbyterian, a Boy Scout troop associated with the Episcopal church, and remember attending on many occasions teen clubs associated with the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. All my friends, no matter what religion they were, would attend teen clubs at different churches.

I never felt like an outsider and grew to be friendly with the ministers. I don't remember any minister ever trying to convert me. Obviously, when prayers were said, I did feel uncomfortable and realized that I was in a church and they were going to practice that religion. None of the other youngsters made me feel awkward about the situation. I have been told by many of my friends, at a much later time, that

they never thought of me as a Jew, but as another person who happened to be Jewish. Many of them have also told me, they don't understand anti-Semitism, as I was the only Jew they knew growing up and was just like them.

On occasion, I would attend church with my non-Jewish friends and was always made to feel welcome. On Christmas mornings, I remember getting up early and going to visit several of my friends to help them open their Christmas presents. It was just part of growing up. My parents had no problems with my ecumenical activities. We talked constantly about being Jewish. My parents encouraged me to engage with my Christian friends, but made sure I maintained my Jewish beliefs and values. I believe they thought this is fine now, but you are going to marry a Jewish woman. I surprised them by marrying two Jewish women, but not at the same time.

When I was young, we joined Temple B'nai Israel in Spartanburg where I attended Sunday school and Hebrew school. My mother was from New York City and did not drive, so my parents would hire teenagers to drive me to Hebrew school in Spartanburg several times a week. On Saturdays I would take the bus from Union to Spartanburg, where a family friend would pick me up and take me to temple. After attending services, I would go back to the rabbi's house, have lunch with him and his wife, and then have a private Hebrew lesson.

Rabbi Max and Mrs. Stauber were wonderful people and treated me as one of their own. Rabbi Stauber served at B'nai Israel for more than 30 years and is still

a legend there. For my bar mitzvah many people from my hometown of Union came and were quite interested in the ceremony as none of them had ever attended a bar mitzvah before. I believe they were fascinated by hearing Hebrew and holding a book where you read from right to left. Many of my parents' friends said they would like to be Jewish because we served great food and gave a good party.

I was involved in activities at Union High School, such as student government and sports. I really was not much of an athlete but enjoyed playing. My senior year I was elected president of the student body at Union High School. Among at least 1,000 students at Union High School, my sister and I were the only Jews. I felt if there was any anti-Semitism, it certainly would have shown up at that time. During the campaign, I would walk around the school early in the morning to make sure that my signs were in the proper place. I probably had 100 signs and on only one occasion on one day was there an anti-Semitic remark. I immediately took the sign down and replaced it with another. There were no other issues.

I knew students at Union High School whose parents were involved in the Klan. One such person came up to me one day and asked if I knew his father was head of the Klan in Union. I indicated that I did, and he told me that he had known me for most of his life and considered me a friend. He further told me that though he liked me, he didn't want to know any more like me. I was speechless, not knowing how to take that comment. On another occasion, at a local drive-in restaurant, I remember when some boys I knew asked me to help erect a cross for a Klan rally. I asked them if they knew I was Jewish, and they said they knew but didn't care. I declined their invitation.

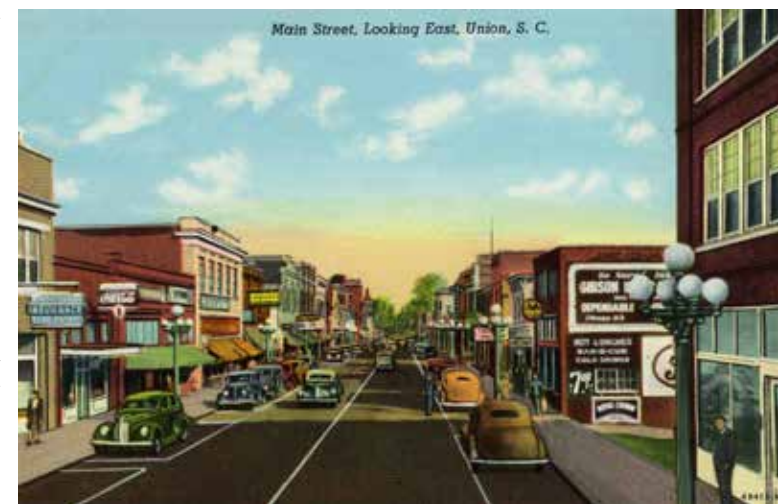
My sister, Gloria, and I were the only two Jewish students in the Union County public schools, but one of my best friends growing up was Jewish. Chuck Bernstein lived in Gaffney, about 30 miles from Union. His grandparents, the Kassler family, had operated a store in Buffalo, South Carolina, a few miles from Union. Chuck's mother, Ethel, was born there and later moved to Gaffney. Chuck was exactly my age and our grandparents had been friends, our parents were friends, so it was only natural we became good friends. We met first when we were about six years old and Chuck beat me up, but we never had another fight. He was a star football player at Gaffney High, was involved in student government, and was as much a part of the Gaffney community as I was in Union. Neither of us spent much time with the Spartanburg Jewish community as we were very happy and busy in our hometowns. We spent many weekends together; when he came to Union, I got him dates, and when I went to Gaffney, he did the same. Not one of these

Advertisement for Harry From's Ladies Shop grand opening in the Union Daily Times, August 7, 1952. Courtesy of Gloria From Goldberg.



girls was Jewish as Gaffney only had three Jewish families. We confided in each other about what it was like to be one of the few Jews in school but not much time was spent on that. We were having too much fun growing up in our communities. Chuck unfortunately passed away and I do miss him as we had so much in common, including close to 100 years of family history.

When I was in sixth grade, we moved from the old family home to a new one in Union next door to First Presbyterian's parsonage. A new minister moved in and my parents became good friends with him and his wife. They socialized, I played with their children, and I shot one-on-one basketball with Reverend Blumer. He played to win as he was a proud graduate of the University of Kentucky. At Christmas he would invite my sister and me over to his house when other college students came home. We were part of his family. When my mother died in 1970 at the age of 48, Reverend Blumer and his family were on vacation. Rabbi Stauber and the Spartanburg community had been very supportive of my sick mother, but the Blumers gave her much needed support as well. A member of Reverend Blumer's congregation called him to let him



Postcard picture of Main Street in Union, SC, no date. Courtesy of Allan From.

know that my mother had died and Reverend Blumer called my father. He said he would be coming home for the funeral. My dad told him not to come, that he had very little vacation time and that we would get together when he got back. Reverend Blumer insisted upon attending and my father told him, if you come you will participate. So on May 31, 1970, Rabbi Stauber and Reverend

Blumer conducted my mother's funeral service.

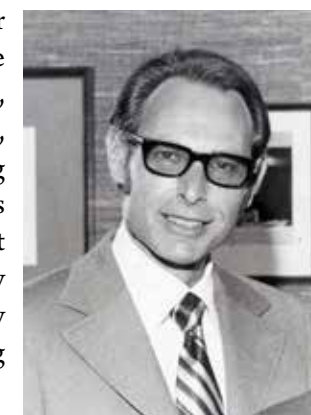
Nine years later my father married an Episcopalian woman. When he died in 1993, the funeral was conducted by the next-door Presbyterian minister, the Episcopalian priest, and a Chabad rabbi. I like to say that my family had all the bases covered. I have always felt there was no better place to grow up than Union. When my mother was sick the community came out to visit and care for her. People in Union respected us for who we were and a difference in religion was really never a problem. I sometimes think how fortunate I was to grow up in a small town and enjoy the advantages of knowing I was the same as the others but only with a different religion. The Froms certainly blended into and loved our community.

The Teszlers of Budapest and Spartanburg: Pioneers in Textile Engineering

by Diane C. Vecchio

In 1959, Andrew Teszler, a Holocaust survivor and a graduate of North Carolina State University, pitched an idea to David Schwartz, the president and CEO of Jonathan Logan, Inc., of New York City, the country's leading manufacturer of women's apparel. Teszler's idea was to start the first double-knit garment operation in the United States. After a feasibility study, the two men agreed on a vertically integrated manufacturing facility, producing double-knit garments from raw fiber.

Schwartz sent Andrew to Spartanburg to organize the Butte Knit Division for parent company Jonathan Logan. The mill opened in 1960 and eventually became the largest



Andrew Teszler. Courtesy of Spartanburg Herald-Journal Collection, Spartanburg County Public Libraries.

manufacturer of women's clothing in the world and the first company to produce double-knit fabric in America.

Andrew was the eldest son of Sandor and Lidia Teszler, Hungarian Jews who survived the brutality of the Holocaust and the communist take-over of their country. Fleeing their homeland, first to England and then to America in 1948, the Teszlers found a refuge and prosperity in the textile industry that so powerfully shaped Upstate South Carolina.

Andrew's father, Sandor, studied textile engineering in Germany, graduated in 1925, and returned to Budapest to work in a knitting factory. Sandor and his brother Joseph, who

was also a textile manufacturer, opened a plant in Belgrade in January 1941, during the Nazi take-over of Europe. The brothers operated factories throughout central Europe and Sandor admitted that “we lived in a dream world, never believing that deportation could happen to us.” *

On April 6, 1941, Germany declared war on Yugoslavia. Sandor and his family continued operating the plant under the watchful eye of a German officer. Eventually, the family’s luck ran out. The Teszlers, along with hundreds of other Jews, were relocated to Budapest. Miraculously, Sandor and Lidia were saved by Carl Lutz, of the Swiss Consul, who is credited with saving thousands of Hungarian Jews. Sandor’s brother, Joseph, was not so fortunate. He and his family lost their lives in the Holocaust.

After Hungary was liberated by the Soviets, Sandor rebuilt the business, but the communist-controlled Yugoslav government seized the factory, claiming he had collaborated with the Germans during the war. Sandor and Lidia fled to Great Britain to join their two sons who had been sent there earlier.

In January 1948, Sandor and Lidia immigrated to New York where another Teszler brother, Akos, had established a textile factory. Akos made Sandor a partner in the business. Andrew and his brother, Otto, enrolled in the textile engineering program at North Carolina State University, recognized as a world leader in textile education and research.

After his move to Spartanburg in 1960, Andrew Teszler recruited upper-level managers and specialists for Butte Knit through familial and social networking. The connections between Andrew Teszler and the people he hired at Butte ran deep. Many were Holocaust survivors like himself. These former refugees found a patron in Teszler who provided them with a job and security in a growing company.

In 1961, Sandor and Lidia sold their textile plant in New York, moved to Spartanburg and launched Shannon Knit, a textile mill at Kings Mountain, North Carolina. A Jew who had experienced the humiliation of segregation in Europe, Teszler refused to abide the racial segregation that dictated life in the South. In his factory there were no segregated bathrooms,

water fountains, or dining areas. Even before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Teszler boasted: “My plant was fully integrated, with thirty percent of my workers being black.” ** Sandor eventually sold Shannon Knits and started working with Andrew at Butte, while Otto worked for another Jonathan Logan subsidiary in Shannon, Ireland.

The meteoric rise of Andrew’s company was phenomenal. From 1960 to 1976, Butte was the largest employer in Spartanburg County with over 3,000 workers in a racially integrated facility. Tragically, in May 1971, at the age of 40, Andrew Teszler died of a massive heart attack.

Teszler had been a devoted civic leader and his generosity impacted the Spartanburg community. He purchased the first intensive-care heart unit for Spartanburg General Hospital, donated monies for the education building at Temple B’nai Israel, and spearheaded a campaign to raise \$950,000 for the Charles Lea Center for handicapped children. In 1969, Andrew became a member of the Board of Trustees at Wofford College and donated money for the building of a new library honoring his father, named the Sandor Teszler Library.

After Andrew’s death, followed by the passing of his wife in 1981 and his son Otto in 1990, Sandor coped with his loneliness by attending classes at Wofford College. There, he forged a close relationship with students who affectionately called him “Opi,” for grandfather. Teszler remained



Andrew Teszler (3rd from left), chair of the architectural committee, at Temple B’nai Israel’s groundbreaking ceremony, Heywood Avenue, Spartanburg, SC. With him are (l to r) Henry Jacobs (co-chair architectural committee), Mayor Robert Stoddard, Joseph Wachter, Sr. (president), Ray Lillard (architect), Joel Tanenbaum (architectural committee), and Rabbi Max Stauber. Photo from Spartanburg Journal, February 28, 1963. Courtesy of Temple B’nai Israel.



Sandor Teszler. Courtesy of Spartanburg Herald-Journal Collection, Spartanburg County Public Libraries.

engaged with the community as a member of Rotary, the Chamber of Commerce, and as a trustee of the Charles Lea Center. In 1997, Wofford College awarded him an honorary doctorate and, at the age of 93, he was named Professor of the Humanities by a vote of the faculty.

After his death at the age of 97 in 2000, Wofford created the Sandor Teszler Award for Moral Courage and Service to Humankind in his memory, a fitting memorial to a Holocaust survivor whose intelligence, perseverance, righteousness, and kindness guided his life.

The Teszlers were survivors. They survived the Holocaust

and the Soviet take-over of Hungary. They immigrated to America where their leadership in the field of textile manufacturing revolutionized the production of women’s clothing and provided employment to thousands of people. They gave back to America through philanthropy that spanned the community from Temple B’nai Israel to Wofford College and the city of Spartanburg.

* *Memoirs of Sandor Teszler*, Wofford College, 1991, 34. Sandor Teszler Files, The Sandor Teszler Library, Wofford College Archives.

** *Memoirs of Sandor Teszler*, 75.

Growing up in Gaffney

by Benjamin Franklin Sheftall III

I was the youngest of three children born to Benjamin and Norma Kassler Sheftall. My father, Benjamin Jr., was the son of a Savannah, Georgia, fire chief and a member of the prominent Sheftall family of Savannah, whose ancestor, also named Benjamin Sheftall, was among the founders of Congregation Mickve Israel in 1735. I was told that my mother’s father said to my father, “Bennie, if you want to marry Norma, you’ve got to leave Savannah and move to Gaffney.” So he did. He was in the beauty supply business. He could work from anywhere. His office was over Norma’s Smart Shoppe, where my mother had a dress shop business, and next door to his father-in-law’s haberdashery. Benjamin Jr. did not live to see his namesake born, succumbing in 1947 to a heart attack—his third—just six weeks before I came into the world.

I grew up in the late 1950s, early ’60s, in Gaffney, South Carolina, a small textile town in the upper part of the state where discrimination was rampant. There was a preponderance of white supremacists. The Klan was very big in those days. We used to go to this place, which was kind of an open-air 7-Eleven, called the Cold Spot. They had applications for the KKK right there on the counter! There were crosses burned in front of the Catholic Church. I grew up with discrimination against religion, as well as for the color of one’s skin. The president of Limestone College in Gaffney had his house bombed in the mid-’50s for writing an article promoting racial equality and integration in South Carolina.

Despite the presence of the Klan, it was a good small town to grow up in. I

had a lot of friends my age. I was a Boy Scout, an Eagle Scout. If it snowed, we got out of school for a week. I went to grammar school, junior high school, and high school in Gaffney. Judaism was my religion. We participated during the High Holidays. I got out of school and went to Yom Kippur services. Everybody knew I was Jewish. It wasn’t a *really* big deal with most people. Nobody made reference to it, for the most part. My particular family and my particular upbringing was very liberal—not associated with any type of strict Judaism. It was kind of convenient. We did this, we did that. I wasn’t totally ingrained with religion.

I remember three other Jewish families living in Gaffney. One family was my mother’s younger sister, Ethel Kassler Bernstein.

Ethel and Dick Bernstein took over the clothing store from my grandfather when he passed away. So, for a while, he had two clothing stores, two daughters, side by side. Then there was another family named Bernanke. The Bernankes had three children—one a little younger than me, one about my age, and one ten years younger than me. Fred Bernanke was a pharmacist at Walgreens. His son David became an anatomy professor at the Medical University of South Carolina School of Medicine. There was one other family, the Van Pragues. Joe Van Prague was a textile executive. I didn’t really know them that well.

When I was eight years old, my mother married Louis Shapiro from Union, South Carolina. Up until that time, 1958, my mother had been taking my brother, sister, and me to synagogue in



Norma Kassler and her sister Irene at Winthrop College, Rock Hill, SC, 1929.

Gastonia, North Carolina, about 30 miles northeast of Gaffney. That's where my family had gone before my father passed away. My mother had a strong bond there. She knew a lot of people. But then when she remarried, I think the Jewish families in town decided to move to the synagogue in Spartanburg. Maybe that was an up-and-coming congregation, increasing in size. Spartanburg was a big textile mecca with a strong Roger Milliken presence. Also, they had the I-85 corridor and they had hotel, motel owners. They had a lot of people who had migrated down from the Northeast. My experience with organized Judaism, so to speak, was really from Spartanburg.

I just think that we were outsiders. Going to temple in Spartanburg, being from Gaffney, was difficult for a young person. The rabbi in Spartanburg, Max Stauber, was a New Yorker. He wanted an Orthodox temple. B'nai Israel was Conservative at best. I just never enjoyed it. It was very difficult for me when I was 9, 10, 11 years old to be transported from everything I knew to a strange place to try to make friends and learn about religion. There are some people there that I did admire, looking back at it. But I didn't think the rabbi loved being in the South. I don't think he was happy there. He never smiled.

Nevertheless, the rabbi and Mrs. Stauber really tried hard to get the young people involved. They had a Sunday Tallis and Tefillin Club, breakfast on Sundays. I was a faithful attendee. Alvin Stauber has been married to my first cousin Susan for almost 50 years.

Along with three or four other youngsters, I was trained by Rabbi Stauber for my bar mitzvah. He did it on an individual basis based on what time of year we turned 13. So mine was in May. It was a very Orthodox Friday night service. How many people came? I don't know, maybe 175. Then Saturday was a more Conservative service. One of the leading families in Spartanburg I really admired were the Feinsteins. Marion Feinstein was a professional dancer who had a dance studio downtown called Miss Marion's School of Dance. Her husband, affectionately known as Speedy, was a Hebrew teacher. He taught Hebrew classes. He also taught dancing for

his wife in Gaffney. He'd come over and he would conduct dance classes for his wife's school. He was a character. I can remember him probably more than anyone from the temple. Marion and Speedy had a daughter who danced with the Rockettes—a beautiful girl named Sandy.

In terms of relations between white families and African Americans in Gaffney, we had a maid, a caretaker named Mamie Rankin, who basically raised my sister and me. Mamie worked for my mother 35 years. I remember she wore a uniform with the little hat and spent time on the back porch. When my second child was born, who is 44 today, Mamie actually came down to Charleston, and helped my wife, Kay, for about a week after she came home from the hospital. Mamie was a surrogate mother to me because my mother worked and my stepfather traveled.

I never went to an integrated school until I entered the Medical University of South Carolina School of Dentistry in 1972. I graduated from the University of Richmond in 1969 and went to Wake Forest University for graduate school in microbiology until 1972. I had graduated from Gaffney High School in 1965, when it was still a segregated school. African Americans in Gaffney attended Granard High School. As is still the case today in South Carolina, Gaffney High School, and all the other white high schools, played their football games on Friday night. The exception was the annual Gaffney vs. Spartanburg Thanksgiving Day game. This tradition was discontinued in the late 1950s. On Thursday nights, Granard played their football games. On Thursdays—I'd go to the games myself—the African Americans would sit on the 50-yard line. It was their game night. Friday, they were relegated to the end of the stadium again. They were segregated. Gaffney had two movie theaters, one of which had a

balcony for African Americans. I see a tremendous change in the race relations I grew up with. I'm always impressed with any minority kids who have really made something of themselves, especially in the healthcare professions, because it was probably harder. But we still have a long way to go.

All photos courtesy of Benjamin Sheftall.



Above: The author, Benjamin "Bennie III" Sheftall (r), with his sister, Myrna Sheftall, 1958. Below: Bennie (r) and his brother, Stanley Sheftall, and mother, Norma Kassler Sheftall Shapiro, 1954.



Endowing our Future

by Mark Swick, Executive Director, JHSSC

The seeds of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina were planted in fertile soil more than 25 years ago. Our founding president, the late State Senator Isadore Lourie, along with several compatriots, saw a pressing need to preserve the record of South Carolina's Jewish communities and their shifting demographics. In 1994, they proposed the creation of a new historical society dedicated to the mission of promoting the history and culture of South Carolina's Jewish communities through research, preservation, documentation, and education.

Twenty-five years later, I can testify that JHSSC is in very good shape. The Society is strengthened by the robust manuscript and oral history archives housed in the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College's Addlestone Library, as well as the public programs and research facilitated by the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. We maintain a multi-faceted website, *jhssc.org*, featuring statewide records of Jewish cemeteries and memorial plaques, a full run of our biannual magazine, and our newest and arguably most ambitious effort to date, the Jewish Merchant Project.

The Society also benefits from a strong relationship with our host institution, the College of Charleston's Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program. The College provides critical staffing and infrastructure, allowing us to deploy our operating budget on programming and content rather than keeping the lights on. Annual expenses are supported by membership dues and especially the generosity of our Pillar members, who commit to donating \$1,000 per year for at least five years.

That said, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. We find ourselves in a period of tremendous generational wealth transfer: according to the AARP, over the next 25 years Baby Boomers will pass along nearly \$48 trillion in assets to their heirs and charities. We need to make sure our constituents and supporters have the opportunity to contribute to the Society's future well-being by making a gift to JHSSC's newly established endowment. Gifts to the endowment will allow the Society's leadership to pursue ongoing projects, propose additional ventures, and engage the next generation in our work.

If you find value in what we do—whether you attend meetings, make use of our digital resources, read the pages of the magazine, or simply take pride in South Carolina's vibrant Jewish heritage—I hope you will consider becoming a Pillar member or making a gift to our endowment, so that in another quarter century, JHSSC will still be in the business of promoting research, documenting, preserving, and educating the public about our state's Jewish history and culture.

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Register now for the **November 9-10 meeting in Spartanburg.** See
page 13 for more information.