The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Volume XXV Number II ~ Fall 2020

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

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The magazine is published twice a year. Current and back issues can be found at *jhssc.org*

On the cover: A mural by Charleston artist William Halsey portraying four of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim's founders. Commissioned by Thomas J. Tobias and the Alexander family in 1950, it is one of two large paintings Halsey created for the synagogue's social hall. Photo by Jack Alterman, courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston. See Timeline entry for 1749 for more on the founders.

In this issue

Leon Banov, M.D., and the Spanish Flu ~ Alan Banov ~ As a young doctor, Leon Banov worked on the front lines of the influenza pandemic of 1918 and went on to become a renowned health officer for the city and county of Charleston. His story, as his grandson recounts, feels eerily relevant in this age of COVID: quarantines, masks, super-spreader events—it's happened here before. . . . 4

Charleston's Early Jews and the City's Notable History of Religious Tolerance ~ Richard M. Gergel and Robert N. Rosen ~ Authors Gergel and Rosen attribute the remarkable religious tolerance writ into Carolina's *Fundamental Constitutions* to the Proprietors' pragmatic desire to recruit white settlers with experience in commerce to the new colony. By the early 19th century, the authors contend, "Charleston had become the unofficial Jewish capital of America." 7

350 Years of Charleston Jewish History: A Timeline of Significant Events. 7–18

Rejuvenating the Study of Sephardic Jewry and Its Role in South Carolina Jewish History ~ Merrill Shapiro ~ Rabbi Shapiro implores American Jewish historians and the general public to pay more scholarly attention to Sephardic Jewry, whose history and culture have been neglected, he argues, in favor of the more numerous Ashkenazim. 11

Mapping Jewish Charleston: 2020 ~ Harlan Greene and Dale Rosengarten ~ This introductory essay for the newest "page" of the online exhibit describes the reshaping of the Jewish landscape since World War II—the rush to the suburbs, the jump across both the Ashley and Cooper rivers, the advent of Conservative Judaism, the multiplication of Orthodox options—a momentous 75 years. 14

"My South Carolina Jewish History" Winners Announced ~ JHSSC's inaugural essay and media contest for Jewish teens produced an array of exceptionally creative award-winning projects, now available on the Society's website. 18

Change and Challenge ~ Rachel G. Barnett ~ JHSSC's new executive director describes the hurdles she has faced since the coronavirus pandemic upended all of our lives. With her able colleagues, she has reimagined the Society so it can continue to operate virtually—through email newsletters, online conversations, meetings, and events—until we are able to gather again in person. 19

Sunday, November 1, 2020 ~ 5:30 p.m.

Charleston's Early Jews and the City's Notable History of Religious Tolerance

A Charleston 350 edition of Sunday Conversations with Judge Richard M. Gergel and Robert N. Rosen, Esq.

With special guests, Charleston 350 Commission Co-Chairs:
Mr. Jonathan Green, City of Charleston Ambassador for the Arts
Hon. A. Peter Shahid Jr., City Councilmember, Ninth District

For Zoom registration information, visit *jhssc.org/events/upcoming*

Letter from the President

The Yiddish expression "Mann tracht, un Gott lacht"—Man plans and G-d laughs—aptly depicts the times we find ourselves in. As I was thinking about what I would write, I looked back at the JHSSC spring 2020 magazine and bounding out of the pages were all the plans we had for 2020—plans that were not to be.

In the first quarter of the year, we began to hear about a virus in China that was receiving some unusual press, but that did not stop me from planning and attending the 18,000-person AIPAC gathering in Washington, D.C., the first weekend in March and thinking we were moving ahead with our spring events. And then—BOOM—the coronavirus was here. This novel virus arrived with a vengeance and life as we knew it came to a screeching stop. The unseen plague had hit us.

Then, following the murder of George Floyd, we witnessed an explosion of protests against racial injustice and police violence. There were calls for "defunding" the police and repeated cries for strategies to address economic inequities, food deserts, our failing healthcare system, and rising racism and antisemitism. Then came the failure of a unified response to the pandemic and the politicization of wearing masks. The perfect storm had hit our world, and most of us wanted to crawl in or under the bed and hide until these terrible assaults disappeared. The health virus of the winter mixed with the hatred virus of the spring and emerged in the political virus of our summer.

What can we do during this unprecedented time? We will always remember 2020 as one of the most challenging years we've experienced, but how we handle it will be paramount. The Jewish Historical Society remains active and committed to our mission, even with the departure of our wonderful friend and executive director Mark Swick. The Society's leadership has the full-throated support of the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Director Yaron Ayalon, and the concerted power of three women—Enid Idelsohn, our administrator; Rachel Barnett, our newly appointed executive director; and yours truly, your devoted president.

We immediately went to work to reassign responsibilities and study how we could continue quality programming in a safe environment. I am pleased to announce, "By George, we think we've got it!" We have reached out to Atlanta's Breman Museum and to the Southern Jewish Historical Society to collaborate on virtual programs. We will be advertising a multitude of presentations, conversations, panel discussions, workshops, and seminars through Zoom and other online platforms. These will be announced in our monthly newsletters and on our Facebook page and website. A special thank you goes to board member Terri Kaufman, who spearheaded our youth essay contest and has agreed to manage our social media outlets.

Federal Judge Richard Gergel and attorney Robert Rosen—both past presidents of the Society and authors, respectively, of *Unexampled Courage* and *The Jewish Confederates*—have initiated a monthly "Sunday Conversations" series. Our first Sunday program, which aired on July 26—"Reaping the Benefits of a Tolerant Society: Jewish Public Service in SC from the Colonial to the Modern Era"—featured guests Senator Joel Lourie, Representative Beth Bernstein, and Mayor Billy Keyserling and attracted more than 80 participants. On August 23, we collaborated on an SCETV program, "Sisterhood: SC Suffragists—Moving Forward." I was one of five guests. A week later JHSSC hosted a second "Sunday Conversation" titled *City Jews, Country Jews: South Carolina Synagogues from 1749 to the Present* with special guests Dr. Gary Zola and Dr. Sam Gruber. Please watch for information and Zoom instructions for future programs in our monthly email newsletters.

Bring your bagels and coffee.
Annual Membership Meeting
Sunday, October 18 ~ 11:00 a.m.
Zoom info will be emailed.

Stay connected.
Sign up for our e-newsletter.
Go to the bottom of our home page and provide your email to receive up-to-date information. jhssc.org

With editorial leadership from Dale Rosengarten and the skills of layout designer Alyssa Neely, our fabulous biannual magazine will continue to appear both in print and online. This fall edition looks back 350 years to the founding of Charles Towne and forward to 2021. Having postponed our 2020 joint meeting with the Southern Jewish Historical Society until October 2021, we will continue quality educational programming online only for the coming year.

Please tune in to our seminars and speakers and send us your ideas about sessions you'd like us to sponsor. Save the date for our virtual fall meeting on **Sunday, October 18, 2020, at 11 a.m.** Your support and participation are more critical now than ever!

As we say in Yiddish: "Gai Gezunt"—Go in Good Health.

Lilly Stern Filler, M.D.
JHSSC President

Leon Banov, M.D., and the Spanish Flu

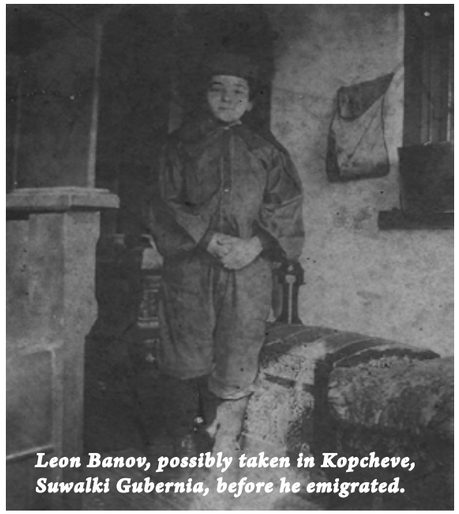
by Alan Banov

As the coronavirus pandemic has taken hold of our country, its death toll continuing to climb, people have drawn comparisons to the Spanish flu that hit the United States in 1918. In Charleston, Leon Banov, a young doctor who had emigrated from Russia two decades earlier, assisted in stopping the deadly virus in his new city.

He was a pioneer in American public health, becoming the health officer for the city and county of Charleston in 1926, a position he held for nearly 50 years.

He also was my grandfather.

Dr. Banov left a profound legacy, both professionally and personally, and was responsible for implementing several public health measures that are commonplace today.



Leon Banov, possibly taken in Kopcheve, Suwalki Gubernia, before he emigrated.

But before then, between 1917 and 1920, he was chief food inspector for the Charleston City Health Department. During that time, in 1918, the Spanish flu infected Charleston and the world, with millions contracting the illness and hundreds of thousands dying. My grandfather witnessed the same challenges that people are encountering today: quarantining for days, wearing face coverings, restricting gatherings, and shuttering schools, businesses, and places of worship.

He described the situation in his 1970 book, *As I Recall: The Story of the Charleston County Health Department:* "Charleston was badly hit; and to make matters worse a great many doctors were in the service [in the Great War] and away from the city," he wrote. "Our Board of Health met frequently but so little was known about the etiology and treatment of the disease that very little could be done to combat it."

Leon Banov in his pharmacy on King Street, Charleston, SC.

An Immigrant's Education

Leon Banov was born in 1888 in a little town called Kopcheve (in Yiddish) and Kopciowo (in Polish). Kopcheve, then in the Russian province of Suwalki Gubernia, had a population of about 1,400, of whom approximately 40 percent were Jews. My grandfather was the youngest of five children of Alexander and Sonia Danilovich Banovitch. Alexander came to Charleston in 1889 and later sent for the rest of the family in stages. Leon crossed the ocean with his mother, his sister Rachel (Raye), and his brother David in July 1895.

Dr. Leon Banov, graduate of Medical College of South Carolina, 1917.

When Leon arrived in Charleston, he spoke only Yiddish. However, he learned English and other subjects at Bennett School and, instead of attending high school, was home-schooled in reading, history, and math. After working in a drugstore, he decided he would become a pharmacist. He did, graduating with a degree in pharmacy from the Medical College of South Carolina in April 1907, at age 19. (A college degree was not required at that time.)

For a few years, Leon operated a pharmacy on King Street. His slogan was "The Largest Drug Store in the South for its Size." But his medical education did not end there. He matriculated at the Medical College in 1908 and received his M.D. in June 1917. While earning his medical degree, he taught in the pharmacy school.

He entered public service in 1912 as assistant city bacteriologist. Five years later he became the city's chief food inspector—the position he held when the Spanish flu hit Charleston.

The Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918

The Spanish flu was a lethal and highly contagious disease. In the United States, about 28 percent of the population of 105 million became infected, and 500,000 to 850,000 people died. In South Carolina, there were an estimated 150,000 to 400,000 cases, with 4,000 to 10,000 deaths attributed to the flu. By November 1918, nearly 6,000 Charleston residents had become infected and more than 200 people had died from it.

As with the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, health officials had no cure and could only attempt to contain the disease. Dr. John Mercier Green, the city's health officer, issued orders similar to those issued this year: people had to quarantine at home for at least five days, wear masks, not congregate in groups, and not hold public funerals at homes or churches.

Banov assisted Dr. Green in the battle against the influenza. As chief food inspector, he scrutinized the sanitation of restaurants and other places that served food and drink to

The Spanish Flu as Described by Dr. Banov

As the public hysterically clammored [*sic*] for action, Dr. Green issued orders forbidding crowds on the street. Meetings and gatherings that called for more than 4 or 5 people were banned.

This automatically closed down schools and churches. One church objected to this interference with its religion and refused to curtail its worship service. The board of health, not being itself sure as to the benefits of the closing of churches, did not make an issue of it; and soon all the churches began to function again.

Another order of the board of health was that all stores in the city must be closed by sundown; and the entire staff of the health department was detailed to the enforcing of this ruling.

Dr. Leon Banov. Photo by Max Furchgott.

In those days a great many of the small retail stores kept their doors open until real late in the night. The merchants having been accustomed to remaining at their business until quite late, found themselves lost for something to do, with their stores being closed.

As I rode up and down the street, I saw a number of these merchants just standing listlessly in front of their closed doors waiting for their usual going-home time.

I felt sorry for them, and I wished at the time that I could have taken them to their homes and reintroduced them to their families for whom they had been working so hard and steadily.

– Leon Banov, *As I Recall: The Story of the Charleston County Health Department* (R. L. Bryan Company, 1970), 22–23.

Charlestonians. In October 1918, finding that soda fountains were generally not sterilizing utensils properly, he wrote to Dr. Green recommending that "all soda fountains be closed and kept closed until the danger of the spread of the influenza has ceased." His letter was reprinted in its entirety in the *News and Courier.* Leon's advice apparently seemed too harsh to the federal, state, and city health officials, but they authorized him to send letters warning food establishments that they would be closed if they did not observe certain prescribed sanitary conditions—such as using spoons only once!

In addition, he visited stores and soda shops to make sure they were not congested and overcrowded. As the *News and Courier* reported on October 15, "The entire force of the health department, the sanitary inspection department, the police department and Dr. Leon Banov, food inspector, were busy distributing humanity [dispersing crowds] so that the influenza germ would not be so likely to stalk unbidden into their systems and do permanent damage in consequence."

Dr. Leon Banov and a young patient. Photo by E. H. Powell. All photos courtesy of Alan Banov.

Leon was also involved in an effort by the health department to curtail the pandemic by distributing whiskey to flu patients, even though it was during Prohibition. In his book Leon explained: "In another futile gesture in attempting to cope with this outbreak of pestilential proportion, a large cache of confiscated liquor was released by the Courts and turned over to the Health Department to be distributed for flu patients on the doctor's prescription." The *News and Courier* reported on October 17 that Dr. Banov "hurried to a printing establishment and ordered 1,500 whiskey labels for bottles; also the bottles themselves had to be gotten from wholesale drug concerns. Labels had to be gummed securely on and filled out."

The following month, when the flu seemed to be subsiding, the mayor lifted the quarantine, over Dr. Green's objections. The mayor also called for a public ceremony on November 11 to commemorate the end of World War I. More than 5,000 people gathered in Marion Square to celebrate both events. Today we might call these mass gatherings "super spreaders." Not surprisingly, the influenza returned to Charleston soon thereafter; thousands more became sick with it and dozens more died.

Dr. Banov's Legacy

The 1918 flu epidemic led to the creation of the Charleston County Health Department in the spring of 1920, and Leon Banov was named the director.

As health officer for the combined city-county health department, Leon left a profound legacy. Charleston became the first jurisdiction in the country to require pasteurization of milk. He instituted mass vaccinations of Charlestonians, including African Americans. He created wellness clinics for new mothers and dramatically reduced infant mortality. He also improved sanitation throughout the county, including giving restaurants scoresheets to be displayed in their windows and eradicating malaria through mosquito control in the marshes.

Public health physicians from around the world visited his health department to learn from his practices. He was rewarded for his many years of public leadership by having a new health department building on Calhoun Street named for him in 1960.

Leon's progeny included my father, Dr. Leon Banov, Jr. (1914–2007), a Charleston proctologist; Morton Banov (1919–1992), a Knoxville merchant; and Roslyn Banov Wyman (1923–1958), a civic leader in Pontiac, Michigan. In 1944, my father married Rita Landesman of New Jersey; they had my sister, Jane Banov Bergen (born 1950) and me (born 1946). Morton and his wife, Ida Linke, had no children. Roslyn and George Wyman were parents of Stephen Jay Wyman (born 1944) and Leslie Wyman Lake (1952–2007). My grandfather had several great-grandchildren he never met.

Dr. Leon Banov, Sr., died on November 4, 1971, in a car accident on Savannah Highway near his home in Byrnes Downs. From his own activities in helping to contain the 1918 influenza, as well as his long experience in public health, he would have been well equipped to deal with the current coronavirus. He always respected science and disdained public health decisions made just to please politicians, as his book makes clear.

Charleston's Early Jews and the City's Notable History of Religious Tolerance

by Richard M. Gergel and Robert N. Rosen

By the year 1800, Jews had settled up and down the eastern seaboard of the United States, with significant Jewish populations in the northeastern cities of Philadelphia and New York. But the largest, most sophisticated, and probably most affluent Jewish community in the young republic resided in Charleston, South Carolina, whose first congregation, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, was organized circa 1749. Charleston's emergence as a city of refuge and opportunity for Jewish settlers was the product of conscious and largely successful efforts to welcome immigrants from diverse religious backgrounds.

Inset from a map by Edward Crisp, one of three included in A compleat description of the province of Carolina in 3 parts, *published in London, ca. 1711. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.*

One cannot appreciate the Jewish attraction to Charleston without understanding the extraordinary burdens and disabilities Jews suffered in most European countries during the 17th and 18th centuries. A broad array of officially sanctioned discrimination and harassment against Jews was part of the fabric of European life.

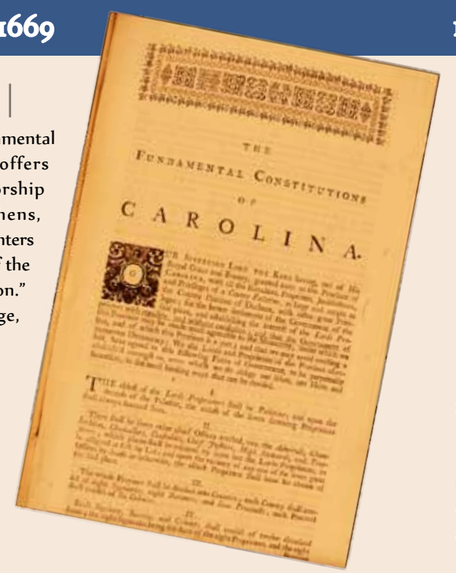
In 1661, King Charles II of England granted to eight English noblemen a massive tract of land lying between the Virginia colony and the Spanish settlement in Florida. This land grant, titled the Charter of Carolina, was bestowed in appreciation for the role these men, now known as the Lords Proprietor, had played in Charles II's ascendancy to the throne in 1660. From the beginning, the Proprietors viewed the colony as a business proposition, and there was little of the religious fervor and mission associated with the establishment of other colonies, such as Massachusetts Bay.

TIMELINE

CHARLESTON JEWISH HISTORY

1669

Carolina's Fundamental Constitutions offers freedom of worship to "Jews, Heathens, and other Dissenters from the purity of the Christian Religion." See related image, page 8.



Timeline images courtesy of Special Collections unless otherwise stated.

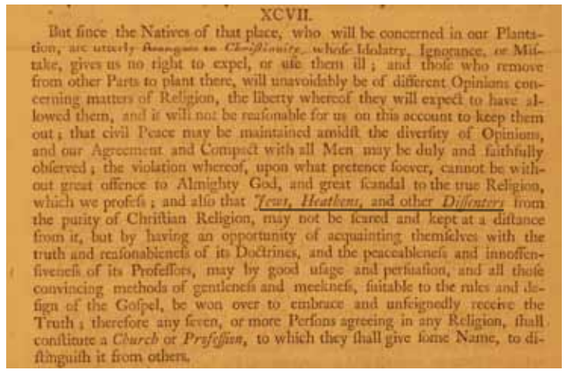
1697

Simon Valentine joins three other "aliens of the Jewish nation" and 60 French Protestants, known as Huguenots, in a petition to the colonial governor for naturalization. See image, page. 9

1749

Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) is formed under the leadership of Moses Cohen (haham), Isaac Da Costa (hazzan), Joseph Tobias (president), Philip Hart (mohel), and Michael Lazarus (secretary), following the Sephardic minhag of London's Congregation Bevis Marks. Cover image depicts, left to right, Da Costa, Lazarus, Tobias, and Cohen.

Among the promising sources of potential settlers were religious dissenters, who found themselves in unending battles with established churches in their home countries. These dissenters, including Quakers, Unitarians, Free Will Baptists, French Protestants, and Jews, were thought to be pious and family-centered people, ideal settlers for a growing and prosperous colony. Further, Jewish traders and merchants from the West Indies, particularly Barbados, were especially sought after to assist in building the commercial life of the new colony.


XCVII.

But since the Natives of that place, who will be concerned in our Plantation, are utterly Strangers to Christianity, whose Idolatry, Ignorance, or Mistake, gives us no right to expel, or use them ill; and those who remove from other Parts to plant there, will unavoidably be of different Opinions concerning matters of Religion, the liberty whereof they will expect to have allowed them, and it will not be reasonable for us on this account to keep them out; that civil Peace may be maintained amidst the diversity of Opinions, and our Agreement and Compact with all Men may be duly and faithfully observed; the violation whereof, upon what pretence soever, cannot be without great offence to Almighty God, and great scandal to the true Religion, which we profess; and also that *Jews, Heathens,* and other *Dissenters* from the purity of Christian Religion, may not be scared and kept at a distance from it, but by having an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the truth and reasonableness of its Doctrines, and the peaceableness and inoffensiveness of its Professors, may by good usage and persuasion, and all those convincing methods of gentleness and meekness, suitable to the rules and design of the Gospel, be won over to embrace and unfeignedly receive the Truth; therefore any seven, or more Persons agreeing in any Religion, shall constitute a *Church* or *Profession*, to which they shall give some Name, to distinguish it from others.

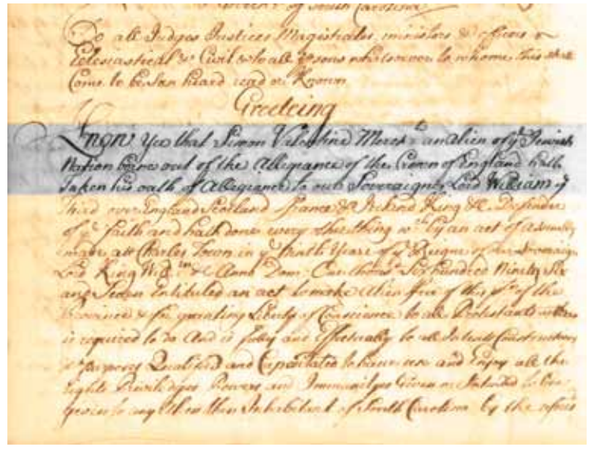
Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, *July 21, 1669. Image courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.*

Driven by the pragmatic desire to recruit new settlers to the colony of Carolina and influenced by the idealism of the Enlightenment, John Locke, then secretary to Lord Proprietor Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury, assisted in drafting the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina,* first published in 1669. The *Constitutions* provided that any seven or more persons "agreeing in any Religion, shall constitute a church or profession." This represented a major departure from the European practice of official state religions, which tolerated no dissent or alternate viewpoint. Leaving no ambiguity regarding the target audience, Article 97 expressly provided these protections to *"Jews, Heathens,* and other *Dissenters* from the purity of Christian Religion."

Freedom of worship was not universal, however, specifically excluding "Papists." Despite this lingering discrimination against members of the Catholic faith, the *Fundamental Constitutions* was a remarkable document: in a world of seemingly unremitting religious strife, Carolina offered Jewish settlers an oasis of inclusiveness and tolerance almost unknown at the time. The provision of religious tolerance was in marked contrast to the colony's embrace of the particularly cruel and brutal system of human slavery practiced in early colonial settlements in the West Indies.

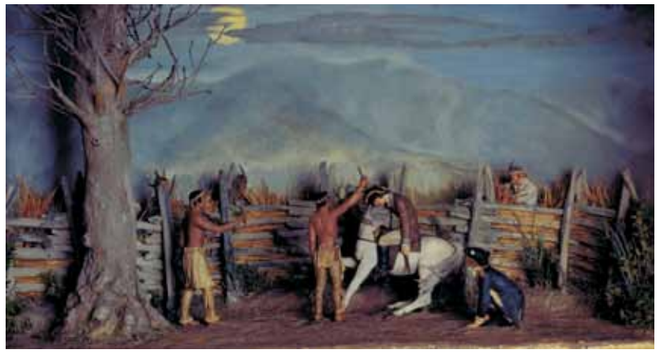
By the 1690s, Christian dissenters, particularly French Protestants and Quakers, and Jews were actively engaged in the life of the colony. One of the first documented Jewish individuals in South Carolina was a translator for then-Governor John Archdale, presumably a Sephardic Jew (of Spanish or Portuguese origin), who assisted the governor in 1695 in communicating with Indians from the Spanish colony of Florida.

In 1697, 60 Huguenots and four Jews jointly petitioned the governor of the Carolina colony for naturalization. Governor Joseph Blake endorsed the petition and recommended adoption in an address to the colonial legislature, which responded by granting citizenship rights to all aliens and their wives and children, regardless of their nation of origin. The legislation noted that a number of dissenters had come to the colony for religious freedom. Shortly thereafter, colonial records confirm that two Charleston Jews, Simon Valentine and Abraham Avila, were issued citizenship papers—40 years before such rights were given to Jews residing in England!


Greeting

Know Ye that Simon Valentine Merct: an alien of ye Jewish Nation have and do take the Oaths of Allegiance & Supremacy & Abjuration & have taken the oath of Allegiance to our Sovereign Lord William the third by the Grace of God of England Scotland France & Ireland King Defender of the faith and hath done every other thing which by an act of Parliament made in the first year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King William & Queen Mary entitled an act to make other provision for the Security of his Majesties Person & Government & for granting unto their Majesties the Customs & Duties of Tunnage & Poundage & for granting unto their Majesties certain Rates & Duties upon Tunnage of Ships & Vessels & upon Goods & Merchandizes imported & exported & for abrogating & making void certain Rates & Duties & for granting to

the Upstate in Ninety Six District, near what is now Greenwood, South Carolina. Salvador soon became a passionate advocate for American independence and was elected to the South Carolina Provincial Congress in 1774. He was killed two years later, ambushed by Tories and their Cherokee allies, making him the first Jew known to die for American independence.



The Ambush of Francis Salvador, August 1, 1776. *Diorama by Robert N. S. Whitelaw, Charleston, SC, 1970. Image courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.*

By the early 1790s, Charleston Jews were ready to build their own synagogue, befitting what was fast emerging as one of the New World's premier Jewish communities. Designed as a near model of the legendary Bevis Marks Synagogue of London, the striking building was located on Hasell Street, right off bustling King Street. The cornerstone of the building was laid in 1792, and the synagogue was consecrated in 1794 with prominent civil, religious, and political figures in attendance. The interior of the sanctuary contained a centrally located reading desk, traditional with Sephardic worship, and balconies for women to separate the sexes in accord with orthodox religious practices. The synagogue served the community until 1838, when the sanctuary burned to the ground in a fire that consumed more than 1,100 buildings, including three other houses of worship, in addition to KKBE.

Charleston maintained its status as having the largest Jewish population in America for the first two decades of the 19th century, with one scholar noting that one-third of all Jews in America in 1818 lived in the Lowcountry of South Carolina.[2] For all practical purposes, Charleston had become the unofficial Jewish capital of America. Not surprisingly, it was from Charleston that Isaac Harby wrote to then-Secretary of State James Monroe, issuing a kind of Jewish declaration of independence: Jews were "by no means to be considered a religious sect, tolerated by the government," but "a portion of the people in every respect. . . . Quakers and Catholics, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Jews, all constitute one great political family."[3]

[1] James W. Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 68.

[2] Alfred O. Hero, Jr., "Southern Jews," in *Jews in the South*, eds. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 232.

[3] Eli Faber, *A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654–1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 137–138.

Rejuvenating the Study of Sephardic Jewry and Its Role in South Carolina Jewish History

by Rabbi Merrill Shapiro

Is there a difference between the study of Ashkenazic Jewish history in South Carolina and the study of the Jews of South Carolina? Of course there is! But, for a number of good reasons, there seems to be a bias towards the study of the history of Ashkenazim and Ashkenazic institutions at the expense of the study of Sephardic Jews and their institutions, which dominated in South Carolina through the Revolutionary War and into the early decades of the 19th century.

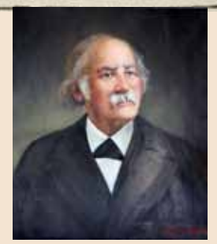
The term "Ashkenazi" refers to Jewish settlers who established communities along the Rhine River in Western Germany and in Northern France dating to the Middle Ages. By the time of the founding of South Carolina in 1670, tens of thousands of Jews had migrated to welcoming lands in East Europe, especially Poland, Lithuania, and Russia. The vernacular tongue of Ashkenazic Jews is Yiddish, a language derived from High German and Hebrew with elements of both Aramaic and Slavic from early Medieval Europe. The plural of Ashkenazi is Ashkenazim.

"Sephardi" refers to Jews whose origins can be found in Spain, Portugal, and throughout the areas held under Moslem conquests in North Africa and the Middle East. Many Sephardim, the plural of Sephardi, fled the Inquisition, including mass expulsions from

Engravings depicting a marriage ceremony of Portuguese Jews, above, and of German Jews, below, in Amsterdam. By Claude Du Bosc after Bernard Picart. William A. Rosenthall Judaica Collection, Special Collections, College of Charleston.

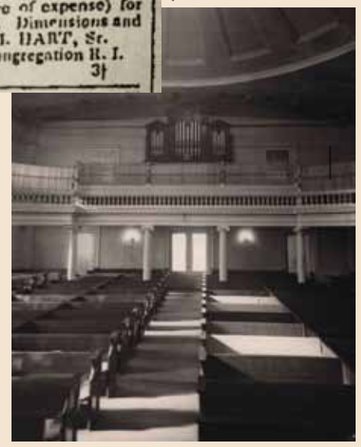
1838

HERREW CONGREGATION, REMNANT OF ISRAEL.—Proposals, (free of expense) for building a SYNAGOGUE, is solicited. Dimensions and plan to be obtained from SAM. HART, Sr. Treasurer & Secty. of Congregation R. I.



Sally Lopez establishes a Sunday school, the second in the United States, for KKBE. The synagogue is destroyed by a conflagration that burned much of downtown Charleston.

1840



David Lopez rebuilds KKBE's sanctuary. The congregation votes by a bare majority to install an organ to provide musical accompaniment to worship, resulting in the secession of the traditionalists, who form a separate congregation called Shearit Israel (Remnant of Israel).

1854

RABBI HIRSH LEVIN

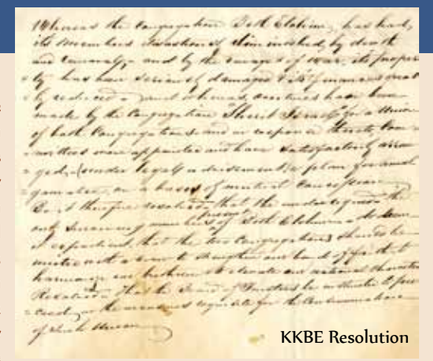
South Carolina's first Ashkenazic congregation, Berith Shalome (later Brith Sholom) grows out of an Orthodox prayer group led by Hirsch Zvi Margolis Levine, an ordained rabbi from Lithuania.

1861

Moses Cohen Mordecai's steam-sail ship, The Isabel, carries federal forces off Fort Sumter in the opening volley of the Civil War. Franklin J. Moses, Jr., is among the men who raised the Confederate flag over the fort. After the war, Moses joins the Radical Republicans and serves as governor of South Carolina between 1872 and '74—becoming the state's most notorious scalawag. Courtesy of John Sands.

Judas Moses who raised the Confederate Flag on Fort Sumter

1866

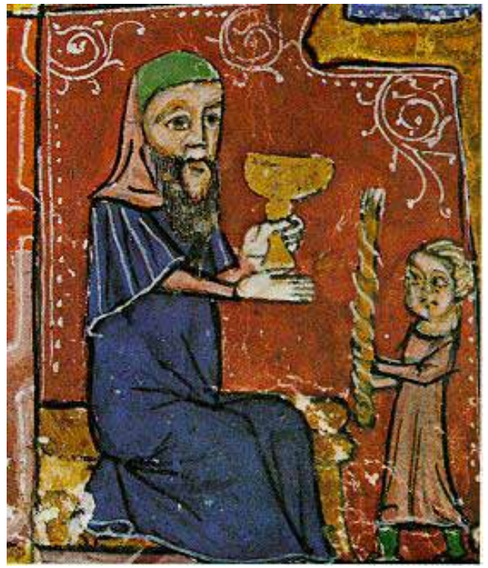


KKBE Resolution

"Whereas the Congregation Beth Elohim has had its members disastrously diminished by death and casualty,– and by the ravages of war, its property has been seriously damaged & its finances greatly reduced – and whereas overtures have been made by the Congregation "Sherit Israel" for a union of both Congregations . . . . the only surviving members present of Beth Elohim – do deem it expedient that the two Congregations should be united with a view to strengthen our bond of faith. . . ."

Unable to sustain separate congregations in the aftermath of the Civil War, Shearit Israel and KKBE negotiate a merger.

Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1496, making their way to the Low Countries of Europe, the British Isles, and to Turkey and Greece in the east. The traditional language of Sephardic Jews is Judaeo-Spanish, sometimes called "Ladino Oriental" (Eastern Ladino), a Romance language resultant from Old Spanish, incorporating elements from Hebrew and from all the old Romance languages of the Iberian Peninsula.



Havdalah Service (to mark the end of the Sabbath), ca. 1340. Detail from a miniature in the Barcelona Haggadah, *Sephardic rite. British Library, Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts.*

Most of those engaged in the study of South Carolina's Jewish history are of Ashkenazic descent and naturally tend to emphasize the Ashkenazic migrations over the earlier Sephardic arrivals. This reflects the demographic fact that 95 percent of American Jews today are Ashkenazim. Much contemporary scholarship focuses on families and events within living memory. Many engaged in the work of bringing South Carolina's considerable Jewish history to life are themselves more comfortable moving about in the world of Ashkenazim than they are among the Sephardim.

Sephardic Jewry's era of greatest popularity, vigor, and prosperity is much further removed in time. The customs of the Sephardim are less known to us, and their world view, vision, and outlook are different and more difficult to understand than those of our own ancestors. The study of history is, of course, more than a regurgitation of names, dates, facts, and places. The study of history involves the interactions of great ideas, concepts, and movements. While Ashkenazic Jewry "grew up" in perennially hostile Medieval Europe, Sephardic Jewry lived in the relatively benevolent and enlightened world of Islam, exposed to the influence of Arabic and Greek philosophy and science. Some say there is still a sense among Sephardic Jews in the United States that they are culturally superior to their Ashkenazic co-religionists.

During the early years of South Carolina settlement, anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic propaganda was endemic in British North America. The aggressive, proselytizing Spanish colonizers were demonized as religious and cultural enemies. Spanish discoveries in the New World were minimized in significance, and religious purity on the Iberian Peninsula, barring Islam and Protestantism, as well as Judaism, was ridiculed on both sides of the Atlantic.

Could the lingering influence of "la Leyenda Negra," the Black Legend, have suppressed the study of Sephardic Jews in South Carolina? Dating back to the 16th century, the Black Legend propagated anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic views, reflecting the desire of northern Europeans, especially the English, to demonize their Spanish rivals. Anti-Catholicism was a major tenet of the Ku Klux Klan and persists today among white supremacists, who put forward the notion that the United States is a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant country.

Are we devoting enough time and attention and hard thinking to understanding what first brought Sephardic Jews to South Carolina? Was there a separate Sephardic community during the colonial era and in the early national period? How did the Sephardim get along with the Ashkenazim who, from the very beginning, chose to settle here too? Were Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities and neighborhoods distinct or did they assimilate one into the other? Where are the voices of the Sephardim today? Can we still hear them, if we listen closely, or are they gone forever?

Engraving of Spaniards killing women and children and feeding their remains to dogs. From Illustrations de Narratio regionum Indicarum per Hispanos quosdam devastattarum, *1598. Joos van Winghe (1544–1603) and Theodor de Bry (1528–1598). De Bry's works are characteristic of the anti-Spanish propaganda that originated as a result of the Eighty Years' War.*

1886

An earthquake rocks Charleston; over $15,000 in aid to Jews comes from outside the city.

1895

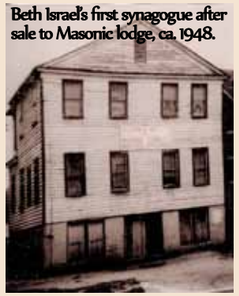
Charter members, NCJW, Charleston section.

The Charleston Council of Jewish Women is founded; in 1906, the organization affiliates with the National Council of Jewish Women.

1910

Charleston Hebrew School is organized by Brith Sholom. Beginning in 1912, classes were held in the Daughters of Israel Hall, 64 St. Phillip Street, two doors down from Brith Sholom Synagogue.

1911



Beth Israel's first synagogue after sale to Masonic lodge, ca. 1948.

Recent immigrants, including a substantial contingent from Kaluszyn, Poland, found Beth Israel. Locally known as the Little Shul, the Kalushiner Shul, or the Greener Shul, Beth Israel meets several blocks north of Brith Sholom on St. Philip Street.

1921

The Charleston Chapter of Hadassah is organized, with leadership from Jane Lazarus Raisin, wife of KKBE's rabbi, Jacob S. Raisin.

1922

The Jewish Community Center and Hebrew School opens on George Street.

Mapping Jewish Charleston: 2020

by Harlan Greene and Dale Rosengarten

This essay was written as the introduction to the 2020 "page" of *Mapping Jewish Charleston,* an online exhibit sponsored by the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. See *mappingjewishcharleston.cofc.edu*

As the 21st century unfolds, Charleston's Jewish community continues to grow and change along with the city. A premier destination for tourists, retirees, and high tech and manufacturing companies, the region has been developing by leaps and bounds, with subdivisions and industrial parks sprawling along every highway.

While some old Charleston Jewish families still occupy their pews in the synagogues, local congregations now include large numbers of transplants from the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, and beyond, as well as a smattering of people from Israel, South Africa, and the former Soviet Union. The Jewish population (estimated in 2016 at 9,500 in the tri-county area) has crossed the rivers on both sides of the peninsula, first establishing a foothold west of the Ashley River in the early 1960s, and more recently popping up east of the Cooper River with the opening of Chabad of Charleston's Center for Jewish Life in 2016.

Performance by adult and youth choirs at Emanu-El, in the congregation's original army chapel building on Gordon Street, Charleston, SC, ca. 1950. At the far left is Rabbi Lewis Aryeh Weintraub. Cantor Jacob J. Renzer stands behind the piano. The violinist is Fannie Turtletaub. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

The suburban exodus commenced in the decades after World War II, driven by the automobile, postwar prosperity, the GI Bill, and the desire for a yard and a garage. Jewish families living downtown began moving into the northwest section of Charleston. Some bought summer houses on Sullivan's Island—so many that the beach community earned the nickname Solomon's Island. Charleston's first Conservative congregation was in fact "hatched" at meetings in the Sullivan's Island beach houses of various members, notably that of Florence and Moses J. ("Mosey") Mendelsohn. Emanu-El held its first Friday night services in a church at Fort Moultrie on the west end of the island in the summer of 1947. By the end of the year, the congregation had acquired its own house of worship, a former U.S. Army chapel rebuilt on a lot on Gordon Street in Charleston's northwest neighborhood.

Another centrifugal force was *Brown v. Board of Education,* the 1954 Supreme Court decision ordering the desegregation of the nation's public schools. The case, originating in Clarendon County, South Carolina, accelerated the flight from the peninsula of white Charlestonians who wanted to avoid sending their children to racially mixed schools.

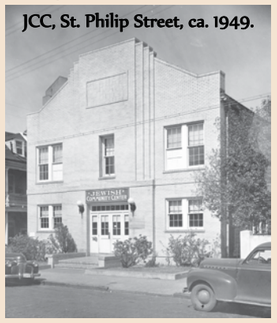
Architect's rendering by Simons, Lapham and Mitchell of the proposed Jewish Community Center on Millbrook Drive (now Raoul Wallenberg Boulevard), west of the Ashley, Charleston, SC, ca. 1960. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

In 1959, the Jewish Community Center (JCC), which had been situated downtown since the 1920s, acquired 25 acres off Millbrook Drive, renamed Raoul Wallenberg Boulevard in 1982. West Ashley, an area undergoing rapid suburban development, had become a new center of Jewish life. Eight years earlier, attorney Bill Ackerman had begun transforming a truck farm on the road to Folly Beach into a residential subdivision and shopping center called South Windermere, which became a neighborhood of choice for many Jewish families. According to a famous quip attributed to William B. "Bill" Regan, Mayor Joseph P. Riley's chief legal adviser and Charleston's corporation counsel from 1975 until 2003: "When Bill Ackerman raised his rod, the waters of the Ashley parted and the Jews walked to South Windermere." Later, one of the main streets, Confederate Circle, would become known as The Bagel.

In 1965, Brith Sholom Beth Israel (BSBI) opened a minyan house in South Windermere for congregants who wanted to walk to shul and not have to cross the bridge on a long trek to the downtown synagogue. In 1964, the JCC sold its downtown building to an all-white segregation academy and, two years later, dedicated a new building on its West Ashley campus. In subsequent years, the JCC campus became home to the Charleston Jewish Federation, Sherman House for seniors, and Addlestone Hebrew Academy (AHA), successor to the Charleston Hebrew Institute.

In 1979, Emanu-El built a new sanctuary on Windsor Drive, west of the Ashley, following its congregants who had relocated more or less en masse from the northwest section of Charleston where the synagogue first stood.

1938



Charleston Hebrew Institute is established by Brith Sholom and Beth Israel. Classes were held in later years at the JCC on St. Philip Street.

1947

Conservative congregation Emanu-El breaks from Brith Sholom and begins meeting on Gordon Street in Charleston's northwest section.

1948

Beth Israel dedicates a new synagogue on Rutledge Avenue, May 23rd.

1954

Brith Sholom and Beth Israel merge to become Brith Sholom Beth Israel (BSBI); the "Big Shul" moves into the "Little Shul" on Rutledge Avenue.

Dedication of the new Charleston Hebrew Institute (now known as Addlestone Hebrew Academy) behind BSBI on Rutledge Avenue.

1956

1966

JCC dedicates new building on Millbrook Drive (now Raoul Wallenberg Boulevard) on 25 acres west of the Ashley River, purchased in 1959. See campus skyview above.

Since the turn of the century, another sea change has altered the lay of the Jewish landscape. Following the national trend within Orthodoxy, a number of Jewish families (mostly living in West Ashley) wanted to become more "shomer shabbat"—to fully observe the traditional laws of the Sabbath, including the stricture against driving to synagogue. They needed a minyan (a quorum of ten men required for prayer services) within walking distance of their homes and began meeting first in private houses and then in the auditorium of the JCC. Negotiations to affiliate with BSBI were unsuccessful, and, in 2012, the West Ashley Minyan (WAM) formally reorganized as Congregation Dor Tikvah.

Congregants of Dor Tikvah bringing in the Torahs for the dedication of their newly remodeled and redecorated facility, which includes a sanctuary, chapel, and lobby, August 2018. Courtesy of Congregation Dor Tikvah.

In 2013, Dor Tikvah hired its first rabbi, and, in 2015, it was one of two tenants remaining on the former JCC campus, the other being the kosher catering company Dining In. The congregation renovated the community center, transforming it into a handsome synagogue, while local donors funded the construction of a new, free-standing, state-of-the-art school next door for Addlestone Hebrew Academy. The Federation moved to new quarters, and the Community Center rebranded itself Charleston JCC "Without Walls" (WOW), communicating electronically and through social media, first producing and now supporting Jewish programming at various venues.

East of the Cooper River, the Center for Jewish Life inaugurated, in 2016, a 16,000-square-foot building on a shaded campus off Mathis Ferry Road in Mt. Pleasant. Affiliated with the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic movement, Rabbi Yossi Refson and Rebbetzin Sarah Refson arrived in town in 2007 and began hosting Sabbath dinners, educational programs, and social gatherings at their home. Nine years later, with local support, large and small, they expanded their activities and created flexible space for preschool classes, adult education, cooking, eating, and gatherings of all sorts.

On the peninsula, the historic Reform congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim has stretched its facilities to the limits of its urban lot on Hasell Street. The temple completed a major restoration of its 1840s-era sanctuary in 2020 and is now working on the restoration of its nearly-full pre–Revolutionary War cemetery on Coming Street. BSBI continues to worship in its Moorish synagogue on Rutledge Avenue and to support the minyan house in South Windermere.

Meanwhile, at the College of Charleston, the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program, founded in 1984, offers an array of Jewish social and intellectual activities and has attracted ever increasing numbers of Jewish students. As of 2019, these students were estimated to account for a robust eight percent of the undergraduate population. At the College's Nathan and Marlene Addlestone Library, named for Jewish philanthropists and opened in 2005, the Jewish Heritage Collection has become a leading repository of archival material on southern Jewish life.

In 2016, a kosher/vegetarian/vegan dining hall, Marty's Place, was built as the anchor in the expansion of the Jewish Studies building. The eatery was named for the program's visionary director, Dr. Martin Perlmutter, who was also founding director of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, a statewide membership organization established in 1994, housed physically and administratively within the Jewish Studies Program.

On April 16, 2018, the stretch of King Street between Mary and Reid streets was dedicated as Sokol Family Block by Mayor John Tecklenburg and members of city council, in honor of the family that had been in business at 510 King Street from 1919 to 2015. L to r: Freida Sokol, Mayor John Tecklenburg, Joe Sokol, and the Sokols' grandsons Elliot Nakios (holding the street sign) and Theo Nakios. Photo by Dale Rosengarten.

As of 2019, only two of the historic Jewish dry goods stores remained in business on King Street—Berlin's at the corner of Broad, and Dumas at Society. The heyday of the Jewish retail merchant is past. As the value of real estate on upper King skyrockets, there has been a string of closings of Jewish-owned businesses, including longstanding furniture emporia Morris Sokol and Dixie Furniture; George's Pawn Shop; Bluestein's, leased to the Charleston School of Law; and Read Brothers, out of business and to be developed. While Jews are no longer concentrated in mercantile pursuits, some have found prominent positions in the city's dynamic food and beverage industry. Hyman's, a popular delicatessen and seafood restaurant, for instance, operates on the site of the family's old dry goods store.

Today occupations pursued by Charleston's Jews are as varied as the population itself. The community's Blue Book, a directory of "Jewish Residents of Greater Charleston" compiled every other year by KKBE, keeps up not just with names and addresses, but with changing demographics, institutional histories, and professional shifts. Passionate partners in all the major movements in the area, never static, always in flux, Jewish Charlestonians are inscribed in the landscape of the old port city with streets, parks, schools, and municipal buildings named for famous members of the tribe.

1979

Emanu-El dedicates a new synagogue on Windsor Drive, west of the Ashley.

Photos courtesy of Synagogue Emanu-El.

Emanu-El, post-renovation, 2019.

1984

The College of Charleston initiates a Jewish studies program as a result of a gift by Henry and Sylvia Yaschik (above), matched by Norman and Gerry Sue Arnold (below).

1994

Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina is organized and headquartered at the College of Charleston.

JHSSC founding members, October 1998.

1995

The Jewish Heritage Collection is established in Special Collections at the College of Charleston. Its first big exhibition project, "A Portion of the People," premiered at USC's McKissick Museum in 2002. JHC's founding curator, Dale Rosengarten, holds her 2003 Governor's Archives Award, presented by the South Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board.

1999

Holocaust Memorial on Marion Square is dedicated on June 6th.

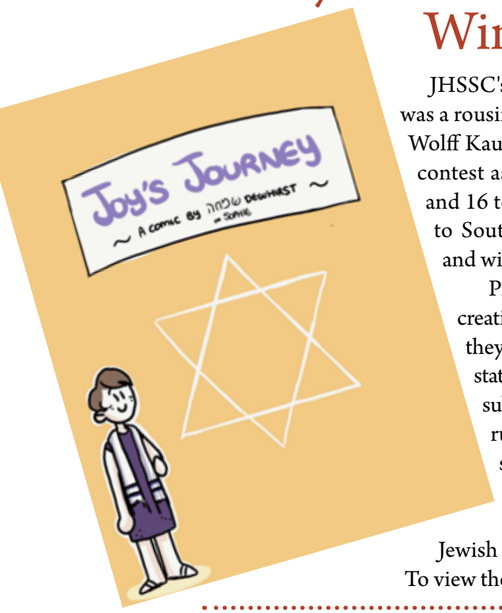
2002

Construction of the Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center at the College of Charleston is completed. Photo by Reeese Moore/College of Charleston.

2006

An independent Orthodox minyan begins meeting west of the Ashley, using facilities on the JCC campus.

"My South Carolina Jewish History" Winners Announced



JHSSC's essay and media contest for Jewish teens was a rousing success. Designed by board member Terri Wolff Kaufman and launched in December 2019, the contest asked young people between the ages of 12 and 16 to express their connection to Judaism and to South Carolina within any creative format—and win cash prizes.

Projects were judged on their energy and creativity and the emotional connections they made to family, Judaism, and the state's Jewish history. The ingenuity of the submissions exceeded our expectations, running the gamut from an original song to a graphic novel.

We are delighted to present the 2020 "My South Carolina Jewish History" finalists and honorable mentions. To view their prize-winning projects, go to *jhssc.org/contest*

1st Place: Sophia Kamen Dewhirst, Johns Island, SC (graphic novel–see images this page)
2nd Place: CJ Kincaid Doss, Williamston, SC (YouTube video)
3rd Place: Sydney Lee, Mt. Pleasant, SC (written essay)
Honorable Mention: Olivia Kamen Dewhirst, Johns Island, SC (photo collage)
Honorable Mention: Shoshana Rosenbaum, Charleston, SC (written essay)

The 2021 contest will open in January. Go to *jhssc.org/contest* or follow us on Facebook for updates.

2012

The West Ashley Minyan (WAM) formally organizes as a new Modern Orthodox congregation, Dor Tikvah.

The Jewish Community Center campus on Raoul Wallenberg is sold and the Center rebrands as JCC Without Walls.

2015

First classes are held in Addlestone Hebrew Academy's new building.

Photo by Jack Alterman.

Chabad breaks ground on the Charleston Center for Jewish Life.

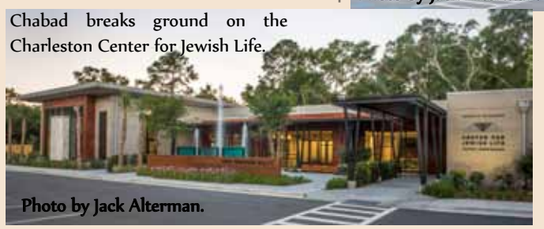


Photo by Jack Alterman.

2016

Rosenblum Coe Architects
Photo © John D. Smoak/SmoakStack Studios.

A kosher/vegan/vegetarian dining hall opens at the College of Charleston. Named for Martin Perlmutter, director of the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program from 1991 to 2018, Marty's Place anchors the expansion of the Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center.

Photo by Jack Alterman.

2018

Congregation Dor Tikvah opens in its newly remodeled and redecorated facility on the former JCC campus.

Change and Challenge

by Rachel G. Barnett, Executive Director

To say this spring and summer has been challenging is an understatement. From cancelling meetings due to the pandemic, to learning how to "Zoom," to finding new ways to pursue the Society's mission in the digital world, to adapting to Mark Swick's departure from the College of Charleston—as they say, life comes at you fast. We wish Mark "mazel tov" in his new job as executive director of KKBE and we are thrilled he and Ellen will remain in Charleston and stay involved with the Society. Mark has been a terrific partner as he and I entered the "post-Marty" era as executive and program directors, respectively.

I first became involved with JHSSC in 2009 when then-President Ed Poliakoff asked if I would assist with planning a meeting. I did not realize this meant I was also a board member! In 2011, I joined forces with President Ann Hellman as we hosted the Southern Jewish Historical Society in Columbia; when Ann's term ended, I succeeded her as president and then continued to work for the Society as program director.

For me, stepping into Mark's shoes as JHSSC's executive director is truly an honor. I am confident in the knowledge that there is a strong team in place. Enid Idelsohn, the Society's longtime administrator, handles daily operations, logistics, and bookkeeping. Jewish Studies Director Yaron Ayalon has pledged his support and partnership. President Lilly Filler and a dedicated executive committee are keeping a firm hand on the tiller. Meanwhile, Dale Rosengarten and Alyssa Neely, our partners at Addlestone Library's Jewish Heritage Collection, continue their outstanding efforts producing this biannual magazine, recording and processing oral histories, and supporting researchers from far and wide, even while working from home.

Past-presidents Robert Rosen and Richard Gergel have offered their talents for our monthly Sunday Conversations via Zoom. Board member Terri Kaufman has volunteered her expertise in marketing and social media. Terri also initiated our first youth essay and media contest on the theme of "My South Carolina Jewish History"—with inspirational results! Next year's contest will open in early winter 2021.

Times of crisis such as the present make us focus on what is important. We ask ourselves, what activities are most meaningful, how can I make the world a better place? The Society's mission "to study, preserve, and promote the history and culture of South Carolina's Jewish community" speaks to me; as Robert Heinlein writes, "A generation which ignores history has no past and no future." The JHSSC exists not only for us now, but for future generations. I therefore encourage you to get involved. Offer your talents, sign up for our e-newsletter, renew your membership, and consider becoming a Pillar.

If you have an idea to contribute or would like to volunteer your time, please email me at *rgbarnettsc@gmail.com* or call 803-917-1418.

You are valued and needed now more than ever!

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
Alan and Rosemary "Binky" Cohen, Charleston, SC
Alex and Dyan Cohen, Darlington, SC
Joan Cutler, Columbia, SC
Lowell and Barbara Epstein, Charleston, SC
Lilly and Bruce Filler, Columbia, SC
Richard and Belinda Gergel, Charleston, SC
Steven J. Gold, Greenville, SC
Judith Green, Charleston, SC
Stuart and Rebecca Greenberg, Florence, SC
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Jerry and Sue Kline, Columbia, SC
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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
Robert and Susan Rosen, Charleston, 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
Mark and Gayle Sloan, Myrtle Beach, SC
Gail (Altman) and Ronald Spahn, Baltimore, MD
Richard Stern, Boston, MA
Haskell and Dale Toporek, Augusta, GA
Anita Zucker, Charleston, SC

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Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional $54 each.
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