



Profiles in Valor: Jewish Women of the Palmetto State
Columbia, SC May 2-3, 2020

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of SOUTH CAROLINA

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THE
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HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
OF
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On the cover: top (1 to r), Nettie Cahn Levenson of Bishopville, courtesy of Rachael Bowman Bradbury; Carrie Pollitzer, ca. 1905, from the Anita Pollitzer Family Papers at the South Carolina Historical Society. Bottom (1 to r), Hannah Gordin (Gorodinskaya) Yelman, Yelman's dry goods store, St. Matthews, ca. 1930; Ida Lomansky Kligman, Kligman's Army Store, Columbia, 1935; and Lena Schiawitz Collis, Collis Bakery, Charleston, 1940s. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

In this issue

The Pollitzer Sisters: Fighters for Women's Rights ~ Betsy Newman ~ The sisters Pollitzer were social activists both locally and nationally. In their hometown of Charleston, South Carolina, Carrie and Mabel lobbied for free kindergartens, women's rights, sex education, and a public library. Anita became a leader of the National Woman's Party in the struggle to ratify the 19th Amendment. 4

Dr. Rosa Hirschmann Gantt: Pioneering Doctor and Suffragette ~ Diane Vecchio ~ Dr. Gantt ushered in the 20th century by breaching the first of many gender barriers she encountered in her lifetime. While busy running a medical practice in Spartanburg, South Carolina, she demonstrated singular drive and vision through her initiatives in health care and her leadership on medical boards, in the suffrage movement, and in her synagogue. 6

"Miz Clara" ~ Lorraine Lourie Moses ~ Clara Kligerman Baker of Columbia, South Carolina, was every child's grandmother and a stalwart of the Park Street neighborhood where she ran the family's grocery store. A fixture behind the counter, she was firm but caring, and ever protective of her own. 7

Patty Levi Barnett: Steel Magnolia ~ by Tricia Barnett Greenberg ~ An adventuresome spirit and can-do attitude was the foundation of this Sumter, South Carolina, native's success in academia and the family business—the world's largest pigeon plant. Patty Levi Barnett met life's challenges with aplomb, bolstered by her strength of character and love of Judaism. 8

Louise Levi Marcus: Behind the Counter in Eutawville, SC ~ Ernie Marcus and Robert Berger ~ When Louise Levi became a Marcus, she assumed the roles that many women who had married sons of Jewish immigrants to South Carolina did—she applied her talents to support the family business and expressed her passions in raising her children, gardening, and volunteering for nonprofit organizations. 10

Profiles in Valor: Jewish Women of the Palmetto State ~ JHSSC meets in Columbia, May 2–3, 2020. 13

My Mother and the New State of Israel ~ Ellen Solomon ~ What if? What if Mildred Cohen Solomon had been free—free from a troubled marriage and stifling gender roles so she could bring her capacity for leadership to bear on promoting social change? A daughter's discovery reveals what might have been. 14

Doris Levkoff Meddin: To Make the World a Better Place ~ Ann Meddin Hellman ~ Doris Levkoff Meddin knew no bounds when it came to following the old Jewish teaching of *tikkun olam*, to repair the world. A woman of action, she was guided by ideals of kindness and justice and a tireless drive to help those in need. 15

A Legend in Her Own Time: The Life of Libby Levinson ~ Margi Levinson Goldstein ~ As a young immigrant from Poland, Libby Friedman learned about tough times and hard work. When she became Mrs. Charles Levinson in 1927, the struggle to make a living was daunting, but she and her husband finally found success when they opened The Leader, a clothing store in Barnwell, South Carolina. Libby put her heart and soul into the business and into her new hometown. 17

Regina Greene (née Kawer): A Woman of Valor ~ Harlan Greene ~ Holocaust survivor Regina Greene lived life on her own terms, unfettered, intense, and fueled by a fire burning just beneath the surface. Brutally honest and laser-focused on the world's injustices, she understood there was no time for anything but the truth. 19

L'dor v'dor: A Daughter's Perspective ~ Beth Bernstein ~ Carol Osterweil Bernstein, mother of six children, was a pioneer who—for her daughters and the women of Columbia, South Carolina—cleared a path right onto the bimah in her synagogue, Beth Shalom. She didn't stop there. She became the first female president of the congregation. 20

Power to the Women, No Delay ~ Mark Swick ~ JHSSC's executive director applauds this issue's tributes to Jewish women who have changed lives and paved the way for the next generation. 23

Letter from the President



I am honored to take over the presidency of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina from Mr. Jeffrey Rosenblum and know I have big shoes to fill. Jeffrey graciously stepped into the role on short notice, yet he had large and enduring ideas about the future of the Society based on his earlier tenure in office. Thanks to him, we have continued on the road of success and will build on his foresight. What cannot be overlooked is the fabulous staff support that the executive board, and the president, specifically, enjoys. The dedication and hard work of Executive Director Mark Swick, Administrator Enid Idelsohn, Program Director Rachel G. Barnett, Founding Curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection Dale Rosengarten, and Assistant Archivist and Layout Designer Alyssa Neely make the board and the Society look good. Thank you all!

It is my love of history coupled with the loss of my extended family in the Holocaust that have attracted me to this vibrant society. I marvel at the stories our members tell, from immigration to peddling to becoming established business owners, documented through the Society's Jewish Merchant Project, launched in 2016. Through JHSSC's exhibit *A Store at Every Crossroads*, we can bring the experience of South Carolina Jews to any museum, college, or community organization.

Those of you who attended the November 9–10, 2019, meeting in Spartanburg, South Carolina, were thrilled to visit with old friends and make new ones. A special thanks goes to Joe Wachter who gathered his basketball team, AZA chapter, high school buddies, and synagogue friends to join in the weekend of remembrance and recognition of a time past and a

future to look forward to. It was a wonderful, warm weekend. Thank you to all who were there!

The year 2020 should have a lot of meaning and historical significance to us all. January 27, 2020, was International Holocaust Day, the 75th anniversary of that momentous occasion when Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated by Soviet forces. A large commemoration was held in Columbia, South Carolina, with many dignitaries and historical figures in attendance. The event was live-streamed by SCETV and you can watch the program in its entirety at scetv.org/auschwitz.

Our spring meeting, "Profiles in Valor: Jewish Women of the Palmetto State," will be held in Columbia, South Carolina, on May 2–3, 2020. Please join us in celebrating and recognizing the state's Jewish women, who often worked

behind the scenes—metaphorically "behind the counter"—but pulled their weight in terms of economic productivity, family cohesion, and religious life. We will be highlighting an array of "strong women," unsung heroines, "necks that turned the man's head," recognizing historic individuals, including suffragists, medical pioneers, Holocaust survivors, and women who broke the glass ceiling, gaining access to the bimah and to

leadership positions in their congregations. August 18, 2020, will mark 100 years since the passage of the women's suffrage amendment, giving women the right to vote. It should be an electrifying year!

Lilly Stern Filler, MD
JHSSC President

See page 22 for a special save-the-date message, plus other news from JHSSC Program Director Rachel Barnett.



JHSSC's November 9–10, 2019, meeting in Spartanburg, SC, was a big success, a reunion of sorts for many of the attendees, seen here standing outside their former synagogue, Temple B'nai Israel, 191 S. Dean Street. Many thanks to Joe Wachter for his tireless work to make the weekend a special one! Photo: Mark Swick.

The Pollitzer Sisters: Fighters for Women's Rights

by Betsy Newman

Carrie, Mabel, and Anita Pollitzer came from a prosperous Jewish family in Charleston, South Carolina. Their parents, Gustave and Clara Pollitzer, were active members of the city's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, the birthplace of Reform Judaism in America. Gustave was deeply involved in community affairs, serving on numerous boards and commissions. The three Pollitzer daughters reflected their father's civic engagement, taking active roles in reform movements at the local and national levels.

Carrie Pollitzer (b. 1881), the oldest of the three, established the city's first free kindergarten program and worked for admittance of women to the College of Charleston, which was granted in September 1918. Mabel (b. 1885) taught for more than 40 years at Memminger High School, where she began the school's first sex education programs. She also helped found Charleston's first public library. The sisters' interest in improving education was in line with the contemporary Progressive Movement, when reform-minded mayors like John P. Grace advocated for investment in public schools.

The Pollitzer sisters all became involved with the struggle for women's rights. In 1915, Susan Pringle Frost founded the Charleston Equal Suffrage League with the Pollitzer sisters as charter members and Carrie serving as secretary and membership chair. Anita Pollitzer (b. 1894) was the most directly engaged with national efforts to gain the vote for women. Like her sisters and their brother, Richard, she studied at Columbia University, and it was in New York City that she began working with the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, created by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns in 1913. All three Pollitzer sisters were founding members of the CU.

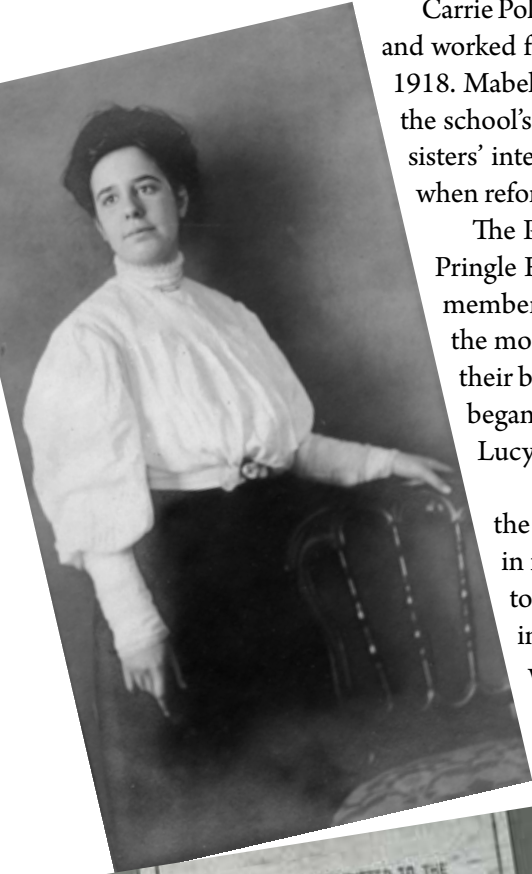
Anita joined the national campaign in New York in 1915. In June 1916, the CU formed the National Woman's Party, and, in January 1917, the NWP began to stage silent protests in front of the White House, calling themselves "Silent Sentinels." The government's initial tolerance for their picketing gave way after the United States entered World War I. Beginning in June 1917, suffrage protestors were arrested, imprisoned, and often force-fed when they went on hunger strikes. Anita Pollitzer was among those arrested in 1917.

The suffragists' persistence and reports of their horrific treatment in prison, which was well documented in the press, began to change public opinion. In January 1918, President Woodrow Wilson switched his position and endorsed the vote for women, and, on May 21, 1919, the House of Representatives passed the 19th Amendment, known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. Two weeks later the Senate followed, and the NWP began campaigning for state ratification. Anita Pollitzer was deployed to Nashville, Tennessee, where a dramatic battle for ratification was playing out.

By March 1920, 35 of the necessary 36 states had ratified the amendment, and only Tennessee remained in a position to vote on ratification that

Top: Mabel Pollitzer, April 1906. Gift of Joan Fox, Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Left: Unveiling of the plaque commemorating the 50th anniversary of the College of Charleston's admittance of women in 1918. Left to right: Dr. Walter R. Coppedge, president of CofC, Mrs. Larry T. Riggs, president, Charleston Federation of Women's Clubs, and Miss Carrie Pollitzer. From the Anita Pollitzer Family Papers at the South Carolina Historical Society.



year. Advocates for both sides spent the night before the vote in a Nashville hotel, lobbying legislators. Anita had dinner with a young member of the legislature named Harry T. Burn, and the next day he surprised his colleagues by casting the decisive vote in favor of the amendment. Although his support for women's suffrage is often credited to a letter from his mother urging him to "be a good boy" and vote "aye," it seems likely that Anita Pollitzer also helped to convince him.

In 1928, Anita married Elie Edson and settled in New York City. Edson was folksinger Pete Seeger's uncle, and Seeger proudly declared his aunt "a firecracker." Anita continued to work closely with Alice Paul, succeeding her as national chair of the NWP from 1945 to '49. All three Pollitzer sisters labored for social reform for many more years, including advocating for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment—a fight that is still ongoing.

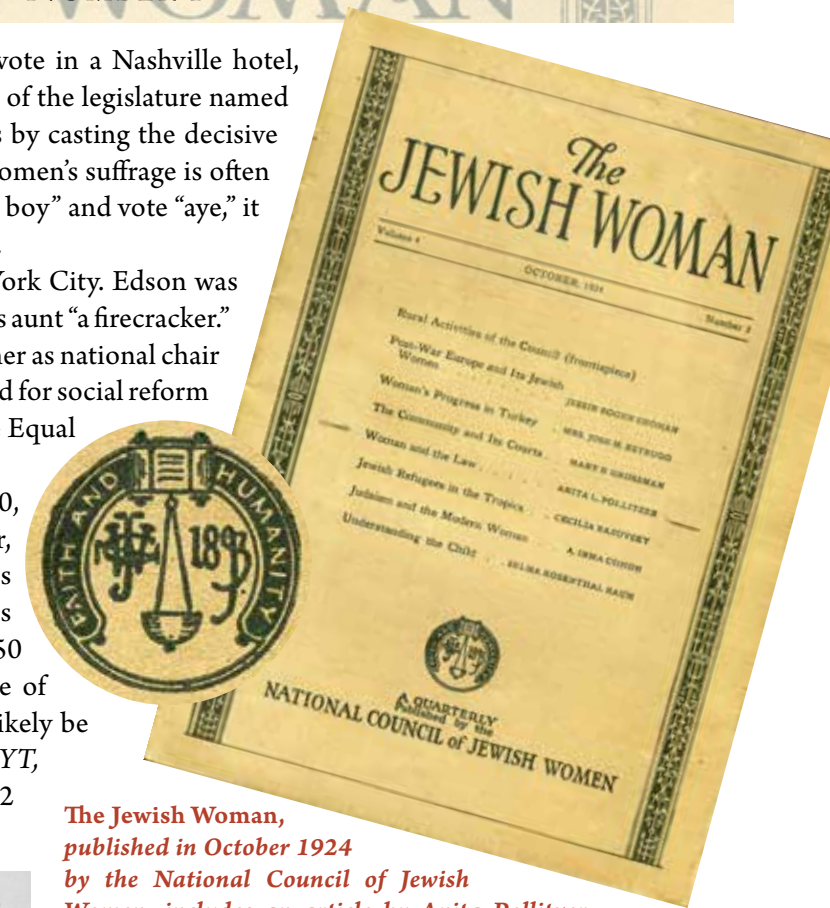
A century after women got the vote, in January 2020, Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the ERA. However, according to the *New York Times*, "Virginia's decision does not seal the amendment's addition to the United States Constitution. A deadline for three-quarters, or 38, of the 50 states to approve the E.R.A. expired in 1982, so the future of the measure is uncertain, and experts said the issue would likely be tied up in the courts and in the political sphere for years." (NYT, 1/16/20) At this writing, South Carolina is one of the 12 remaining states that have not passed the ERA.



Above: Officers of the National Woman's Party (Anita Pollitzer with hat in hand) meet in Washington in 1922 to complete the plans for the dedication ceremonies for the Party's new national headquarters opposite the Capitol.

Right: Anita Pollitzer meets with Tennessee Representative John Houk, Mayor Neal of Knoxville, and Representative Brooks [R. I. Johnson], outside the National Woman's Party Tennessee Headquarters, August 1920.

Courtesy of the Records of the National Woman's Party, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



The Jewish Woman, published in October 1924 by the National Council of Jewish Women, includes an article by Anita Pollitzer titled "Women and the Law." From the Anita Pollitzer Family Papers at the South Carolina Historical Society.



Rosa Hirschmann Gantt: Pioneering Doctor and Suffragette

by Diane Vecchio

Love Rosa Hirschmann Gantt (1874–1935) was the first woman physician in Spartanburg, South Carolina. A pioneer in providing health services to rural areas, she served as acting surgeon for the U.S. Public Health Service.

Born in Camden, South Carolina, on December 29, 1874, Rosa (her preferred name) Hirschmann's family moved from Cades, South Carolina, to Charleston, where her father, Solomon, a native of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, opened a wholesale grocery store and she attended local schools. At the age of 14, when her mother, Lena Nachman Hirschmann, died, Rosa helped care for her father and younger siblings. Her numerous responsibilities, however, did not deter her from excelling in her studies; after graduating from high school, Rosa enrolled in the college today known as the Medical University of South Carolina. In 1901, she was one of the first two women to obtain a medical degree from the institution.

After postgraduate training at the Aural and Ophthalmic

Institute and the New York Ear and Eye Hospital in New York, Dr. Hirschmann was appointed resident physician at Winthrop College in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

A year later she left Winthrop to marry Spartanburg attorney Colonel Robert Gantt and relocated to his hometown. Without delay, she established a practice as an ear, nose, and throat specialist, making her the first female physician in the city. In the 33 years she practiced medicine, she left an indelible mark on the health and well-being of Spartanburg County.

Along with her private practice, Dr. Gantt pioneered work in public health by dispatching mobile health clinics to rural areas of the state with a dearth of physicians. These "health mobiles" were among her greatest innovations. Staffed with physicians, nurses, and nutrition workers who offered immunizations, examinations, prenatal, and dental care, their motto was "Bringing Health to the Country."

A highly respected doctor, Gantt served as an officer



Dr. Rosa Gantt, fourth from right, stands by an "American Women's Hospitals, Rural Health Service" mobile clinic out of Spartanburg County. From the Hilla Sheriff papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

for the all-male Spartanburg County Medical Society from 1909 to 1918 and was one of the first female members of the Southern Medical Association. She also served as president of the American Medical Women's Association.

During World War I, Gantt organized local women to sell Liberty Loans, serve in the Red Cross, and engage in hospital work caring for soldiers. She was the only woman to be appointed to a draft board in the United States and hold a commission from the Department of Commerce as a medical examiner of air force pilots.

Dr. Gantt was the first president of the Women's Auxiliary of Temple B'nai Israel, incorporated in 1916. In addition, she negotiated with Oakwood Cemetery to create Spartanburg's first Jewish burial section. In 1922, the Sisterhood of Temple B'nai Israel joined the State Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and changed its name to Temple B'nai Israel Sisterhood. In 1919, Gantt was elected president of the South Carolina Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.

From her leadership of Temple Sisterhoods, locally and on a state level, to her work as a suffragist, Dr. Rosa Gantt illustrates how Jewish women of her era blended traditional Jewish values with prevailing social and religious ideas. As a member of the South Carolina Equal Suffrage League when

it was organized in 1914, Gantt was on the cutting edge of suffragist activity. She was one of the few educated women who became both professionally and politically active—balancing her medical career and her duties as legislative chair of the South Carolina Equal Suffrage League.

Gantt was also instrumental in establishing Spartanburg General Hospital, the first public hospital in the city. After decades of devoted service to Spartanburg, Dr. Gantt died in 1935, following surgery for uterine cancer.

Reflecting the high esteem in which she was held by residents of the city, an obituary published in the *Spartanburg Herald-Journal* on November 17, 1935, praised her many accomplishments: "[S]he was one of the outstanding women of this section, not only a shining example of a physician standing for the highest and best in ethics, but a leading worker in social service."

Gantt's death was a loss to the medical community and to the synagogue where she devoted much of her time. Similar to the North Carolina Jewish activist, Gertrude Weil, who was politically active and, at the same time, committed to her synagogue and Jewish causes, Gantt was a "New South" progressive who served her community while challenging gender barriers as a doctor and suffragist.



Dr. Rosa Hirschmann Gantt, ca. 1930. Courtesy of Marsha Poliakoff.

"Miz Clara"

by Lorraine Lourie Moses

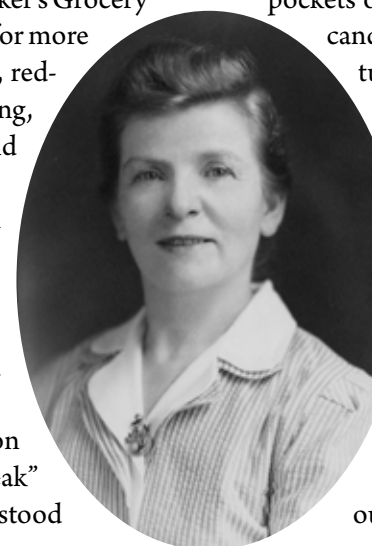
"Miz Clara," as she was ever so fondly addressed by her many loyal customers, was my grandma, Clara Kligerman Baker. She owned and operated Baker's Grocery on Park Street in Columbia, South Carolina, for more than 40 years. She was petite, freckled-faced, red-headed, blue-eyed, no-nonsense, hard-working, witty, smart, dedicated, stubborn, selfless, and altogether wonderful.

The small neighborhood store opened in the late 1920s, surrounded by blocks of worn-down, weathered frame houses in which mostly low-income families dwelled. Grandma Baker extended credit to her customers and was quite often left with an unpaid balance.

She would turn a blind eye when, on numerous occasions, customers would "sneak" food items from the grocery. She understood their desperation. In her decades behind the counter, no one ever tried to harm her. The

neighborhood would not have tolerated such. No crying child went unattended. Grandma Baker would reach into the deep pockets of her meat-stained apron and give the youngster candy and bubble gum. The crying ceased. Tears turned to smiles. The child was happy and she was happy.

Baker's Grocery was open for business seven days a week. From sunrise till sundown, Grandma was there, serving her clientele. In the early years, when business was slow, she kept the door open on the weekends until midnight. Oftentimes, local men would enter the store late Saturday night, drunk as could be. She made them sip hot coffee and eat crackers. This was her way of sobering them up. Then she would take out her broomstick and shoo them out the door, demanding they go straight home to their families and sleep it off. Grandma Baker took care of the neighborhood; she watched



Clara Kligerman Baker, ca. 1932.



Painting by Kathryn Baker Lotzoff, Esther and Jake Baker's daughter. All images courtesy of Lorraine Moses.

over everybody. After all, this was, literally, her home. She and Grandpa Baker raised their four children, Dave, Freda, Toby (my mother), and Alan, in a small house located directly behind the store.

Truly, it's not easy to tell someone why you think your grandmother was a remarkable woman. Working so many hours in the grocery provided the means for her children to grow up to become the honorable, wonderful adults they were. She understood children. She was most proud of hers, and they were most proud of her. I cannot tell you how many times my mother would say to me, "They don't make 'em like her anymore."

My grandmother died on September 4, 1969, of a massive heart attack. She was 77 years old. Through the years, she survived two painful bouts with breast cancer. My mother, Aunt Freda, and I spent hours in the hospital room with Grandma Baker, sitting by her bedside. We hoped this was not her time to go when she asked us to fetch her some ice cold watermelon. She loved watermelon. The request, however, was a ruse. She simply did not want us to be there when she gasped her last breath. She passed within minutes of our departing to grant her watermelon wish. To the end, she was most protective, most concerned about her family. This was my grandmother, Clara Baker.

With Grandpa Baker so busy with his inventions, his wife Clara knew she had to do intervention. With so many hungry mouths to feed, Baker's Grocery was opened to meet their many needs. This tiny store had a variety of meats, the most memorable of all being the pink pig's feet. Also there, you could find cookies, candies, and nuts, which most probably created the now famous "Baker Butt."
—excerpt from a poem I wrote for my mother's 80th birthday

Patty Levi Barnett: Steel Magnolia

by Tricia Barnett Greenberg

Patricia Levi Barnett came into this world along with her twin brother, Wendell M. Levi, Jr., on Friday, September 13, 1927, a day most consider bad luck. Not so for Mama, who possessed a confidence and fearlessness that served her well throughout her life. Born to Wendell M. Levi, an attorney from an old South Carolina family who was educated at the College of Charleston and University of Chicago, and Bertha London Levi, a Wellesley College graduate from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Mama was very grounded in Sumter, the South, and Judaism. Yet she also believed in venturing



Patty Levi with her fellow senior class officers in Hi-Ways 1944, Edmunds High School yearbook, Sumter, SC. All images courtesy of Tricia Barnett Greenberg.

out of one's comfort zone for exposure and education.

Beautiful, smart, and always popular, she was a conscientious student and excelled in leadership and sports. A class officer, senior superlative, and athlete, Mama and her twin, Wendell, graduated from Sumter High School in 1944. With only 11 grades in Sumter, she bravely ventured to Ferry Hall School (now Lake Forest Academy) in Lake Forest, Illinois, for 12th grade. Though not one of her favorite experiences, the school, snow, and dorm life broadened her horizons and fostered a sense of independence.

At a time when few women were encouraged to attend college far from home or major in the sciences, Mama spread her wings and went to Virginia's Sweet Briar College. She flourished there academically and made lifelong friends from all around the country. She always said being Jewish helped her social life as the Jewish boys at University of Virginia and Washington and Lee sought her out, while her non-Jewish friends were always on the lookout for Jewish guys to fix her up with.

Mama majored in chemistry, an unusual field for a woman at the time, and her advisor encouraged her to apply to the master of chemistry program at Wellesley College near Boston, Massachusetts. Mama loved to tell the story that when she expressed doubt that her grades were good enough to get in the program, her professor responded that an A student in chemistry is commonplace but a B chemistry major with a good disposition is a rarity and that was Mama! She was accepted, and, after graduating from Sweet Briar in 1949, she headed to Boston.

Working on her master of chemistry at Wellesley and teaching physics and chemistry as a teacher's assistant for one dollar a day plus room and board were among her proudest accomplishments and favorite memories. She enjoyed dating men from Harvard and MIT and relished discussing chemistry with them. Her combination of smarts, guts, common sense, and what she called "good listening skills" made her an attractive companion. Some of her male friends said she was sensible and different from the other female students and encouraged her to go into research.

Summer of 1950, Mama was back in Sumter and met Henry Davis Barnett (Bubba), who had returned to the Midlands town to run the family farm after the death of his parents. They quickly fell in love and Mama traded her test tubes and graduate school for a wedding ring and a traditional role as housewife and mother, providing a happy home for Daddy, me, and my



Rabbi Samuel Shillman presided over confirmation exercises, Temple Sinai, Sumter, SC, May 24, 1942. Patty Levi is third from right. Her twin brother, Wendell, is on the far left. Other confirmands, according to the program, were Faye Romansky, Joan Schlosburg, Everett Ness, and Bernice Richman.

tree-ripened fruit. Not many, if any, could resist her charm and convincing salesmanship, so she became a pioneer in the concept of local sales, or, as we say now, "farm to table!" It was a huge success and a great sales addition for the business.

In the late 1970s, Mama served on the board of the Palmetto Pigeon Plant, which her father and Harold Moïse had started in 1923. When the manager of several years was terminated, the Levi and Moïse

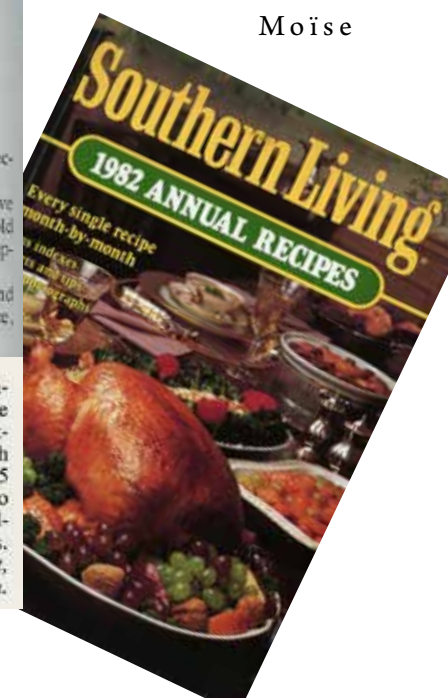
BAKED STUFFED SQUAB

1 (6-ounce) package long grain and wild rice mix
6 squabs
Salt and pepper
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ cup sliced fresh mushrooms
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
¼ cup chopped celery
¼ cup butter or margarine
1 tablespoon soy sauce
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
½ cup white wine

Cook rice according to package directions; set aside.
Remove giblets from squabs; reserve for another use. Rinse squabs with cold water, and pat dry; rub with salt, pepper, and ginger.
Sauté the mushrooms, parsley, and celery in butter until tender. Stir in rice, and mix well.

Stuff squabs with rice mixture; sprinkle with soy sauce and Worcestershire sauce. Place squabs in a 4½-quart baking dish. Fill baking dish with ½ inch water. Cover and bake at 450° for 45 minutes. Remove cover; reduce heat to 350°. Add white wine, and bake an additional 30 minutes. Yield: 6 servings.

Patty Barnett,
Sumter, South Carolina.



board members decided that Mama would be the best choice to step in and take over management of this unique and important family business. No shrinking violet, Mama did not hesitate to step up to the plate. So, for her first official paid job, she suddenly became CFO and CEO of America's largest producer of squabs for the table, as well as for medical and dietary research.

Mama immediately tackled marketing. She reached out to *Southern Living* and other magazines to familiarize epicureans with the delicacy of squabs. She prepared a squab dinner and her recipe was printed in the magazine and its book of 1982 *Annual Recipes*. She figured out what ethnic groups consumed squabs on special occasions and marketed to them as well. She increased sales and, therefore, production. She

taught herself the ins and outs of the business and got to know the customers and the employees. Meticulous, honest, and driven, she used her smarts and her charm to put the Pigeon Plant back on a profitable path and she remained at the helm for about 15 years.

Mama was a well-liked and respected leader in her volunteer work in the Sumter community. She was the first

Jewish member of the Sumter Junior Welfare League and even served as an officer. She was selected to be the first president of the Wilson Hall School Association of Parents and Teachers, served as a trustee of the Sumter Museum, and endowed a portion of the Levi Barnett Gallery at the Sumter County Gallery of Art. Judaism was important to her and she passed on her love of the tradition to her children and her students at Temple Sinai's religious school, where she taught for many years. She was a trustee of the temple, as well as president and treasurer of the Sinai Sisterhood. In fact, she remained treasurer almost until her death on June 1, 2016. She always believed in giving back to the community.

My mother was exceptionally beautiful, elegant, and refined to the eye, but the depth of her character, her integrity, and her loyalty were even more amazing. She loved a challenge and used reason and logic to tackle any situation. She was gutsy and feisty and eager to step up and speak up whenever it was needed. She took her responsibilities seriously and broke the norms. A lovely southern lady, she was indeed a "steel magnolia," as her life revealed.



Patty Levi Barnett (center) with her daughter Tricia Barnett Greenberg (r) and Tricia's mother-in-law, Ruth Brody Greenberg (l). Tricia's husband, Phillip Greenberg, is in background, ca. 2005.

Louise Levi Marcus: Behind the Counter in Eutawville, SC

by Ernie Marcus and Robert Berger

Ernie

Eutawville, the little town I grew up in, represents a microcosm of how Jewish women ended up behind retail counters in the South. The women in my family, from cousins to my grandmother and, finally, my mother, Louise Levi Marcus, each found herself working in a store to support the family. It must have been hard for my mother, a well-educated, sophisticated woman raised in a decidedly proper, Victorian family in the Upstate town of Abbeville, to acclimate to the tedious routine of working in the store.



Louise Levi

Marcus Department Store was founded by my immigrant grandfather, Morris Marcus, in 1901; his death 16 years later left his wife, Janie, to support their two sons. My dad, Harry Marcus, was involved intermittently in the business until after his service in World War II. So, from 1917 to her death in 1962, my grandmother was running the store. Her niece Marie Karesh, who never married, operated her own store a few doors down until her death in 1975. Two of Janie's sisters, Katie and Mary, worked alongside their husbands (Abe Karesh and

Moses Cohen, respectively) in separate general and grocery stores along Porcher Street in Eutawville.

My mother married into the Marcus family in 1949 after her divorce from Manuel Berger, with whom she had sons Arthur and Robert. My sister, Ellen, and I came along in the next decade. Among the four of us, Marcus Department Store had an auxiliary workforce, off and on, from the 1950s to the '70s. My siblings and I spent many Saturdays and some weekdays waiting on customers, straightening out lay-away packages, and putting away new inventory. Mom did not work in the store during the early years, but after Janie's death my parents immediately began to modernize the store inventory and presentation.

When I got a bit older and more able to fend for myself, Mom spent most Saturdays in the store, kibitzing with the clerks and the customers. She would go on buying trips with Dad to wholesalers in Charleston and Savannah with a focus on women's fashions. Dad often deferred to her sense of style. Mom's extended family had been running retail businesses in South Carolina since the 1850s, with stores all over the state, including Rosenberg's Mercantile Company in Abbeville and Greenwood, Moses Levi's Emporium in Manning, and shops operated by King Street merchants Moses Winstock and Julius Visanska in Charleston.

Mom's passions, however, were elsewhere, and she invested her time in community organizations and intellectual pursuits. She was a long-time leader of the Eutaw Garden Club, which she belonged to for more than 35 years. Upon her death, the Club planted a Spanish oak and placed a plaque in her honor in the shadow of the water tower my father is credited with building during his 23-year term as mayor.

While Mom had no official duties as First Lady, she attended municipal conferences in the state and a mayoral conference at Expo '67 in Montreal. She also took charge of getting clothes from the store whenever there were burnout victims (the old wooden shotgun houses around town were real tinderboxes). She and Dad were also known to befriend visitors (usually lost) who happened upon the store, in some cases inviting them back home for a good southern meal. She also dedicated herself to the South Carolina Archeological Society, the Caroliniana Society, the South Carolina Historical Society, the Orangeburg Arts League, and was a member for at least three decades of her bridge club with mostly the same group of ladies.

Mom spent hours and hours walking along the shores of Lake Marion, usually with kids in tow, searching for Indian artifacts that washed ashore from the ancient villages that once dotted the Santee River. Over the years she accumulated an impressive array of arrowheads and pottery, as well as antique bottles.

Reflecting on Mom's collections, the poems and plays she wrote as a school girl, the paintings she created in college and for some time afterwards, her library, her education at Agnes Scott and the University of South Carolina, where she earned her English degree, and her discerning eye when reviewing her children's school papers, it's obvious she had many talents. These were on display as she wrote wide-ranging comments to Ashley Cooper, the columnist for Charleston's *News and Courier*, sometimes involving local fauna, flora, and tidbits, the majority about language and its dialectical peculiarities as practiced in South Carolina by both white and black residents.

My mother was a pillar of the community and a curious, creative mom for me and my three siblings. Still, I have to wonder if she ever found herself

From top: Louise Levi Marcus and Harry Marcus in the yard of their Eutawville, SC, home, 1951; view of the Eutawville water tower, built during Harry Marcus's term as mayor, and the Spanish oak tree planted by the Eutaw Garden Club in honor of Louise Levi Marcus; News and Courier columnist Ashley Cooper responds to the poem submitted by Louise Levi Marcus. All images courtesy of Ernie Marcus.



Doing The Charleston
LOUISE L. MARCUS of Eutawville writes today's poem on Charleston. Don't let the last line throw you, folks:
Ah, I can sit and rhapsodize
About the Charleston hucksters'
cries
And other things, both seen
and heard,
That make this city my preferred.
The streets that wind their cob-
bled way,
The houses old, the beaches
gay,
All cause one oft to wish to
stop.
But me — I just go there to
shop!
WELL SHAME on you, Miss
Louise. But I guess if you shop
at stores which advertise in The
N&C, I'll have to forgive you for
not being prompted by esthetic
reasons to visit the Holy City.

dreaming of another life, beyond the counter of the store in small-town South Carolina.

Robert

Mom hated the store. It was dirty and dark, and she found the work boring. She was a wonderful cook, wife, and mother, which was a full-time job. She loved the outdoors and hard physical labor. My step-dad, Harry Marcus, inherited from his mother a 50-acre sharecropping farm, run by the family of Isaac Washington, just outside Eutawville. Mom worked a two-acre vegetable plot there, as well as a home garden, planting Park catalogue seeds and picking the crops. She canned and froze all sorts of vegetables, such as corn, lima beans, and string beans, so we could eat them year round. She was an inspiration to the Garden Club members as she could name any plant—and knew the Latin words for most—and describe its features.

Mom's best friend, intellectually, was the African-American superintendent of schools. He would come by the store and

they would talk for hours. They were both voracious readers and discussed everything. She confided to my brother Arthur and me that he was "certainly more intelligent than any white man in the area." Her intelligence was amazing. I would open the dictionary and try to stump her. I would not be successful. She knew virtually every word's spelling and definition.

The people of Eutawville loved our mom for her generosity and kindness. She helped our African-American neighbors and encouraged everyone to open their minds and understand one another. She never tolerated racist talk and was seen by all as a beacon of purity and love.

The bridge club was a talk-a-thon for women—not a serious game. The only thing that was competitive was the quality of the snacks served. The store was not very busy, usually, and we eked out a living. Mom and Harry spent very little money while Arthur and I were young. They didn't have much and never complained. It was a poor area and we had a roof over

our heads, enough to eat, and ambition for the future. Mom was proud of her children until the day she died.



Left to right: Ernie Marcus, Robert Berger (holding Ernie), Arthur Berger, Ellen Marcus (in front of Arthur), Harry Marcus, and Louise Levi Marcus, outside their Eutawville, SC, home, 1957.

Joyce Antler, Keynote Speaker

Joyce Antler is the author or editor of a dozen volumes, including works on American women's history and Jewish history. She wrote the prize-winning book, *You Never Call! You Never Write!: A History of the Jewish Mother*, and *The Journey Home: How Jewish Women Shaped Modern America*.

Her most recent book is *Jewish Radical Feminism: Voices from the Women's Liberation Movement*, published in May 2018, which tells the previously unknown stories of nearly 50 women's liberation and Jewish feminist pioneers—women



who helped shape the politics and culture of the late 20th century.

Joyce taught at Brandeis University for 37 years and recently retired as the Samuel J. Lane Professor of American Jewish History and Culture in the American Studies Program. She is also Professor Emerita of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and was a founder of Women's Studies at the university, chairing the program

for 10 years. She was an affiliate of the Departments of African and African-American Studies; History; Education; and Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation.

Profiles in Valor: Jewish Women of the Palmetto State

May 2–3, 2020 ~ Columbia, South Carolina

JHSSC's spring meeting is produced in partnership with Historic Columbia and Jewish Studies at the University of South Carolina.

All events take place in the Campus Room, Capstone House, USC, 898 Barnwell Street, unless otherwise noted.

Saturday, May 2

11:30 A.M. Registration and lunch

12:15 P.M. Welcome – Lilly Stern Filler, JHSSC president

12:30 – 1:30 **You Never Call! You Never Write!** – Brandeis Professor Joyce Antler provides an illuminating and often amusing history of one of the best-known figures in American popular culture—the Jewish Mother. Whether drawn as self-sacrificing or manipulative, in countless films, novels, radio and television programs, stand-up comedy, and psychological and historical studies, she appears as a colossal figure, intensely involved in the lives of her children.

2:00 – 3:30 **Women Behind the Counter and Beyond**

Moderator: Robin Waites, Executive Director, Historic Columbia

Panelists: Beth Bernstein, Margie Levinson Goldstein, Ann Meddin Hellman, Ernie Marcus, Lorraine Lourie Moses, Diane Vecchio

3:45 – 5:30 **Columbia City of Women bus tour** – Join Kat Allen of Historic Columbia on a drive through downtown Columbia to sites where remarkable women left their mark. Tour will end at Graduate Columbia hotel.

5:30 – 6:00 **Reception, Graduate Columbia**, 1619 Pendleton Street
Dinner on your own

NELSON MULLINS

Reception sponsored by Nelson Mullins

Sunday, May 3

9:00 A.M. **Open board meeting**—everyone is invited!

10:45–12:00 **Sisterhood: South Carolina Suffragists** – It took South Carolina 50 years to ratify the 19th Amendment, but the state was home to some of the most famous—and infamous—fighters for women's right to vote. South Carolina suffragists were fearless, provocative, and persistent.

Panelists: Beryl Dakers, Director of Cultural Programming/Outreach, SCETV; Amy Thompson

McCandless, Professor of History, Emerita, College of Charleston; Betsy Newman, Producer, SCETV;

Katharine Purcell, Instructor of English and Director of International Education, Trident Technical College

Hotel reservations

Graduate Columbia

1619 Pendleton Street, Columbia, SC 29201
803.779.7779

Special rate: \$149 per night + tax

To get the special rate, make your reservation by Wednesday, April 1, 2020.

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

My Mother and the New State of Israel

by Ellen Solomon

I have almost no papers of my mother's and was astonished recently when I discovered the speech she gave in 1948 as the finale to her two years as president of the Charleston chapter of Hadassah. The speech—typed and 17 pages long—was not only a relic, excavated from boxes of my old papers, but a new glimpse into her life.

As I have read and reread these pages, I've wondered how the woman who wrote and spoke these words could really have been my mother. This woman who wrote, "Our work cannot be measured in terms of time—of a year or years. It is part and parcel of the great and noble fight to achieve full nationhood for our people." This woman who then traced the progress of the United Nations in its recommendation of the partition of Palestine, the "violence and bloodshed that followed," "the decision of the Yishuv to bring into being a provisional government of a new Jewish state," and the attempt by the Charleston chapter to raise \$5,000 in an emergency drive. This woman who described the formation of groups of ten Charleston women—"minyanim"—each of whom pledged to "redeem" a Jewish child in Palestine "by paying a tenth of that child's upkeep, estimated as \$630 a year," to Youth Aliyah. This woman who urged other members to further their education about Palestine and the world. This woman who, throughout, called out the names of 30 other women, thanked them for their work, and asked each one to rise.

My mother's life, which ended in 1979 when she was 65, has always seemed tragic to me and feels even more so now that I have read her Hadassah speech. A few people had told me that her Hadassah presidency was uniquely successful, but I really had no idea.

Mildred Cohen was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. She spent two years at Agnes Scott College and was

then admitted to the University of North Carolina but left second semester of junior year. I've always wondered why. She remembered college with excitement: acting in dramas, debating a team from Oxford University, being accepted into the Mortar Board honor society, learning about socialism, and admiring Robert Hutchins' educational reforms at the University of Chicago. Perhaps there wasn't enough money to continue college; perhaps more intellectual growth would have threatened her marriageability.

At an AZA convention in Atlanta, she met my father, Walter H. Solomon, who wanted to correspond with a good-looking girl in order to improve his English. After they married, she devoted herself to being what I call a "Mrs. Mister." He, the son of immigrants and the only one of nine children to go to college, became a successful Broad Street lawyer, the first Jew in South Carolina to be granted a license for a federal savings and loan, and the architect of the Saul Alexander Foundation. The year after Momma's Hadassah presidency, he suffered the first of many debilitating depressions, which had to be kept secret. Afterwards, she was often lonely, depressed, angry, and scattered, and did little outside the house besides tending to her strong-willed mother, who had moved to Charleston.

When I was four years old, I asked Momma why people who worked for us were darker-skinned than we were. She said the system of segregation was wrong and that perhaps our generation would set things right. Her liberal political views, including her distaste for college fraternities and sororities, influenced her children, but only her children. Her Hadassah presidency was the one time after college when she used her lively, active mind, her capacity for leadership, and her desire to change the world. Tragic, but also heroic in its own way.



Above: Walter H. Solomon and Mildred Cohen Solomon, Charleston, SC, 1963. Below: Mildred Solomon and her daughter Ellen, Ahmedabad, India, 1965. Images courtesy of Ellen Solomon.



Doris Levkoff Meddin: To Make the World a Better Place

by Ann Meddin Hellman

My mother, Doris Levkoff Meddin (Mrs. Hyman J. Meddin), was born on February 27, 1917—a date we didn't know until 2007—in Augusta, Georgia, to Shier and Rebecca Rubin Levkoff, who were both born in Charleston, South Carolina. She always told us stories about going with her grandmother, Hannah Piatigorsky (Jacobs) Levkoff, to deliver charity to those in need in Augusta. This had a major impact on her and was the beginning of her wanting to make the world a better place.

Mama graduated from Winthrop College in 1937 with a bachelor of arts in psychology and sociology. She did social work for a year before she got married. As the story goes, she would go by the meat packing plant where her boyfriend, Hyman J. Meddin, worked, and he would fill her car with gas and give her food to deliver to her clients. She was continuing to do what her grandmother taught her.

After her children were grown, Mama discovered that the University of Southern Illinois was offering graduate degrees in Charleston. In 1980, she got a master's degree in education with an emphasis in counseling. The final requirement for this degree was to work for one year. This was a challenge as my father didn't want her to work. It was solved by Mama taking a job at the Family Service Agency as a "dollar a year person."

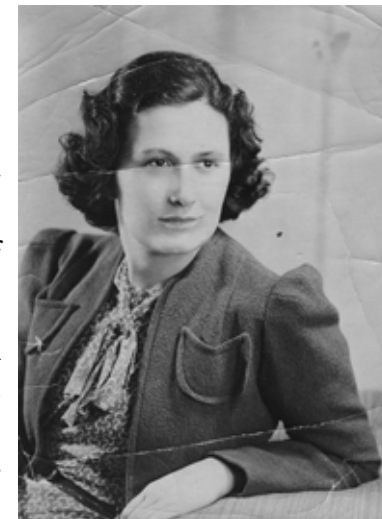
In her first year of marriage, Mama was active in 21 different

organizations. She remained heavily involved in the community until her death, initiating programs that would better the lives of others. Among the boards she was on were the South Carolina College of Pharmacy's Board of Advisors, the College of Charleston's School of the Arts, the Dee Norton Lowcountry Children's Center, Darkness to Light, and the Florence Crittenton Home.

In 1976, Mama was a recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, Charleston Area Mental Health Association, and, in 1986, she was honored by the Society of 1824, Health Sciences Foundation of the Medical University of South Carolina. In 1998, she was recognized by the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), Charleston Section, as A Woman Who Makes a Difference. The award, sponsored annually by the Charleston chapter

of Hadassah and the women's division of the Charleston Jewish Federation, is presented to one woman from each of the local Jewish women's organizations, including the sisterhoods, for her volunteer work on that group's behalf.

Mama was a past president of the Charleston Area Mental Health Association and K. K. Beth Elohim Sisterhood. She was a board member of the City of Charleston Office of Economic Opportunity and the South Carolina Mental Health Association, and a chair of the UNICEF Year of the Child, Charleston. She helped start



Doris Levkoff's engagement photo, 1939.



Doris Levkoff Meddin (second from left) was named A Woman Who Makes a Difference by the Charleston chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women in 1998. With Doris in the Jewish Community Center auditorium on Raoul Wallenberg Boulevard, Charleston, SC, from left, are Ellen Katzman, executive director of JCC; Leah Chase, president of Hadassah; and Anita Moïse Rosefield Rosenberg, president of JCC and NCJW. All images courtesy of Ann Meddin Hellman.

Charleston Pink Ladies Volunteer Program at Roper Hospital, a collaborative effort of Charleston's NCJW and the Junior League. In pursuing her volunteer activities, she always let people know her ideas and actions personified her Jewish values.

Because her brother, Dr. Abner H. Levkoff, was head of pediatrics, Mama would visit the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) often. On one of these visits, she noticed that children were taken to procedures on hospital beds. This upset her, so she bought little red wagons and arranged for a playroom to make the kids' experience in the hospital less scary and more fun.

Other programs Mama started were Cornerstone Incorporated for Mentally Ill, Charleston, SC; Relatives Group for Families of Mentally Ill State Hospital Patients; Teen Parent/Children Bonding Program at the Charleston YWCA; and Hot Line Program for Youth on Drugs (formerly known as Further).

Mama faithfully supported MUSC for more than 20 years, donating generously to the College of Pharmacy, the Storm Eye Institute, and the Children's Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, established by Dr. Abner Levkoff.

Mama believed children had to learn how to be kind. She developed a program for students in the lower grades in the City of Charleston to draw a picture of what they thought kindness was. To reward the winners, whose pictures showed that they knew what kindness was, she gave each an ice cream cone. About the same time, the *News and Courier* came out with a folder for 15 cents on how teachers could teach kindness in the classroom. Mama bought 200 of them and gave them to the Charleston County school board to distribute to teachers.

Mama believed in equal rights. When Burton Padoll was the rabbi at K.K. Beth Elohim in the 1960s, he wanted to have an interracial civil rights meeting. Mama let him hold the meeting at our house on Murray Boulevard. She was not concerned about what others thought. She knew she was doing the right thing.

Listening to the radio one night, Mama heard that the Dallas Section of NCJW had designed a project, Safeguard for Seniors, to find people at risk from medication complications. She presented this idea to the NCJW in Charleston, then approached the Medical University College of Pharmacy for help. The program became the Doris Levkoff Meddin Medication Safety Education Program at MUSC, created to educate healthcare professionals and the general public about drug safety and to help reduce the number of adverse drug effects experienced by

The South Carolina College of Pharmacy
Medical University of South Carolina
Cordially invites you to the Dedication
of the
Doris Levkoff Meddin
Medication Safety Education Program
Monday, April 24, 2006
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
The Wickliffe House
178 Ashley Avenue
Charleston, South Carolina
Please RSVP by April 17, 2006
Kelly James Draganov
(843)792-4980



Members of Doris Levkoff Meddin's family gather in September 1994 to celebrate the naming of the neonatal intensive care unit at the Medical University of South Carolina in honor of her brother, Dr. Abner Levkoff, who established the high-risk nursery. Back row (l to r): Abner H. Levkoff, Alice Fink Levkoff, Douglas Berlinsky, Brian Hellman, Max Hellman, Stuart Meddin, Amy Levkoff Hudnall, David Hudnall. Middle row (l to r): Dawn Berlinsky, Ann Meddin Hellman, Eve Meddin Berlinsky, Allison Levkoff Taylor. Front row (l to r): Kenneth Berlinsky, Ann Levkoff Reynolds, Doris Levkoff Meddin, Scott Hellman.

patients statewide. Because of this program, Mama was inducted as an honorary member of Phi Lambda Sigma Leadership Society of the South Carolina College of Pharmacy, MUSC.

With all of this, Mama still found time to operate her own real estate company. In selling real estate, she was always guided by her Jewish beliefs. While showing one client houses, the client stated she didn't want to live near Jews. Mama drove the person back to where she picked her up and told her that she would have to find another agent.

Mama's eating habits were looked down upon by the many doctors she knew, whether they were family, professors

at MUSC, or just friends, but thanks to her unlimited consumption of chocolate she lived to be 96. Knowing there was so much to be done to repair the world, she was determined to do as much as she could. She was a perpetual optimist. She had no boundaries and would call upon anyone at any level who she felt could make her dreams come true and help others have a better life.

Doris Meddin's Jewish Heritage Collection Oral History interview is online at lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/lcdl:11842.

A Legend in Her Own Time: The Life of Libby Levinson

by Margi Levinson Goldstein

The story of my mother, Libby Friedman Levinson, is of a woman who faced life's challenges with courage and resilience. In 1918, at the age of eight, she traveled from Poland to Charleston, South Carolina, accompanied by her mother, two sisters, and a brother. Financial circumstances were dire. Libby quit school at age 14 and found a job cleaning a ladies' dress shop. Little did she know, ladies' dress shops would be her destiny.

Life was difficult but there was still a little time for fun. At a party, a young blond man asked her to dance. She refused, thinking he was not Jewish. After she realized her error, their romance blossomed. Libby and Charles Levinson were married on February 27, 1927, in Holly Hill, South Carolina.

The newlyweds opened their first store in Branchville, South Carolina. Her sisters lived nearby. Annie Lourie operated a store in St. George and Minnie Kalinsky lived in Holly Hill. 1927 was not a good year to start a new business and the Branchville store failed. Next they tried North, South Carolina; then Marion, North Carolina; and then Tocoa, Georgia. In the midst of all the failures, Arnold Milton Levinson and Margi Cecilia Levinson were born.

In 1932, at the height of the Great Depression, Libby had had enough. She was determined to build a better life. No more

North Carolina or Georgia—she was moving back to South Carolina. Charlie chose Barnwell. In 1933, the Levinsons finally found a winning location. The Leader, a ladies' and men's clothing store, became a huge success.

As business conditions improved in the '40s and '50s, Libby became somewhat of a legend. Women came from all over lower South Carolina for Libby to dress them—from Bamberg, Denmark, Fairfax, and Estill.

Every Sunday, Libby and Charlie went to the wholesale houses in Charleston, Augusta, and Savannah, searching for merchandise. Libby could not find the fashions she knew she could sell. Instead, they returned home with kosher meat from Zalkin's and delicatessen from Mazo's.

In search of the latest styles, Libby, age 29, and her sister Annie made their first buying trip to New York City in 1939. They boarded the Seaboard train in Denmark and sat up all night (a Pullman was not affordable). War was coming to Europe and merchandise was hard to find. Nothing, however, stopped the sisters. Beautifully dressed in their hats and gloves, they went from the Lower East Side to Upper Broadway. Because they were shrewd and relentless, they excelled in their businesses beyond expectations.

The United States entered World War II in December



Libby Friedman, age 17, 1927. All photos courtesy of Margi Levinson Goldstein.

1941. The army opened a radar school and a German prisoner of war camp in Barnwell. Jewish soldiers were stationed at both facilities. The Levinson home became a Jewish USO. The Passover Seders were unbelievable, some years with 20 or 30 servicemen in attendance. Charlie conducted the Seder with Libby continuously correcting his Hebrew. Libby always concluded the proceedings with a rousing Chad Gadya! *

Libby was not the typical mother or wife. She never cooked a meal or mopped a floor. She did not read bedtime stories or sing lullabies. To compensate, Libby's mother, Baila, lived with us. Baila would travel to Holly Hill and St. George, but Barnwell was her home. She was strictly Orthodox. We had no synagogues or Hebrew school, but we had our grandmother. Ours was a kosher, Jewish home.

Libby and Charlie established a warm relationship with the black community. They extended credit to African-American customers when other stores did not. The Leader was one of the first stores in lower South Carolina to encourage black people to try on clothes in the fitting rooms.

Libby rarely compromised her Judaism. In a small town, Saturday represented 50 percent of the week's business and the store had to stay open. But Libby would not ride on Shabbos. Rain or shine, she walked from home to the store and back. On the way, you could hear passersby call out, "Hello, Miss Libby!"

The Christian community had great respect for Libby's commitment to her faith. The Levinsons were invited to join the country club and the bridge club. Libby graciously refused. However, you would always find jars of matzo ball soup and noodle kugels at the church bazaars. Grandmother had taught our housekeeper, Lovie, to be a fabulous Jewish cook.

After 40 years in business, Libby and Charlie were aging. Charlie had suffered serious wounds in World War I. While he went to veterans' hospitals for weeks at a time, Libby met the challenge and managed the store on her own.

Libby had always dreamed of living in a Jewish community. Arnold was in Columbia. Margi was in Charlotte. Six grandchildren were added to the family. Libby would not leave South Carolina. So, in 1967, Libby and Charlie sold the Leader and moved to Columbia. Libby made adjustments, but in truth, her heart remained in Barnwell.

During retirement, Libby played cards and went to synagogue, but her happiest days were spent selling dresses part-time at Arnold's store, Brittons. There she could do what she did best. And Charlie had his own throne from which he could kibitz with the customers and smoke his cigarettes.

Charlie died in 1983. Libby was deeply saddened, but she knew she had been loved unconditionally for 56 years. Libby was 73, a handsome, engaging woman with a keen mind, politically savvy and an ardent Democrat. She died on May 10, 2000, at the age of 90.

I have much to thank my mother for. She taught me to work hard, think for myself, fight for what I believe, never stop learning, and to truly love being Jewish. As the years go by, we will tell Libby's story—a story of a woman who faced life with determination, commitment, independence, and courage. May her name be a blessing for generations to come. L'dor v'dor.

*Chad Gadya, which means "one little goat" in Hebrew, is a playful song sung at the end of the Passover Seder.

Top: the author, Margi Levinson, and her brother, Arnold, pose for a family photo behind their parents, Charles and Libby Friedman Levinson, and Libby's mother, Baila, 1942. Above: the Friedman sisters (1 to r), Annie Lourie of Holly Hill, Minnie Kalinsky of Charleston, and Libby Levinson of Barnwell, 1955.

Libby Levinson's Jewish Heritage Collection Oral History interview is online at lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/lcdl:86557.

Regina Greene (née Kawer): A Woman of Valor

by Harlan Greene

I always knew there was something different about my mother that set her apart—not just from other mothers, but from other people, too.

First, there was her accent—her Eastern European and yet slightly nasal French manner of pronouncing things. Like Edith Piaf, the little sparrow, my mother was a tiny woman, who stood five foot one (taller in the high heels she always wore). She was full of self-confidence and fierce in her delivery of any message, whether it was love, or something else. When she was angry, you knew it, and then the wrath passed like a violent storm, and you were wrapped again in the warmth of her unconditional love and acceptance.

She loved us in a way that maybe, again, was not like other parents. She was not southern, not sentimental, not particularly physical in her affection; her love blazed in her spark-blue eyes when she spoke to us, expressing her own intense affection and intelligence and challenging us to return it. If I came home bragging

of a 99 on a test, the inevitable question was, "Who got a hundred?"

At the furniture store on King Street she and my father owned, she befriended the African-American customers and workers, demanding they strive to get ahead. In shul, she looked down on me like a beneficent goddess, hatted and in sleeves, even on the hottest Yom Kippurs. (European, she would never leave the house without being extremely well dressed.) Yet she'd storm out and cause a scene if she detected hypocrisy on the bimah, in the benches below, or in the balcony. She was much too frank, many said, always on a slow burn like one of those cigarettes (first Pall Malls and then the long black mentholated Mores) she smoked ceaselessly. She denied herself most pleasures (except reading, which she deferred till late in the day) and never tried to guilt-trip us, though I think she was consumed with guilt herself.

It was survivor's guilt. For someone who spoke so directly about what was on her mind, she was always tight-lipped about her past. Born in Warsaw to a middle class Jewish family, she was left wing, attracted to my father, a poor working class youth from a shtetl. They married in June 1939 and were still in Warsaw as the German bombs fell and tanks rolled in. My father went east to his village, where my mother eventually joined him. A blonde with blue eyes, she could "pass." I'll

never know exactly what happened,

but there were mentions of guns smuggled in hay wagons, working in the underground, and her firstborn who died. She told me she had to bury him in a Jewish graveyard in stealth one night by herself. "Where was that?" I asked when I was about 13. She could not remember, she told me.



In her Polish passport, Regina Kawer Greene is listed as Rachela Grynblatt, born in 1920. Images courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Her family, except for her sister, blonde hair and blue eyed, too, died in camps. My mother fussed at my father when he began to speak of the past. All his stories were about himself, until the day of my mother's funeral. It was then that my father, not a very emotional man, collapsed in my arms, sobbing that he could not count the number of times she saved his life.

When she survived breast cancer, she became a breast cancer volunteer immediately, helping other women adapt. She monitored politics incessantly, pursued social justice as zealously as she cleaned, and aged much too quickly. She would have nothing to do with Holocaust memorials, or with the survivor groups championed by her cousin Ben Mead. She told me there were too many holocausts still happening. Besides, thinking of Europe and the past brought up too many memories.



Left to right: Regina Kawer; Ruchel Liebhaber, Regina's aunt; Yitzhak Kawer, Regina's brother; Edith Kawer, Regina's sister. This photograph was taken in Warsaw, Poland, on October 12, 1927.

My mother died at age 69. And the thing I remember most from her funeral was how sparsely it was attended. It dawned on me then that there really is very little justice in the world—a woman of valor (the words on her tombstone) such as she should have attracted the hundreds she had helped quietly and discretely. Looking back, I have to think that even in death, she was teaching me. She had known, firsthand, the lack of justice in the world, but she taught that should not stop us from seeking it, as passionately as she smoked, and loved, and cleaned.

Images are from the Samuel Greene papers, Special Collections, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston. To view more images from the Greene papers and to explore other Holocaust collections, see *The Holocaust Quilt*, an online exhibit, at holocaustarchives.cofc.edu/panels/greene/index.html.

L'dor v'dor: A Daughter's Perspective

by Representative Beth Bernstein, South Carolina House of Representatives

L'dor v'dor, "from generation to generation," accurately describes how my late mother, Carol Osterweil Bernstein, served as a role model for my siblings and me and a trendsetter for women at Beth Shalom Synagogue in Columbia, South Carolina. Her innovative nature paved the way for us to follow her into leadership roles in the Jewish community and the community at large.

My mother was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1933. She graduated with a bachelor of arts degree from New York University and received a master of arts in English from Columbia

University. Before moving to South Carolina, she worked as a production assistant for the popular children's television program *Captain Kangaroo*, and then as a high school English teacher.

She settled in Columbia in 1961, after marrying my father, the late Isadore Bernstein, and quickly became involved in the community, while also becoming a mother to six children in the short span of eight years. I was her fifth child and shared the



Left to right: Carol Osterweil Bernstein, unidentified woman, and Eleanor Hammer, Beth Shalom Sisterhood, October 1964.

place as her youngest with my identical twin sister, Anne. Although my mother was constantly busy raising all of us, she remained committed to her civic responsibilities and dedicated to her faith in Judaism.

Joining Columbia's League of Women Voters in the 1960s and becoming its president in 1967 marked the beginning of her lifelong volunteerism in the community and at Beth Shalom. She participated in a variety of interfaith groups, such as Christian-Jewish Congress and Catholic-Jewish Dialogues, which allowed her to share the values of Judaism with people of other faiths. She served as president of the Columbia chapter of Hadassah and even participated in a bat mitzvah ceremony at a national Hadassah convention.

Ultimately, my mother's paramount contributions were to her synagogue, where she remained an active member for most of her adult life. She served in numerous board positions, including vice president, and eventually became Beth Shalom's first female president.

In the '70s and early '80s, during my formative years at Beth Shalom, women were not allowed to stand on the bimah (pulpit) to pray while the ark was open or while the Torah was being read. When she was

vice president, my mother fought against this practice and prayed on the bimah to make the point that women should play an integral part in ritual life at the synagogue.

This was quite a controversial stance at the time. Many men in the congregation, including some of her friends and family, walked out in protest. Nevertheless, her courage led to fundamental change at Beth Shalom, where women now read from the Torah and are counted as part of the quorum for a minyan. Serving as the first female president of Beth Shalom required bravery, determination, and a willingness to challenge the rules of convention to advance women's rights in the religious setting.

Throughout her life, my mother remained passionate in her commitment to her family and the community. Her devotion never wavered,

even after the devastating loss of my brother Sam, who was killed by a drunk driver in an automobile accident in 1981.

My mother was truly a woman of valor. She led by example and exuded the principles of love, integrity, dignity, humility, justice, open-mindedness, and acceptance, values that were instilled in my siblings and me. Her legacy is now passed down to our children. L'dor v'dor.



Back row (l to r): Michele Bernstein Perrick, Carol Osterweil Bernstein. Front row (l to r): Anne Bernstein, Beth Bernstein, Hilary Bernstein, at Beth Shalom's 85th Anniversary Trilogy Gala, Columbia, SC, January 16, 1993, celebrating the synagogue's 85th anniversary, mortgage burning, and 20th year on Trenholm Road. Carol and Rose Kline chaired the event. All images courtesy of Beth Bernstein.



Beth Bernstein's wedding day at Capital Center, Columbia, SC, March 22, 2003. Left to right: Lowell Bernstein, Hilary Bernstein, Isadore Bernstein, Beth Bernstein, Rip Sanders, Carol Bernstein, Michele Bernstein Perrick, and Anne Bernstein.

Up & Coming

by Rachel Gordin Barnett, Program Director, JHSSC

SAVE THE DATE!

Expanding the Archive(s) of Southern Jewish History

45th Annual Conference of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

Co-sponsored by JHSSC and the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture

October 23–25, 2020 | Charleston, South Carolina

SJHS is planning its next annual meeting to be held at the College of Charleston on October 23–25, 2020, with JHSSC and CSJC serving as local hosts. In honor of the 25th anniversary of Addlestone Library's Jewish Heritage Collection, the conference will examine how archives have influenced—and might continue to influence—the study of southern Jewish history and culture. How might we use archival material—or create new collections—to discover new southern Jewish voices and stories? How might digital humanities and digital archives help us achieve our archival mission? For more information, contact program co-chairs: Shari Rabin (srabin@oberlin.edu), Dale Rosengarten (rosengartend@cofc.edu); Marcie Cohen Ferris (ferrismarcie@gmail.com).



My South Carolina Jewish History

An Essay/Media Contest for Ages 12–16

Deadline for submissions: April 3, 2020

The first youth activity sponsored by JHSSC, this contest is open to all young people, ages 12–16, with a story to tell about their connections to Judaism and to South Carolina. Submissions can be written essays or multi-media productions. Contest winners will be announced the first weekend of May at the JHSSC spring meeting in Columbia, SC. Cash prizes total \$1,000. For more information, contest rules, and submissions form, visit: jhssc.org/contest

Kugels & Collards

Does the smell of brisket remind you of a special place and time? Do you have a family recipe to share? *Kugels & Collards* documents Jewish foodways in Columbia, SC, through shared recipes and family memories. *K&C*, sponsored by Historic Columbia, will expand its range in 2020—recording oral histories and gathering documentary materials in small towns and cities across the state. Visit kugelsandcollards.org and follow us on Twitter and Instagram.



A Store at Every Crossroads:

Documenting the Stories of South Carolina's Jewish Merchants

A Store at Every Crossroads is now available for rent through the South Carolina State Museum Traveling Exhibit Program. The multi-panel display grows out of JHSSC's Jewish Merchant Project, an ongoing effort to collect information through a statewide survey, illustrated narratives, and a website featuring an interactive map. See merchants.jhssc.org/. To book the exhibit contact: steven.kramer@scmuseum.org

Interested in volunteering?

We need people to help with oral history interviews, Jewish merchant research, and cemetery updates. For more information, contact Rachel Barnett (rgbarnettsc@gmail.com).

Power to the Women, No Delay

by Mark Swick, Executive Director, JHSSC

I am a loud and proud disciple of *The Bitter Southerner*, an online media platform that publishes feature-length stories and photographic essays about an often overlooked aspect of southern culture: the progressive South. It was in those digital pages that I was recently introduced to a now-favorite idiom, printed on a t-shirt in the BS's General Store: "Power to the Women, No Delay."

Like so many of yours, mine is a family of strong women. I was raised by a single mother and profoundly influenced by both my grandmothers, whose word was law, their opinions as unwavering as their kindness. And, though Judaism was not necessarily a defining quality for either of them, the respect they demanded and their unflappable determination are traits that I have come to identify with South Carolina's Jewish women—those whom I know and work with, and the southern matriarchs whose stories I have internalized, some of which have appeared in past issues of our magazine.

I am in awe of the women profiled in this issue and those who memorialize them. Awed by the survivors of Europe's atrocities, such as Regina Kawer Greene; filled with respect for merchants like Louise Levi Marcus, Patty Levi Barnett, Libby Friedman Levinson, and "Miz Clara," who so ably ran businesses, often alone, in South Carolina towns large and small. I am enthralled by those who broke barriers and smashed glass ceilings—the Pollitzer sisters, Dr. Rosa Hirschmann Gantt, Carol Osterweil Bernstein—and those who advocated on behalf of people in need, like Doris Levkoff Meddin, and championed a Jewish homeland, like Mildred Cohen Solomon.

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina has had a remarkable 25-year run thanks, in large part, to women like Ann Meddin Hellman, our inaugural webmistress and curator of South Carolina's Jewish cemetery surveys; like our Administrator Enid Idelsohn, our President Lilly Filler, and Program Director Rachel Barnett. And of course, our colleagues at Addlestone Library, Alyssa Neely and Dale Rosengarten, who so ably edit this magazine, among their many other responsibilities. My deepest thanks to these women, to name just a few.

Finally, we are where we are thanks to friends, members, donors, and JHSSC Pillars, many of them women, who have supported our various initiatives over the past quarter century. Your membership dues, especially those who choose to join us as Pillars, are what make the Society function day in and day out. I invite you to sign up today, and to proudly proclaim with me: Power to the Women, No Delay.

Pillars

Anonymous

Susan and Charles Altman, Charleston, SC
Ellen Arnovitz, Atlanta, GA
Rachel and Henry Barnett, Columbia, SC
Doris L. Baumgarten, Aiken, SC
Harold Brody, Atlanta, GA
Alex and Dyan Cohen, Darlington, SC
Rosemary and Julie Cohen, Charleston, SC
Joan Cutler, Columbia, SC
Lowell and Barbara Epstein, Charleston, SC
Lilly and Bruce Filler, Columbia, SC
Steven J. Gold, Greenville, SC
Judith Green, Charleston, SC
Stuart and Rebecca Greenberg, Florence, SC
Max and Ann Meddin Hellman, Charleston, SC
Alan and Charlotte Kahn, Columbia, SC
Jerry and Sue Kline, Columbia, SC
Michael S. Kogan, Charleston, SC
Susan R. Lourie, Columbia, SC
Bert and Robin Mercer, Carnesville, Georgia
Susan Pearlstine Norton, Charleston, SC
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Edward and Sandra Poliakoff, Columbia, SC
Alan and Anne Reyner, Columbia, SC
Deborah Ritter, Columbia, SC
Benedict and Brenda Rosen, Myrtle Beach, SC
Jeffrey and Mickey Rosenblum, Charleston, SC
Sandra Lee Rosenblum, Charleston, SC
Joseph and Edie Rubin, Charleston, SC
Fred and Ellen Seidenberg, Columbia, SC
Larry Simon, Isle of Palms, SC
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Haskell and Dale Toporek, Augusta, GA
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Register now for the **May 2-3 meeting in Columbia**. See page 13 for more information.