

THE
JEWISH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

Calling Beaufort Home

Register now for spring meeting in Beaufort
June 10-12, 2022

Volume XXVII Number 1 ~ Spring 2022





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

A Keyserling excursion (1 to r), front: brothers Joe and William with William's son Herbert between them; Herbert's older siblings Beth and Leon; unidentified child; and Harold, Joe's eldest son on the running board. Back: Jennie Hyman Keyserling, William's wife; Theresa Herzfeld Keyserling, Joe's wife; Rosalyn, William's daughter; and Leroy, Joe's younger son, ca. 1916. Courtesy of Paul Keyserling.

In this issue

From Blue Collars to Blue Serge Suits: Beaufort's Jewish Settlers ~ Dale Rosengarten ~

The sparse Jewish population of 18th- and 19th-century Beaufort increased noticeably with the dramatic influx of Eastern Europeans to the United States beginning in the 1880s. Shortly after the turn of the 20th century, there were more than enough Jewish residents for a minyan, plus a healthy variety of tradesmen and businesspeople contributing to the local economy. In this historical overview, Rosengarten illustrates the changes over time and captures a vivid and nostalgic snapshot of the early 1900s with observations from a Beaufort native. 4

Store Stories and Family Stories

The stories are familiar: a young man flees conscription into the Russian army; a family emigrates in search of a better life; one sibling sends for another, and then another. The Beaufort natives who share their family histories in this issue have roots in Lithuania and Belarus. While their tales of success, struggle, and fellowship may seem similar, each family is unique in how its members made their way in this small southern town and how that past is remembered.

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Beth Israel: A Congregation Grows in Beaufort ~ Emilie Crossan ~ Now 117 years old, Beth Israel's origins lie in a fast-growing Eastern European immigrant community that pooled its resources to build a synagogue and buy a burial ground. Through oral histories, photographs, and archival documents, members have left behind a historical record of a small but thriving congregation that continues to fulfill its mission. 20

Connecting the Dots ~ Rachel Gordin Barnett ~ JHSSC's executive director makes the case for why the Society's work is so vital. Resources made available through the acquisition of photographs, oral histories, and written records are invaluable in supporting genealogical and scholarly research and educating the public through exhibits and publications. To sustain the Society's efforts into the future, JHSSC and the Jewish Heritage Collection have launched the South Carolina Jewish History & Heritage Campaign to create a joint endowment that will assure the pursuit of knowledge continues. 22

Letter from the President



Thirty years ago, when I was elected vice-president of Beth Israel Congregation in Florence, South Carolina, one of the first things I remember was a visioning session with our rabbi and temple president about establishing an endowment fund. We realized it was unlikely that the congregation would grow substantially in the years to come and the expenses of maintaining the congregation would continue to increase. Our rabbi, who had worked with small congregations his whole career, told us that without an endowment to supplement our budget, Beth Israel's long-term survival was not secure. He had seen congregations like ours forced to decrease services and sometimes close their doors due to lack of funding.

With an initial donation from one temple family, our board of trustees set out to raise money to establish the Beth Israel Foundation. The bylaws of the foundation stated that the principal and donations would remain in the fund and the proceeds from investments could be taken out annually, if needed, to supplement the congregational budget. In less than two years we reached a benchmark of \$100,000, and with continued contributions and excellent management by the trustees, the balance of the fund has since increased.

Today the endowment fund provides 25 percent of the congregational budget. Without this substantial annual contribution, it is doubtful Beth Israel would still have the doors open.

The executive board of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina (JHSSC) has had the same discussion for the past couple of years. For a quarter century, the Society has

been operating on money received from membership dues, pledges from our Pillars, and a great relationship with the Jewish Studies Program and the Jewish Heritage Collection (JHC) at the College of Charleston. We have received some funding from grants for specific projects. We have adapted to virtual programming, and our membership has actually increased since the Covid pandemic began. However, we cannot continue to operate as we have in the past.

JHSSC is evolving. The Society was founded to record and preserve the history and stories of our membership. Over the years we have had many successes, but there are still many stories to tell and much work to do. Our long-time executive director, Dr. Martin Perlmutter, has retired, and we now rely on a dedicated professional, Rachel

Barnett, without whose services the Society couldn't function. JHC's founding curator, Dr. Dale Rosengarten, has announced that she will be retiring in the near future, and we have no guarantees about her replacement. We have to establish a sustainable income; we cannot live on dues and grants alone.

With leadership from Past President Jeffery Rosenblum, the Society launched an endowment drive that to date has raised a little over \$200,000. But we will need to raise a good

deal more principal for the proceeds to be able to underwrite our Society's mission in perpetuity. We have joined forces with the Jewish Heritage Collection in an ambitious South Carolina Jewish History & Heritage Campaign, to ensure that both organizations have stable funding in the years to come. Please consider making a substantial donation to the joint campaign. Help us tell YOUR family's story!

L'shalom,
Alexander Cohen, M.D.
JHSSC President



Judy Kammer (l) and Bruce Siegal, who served as co-presidents of Beth Israel Congregation in Florence, SC, from 1995-97, oversaw the creation and dedication in 1996 of this plaque honoring donors to the Beth Israel Foundation. Courtesy of Beth Israel Congregation of Florence, SC.

From Blue Collars to Blue Serge Suits: Beaufort's Jewish Settlers

by Dale Rosengarten, based on a talk delivered at the dedication of the Beth Israel historic marker, Beaufort, SC, January 12, 2014

When we launched the Jewish Heritage Project in 1995, I had no idea of the depth and breadth of Jewish history in this state. It didn't take me long to become a true believer. Jewish settlement in Carolina began within a decade or two of the colony's founding in 1670. The first documentation we have of a Jew in Beaufort dates to the 1760s, but it is likely that Jews were there before then. With the port cities of Charleston to the north and Savannah to the south, the deep harbor of Port Royal offered opportunities for trade and development of the interior. Charlestonians supported the establishment of Beaufort in 1711 for military purposes as well: Beaufort would become the first line of defense against incursions from Spanish Catholics and their Indian allies in Florida.

Among Beaufort's early settlers was Peter Lavien, who moved from Danish St. Croix to South Carolina in 1765. Son of a Jewish merchant and half-brother to Alexander Hamilton, Lavien became a successful merchant, as well as church warden for St. Helena's Anglican Church—yes, that's right, church warden. Jews in the Palmetto State were ever ecumenical! And besides, no one who wasn't Jewish was quite sure what it meant to be Jewish, and that remained true into modern times.

Saul and Hart Solomons, immigrants from Germany, moved to the vicinity in the early 1800s and became cotton agents in Savannah and Beaufort. Several members of the Sheftall family of Savannah lived and died in Beaufort. Meyer Jacobs, of England, was listed as an officer in the Beaufort Volunteer Artillery by 1825. Jacobs welcomed the Marquis de Lafayette to Beaufort that year, and six years later was elected mayor. In 1833, he represented St. Helena parish in the state legislature.

The man who would later become the Confederacy's most revered and reviled Jewish son, Judah P. Benjamin, came to

Beaufort for extended visits with his mother and sisters in the 1840s—bearing gifts of books and indulging in the dangerous sport of devil fishing with his “stout Negro companion,” by the name of Hannibal.

Which calls to mind a verse from a paean to Beaufort by Robert Woodward Barnwell, titled “A Town's Peculiarity,” published in 1936:

Books and the boats I sing:
And this old town of note.
Where each man had a library,
And every man a boat.

Of course, not *every* man had a boat and a library in antebellum Beaufort, but the town supported a genteel class of white people to which affluent Jews might aspire. Benjamin, you may recall, became a prominent attorney, owner of a

sugar plantation near New Orleans, a United States Senator, and, when the South seceded, Confederate attorney general, secretary of war, and secretary of state.

Early in the Civil War, during the Federal occupation of the town, Moritz Pollitzer arrived in Beaufort with wife and children. The Pollitzers had left Vienna during the revolutions of 1848, settling in New York where Moritz worked for ten years in the silver-plating business.

His decision to move to South Carolina in 1862 was influenced, no doubt, by the fact that his brother-in-law, Charles S. Kuh, a native of Prague, Bohemia, owned “Cottage Farm” near Beaufort, estimated to be worth \$4,000, or \$100,000 in today's currency. Surely Moritz was also aware of the business vacuum created by the departure of cotton brokers who fled the region after “The Big Gun Shoot” in November 1861, when Union troops occupied Port Royal Sound. In 1869, under Republican rule, Charles Kuh was elected to the South Carolina legislature (he was said to be a “most honest man” who had favored emancipating the slaves).



Permission pass for M[oritz] Pollitzer to land on Hilton Head Island, 1862, signed by Brigadier General Thomas West Sherman (1813–1879), who led Union land forces to victory in the Battle of Port Royal, after which Hilton Head became headquarters for the Department of the South. From the Anita Pollitzer Family Papers (24-26-01) at the South Carolina Historical Society.

Moritz Pollitzer operated the most productive cotton gin in town, and by 1871 was mayor of Beaufort. (It is interesting to note: Pollitzer's great-grandson Henry C. Chambers, a fourth-generation Beaufortonian, served as mayor from 1969 to 1990, and ran again, unsuccessfully, in 1999.)

In 1878, some 29 Jewish people were living in Beaufort. Over the next 50 years—during the era of mass immigration from Eastern Europe—the number increased four-fold. Early in this new wave came William Keyserling of Lithuania, who dreamed of becoming a farmer. But Jews were forbidden to own land in Lithuania so he immigrated to America in 1888, headed south towards an uncle in Walterboro, and settled in Beaufort, from where he sponsored the immigration of his mother, four brothers, and a niece and nephew. Starting as a cotton gin machinist, William became a business partner in MacDonald, Wilkins & Company. He and his wife, Jennie Hyman Keyserling, had four children, including Leon Keyserling, the renowned New Deal economist, who, in the tenth grade, won an award for an essay entitled “A Bigger, Better, More Beautiful Beaufort.” A framed copy hung in his office and, after his retirement, at his home.

By the early 1900s, Beaufort's main thoroughfare, Bay Street, supported many Jewish-owned stores. These days were vividly recalled by Joseph J. Lipton at a meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina many years ago. “My mother would take me as a very young child with her to the stores that lined Bay Street: Schein, Lipsitz, Mittle, Rudowitz, Rosenthal, Weinberg, Hirsch. It wasn't so much shopping as visiting. An interesting sight for me was to see Mr. Goldberg, a watch repairman, sitting in front of his establishment with Mr. Rubinowitz, the local Bolshevik, immersed in a game of chess. The required time clock was absent. One move on occasion took days. But then where was the urgency?”

Lipton's recollections are worthy of a *midrash* (a commentary on Hebrew scriptures).

In their number, he recalled, counting off the Jewish businesses, were tradesmen, artisans, and craftsmen: “Caspar Farbstein – electrician, Sam Levin – printer, Esau Levy – plumber, Abe Rudowitz, Sam Lipton – cobblers, Mr. Goldberg – watch repairman, Leopold Schoenberg – baker, the Keyserling brothers, William, Israel, J. B., Mark – farmers and merchants,

J. Young – junk dealer, Joe Mark, Phillip Cohen – merchants, Dave Mittle – railway express agent and volunteer fireman, Sam Richman, Morris Schein, Morris Levin, Max Lipsitz, and Jacob Getz – merchants. [At the time], the only [Jewish] professional in Beaufort was William N. Levin, attorney. Later came Dr. Herbert Keyserling, Dr. Sol Neidich, and Dr. Hymie Lipsitz, dentist, and still later Junie Levin, attorney. Today, [Joe remarked], Beaufort is loaded with the blue serge suit crowd.”



Joseph Lipton (b. 1923) and his mother Helen Stern Lipton, 1926. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

The Jewish population of Beaufort reached a critical mass in the first decade of the 20th century. Beth Israel received its charter from the state in 1905, and by 1908 its congregants had built a synagogue. In 1910, they purchased land for a burial ground and two years later established a cemetery. No longer would Beaufort Jews have to be interred in Charleston or Savannah. They could spend eternity near home.

Beth Israel's minutes book covering 1916 to 1954 offers a window into synagogue operations—not so different, it turns out, from current concerns. Fundraising, attracting new members, and improving attendance were top priorities. Through the Ladies Auxiliary Society, the women, as is often the case, took the lead in raising money. In 1917, the congregation

formalized a constitution. It added a *cheder* (Hebrew school) for boys and a Sunday school for all children, and, in 1920, Beth Israel acquired a parsonage.

Joe Lipton remembers attending High Holiday services—when Rosh Hashanah didn't conflict with the World Series—conducted entirely in Hebrew, with women sitting apart, the patriarchs on the *bimah* (Hebrew for platform from which the Torah is read), and Max Lipsitz davening. “A reverence and majesty descended upon that humble, simple edifice, and in that captured moment one felt holy and believed. I viewed these immigrants hungrily, selfishly, greedily—because I felt instinctively that this was the last time I would stand so close to *shtetl Yiddin*.”

Joe was right. Beth Israel's *shtetl Yiddin* (the plural in Yiddish for Jews from small towns) are no more, and a lot of water has flowed to the sea and back. But the congregation is still here, and, I can report, a bit bigger and stronger than it was when I first visited two-and-a-half decades ago. Now it is graced by an official historical marker sponsored by the Beaufort County Historical Society and dedicated in 2014 by the town's dynamic mayor, Billy Keyserling, who grew up, well, not exactly in the temple, but playing hooky from shul, joining the Beaufort High football team for the Friday night game.

Morris Levin Builds a New Life in Beaufort

by Helen Levin Goldman

I met my grandfather when I was five and he was 75. He died the following year. I wish he could have told me stories. This is my attempt to tell his.

As Morris Levin approached the age for conscription in the Russian army, his older sister, Gretta, who lived in America, became very concerned. Gretta and her husband, John Levin, a cousin, lived in Beaufort, South Carolina, where they owned a mercantile business on Bay Street. They had come to Beaufort in 1880. Gretta and John sent for Morris, who emigrated in 1886 from Georgenburg, Russia (now Lithuania), on the Neman River. He came first to Baltimore where he worked as a laborer and arrived in Beaufort at age 19. Meanwhile, Gretta sent word to the Russian government that Morris had died in America, thus ending his responsibility to the Russian army. Many American Jewish families had their roots in escape from military service under the tsar.

Morris lived with Gretta and John and their two sons, Alexander and Sam, and worked with them in their store until he could purchase his own business in the neighboring town of Port Royal, acquired with a Mr. M. Herman who may have been a silent partner, related by marriage and living elsewhere. Many ships came into Port Royal in those days and Morris sold the bulk of his merchandise to those ships.

In 1895, Morris sent for his bride and cousin, Alice Kollicant, who lived in his hometown. During Alice's long passage she carried her personal effects in a large hamper-like basket, including a kiddush cup—a gift from her parents—and a pair of socks she was knitting for her new husband. She was sure he would need them in South Carolina.

As there were no synagogues in the area, the young couple were married in Beaufort's Arsenal on Craven Street. Their first child, Pauline, was born in Port Royal. Two years later their family moved to a new store in Beaufort on the corner of Craven and West streets, now the site of Nancy Rhett's gallery.

Morris and Alice lived above the store as did many young Jewish merchants on Bay Street. The couple raised six children there: Pauline (Polly), William (Willy), David (Buster), Bessie, and my father, Stanley. The sixth child, Melvin, died at age five. Our family story is that Morris and Alice were able to educate their oldest child, Pauline, and then each child helped the next until all had good educations and professions. They became a lawyer, an architect, a physician, and two teachers.

Jewish families in Beaufort needed a religious home, a synagogue. They had been meeting at the Masonic Hall and on the second floor of the Arsenal for ceremonial occasions. They applied for a charter or document of incorporation. In 1905, the charter was granted by the State of South Carolina, and by 1908, Beth Israel had built a synagogue downtown on Scott Street.

The members of the congregation helped with the construction. Morris, who was known to be a skilled carpenter, climbed on the roof to assist. They were not wealthy men. They knew they would have to work hard to make the synagogue they envisioned a reality, but they lived in a time when anything was possible with hard work. The original congregation numbered 36 paid adult members. Morris was elected treasurer and later became president.

The dedication of the synagogue took place in 1908. By all accounts, it was a grand event. Rabbi George Solomon of Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia, officiated, and many non-Jewish

Beaufortonians attended the ceremony. President Moses Epstein and treasurer Morris Levin took part in a formal procession that marched through the new sanctuary.

The year 1908 was one of celebration and of sadness for the members of Beth Israel. Morris and Alice's five-year old son, Melvin, died of a heart defect that would have been operable today. There was no Jewish cemetery in Beaufort so Morris and his cousin, Alexander, took the child by boat to Charleston where he was buried in the Brith Sholom cemetery with Cantor Jacob J. Simonhoff, leader of the St. Philip Street synagogue, officiating.

The next step for the congregation was to establish a Jewish cemetery in Beaufort. In 1910, Beaufort Jews raised over 300 dollars and purchased the entire city block between Bladen Street on the east, Adventure Street on the west, Washington Street on the south, and Green Street on the north. The cemetery was dedicated in 1912.

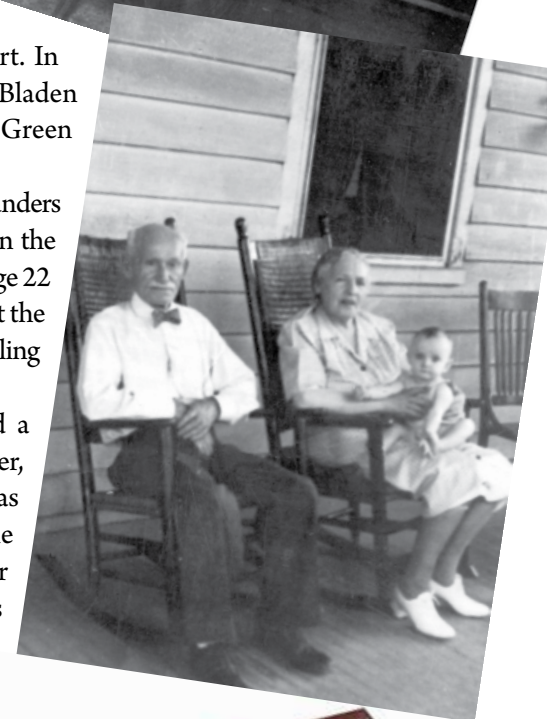
Beth Israel Synagogue became the center of Jewish life in Beaufort. As one of the early founders of the congregation, Morris participated in much growth and change. He also was active in the larger Beaufort community as a member of city council for his ward and as a member of Lodge 22 of the American Federation. In 1904, he travelled to the World's Fair in St. Louis and brought the first, newly invented, Burroughs adding machine back to Beaufort. Morris retired in 1926, selling his store to another member of the congregation, Bobby Hirsch.

When Morris's oldest son Willy was established in his law practice, he purchased a pre-Civil War home at 901 Craven Street. His brother Buster, an architect, supervised the renovation of the house, which was in great disrepair. In 1929, Morris and Alice moved into the new family abode with Willy and Buster and lived there for the remainder of their lives. Alice died in 1945 and Morris in 1946.

Morris Levin's life reflects that of so many immigrants who came to America to escape conscription into the Russian army: he was able to earn a good living, start a family, and become an integral part of his adopted nation.



Top: Morris Levin (1), with his sister Gretta Levin and her husband John Levin.
Middle: Morris and Alice Levin, wedding portrait.
Bottom: Melvin Levin, Morris and Alice's youngest child, who died at age five.
Courtesy of Helen Levin Goldman.



Top: Willy Levin, eldest son of Morris and Alice Levin. Middle: Helen Levin with her grandparents, Morris and Alice Levin. Bottom: Former Levin store, Bay Street, Beaufort, SC. Courtesy of Helen Levin Goldman. Left: Image of the Burroughs adding machine and the building that hosted the Burroughs exhibit at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, MO. Courtesy of Bernie Schein.



Near the end of the Reconstruction Era that followed the Civil War, five young Keyserling brothers came to Beaufort and left a memorable mark as they leveraged their freedom from oppression to promote the common good in a town and region in recovery. Let's start with William, the middle of the five boys. On the run in 1887, with tsarist operatives on his tail for allegedly organizing anti-tsarist activities at school in his small village in Lithuania, my paternal grandfather, William Caeserzki (changed to Keyserling when he entered the United States), tied himself to the undercarriage of a vegetable cart to escape. Following a circuitous route, he ended up in New York City's Lower East Side.

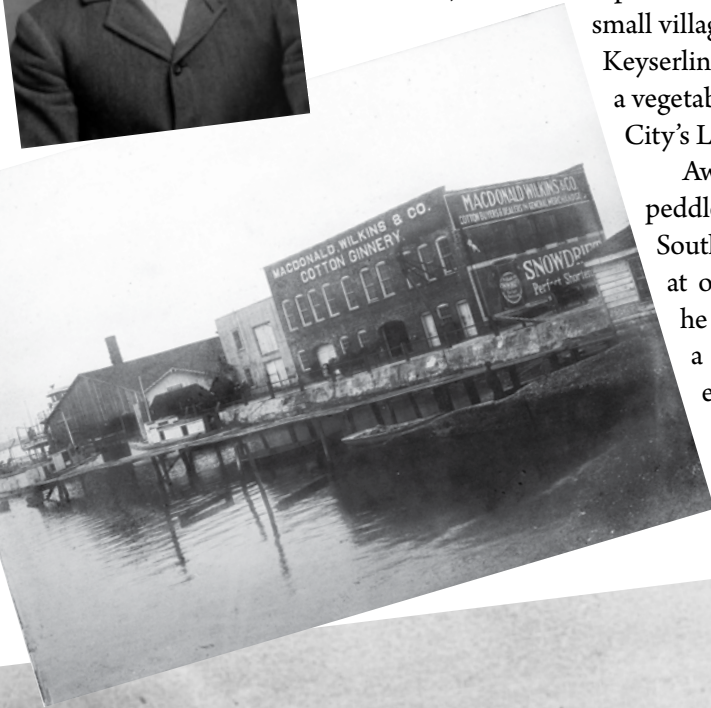
Aware that his lifelong desire to farm would not happen in the city, he peddled his way south where, in 1888, at 18 years of age, he landed in Beaufort, South Carolina. He worked odd jobs until he became a "mechanic" (foreman) at one of the MacDonald, Wilkins & Company's cotton gins. Before long he was dispatched to nearby St. Helena Island to farm Sea Island cotton in a community with only ten white families and 10,000 or more formerly enslaved African Americans. He raised his children in a house next to MacDonald's store, where he worked. While William quickly moved into management at the company, he realized his dream of working the land after acquiring his own farms in the area.

Although the Reconstruction Era formally ended in 1877 when federal troops withdrew from South Carolina, the work of reconstruction—protecting the rights of African Americans—continued in Beaufort. Freed men and women, declared U.S. citizens under the Civil Rights Act of 1866, became self-sufficient, with many achieving success in agricultural, educational, business, and political pursuits. Seeing these achievements and wanting to promote further gains through education, William and one of his partners became the first local members on the board of Penn School. Established in 1862 on St. Helena Island while the area was occupied by Union troops, Penn educated newly freed people as part of what came to be called the Port Royal Experiment. William's support of the school likely earned him the trust of his African American neighbors.

After working for MacDonald, Wilkins for about two years, William became a member of its board, bringing with him the close ties he had forged with Black residents of northern Beaufort County and the belief that working together would benefit all. A partnership agreement, forged around 1900, enabled William to bring his four brothers, two older and two younger, and their mother to Beaufort, where they joined the business. Years later, he became president of the company.

Besides the trust he earned among the islanders, William's largest contribution to the company may have been engaging local farmers—large and small, Black and white—to participate in a buying and selling cooperative. My uncle Leon Keyserling recalls him saying, "We need not compete against each other. We grow the world's best and most desirable long staple Sea Island cotton." A second function of the cooperative was to jointly purchase (and perhaps finance) and distribute materials for cooperative members.

Growing exponentially through its alliances with other farmers, MacDonald, Wilkins added more cotton gins. It also assembled a small fleet of boats to reach members of the cooperative living on isolated islands. The boats brought materials to the farmers and transported their produce to larger ports for shipping to England.



Top: William Keyserling.

Middle: MacDonald, Wilkins & Co. Cotton Gin, corner, Bay and Carteret streets, Beaufort, SC. Bottom: The Keyserling family, ca. 1918.

The Keyserling Brothers Leave a Mark on Beaufort

by Billy Keyserling

The business model included seven "country stores" as outposts for co-op members. Each of the stores became the center of small crossroads communities, offering U.S. postal services, farm supplies, basic clothing, grocery products, and later, gasoline. Clearly, William cast a net of influence throughout the larger community. Yes, he was excluded from the Rotary Club and the country club because he was Jewish, but his stature as a business and community leader grew.

While William built a small cottage for his mother in downtown Beaufort so she could be close to Yiddish-speaking merchants, three of his brothers—Mark, Israel, and Michael—were dispatched to run the country stores. The fourth brother, Joe, worked in several capacities for the company. Just as William became a trusted and influential figure, his brothers followed suit, serving almost like mayors of the rural crossroads settlements.

When the boll weevil infestation of 1915 and 1916 took down cotton farming, Beaufort transitioned to become the largest grower of vegetables in the Carolinas, likely thanks to the collaboration among so many farmers. The farmers' prosperity was temporarily restored until the Great Depression hit, which devastated most farming operations, including William's. He became a man of modest means.

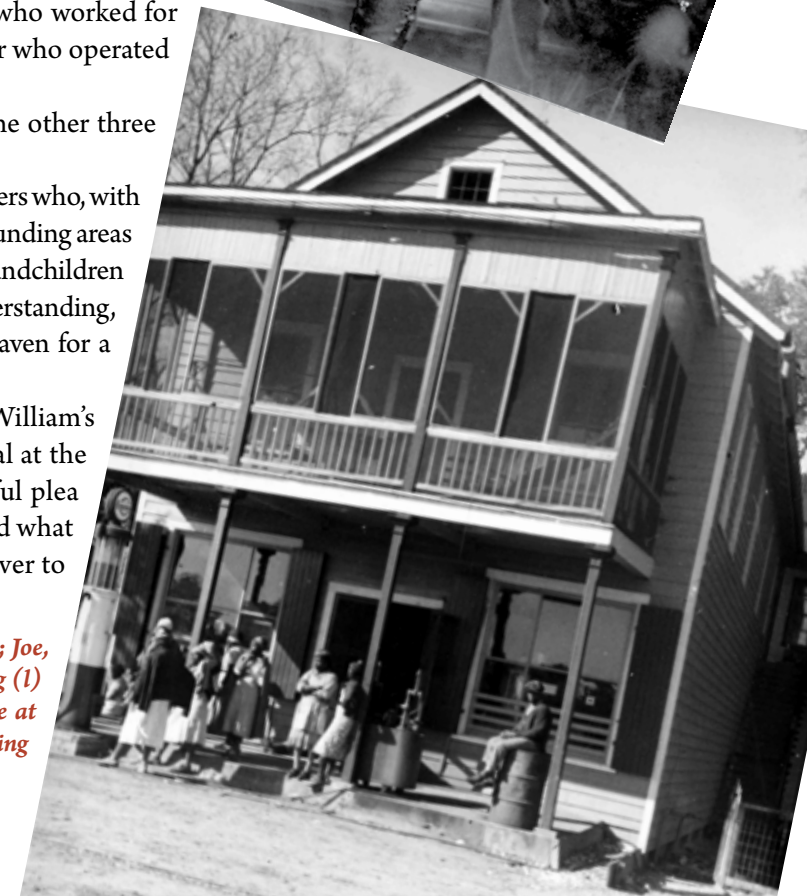
Meanwhile, Israel, Mark, and Michael were able to hold on to their stores. We assume they purchased them from MacDonald, Wilkins as the company's assets were divested during the Depression. Each remained a prominent figure within the crossroads communities of Dale and Seabrook, north of Beaufort, and Sams Point on Lady's Island. The Dale store stayed in operation when Israel's son King took over. When King's health declined, he sold the store to a man who worked for him. Meanwhile, Mark turned his store over to a young neighbor who operated it until it closed.

I regret, as do our first cousins, that little is known about the other three brothers, or Joe, who died at an early age.

Few from their era would doubt the leadership of the five brothers who, with others, cultivated goodwill and business in Beaufort and the surrounding areas through tough times. Their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren have followed the Keyserling moral compass of compassion, understanding, and leadership, giving back to the society that provided a safe haven for a family that had escaped tsarist oppression in Russia.

I would be remiss if I did not end with a story about William's death in 1951. At a special session of the United Jewish Appeal at the Commodore Hotel in New York City, while making a powerful plea for support of Jewish communities around the world, he uttered what we have been told were his last words: "It's time we turn this over to the next generation."

Top: The Keyserling brothers (l to r): William, Mark, Israel (standing); Joe, Michael (seated), Seabrook, SC, ca. 1916. Middle: William Keyserling (l) and unidentified man with tomatoes. Bottom: Mark Keyserling's store at Sams Point, Lady's Island, SC, ca. 1935. Photos courtesy of Paul Keyserling and Special Collections, College of Charleston.



Schein-ing a Light on Beaufort: An Interview with Bernie Schein

by Nora Kresch

The story of how Bernie Schein's family ended up in America isn't unusual. It's a common one in many American Jewish families. Fleeing an increasingly difficult life and escaping to freedom in an unfamiliar environment resonates today more than ever. It takes an inordinate amount of bravery to emigrate with only the hope of a better life for yourself and your family.

"My grandfather Samuel Schein was a captain in the tsar's army in the late 1800s," says Bernie Schein in an interview I recorded on December 27, 2021. "He lived with his wife, Esther (née Mark), and daughter, Nettie, in a town near the German border called Tourage, in the state of Kovno. He knew that if he stayed, as a Jew he would be among the first to be sacrificed in any confrontation. Jewish men were treated horribly in the army, and the threat of pogroms was constant."

In 1896, the story goes, Samuel left his family and headed seven miles to the German border. He brought with him enough homemade vodka to get the border guards drunk, and then he crossed over. From there, he got on a boat destined for Ellis Island. Once in New York, he found there were too many peddlers, so he traveled down the east coast looking for a good place to make a living.

"He went to Charleston, and was told there was no room for more peddlers," Schein says. "Then, he went to Savannah, where he was told the same thing. So he turned around and went back to settle in Beaufort. He started off peddling, soon opening a store out on Highway 21, across from where the [Marine Corps] Air Station is today." It was a very poor area, according to Schein, mostly populated by African Americans.

Shortly after Samuel arrived in Beaufort, he found an African American baby abandoned near the railroad tracks behind his store. He took the baby in and unofficially adopted him. The Black woman who worked for him keeping house lived behind the store and cared for the baby. When Mr. Schein's wife and daughter arrived soon after, she left and raised the child farther out in the country.

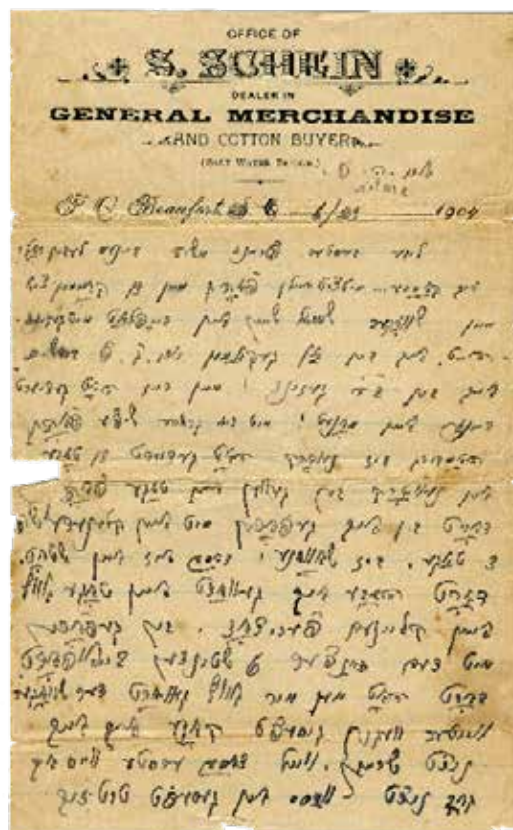
Bernie's father, Morris, was born in 1899. He grew up mostly surrounded by poor African American families. When

he was old enough to go to school, he hitched up his horse and buggy and rode into town to attend Beaufort Elementary. The school building was the same one Bernie and his two brothers would attend later. Beth Israel Congregation was formed in 1905, and the synagogue opened in 1908. Samuel and his family were early members, and Morris was among the first boys to be bar mitzvahed there.

When Morris was 18, tragedy struck. He heard a commotion, and a shot rang out in the store. He ran from the back to see his father wrestling with a Black man to get control of a gun. Morris wrested the gun from him. The man jumped out of a window and ran. His father was slumped over the counter. He died at the age of 49, leaving behind his wife, his oldest daughter, Nettie, his youngest daughter, Lena, and Morris. Later, it was discovered that the man who shot Samuel Schein was the baby boy he had adopted many years before. The shooter, whose name was Gardner, was tried and convicted of murder and was electrocuted.

After Samuel's death on December 11, 1917, the Scheins moved into town and set up shop—Schein's Grocery—on Bladen Street in what is now called the Northwest Quadrant. The building, which no longer exists, was on the site where the Pilates studio is now. According to Bernie, the denizens of the area—the Scheins' regular customers—were mostly African Americans and mostly poor.

Morris had to drop out of school to run the store. He did well taking care of his mother and sending both sisters to college. In 1940, he was invited to Charleston to meet his future wife, Sadie Garber, a native of Williston, South Carolina. She and her sister, Dot, were brought up to be musicians, with the idea that both of them would go to Julliard in New York. Though the Great Depression ended that dream, they were invited to play all over South Carolina. Sadie played the grand piano, and Dot, the violin. They were quite a pair. Dot was first chair violinist for the Charleston Symphony Orchestra for 40 years.



S. Schein letterhead, 1904, correspondence in Yiddish. From the Mark family papers, Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Morris and Sadie were married in 1940. Sadie's father, Aaron Garber, from Williston, bought them a house on Ribaut Road. They had three boys—Stanley, Bernie, and Aaron. Stanley and Bernie were born at Roper Hospital in Charleston. (Beaufort had no public hospital until 1944.) Aaron was born at Beaufort Memorial Hospital, just down the street from the Scheins' home.

When World War II broke out, Morris was deferred from service because he had bad eyesight. He foresaw the need for rationing as the war went on. He stocked up on goods and stored them in empty apartments he had been renting to men now serving in the war. When rationing started, word got out that you could get goods at Schein's store. However, when people who would normally shop at the more upscale grocery stores downtown showed up, Morris informed them that those goods were saved for his "regulars."

Morris set the example for his sons that everyone was equal; he had many friends, both African American and white. Like many white kids then, so did Bernie and his brothers, until they began school. Bernie says, "We grew up not really knowing there was a difference between Blacks and whites. The first time I saw Blacks treated differently was when I went to school. The schools were segregated. We didn't know anything different."

"The [Ku Klux] Klan really wasn't very threatening [to Jewish residents] in Beaufort," Schein observes. In a follow-up to his interview, he explains "it would have been bad for business, plus we were the Chosen People, People of the Book. We were assimilated." The Klan "would march downtown every once in a while, but people really didn't pay them much attention." In fact, according to Schein, the rumor was that Josie Lipsitz, who owned Lipsitz Department Store, could tell who each of them was because he had sold them their shoes. Nevertheless, Morris used to say, "If it weren't for the Blacks, it would be the Jews."

As for the family's practice of Judaism, Bernie remarks that there was no way to keep a kosher kitchen in such a small community. There were about 50 Jewish families in Beaufort when he was growing up in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The Scheins observed *kashrut* only on the High Holidays, shopping at a kosher grocer in Charleston.

According to Bernie, the *onegs* [festive gatherings on Friday nights after Sabbath services] at Beth Israel were wonderful. However, Sadie couldn't find a way to participate; she had never learned to cook growing up. She was always practicing her music. Sadie asked Thedie Keyserling, who led the Sisterhood, what she could bring to the *onegs*. Thedie assured her she didn't have to make a thing. She should just play the piano. And play she did. She played at *onegs* and at her home with her sister on the violin. They would clear the house of furniture and raise money for United Jewish Appeal.

"Being in Beth Israel Synagogue always made me feel at home," Bernie reminisces. "Everyone was so welcoming there.

When Rose Mark smiled at you, you felt like you were the most important child on earth." The Scheins went to services every Friday night at Beth Israel, and all three boys were bar mitzvahed under the guidance of Rabbi Julius Fisher. It was a very active synagogue. "You have to understand that, when we were coming up, it was shortly after World War II, and people were learning the details of the Holocaust," Schein continues. "Over six million

dead. We were the new hope for the Jewish people. People had lost families back in Europe. All of us children were valued and revered at our synagogue. In the eyes of the congregation, we were special, indeed precious. And we always felt that way."

Morris died in 1978, a decade after the Schein store closed. When Bernie and his wife, Martha, moved to Beaufort in 2006, Sadie still lived in the same little house on Ribaut Road where she and Morris raised their children. Bernie and Sadie attended Friday night services at Beth Israel together until Sadie's death in 2008 at the age of 97. Bernie says it felt like he was back at home. His brother, Aaron, and his wife, Nancy, had already returned to Beaufort; his brother Stanley and wife Isabel visited frequently. He reconnected with his old friend Pat Conroy, who had moved back to Beaufort in the 1990s. "Things were good until Pat died in 2016," Bernie reveals. "His death really shook me. Since then, I've felt even more connected to Beth Israel. They even let me sing the Kiddush at Friday night services like I did when I was a kid. It's home."



Morris Schein (1) with unidentified man in Schein's Grocery, Bladen Street, Beaufort, SC. Courtesy of Bernie Schein.



Sadie Garber Schein (foreground) and Mickey Fuller playing piano at Beth Israel's 100th anniversary, Beaufort, SC, 2005. Courtesy of Beth Israel Congregation.

Calling Beaufort Home

June 10–12, 2022 ~ Beaufort, SC

Friday, June 10

7:00 P.M. Shabbat services, Beth Israel, 401 Scott Street
Oneg Shabbat hosted by Beth Israel Congregation

Saturday, June 11 **Beth Israel Synagogue, 401 Scott Street**

11:30 A.M. Registration opens | Box lunch, social hall

12:30 P.M. Welcome and opening remarks ~ Alex Cohen

12:45 **From Blue Collars to Blue Serge Suits: Beaufort's Jewish Settlers**
Dale Rosengarten

2:00 **Family Stories**
Moderator: Dale Rosengarten
Panelists: Helen Goldman, Barbara Mark, Elizabeth Schein-Pearson, Philip Young

3:30 **Store Stories**
Moderator: Rachel Gordin Barnett
Panelists: Robert Greenly, Tommy Keyserling, Paul Levine, Neil Lipsitz, Bernie Schein, Arnold Young

5:00–6:00 **Reception**
Dinner on your own



Reception sponsored by Nelson Mullins

Sunday, June 12 **Learning Center, corner of West and Washington streets**

9:00 A.M. Open board meeting
Bagels, fruit, and coffee will be served

10:30 **Reconstruction: An Unfinished Revolution** ~ Judge Richard Gergel and Robert Rosen
in conversation with special guests Thomas C. Holt and Lawrence S. Rowland

12:00 P.M. **The Making of a National Park** ~ Billy Keyserling

1:00 **Tour of Reconstruction Era National Park sites** ~ caravan or self-guided
Maps and box lunches will be provided

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 (per person):

Full weekend \$120
Saturday only \$75
Sunday only \$45

Questions:

Enid Idelsohn
idelsohne@cofc.edu
Phone: 843.953.3918
Fax: 843.953.7624

Accommodations ~ rates are good until May (availability is limited). For details, go to: jhssc.org/events/upcoming



Thomas C. Holt, Professor Emeritus of American and African American History at the University of Chicago, has a longstanding interest in comparing the experiences of people in the African diaspora, particularly those in the Caribbean

and the United States. His first book, *Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction*, won the Southern Historical Association's Charles S. Sydnor Prize in 1978. Holt's 1992 award-winning study, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832–1938*, analyzed Jamaica's economy, politics, and society after slavery. His most recent volume, *The Movement: The African American Struggle for Civil Rights* (2021), emphasizes the aspirations and activities of the rank and file over those of their more famous leaders.



Driven by his passion for establishing common ground as an effective leadership tool, former Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling coordinated the local effort to help achieve the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park. His record of public service includes two terms in the SC House of Representatives (1992–96), where he was vice chair of the Joint Legislative Energy Committee, four years on the Beaufort City Council (2000–04), and three terms as mayor (2008–2020). His book, *Sharing Common Ground: Promises Unfulfilled but Not Forgotten*, tells his personal story and explains why he believes understanding the Reconstruction Era is critical for building a better future for all.

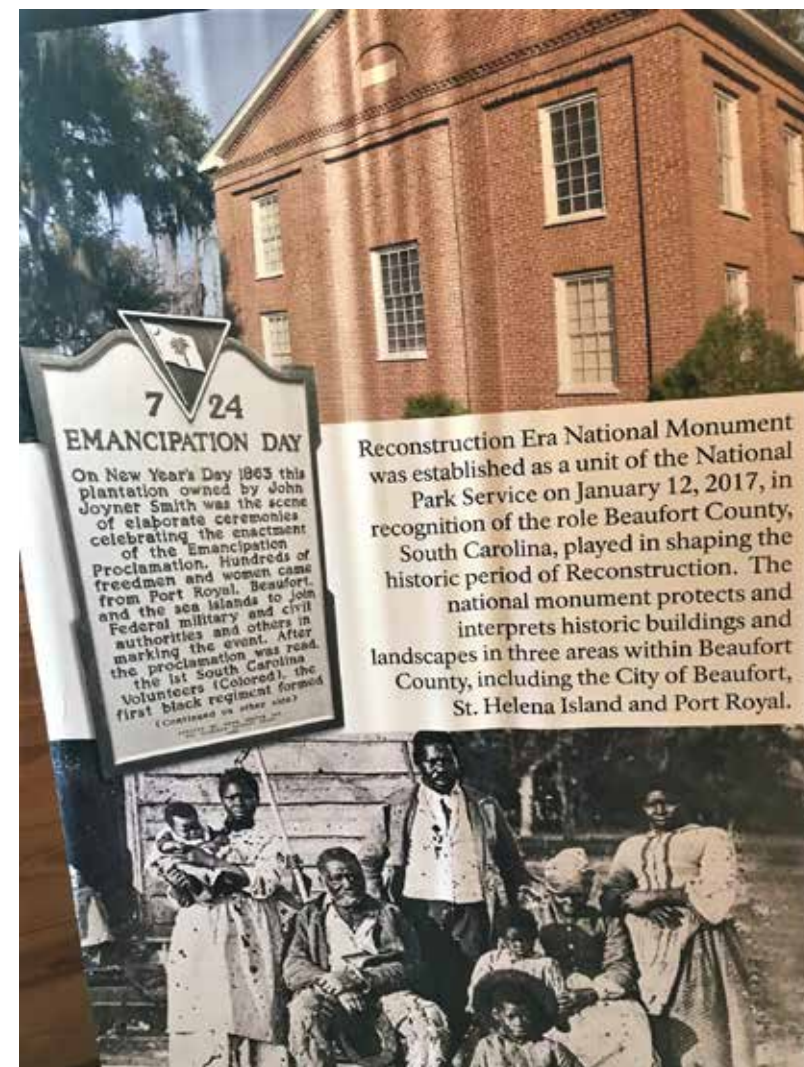
COVID Protocols:

We are aware that COVID guidelines may change by June. Vaccinations are required to attend the conference. We plan to follow CDC recommendations and continue to update our protocols.



Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at the Beaufort campus of the University of South Carolina, Lawrence S. Rowland previously served as Professor of History and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at USC-Beaufort, and as president of the South Carolina Historical Society. Among his publications on South Carolina and Sea Island history are: *The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina, Vol. I, 1514–1861*

(with Alexander Moore and George C. Rogers, Jr.), 1996; *Window on the Atlantic: The Rise and Fall of Santa Elena, South Carolina's Spanish City*, 1990; *The Civil War in South Carolina: Selections from the South Carolina Historical Magazine* (edited with Stephen G. Hoffius), 2011; and *The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina, Vol. II and Vol. III, 1861–1990* (with Stephen R. Wise and Gerhard Spieler), 2015.



The Lipsitz Family

by Neil Lipsitz and Alyssa Neely

Around 1900, Lithuanian immigrant Max Saul Lipsitz (1886–1964) arrived in Beaufort, SC, where he joined his older brother, Elias Meyer Lipsitz (1879–1913). Soon after, Max opened a grocery store at 825 Bay Street, the main street along the Beaufort waterfront.

In 1905, Max helped build Beth Israel synagogue. As a founding member of the congregation, he was honored to be the first married in the sanctuary when, in 1908, he took Bertha Rubin (1886–1956) as his bride.

Bertha Rubin Lipsitz (Mrs. Max) and her children, Hyman (l), Joseph, and Ethel, ca. 1924.



Special Collections
College of Charleston

Max and Bertha lived above the store, which eventually became Lipsitz Department Store, selling dry goods, general merchandise, and clothing.

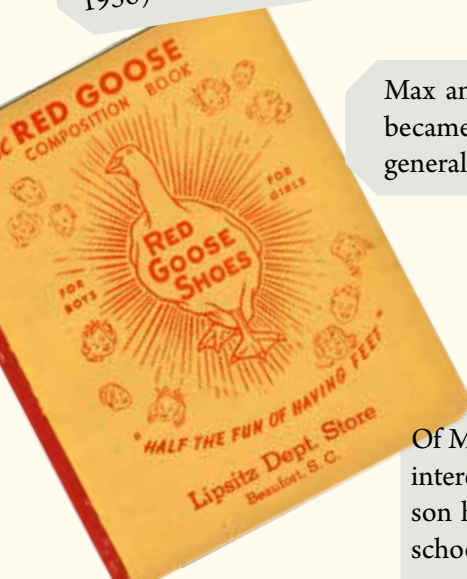
The three Lipsitz children were born above the store: Ethel (1911–1997), who married Henry Rabinowitz (1907–1964); Hyman (1913–2002), who married Helen Jacobson (1923–2000); Joseph (1920–2014), who married Lucille Bass (b. 1930).

Of Max and Bertha's grandchildren, only Neil Lipsitz was interested in taking over the store. Joseph and Lucille's son had been helping out since he was in elementary school. Just before Neil graduated from college, Joseph

told him that if he wasn't going into the family business, Joe would close the store immediately. Neil had planned to pursue a career in banking or law, but felt a duty to take over the store and jumped—it turned out happily—into retail. In 1998, Neil opened Lipsitz Shoes across the street from Lipsitz Department Store.

Hyman opened a dental practice in Bishopville, SC, before World War II, while Ethel and Joseph helped Max run the store. After her brothers, Hyman and Joseph, joined the U.S. Army, Ethel took over much of the management of the business.

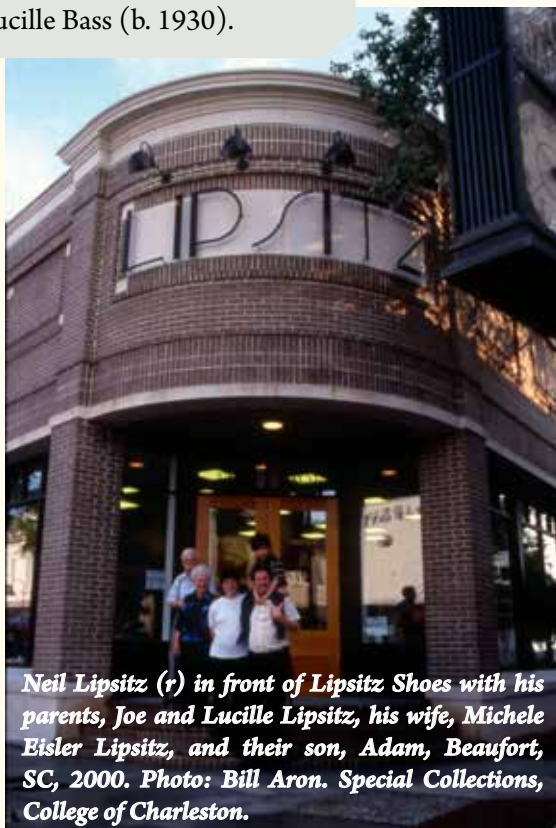
After the war ended in 1945, Hyman opened his dental practice in Beaufort, and Max decided it was time to retire, so he simply tossed the keys to Ethel and Joseph and told them the store was theirs. It truly was a family-run department store, because Ethel's husband, Henry, and, later, Joseph's wife, Lucille, joined them.



From the *Lucille Hasell Culp Collection*, courtesy of Beaufort County Library (SC).



The Lipsitz store, Bay Street (right forefront), needed new display windows after Hurricane Gracie came ashore in Beaufort, SC, in September 1959.



Neil Lipsitz (r) in front of Lipsitz Shoes with his parents, Joe and Lucille Lipsitz, his wife, Michele Eisler Lipsitz, and their son, Adam, Beaufort, SC, 2000. Photo: Bill Aron. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

The Mark Family

by Barbara Mark and Alyssa Neely



Joseph Wolf Mark, born in 1882 in Utena, Lithuania, immigrated to New York when he was 22 years old and made his way to the Beaufort, SC, area where his sister Esther Mark Schein lived.



Rejected by his sweetheart back home, Joseph began writing to her younger sister, Lena Mae Banisch. Thus began an eight-year epistolary courtship that culminated with Lena's arrival in South Carolina, carrying Joseph's letters in a cloth bag.



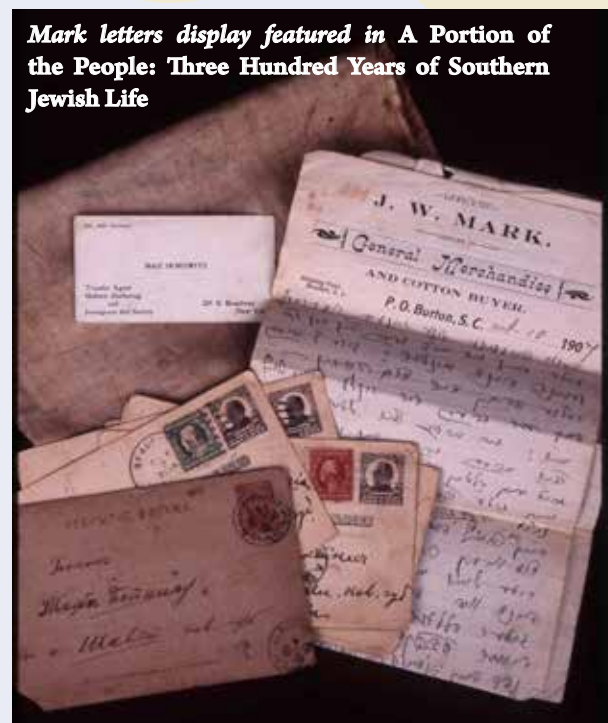
Raye, Sarah, Margie, and Ada Mark



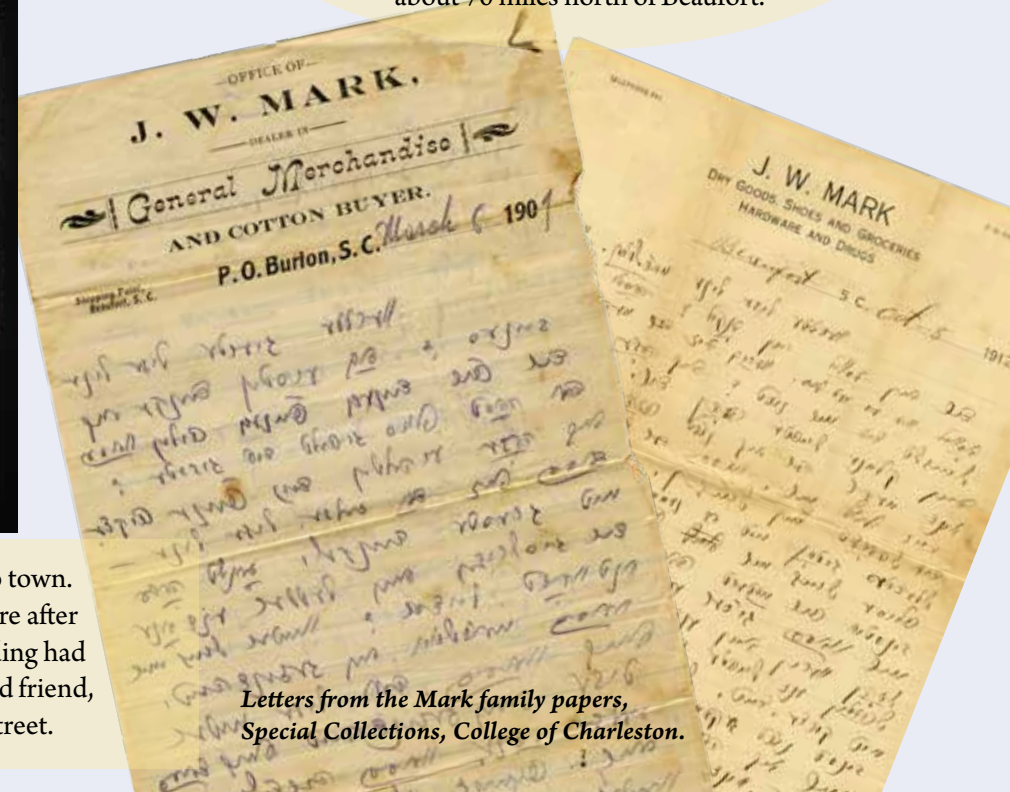
Family photos courtesy of Barbara Mark.

Joseph ran J. W. Mark, General Merchandise, in Burton, about five miles west of Beaufort. He and Lena and their four daughters and one son (pictured above) lived in a large apartment above the store. The children attended public school in Beaufort, traveling by either car or bus, and most of the time Ernest rode his horse into town. The girls graduated from Beaufort High School. Ernest graduated from Carlisle Military Academy in Bamberg, SC, about 70 miles north of Beaufort.

Mark letters display featured in A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life



In the 1930s, Lena Mae and the children moved into town. Joseph joined them in 1940 and opened a liquor store after his Burton shop was destroyed in a storm. The building had fallen on him and he was rescued by his employee and friend, Frankie Lawrence. The family lived at 506 Craven Street.



Letters from the Mark family papers, Special Collections, College of Charleston.

From Russia to Beaufort: A History of the Neidich/Rudowitz Family

by Linda Neidich Hoffman

In 1915, when my mother, Evelyn, was three months old, her father, Abe Rudowitz, took the train to Savannah, Georgia, to visit his brother David, who had a shoe repair store there. David said Savannah was too small to support two shoe repairmen. He suggested Abe go to Beaufort, South Carolina, where they had no cobbler. As a hunter and fisherman, my grandfather fell in love with the area. He and Mama Fannie (née Papish) opened dry goods stores in Beaufort and nearby Yemassee and Gardens Corner.

The original store in Beaufort was at the southwest corner of Bay Street and Scott Street, next to the Habersham House, where the family lived on the top two floors. The store included a shoe repair shop in back where Abe's father, Shaya Rudowitz, worked. David and Abe brought their parents and most of their siblings to America. (Shaya's wife, Sadie Sendlirski Rudowitz, had died in New York.) The Yemassee and Gardens Corner stores closed in 1930.

Joseph "Josie" Lipsitz, son of Max and Bertha Lipsitz and one of my mother's good friends, described the downtown store, Rudowitz & Co., as long, narrow, and dimly lit, with wide steps descending from the back of the building down to the waterfront. Unfortunately, my grandfather became very ill in 1930 and, as there was no hospital in Beaufort, he was taken to Charleston by ambulance. He passed away shortly after arriving at the hospital. Not long after his death, Mama Fannie moved the store across the street to 807 Bay.

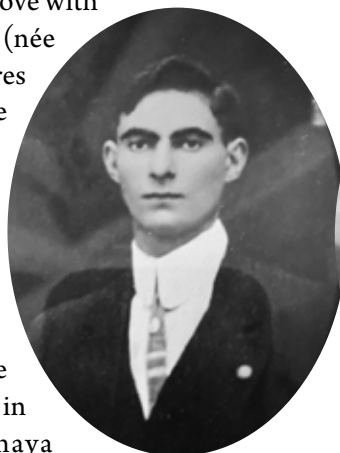
My other grandfather, Morris Neidich (Papa), was Mama Fannie's first cousin. He always celebrated two birthdays, one when he was born and the other on the date his ship landed at Ellis Island. Before he was to be sent to the front with the Russian army in 1905, he stuck himself with a needle to get a urinary infection. Upon learning he was to be released from the hospital after a three- or four-week stay, he made plans to flee Russia. His older brother Aron, a boat captain, had

connections and provided him with a passport and a boat ticket. Before making his escape to America, he promised to send for Rose Lewen. He had been apprenticed to her father, a tinsmith/riveter in Minsk. She arrived in New York City in 1908, and they married that same year. Morris worked in a tinsmith shop and ultimately was fired for trying to form a union. He went on to open a series of restaurants in the city.

In 1936, Papa and my grandmother Rose moved to Beaufort. Morris's New York business had failed, a victim of the Great Depression. His best friend and cousin, Fannie Rudowitz, now a widow, lived in Beaufort. He went into partnership with Mama Fannie, selling low-priced merchandise to workers and to marines. It was one of the first retail businesses in Beaufort that allowed African Americans to shop in the store and try on clothing. After experiencing discrimination themselves growing up in Russia, they definitely empathized with their Black customers.

In 1935, Beth Israel was barely functioning as an Orthodox synagogue, with no rabbi and few members. Papa provided leadership in the transition to the Conservative tradition, which became official in 1949 and attracted more than 50 congregants for Shabbat and twice that number for the High Holidays. The synagogue hired a rabbi and offered special programs, including a community Seder and Sunday services for Jewish marines.

Beth Israel remains one of the very few synagogues in South Carolina outside of the major cities that still has Shabbat services every Friday. Papa served as president of the congregation for more than three decades. In 1951, he and William Keyserling, for whom Beaufort's former mayor Billy Keryserling is named, raised the money to build an addition to the synagogue, a social hall. He and other members drove to Parris Island every Sunday morning to conduct services



Above: Abe Rudowitz and Fannie Papish Rudowitz. Below: Rose Lewen Neidich and Morris Neidich. Courtesy of Linda Neidich Hoffman.



for Jewish marine recruits. (This service to the marines was continued by the congregation until the late 1990s.) In 1956, Morris and Rose were among the first Jews in South Carolina to go on a United Jewish Appeal study mission to Israel. On this trip Israel's Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion presented Papa, as representative of Beaufort, an award for the most money raised by a Jewish community of its size.

My father, Sol Neidich, was born in 1913; my mother, Evelyn Rudowitz, in 1915. They were second cousins and were married December 25, 1938, in Beth Israel Synagogue. My brother, Alan, of blessed memory, was born in 1940; my sister, Marilyn, in 1943, and I was born in 1945. My husband and I were also married in Beth Israel, as was our daughter. From my extensive research of the Beaufort Jewish community, I believe that we are the only family with three generations who were married in the synagogue.

From the time he was a teen until he graduated from college, my father worked as a bellhop and waiter in the Catskills. The tips he earned were used to pay his tuition for the previous semester and for books for the new term. During his sophomore year, he decided he wanted to be a physician. He knew that he probably could not get into a medical school in New York because of the admission quotas in effect for Jewish students at that time. Somehow, Mama Fannie knew the dean of the Medical College of South Carolina (now the Medical University of South Carolina). He told her that if my father transferred from Long Island University to the University of South Carolina and received good grades, he could be admitted to the Medical College. He was admitted and he graduated in 1938.

My mother graduated from Winthrop College in 1934 and received a master's degree in geography from Peabody College in Nashville, now part of Vanderbilt University. In 1936, she went to Washington, D.C., where she worked for the Department of the Interior drawing maps.

My parents moved to Beaufort in 1940 and became passionately involved in the business, political, and social activities of the city, county, and state. My father felt that he owed a debt to the Medical College for giving him the opportunity to become a doctor. He practiced medicine in Beaufort for over 50 years and was one of the original members of the medical staff at Beaufort Memorial Hospital, serving also as its chief of staff.

For almost 30 years, my father and Herbert Keyserling were the only full-time doctors in the Beaufort area. My mother started the first eye and hearing testing for the Beaufort County Schools. She also started a sex education program for sixth graders. She was PTA president and won a life membership award from the South Carolina PTA for her service. Besides her involvement in numerous civic organizations, she played violin in the Beaufort Orchestra and was an avid painter. Both my parents passed away in 1996 from injuries they suffered in an automobile accident.

Right: Rudowitz & Co. storefront is seen in right foreground, Bay Street, downtown Beaufort, SC, 1950s. From the Russell J. Arnsberger Postcard Collection, courtesy of Beaufort County Library (SC).



Top: Israel's Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion presents Morris Neidich, as representative of Beaufort, with an award for the most money raised by a community of its size in a United Jewish Appeal campaign, 1956. Above: Sol and Evelyn Rudowitz Neidich, 1996. Courtesy of Linda Neidich Hoffman.



The Young Family of Beaufort

by Arnold Young, Sharon Shavin Rosenstein, and Neil J. Young

For the Young family, Beaufort is and always will be home. Our forebearers, Jews who resided in the Belarus region of the Russian Empire (within The Pale of Settlement) escaped hard lives. Julius “Yudah/Jay” Young (always “Papa” to us), born 1879, in Dubrovno, Vitebsk, immigrated around 1904, and ended up in Boston, where he had family. He arrived with the last name Yaguden, later becoming Young. Tobe (Tillie) Rosenblatt, born 1886 in Brest-Litovsk, also landed in 1904, in Boston, where she had family. As was the custom, a marriage was arranged, and the couple was married in Boston in 1905, and lived there for three years, before moving to Montreal, birthplace of Abe and Joe.

The family then moved to upper New York state where they tried chicken farming, and thereafter to Pittsburgh where Julius was a peddler. Oscar and Sara were born in Pittsburgh. Tragically, three of their children died very young, but seven children would survive and prosper. Next Julius and Tillie moved with their four children and their meager possessions to Charleston, where he worked for a scrap metal business.

Soon Papa discovered Beaufort and they moved there in 1916. Beaufort felt like home. It offered good flat land, lots of horses (which Papa loved), and it was a wonderful place to live. Papa engaged in numerous businesses: scrap metal, dry goods and shoes, lumber and sawmills, among others. Mama, in full charge of the home and children, was the loving *baleboste* (Yiddish for good homemaker). The family prospered as it grew. Lena, Sanie, and Morris (Mikey) were born in Beaufort. The Youngs, now with seven children, lived sequentially in several houses in the area of Prince Street, near what was then Beaufort High School and near the USO.

Over time, the family grew through marriages that began in the mid-1920s. Abe married Sayde Goldberg and they had three children (after Sayde’s passing, Abe remarried and had another child); Joe married Ethel Cohen and had six children;

Oscar married Lillian Minkow and had two; Sanie married Ben Fox and had four; Lena married Max Stein, and had three; Sara was married and had no children; Mikey married Ethel Lee Kravitz and had four children—a total of 22 first cousins, plus parents and grandparents, all in Beaufort or nearby Hampton.

In the mid-1930s, Joe Young and his brother-in-law Max Stein bought a furniture store in Allendale and moved there, where one child was born to each. They sold the store and, with

proceeds, purchased a sawmill in Bluffton, then dismantled it and moved it to Allendale. They ran it for two years before returning to Beaufort. They relocated the sawmill to Burton and continued operations.

Everyone remained close, physically, and in every other way. Nearly every Sunday was a de facto family day. We gathered at someone’s house, the children played, the men competed in pinochle, and the women fixed dinner and talked. As children, we often wound up eating or sleeping at a cousin’s house. Every Friday night, we all went to shul; many of the children could not stay awake for the full hour.

Pesach was the best of times; our Seders were wonderful.

Everyone was there—except those not yet born—and then they were! Papa conducted each Seder, always wearing a big hat. Of course, services were long and there was a lot of wine, and near the end the children searched for the *Afikomen* (matzo hidden for children to find for a prize) and then fell asleep before the Seder ended. Our family photographs of these happy occasions go back to the mid-1930s. Papa always hired a professional photographer, so today we are able to enjoy revisiting those treasured family gatherings.

Young Lumber Company, started about 1942 by Papa and Joe, was located first on Adventure Street, and later on Church Street. After World War II, Papa and Joe joined forces with Oscar and built a development of 30-plus houses in what was called Floyd Heights, an area west of Ribaut Road. Everyone in the family had homes there. Soon after,



Julius “Papa” Young surrounded by his grandchildren, back row (l to r): David Young, Marshall Stein; middle row: Stanley Fox, Marsha Gail Fox, H. Fred Young, Harry Young; front: Linda Young, Beaufort, SC, ca. 1944. Photos courtesy of the Young family.

they built another development on Pigeon Point, with 35 or so homes, completed about 1949. Oscar, Joe, Ben Fox, as well as Papa, built larger homes for themselves on Pigeon Point, all adjacent to one another. Mikey, Ethel, and their children lived in Hampton. Both Abe and Sayde died young, but their children were always nearby and very much part of the extended family.

In conjunction with the lumber yard operated by Joe, the construction business, conducted under the Young Lumber Company name, took on large commercial projects on Parris Island and at the Marine Corps Air Station. The Youngs, generally, were well known in the African American community.

Papa, without any formal contracts, sold materials on a “pay as you can” basis to build several churches and some homes in the Frogmore area; one church has a cornerstone honoring him. Also, there was a school, believed to be part of what is now Penn Center, where Papa and Joe provided lumber, supplies, and skills to teach building trades to young men. The Young family shared a lasting, close, and mutually respectful relationship with the African American

community. Sometime after Papa’s death in 1950, Joe incorporated the construction business as J. Young Construction, in honor of Papa.

Oscar operated Young Brothers Furniture Company on Bay Street from about 1940 until 1957, when he sold all the merchandise in an auction. He then established a mortgage lending business, Capital Improvement Company. The object was, of course, to improve capital! Oscar also continued in commercial construction and took over Young Lumber

Company after Joe and Ethel moved with their large family to Jacksonville, Florida, in 1963. There Joe reestablished J. Young Construction Company, completing projects primarily for the navy, and created Southern Steel Company, selling construction steel. His sons, by then grown and educated, joined him in the construction business.

Ben Fox owned Fox Jewelers on Bay Street until his retirement, when the business was taken over by his son-in-law, Paul Isaac, and daughter, Phyllis Ann. Ben was well known for his excellent hand engraving. Before joining the navy, Mikey worked for Ben at Fox Jewelers and learned the business. After the war, Mikey and Ethel moved to Hampton

and opened their own jewelry store. In the early 1950s, Joe became engaged in tomato and cucumber farming. Oscar later joined him and kept the substantial operation going until his death in 1982.

While each of the Young family businesses was usually owned by an individual person, things operated more like a large corporation with various divisions. Various family members worked in the various businesses at various times. Papa recognized the potential for

disagreements, especially among the wives. His edict: there was to be no discussion with wives about who made what or who got what. Any issues that cropped up were ultimately directed to and decided by Papa. That included who would put up how much money to help someone in the family for whatever reason.

While the Youngs were successful both in the family sense, as well as financially, there was no college education among the first generation, and some did not complete high school. The



Young family Passover Seder, 1940 (note picture on wall of their 1939 Seder). Julius “Papa” Young is at the head of the table. Seated (l), front to back: Ethel Kravitz Young, Sara Young Brawer, Sanie Young, Ethel Cohen Young. Standing (l), front to back: Morris Young, Ben Fox, Josef Young, Don Young, Tillie “Mama” Rosenblatt Young, Lewis Young. Seated (r), front to back: Lillian Minkow Young, Gilda Young, David Young, Sadye Goldberg Young, Lena Young Stein. Standing (r), front to back: Oscar Young, Abe Young, Max Stein, Marshall Stein, Bernie Stein. Note: Marshall Stein donated an Oral History interview to the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston. It is online at the Lowcountry Digital Library: <https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/lcdl:108592>.

next, and currently older generation, all went to college and a number went on to professional education and careers. All have done well.

As of 2022, our family has dispersed all over the country and Israel, but with the magic of technology, we meet twice a month for two or more hours. Additionally, we have had several well attended family homecomings in Beaufort and Jacksonville—truly wonderful! But it must be said: not actually living together is



Young family reunion, Jacksonville, FL, 2004. About 135 people attended, wearing color-coded T-shirts. Red was worn by Tobe and Julius Young's children (second generation American) and their spouses; dark blue by the third generation; light blue by the fourth generation; and orange by the fifth generation.

join them. The Youngs of Beaufort, whether through blood or marriage, and no matter where they live, believe with all their heart and soul that they are Youngs, and Beaufort is home.

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About the authors: Arnold Young is the son of Oscar Young and lives in Savannah, GA. Sharon Shavin Rosenstein is the granddaughter of Abe Young and lives in Israel on the Mediterranean, north of Tel Aviv. Neil J. Young is the grandson of Josef Young and lives in San Francisco, CA.

Beth Israel: A Congregation Grows in Beaufort

by Emilie Crossan, research assistant, Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture

Although the Jewish community of Beaufort dates to the mid- to late-19th century, it was not until 1905 that a number of prominent Jewish businessmen sought to establish a congregation. On October 16, 1905, the state of South Carolina formally granted a charter establishing Beth Israel as a religious corporation that could “jointly buy and hold title to land.” Jewish residents of Beaufort J. B. Keyserling, Moses S. Epstein, Morris Levin, David Schein, and E. M. Lipsitz signed the document.¹ Over the next 50 years, the Jewish community expanded along with the general population,

peaking at 100 Jewish individuals in 1937.² The small but resilient congregation has continued to worship in the original synagogue, which today remains the focal point of Beaufort’s Jewish community.

Before constructing a synagogue, the 36 congregants met for services in the Masonic hall above Sheffer’s store on Bay Street, while social functions were held in the former Arsenal on Scott Street.³ When the lot directly adjacent to the Arsenal went up for sale, the congregation saw this as the perfect opportunity to purchase the property with plans of building a



Postcard image of the Beaufort Volunteer Arsenal, corner of Craven and Scott streets, Beaufort, SC. Beth Israel Congregation built its synagogue on Scott Street, next door to the former arsenal, now a museum. From the Russell J. Arnsberger Postcard Collection, courtesy of Beaufort County Library (SC).

synagogue.⁴ In December 1905, Nora Comerford conveyed the lot, measuring 50’ x 118’, to Beth Israel Congregation for \$187.50.⁵ According to the 1884, 1889, 1894, 1899, and 1905 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Beaufort, the building that originally sat on the site was a single-story L-shaped structure labeled “Shanty.” The congregation was able to raise sufficient funds, and with the physical help of some members, construction began.⁶ The *Evening Post* reported that the ladies of the congregation held a variety of fundraisers, including a bake sale with “ice cream, cake, and candy” at a storefront on Bay Street.⁷

Construction of Beth Israel was completed in June 1908. Rabbi George Solomon of Mickve Israel in Savannah officiated at the dedication ceremony.⁸ The single-story Colonial Revival wood building has stood on Scott Street for more than 100 years without undergoing any major alterations. A visiting scholar noted that the synagogue’s sanctuary reminded her of a Lithuanian wooden shul, perhaps a nod towards the congregation’s founding families, such as the Keyserlings, who came from Lithuania. The structure first showed up on the 1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, described as a single-story “Synagogue” with a single-story porch overhang in the front. The interior stretched 16 feet to the eaves. At the time, the building was heated with stoves and illuminated using oil. By 1924, however, the oil lighting had been replaced by electricity. Services were held in accordance with the Orthodox tradition, with sermons and prayers recited in Hebrew, and men and women sitting apart.⁹

The Jewish community bought land for a cemetery in July 1910. The impetus was the death in 1907 of five-year-old Melvin Levin, who was buried in Charleston, about 70 miles from home, because Beaufort had no Jewish burial ground.¹⁰ Mary H. Bucknam sold the lot on Green Street for \$152.50.¹¹

The Julia Mittle Ladies Auxiliary Society raised funds to help purchase the burial grounds and maintain the synagogue.¹² With their cemetery formally established in 1912, Beaufort Jews no longer had to transport their loved ones to Charleston or Savannah to be laid to rest.¹³

Beth Israel’s constitution, adopted on May 6, 1917, covers a range of topics, from the roles and responsibilities of the president to what a member should do in the event of a death. It also included official plans for a Sunday school for children and a cheder for boys. In July 1920, the congregation purchased an “Old parsonage” for \$1,500, a property that bounded the synagogue to the north on Scott Street. Used to house the rabbi, the building was remodeled in 1946 at a cost of \$2,303.61.¹⁴

Women’s names began to appear in the minutes in the mid-1940s, suggesting the congregation had begun its drift away from Orthodoxy, allowing women to take on roles traditionally reserved for men.¹⁵ Some members felt the strict Orthodoxy practiced by Eastern European immigrants was driving away younger members.¹⁶

When attendance started to decrease in the 1940s, Dr. Sol Neidich, son of Morris Neidich, Beth Israel’s president at the time, suggested that the congregation hire a Conservative rabbi. After some discussion, they did just that, bringing in Dr. Julius S. Fisher. Beth Israel officially made its transition from Orthodox to Conservative Judaism in 1949 by

joining the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. At the time, the congregation numbered 44 heads of households, five of whom were women.¹⁷ In the early 1950s, an annex was built to serve as a recreation hall.¹⁸

In 1996, Rose Mark became Beth Israel’s first female president. Mark was born in Baltimore and moved to Beaufort after World War II to raise her family. When she assumed the presidency, membership had declined to 25 families, and it was



Children’s Passover Seder, Beth Israel, Beaufort, SC, 1949. Donnie Young, father of Neil J. Young, is at the head of the table, and seated, clockwise from left forefront: Sarah Rosenthal, David Young, Stanley Fox, next two unidentified, Michael Greenly, next two unidentified, Fred Young, unidentified, Linda Young, unidentified, Bernie (or Aaron) Schein, Aaron (or Bernie) Schein, Arnold Young, Lewis Young, Philip Young. Standing (1 to r): Ben Fox, Gerrie Lipson, Marsha Gail Fox, Barbara Mark. Adults seated, right rear: Sam Greenly, Lucille Greenly, Lillian Minkow Young, Ethel Rabinowitz. Identifications provided by Neil J. Young. Courtesy of the Young family.

difficult to gather a minyan, though they still were able to afford a full-time rabbi.¹⁹ According to long-time member Helen Levin Goldman, the congregation did not “have the luxury of being Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform,” and by necessity

learned to accommodate a variety of Jewish practices.²⁰

In 2022, Beth Israel remains Beaufort’s only Jewish congregation, serving 85 member families and hosting services conducted by lay leaders nearly every Friday evening.²¹

NOTES

1. “The Jewish Community of Beaufort in 1905 and the Founding of Beth Israel Congregation,” audio speech given by Helen Goldman and Stephen Schein, 02 April 2005, Mss. 1035-290, Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, USA, <https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/lcdl:36583>.
2. Mark K. Bauman, *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 115; “The Jewish Community of Beaufort in 1905.”
3. “Jewish Community of Beaufort in 1905.”
4. Ibid.
5. Beaufort County Deed Office, Deed Book 26, p. 305.
6. “Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities -- Beaufort, South Carolina,” Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, accessed 01 March 2022, <https://www.isjl.org/south-carolina-beaufort-encyclopedia.html>.
7. “Synagogue at Beaufort,” *Charleston (SC) Evening Post*, June 22, 1907: 6.
8. “Jewish Community of Beaufort in 1905.”
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.



Beth Israel Congregation, Beaufort, SC, 2000. Photo: Bill Aron. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

11. Beaufort County Deed Office, Deed Book 29, p. 735.
12. Original minute book and photocopied reproduction, 1916–1961, Box: 1, Folder: 1–2, Beth Israel Congregation (Beaufort, S.C.) records, Mss. 1076, Special Collections, College of Charleston.
13. “Jewish Community of Beaufort in 1905.”
14. Original minute book, 289.
15. Ibid., 289–292.
16. “Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities -- Beaufort.”
17. Original minute book, 182–183; 189.
18. “JHSSC_Beaufort_Beth_Israel_History,” archive.org, 2016, accessed 1 March 2022, <https://jhssc.org/history-of-temple-beth-israel/>

19. “Jewish Heritage Collection: Oral history interview with Rose Yospe Mark,” 07 November 1996, Mss. 1035-094, Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, USA, <https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/251729>.

20. “Jewish Community of Beaufort in 1905.”

21. “Beth Israel Synagogue, 2014, accessed 01 March 2022, <https://www.bethisraelbeaufortsc.com/>.

Connecting the Dots

by Rachel Gordin Barnett, JHSSC Executive Director

We receive email inquiries from folks around the country and the state on a variety of topics. Lately, requests have been trending toward inquiries about family history, particularly questions involving South Carolina’s Jewish merchant community. People ask for information on relatives who tried to make it in business in South Carolina but, for various reasons, left the state and moved on, often to the

Northeast; or forebears who were merchants in small South Carolina towns now long gone.

Thanks to an able researcher working diligently on the Jewish Merchant Project, we often can help with these explorations. Eric Friendly with Historic Columbia has been pursuing leads and using technological tools to connect the dots. Alyssa Neely, Dale Rosengarten, and their colleagues

at the College of Charleston’s Addlestone Library provide resources from the Jewish Heritage Collection’s extensive photo, oral history, and manuscript archives. None of this work happens without funding, and JHSSC is grateful for the generous support of an anonymous donor, the Stanley B. Farbstein Endowment, and the Henry and Sylvia Yaschik Foundation.

Why are we documenting merchants? It is for posterity and for those who send us emails, hoping to find family connections. It is for scholars and genealogists. It for public historians and historic preservationists, and for members of JHSSC dedicated to understanding the past.

The Merchant Project is just one of many enterprises the Society has embarked on over the past five years. We have continued to survey Jewish burial grounds and sponsor historic markers across the state. We have recruited Mitch Litwer and his wife, Di, to photograph and document synagogue buildings, past and present, under the guidance of architectural historian Samuel D. Gruber. Our deep-rooted history is becoming part of the South Carolina lexicon.

How do we sustain the momentum we have built? We are happy to announce the inauguration of the South Carolina Jewish History & Heritage Campaign, a joint effort by the Jewish Historical Society and the Jewish Heritage Collection aimed at creating a sustainable foundation for both organizations. A gift to the Campaign will impact all our work—from curating exhibitions and recording life stories to collecting images, manuscripts, heirlooms, and mundane objects that chronicle the Jewish history of our state; from holding meetings (virtual and real) to designing web sites and publishing magazines.

There is more digging to be done... more dots to connect. The future of the past is in our hands.

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See pages 12–13 of this publication for program information.